Responding to Fiction with Emotion and Imagination

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The paradox of fiction presents an inconsistent triad of propositions all of which are purported to be plausible or difficult to abandon. Here is an instance of the paradox:

1. Sally pities Anna (where Anna is the character Anna Karenina in the novel by Tolstoy bearing that name).
2. To pity someone, one must believe that they exist and are suffering (have suffered).
3. Sally does not believe that Anna exists.

If we find all of these statements plausible or difficult to abandon, then we will become committed to an inconsistency because they imply that Sally does and does not pity Anna. That is, 2 and 3 imply that Sally does not pity Anna, but 1 asserts that she does.

Here is the problem. The paradox was formulated during the heyday of the cognitive theory of the emotions when there was a lot of theoretical commitment to 2 or a variant of it. But now virtually no one accepts 2. For one thing it is way too strong. We can pity people who lived in the past and who no longer exist. We can pity those who will live in a hypothetical future. We can also feel emotions about states of affairs that have not been actualized and may never become actualized such as fear for the next big earthquake in the Midwest. In such cases we don't believe that the object of emotion exists. Finally, we seem to be capable of irrational emotions such as those that are brought on by phobias, where we may know that we are in no danger yet are still afraid. Perhaps Jim's snake phobia is so extreme that he knows that what lies ahead is a very realistic plastic replica of a snake, so he both knows that there is no snake ahead and no snake currently poses a danger to him but he is still afraid. (There is a question whether Jim's phobia creates the irrational belief that he is in danger that co-exists with the knowledge that he is not.)

In addition, even proponents of solutions to the paradox that crucially involves the denial of one of the other propositions in the inconsistent triad, still deny 2. Thus Kendall Walton famously argues that Sally does not literally pity Anna, though she does pity her in the imagination. Hence his solution to the paradox crucially involves the denial of 1. But he doesn't think 2 is true either (because of cases of irrational emotion like Jim's).[1] Peter Lamarque, who is one of the first to formulate the alternative to Walton's view now known as the thought theory, also seems to deny 1. "Both Walton and I agree that [Charles remark, 'I am terrified of the Slime'] is not literally true."[2] He would say the same for Sally's purported pity for Anna. This seems to imply that Lamarque too denies 1, yet I suspect he would also claim that 2 is false.

To solve the paradox, we just have to find a way to reject one of the inconsistent statements. It appears easy to reject 2. So why do even some of those who do reject 2, not

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[1] Kendall Walton, "Spelunking, Simulation, Slime: on Being Moved by Fiction," in Art and Emotion, Mette Hjort and Sue Laver (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, 37-49.

[2] Peter Lamarque, The Fictional Point of View, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996, 127.

leave matters there? Is there still any reason not to simply reject 2 and pronounce that paradox solved?

Many now think this is precisely the way to go.[3]

I will argue that there is still reason to take seriously other solutions to the paradox. The paradox leads us to think about the nature and variety of our responses fiction. When we attempt to do justice to this nature and variety, and then return to the paradox, it becomes less clear which statements we should reject.

Alternative solutions

Let's begin by surveying some of the solutions to the paradox that offer an alternative to denying 2. Some question 3, wondering whether, while immersed in the novel, Sally forgets or suspends her belief that Anna is merely a fictional character. There is, however, an immediate problem with this approach. Even when one is perfectly aware of the fictionality of Anna and the events surrounding her, it still seems possible to be moved by the novel. This is why most philosophers have focused their attention on 1 and 2. Since we are now looking at alternatives to denying 2, I turn to ways of denying 1.

No one denies that when Sally responds to Anna Karenina, she feels something akin to an emotional response. So the claim is some variant of the following: Sally feels but what she feels is not pity for Anna. One can go on to claim either that Sally feels pity but not for Anna or that Sally feels but without feeling pity. There are advocates of both approaches. A novel might put us in mind of a real person or people who suffer a fate like Anna's, and we might unproblematically pity them.[4] Alternatively, while we may have no one specifically in mind, we might pity any one who has a fate like Anna's. It's generally admitted that there is something correct about this as we might extend our pity to real people we are aware of or merely hypothesize, but the proposal has not received wide acceptance as a general solution to the problem. The reason is that the proposal takes what is really a peripheral case and tries to make it the central phenomenon. When reading a novel or watching a play or a movie, we are focused on that. We may have no acquaintance with real people who undergo what happens to the characters, or if we do, we may not think of them. Further, merely hypothetical cases of such people are less likely to move us than the fictional characters we are engaged with. Most important, it is the fiction that is the primary, often the sole, object of our attention. So a satisfactory solution should give the fiction a more central role in generating what we feel.

Lamarque's view perhaps also falls in this category of solution, since he says that

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[3] Noel Carroll, The Philosophy of Horror or the Paradoxes of the Heart, London: Routledge, 1990, Tamar Szabo Gendler, and Karson Kovakovich, "Genuine Rational Fictional Emotions," In Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art, Matthew Kieran (ed.), Oxford: Blackwell, 2006; Richard Moran, "The Expression of Feeling in Imagination." Philosophical Review 103, 1994, 75-106 ; Jenefer Robinson, Deeper than Reason, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, among many others.

[4] William Charlton Feeling for the Fictious." British Journal of Aesthetics 24, 1984, 206-16.

Charles *does not literally fear the slime* (and later says the same thing about pity), but insists that Charles feels real fear. I say 'perhaps' because I am not entirely clear why Lamarque denies what he denies. Lamarque says the object of Charles's fear, what he is afraid of, is "the imagined slime". But fearing the imagined slime (i.e, fearing an intentional content of his imagining) is what fearing the slime might be thought to amount to in the context of engagement with fiction. If Charles feared some actual slime (if such there be), then his fear is not directed toward the movie but toward some actual thing that the movie brings to mind.

A different solution proposes that it is part of our imaginative response to the work that we pity Anna. We pity Anna in our imagination, and this means that we don't literally pity her. But this does not imply that we literally feel nothing. Though we only imagine pitying Anna, we have much the same physiological response that we have when we actually feel pity, and so the two experiences - pitying in the imagination and actual pitying feel much the same. Further, we can even say that we are feeling an emotion - a strong one. But because of differences with typical cases of real pity - not only the lack of belief in the existence of the object of pity (Anna) but also the absence of any inclination to act on one's feeling (to provide help or soothing words, for example), the emotion or feeling should not classified as pity.[5]

This proposal has much in its favor. It offers an explanation of why the fiction itself creates strong feelings in us. The explanation is pretty uniform across the different emotions fiction evokes. It also explains the difference between actually pitying someone and what happens to Sally regarding Anna, and more generally what happens when we have emotional reactions to fiction. Lamarque's proposal does this too. Although Lamarque would insists that Sally feels real pity, and Charles feels real fear, these cases differ in several respects from emotional responses to actual people or actual dangers.

A Special Kind of Pity?

At this point, let me emphasize the most important difference between "feeling pity" in connection with fictional characters and other cases mentioned earlier in the paper as counter-examples to 2. We can characterize all of these cases as ones where there is a proposition before one's mind, and we take an attitude to it that is partly responsible for the emotion we feel. In the case of pity for those who existed in the past, the attitude is belief that they suffered, the same attitude that we have to those who suffer in the present. In the case of future directed emotions, the proposition is that an event might occur, and the attitude is again belief. Belief in these situations suffices to explain what I feel. If I dread a storm that I think is coming, my belief that something is likely to happen that will put me in danger suffices to explain my feeling dread. It doesn't matter that the storm never materializes. My belief that it had a good chance of doing so is all that is needed to explain my emotion. In

[5] Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1990.

the case of Sally pitying Anna, the true proposition before Sally's mind is not that someone suffers or that someone did or might suffer, but that someone (Anna) suffers in the fiction.[6] There are lots of cases where people believe that it's true in the fiction that someone suffers, but they don't feel pity. Here is an imaginary example. Suppose a novel opens with the following sentences. "The drought had been going on for three years. The people suffered horribly. Jim was starving but he worried more about his children." One takes in these fictional truths without feeling emotion. As we read more about Jim and his family, this may change but, there is some plausibility that more than belief about what is fictionally true in the story is required, viz. that one imagines (the more vividly the better) the suffering. If this is correct, quite a different attitude is required to explain what Sally feels: imagining rather than believing. If so, Sally pities Anna in her imagination, at least in the sense that the attitude one has to the proposition that someone is suffering terribly is *imagining that* rather than *believing that*.

This difference between dreading a storm and "pitying Anna" is recognized by both Walton and Lamarque. In fact, their views have a lot in common, despite representing two among the main alternative solutions the paradox of fiction. They agree that a central aspect of Sally's psychological state is her vividly imagining Anna's suffering, and they also agree that this results in Sally experiencing strong feelings that have the phenomenology and physiology of pity (to the extent that these exist). I'll call this Sally's core psychological state. Finally, as mentioned before, they agree that Sally does not literally pity Anna Karenina.

If their only remaining disagreement is whether to call Sally's psychological state pity, one might think there is only a verbal difference between them. But there is more to it than that. Lamarque claims that Sally's pity has an intentional object, and he denies that Sally imagines pitying someone. Walton asserts that Sally imagines pitying Anna. I'm less clear about Walton's view on intentional objects. When Sally imagines pitying Anna, does this imagining have the same intentional object as the one Lamarque picks out? On the one hand, Walton denies that a thought is normally an appropriate object of emotion, and he may carry this over to imagined emotion. Walton says that Sally imagines feeling emotion for everyday kinds of objects, not thought contents or intentional objects. This is certainly true, but of course there is no everyday object such as an actual person that Sally is thinking of.

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[6] This raises a new problem in the case where we respond emotionally to fiction that arises especially for those who believe that fictional names like "Anna Kerenina" do not refer to anything, viz what is the content of the proposition before one's mind in these cases. Notice the problem applies both to those who claim that we literally pity Anna and those who deny this as long as they characterize what we feel as a kind of emotion, or indeed as any kind of mental state that has cognitive content. Since this raises technical issues about the semantics of fictional names and the nature of mental representations, a discussion of solutions to this problem is beyond the scope of this essay. For three quite different solutions to the problem, see Fred Adams, Gary Fuller and Robert Stecker "The Semantics of Fictional Names." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 78, 1997, 128-48; Gregory Currie, *The Nature of Fiction. Cambridge: Cambridge* University Press, 1990; Walton, Mimesis, 385-419.

Lamarque might say that an *imagined everyday object* is precisely what he has in mind by an intentional object. So I suspect that there may be more of a misunderstanding here than an actual difference of view.[7]

I note in passing that Lamarque is not entirely clear about the nature of the intentional object of emotion. When discussing Charles's fear while watching a horror movie, at one point he says that the intentional object is "*the* imagined slime".[8] Later Lamarque says that Charles is not afraid that "*this* slime will devour him because he does not believe that what he is seeing is real."[9] Rather he is afraid of "being attacked by *a* ferocious slime."[10] This suggests his thought is a general one that there is a slime that will devour him and the intentional object of this fear is an indefinite object: *an* imagined slime. But we get a somewhat different story again when Lamarque turns to pitying Anna. Our "genuine pity is not directed to someone or other"[11], that is, it is not directed to an indefinite object as Charles's fear seems to be, but to '*this* person." Sally is not in a different situation with respect to *Anna Karenina* than Charles is with respect to the slime movie. She no more believes in Anna's existence than Charles does of the slime's. But unlike Charles this is no obstacle, according to Lamarque, to her feelings being directed to a definite imagined object. Perhaps this difference is due to a difference in the emotions of fear and pity but, if so, Lamarque does not make this explicit. (We return to this issue later.) However, given these varying claims including two apparently different accounts of the object of Charles fear, it's not clear just what Lamarque believes the intentional objects of fiction-generated emotions are.

Whether or not there is a genuine difference in view between Walton and Lamarque when it comes to the intentional objects of real or imagined emotional responses to fiction, there is certainly one about whether we imagine pitying or fearing fictional characters. This is something Lamarque flatly denies and Walton flatly asserts. What I want to claim here is that neither are completely right on this score. Lamarque is wrong to deny that we sometimes imagine emotionally responding to a character. Walton is wrong to claim that this is an essential part of the story of our emotional responses to fiction.[12]

Ways of imagining and Imagined Pity

To establish these points we have to look at the various ways we can imagine fictional content. One way is imagining that one is reading or hearing a factual account of events.

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[7] Walton and Lamarque do differ about the semantics of fictional terms and, to the extent this difference applies to people's thoughts as well as their words, the contents of the imaginings that each ascribes to Sally will differ.

[8] Lamarque, *The Fictional Point of View*, 126.

[9] Lamarque, 128

[10] Lamarque, 128.

[11] Lamarque, 129.

[12] The argument to follow has benefitted from Stephen Davies, "Responding Emotionally to Fictions." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 67, 2009, 269-284.

This implies that we imagine that the characters and what happens to them, the narrator who relates to *us* these events, and we ourselves all inhabit the same world.

Things happen to the characters, the narrator knows that that they do somehow, and he or she tells us. That can only happen in a shared world. So the view implies that we imagine that the characters, the narrator and we all inhabit the fictional world we are imagining, though we and the narrator may be temporally and/or spatially distant from the events being narrated and in no position to intervene in them.

There are other shared world imaginings. One might suppose that one is a direct witness to the events in a fictional story. This is more likely when the existence of a narrator is either not obvious or there just is none. A novel written completely in dialogue might lead one to imagine one is a non-participant hearing or over-hearing the conversation. Similarly one may imagine one is witnessing the events in a play or a movie.

Is there a way to imagine what is fictionally true in a work without putting oneself in the fictional world? Yes there is. When dealing with a narrative, one can imagine a world of fictional characters and events and someone is telling someone else about these events, but we don't imagine ourselves as part of the audience. We don't imagine ourselves hearing about Anna taking a lover; we simply imagine Anna taking a lover or someone telling of Anna taking a lover, but not telling us.

It is possible to imagine in all these ways. Is one way the correct way to approach a fiction? Even if we confine ourselves to one type of fiction such as the novel, I doubt that there is.

Let's now bring our emotional reactions back to center stage. Suppose that we are imagining that we share a world with the fictional characters. We are following the story of a character, and we imagine hearing about or witnessing that things work out very badly and the character suffers terribly. A feeling wells up that we are inclined to call pity. Is it part of our make believe that we feel pity for the character. This is the claim that Lamarque denies. Though we imagine hearing about the sad events of the story, what we feel is not part of the make-believe. But I'm inclined to think that two different things might be getting conflated here. It is natural that, if I'm imagining myself in the world of the fiction hearing about the sad fate of the character, I may well also imagine myself pitying her. No one denies that this can lead to some genuine strong feelings that resemble real pity, but differ in some important ways from the standard case of pity. So what may be conflated are the genuine strong feelings which are not fictional and its being fictional or imagined that I feel pity for the character.

Suppose we imagine the sad events of the fiction without imagining ourselves in the world of the fiction. We don't imagine witnessing the sad events or hearing about them. Still, a feeling wells up in us that we're inclined to call pity. Here it's not plausible that we make-believe that we feel pity for the character. In this situation, it's not clear what would prompt me to engage in this kind of make-believe. Nevertheless, the feeling wells up in us because there are propositions before our minds that we are imagining to be true. So my imagining pitying a character is only sometimes a concomitant of those actual strong feelings

that at least feel like pity. Imagining pitying can only happen when certain modes of imagining are employed, and even then it may not be necessary for actual feelings that resemble pity.

If all this is right, then the essential psychological state that occurs when we "pity" a fictional character is just the one identified above as Sally's core psychological state: her vividly imagining a character's suffering, and resulting in physiological changes that create strong feelings that have the phenomenology of pity. This is the aspect of the psychological state that Walton, Lamarque and most others who have written about the paradox of fiction agree about.

Borderline Pity

Is this core psychological state pity? Is it pity for a fictional character? I have already suggested that (*pace* Lamarque) *if* it is pity, we might as well say it is pity for a fictional character in virtue of the fact that the guiding propositional attitude is one where one imagines that the character is suffering (i.e. one imagines that a person is suffering and that the character is this person). I have also said that if it is pity it is a special kind of pity. However, my main point is that it matters little whether we classify it as a special kind of pity or as not pity because by its nature it can at best be a borderline case of pity as opposed to a mainline case. Depending on which side of the border we put it, we might deny statement 1 or 2 by way of resolving the paradox of fiction. We might end up denying 1 even if we also deny 2 on independent grounds (as Walton does.)

If we are going to make the case for this claim, we have to distinguish a borderline case of emotion from a mainline emotion. A good place to start is with mainline emotions. Here, however, we face the problem that there is no generally accepted theory of the emotions. There are both cognitive theories and non-cognitive theories that have significant number of adherents. I want to claim that whichever approach we take, we get the same result. This result is not surprising on a cognitive theory since it was just such a theory that gave plausibility to statement 2. But even a plausible cognitive theory should not assert 2 for reasons already outlined regarding emotions directed toward the past and future, irrational emotions and so on. What such a theory will assert is that a central constituent of an emotion is a cognitive judgment or a belief. In the case of pity, such a judgment (belief) would be that someone has suffered or does or will (might) suffer. A presupposition of such a judgment is that the object of the judgment has existed, exists, or will or might exist. Though perhaps not essential to cognitive theories, a plausible addition to it would assert that such judgments are causally connected to physiological changes, an accompanying phenomenology (sensations) and to motivation and action guidance. A non-cognitive theory of the emotions can take a number of different forms. One version is the James-Lange theory that emotions are sensations caused by bodily changes. But this theory has difficulty explaining why emotions involve concerns with such things as one's own safety or the suffering of others because it lacks a representational aspect. It also has difficulty explaining why emotions are open to rational assessment. A more plausible non-cognitive conception of emotion solves

these problems by adding a layer of complexity. Emotions are (or involve) the representations of the suffering of others, danger, loss and so on. But not all representations need to be conceptual, hence cognitive. There are non-conceptual representations of these things that represent because they are reliable detectors of them. (One problem here is to explain how something can be a *reliable* detector of danger, say, and yet, if we are to account for all of our irrational fears, it will misrepresent non-dangerous items as dangerous on a fairly regular basis.) Sensations of bodily changes can evolve to serve as such detectors in which case *they* are non-cognitive representations of the items they detect. So the general picture that emerges is something like this: Something causes a characteristic physiological change. This can be a cognitive judgment about a matter of concern, but often it is something else. The physiological change causes certain sensations which function as a non-conceptual representations of the matter of concern. This in turn causes certain behavioral tendencies linked to motivation or action guidance.[13]

The responses to fiction we are dealing with are in some ways continuous with more usual cases of emotional response, but in others importantly different. The most important difference between Sally's feelings and mainline emotions is the one we have emphasized: the guiding propositional attitude in Sally's case in *imagining that*. On a cognitive conception of the emotions, the typical attitude is *believing that*. But even a non-cognitive conception has an analog of belief: "embodied appraisal", the function of which is to detect actual objects of concern. In addition, on both cognitive and non-cognitive theories, emotions will characteristically be connected to behavioral tendencies linked to motivation and action guidance. Interestingly, the fact that the guiding attitude of a emotional response is *imagining that* does not by itself cut off a connection with motivational and action guiding systems typical of mainline emotions. As Gendler and Kovakovich have pointed out, when we deliberate we also imagine and respond with feeling.[14] It has been demonstrated that normally this is accompanied by the physiology characteristic of the emotions being simulated. In this case, these emotional responses are not only connected to the action guiding system (though not in the same direct way that mainline emotions are), but the accompanying physiological response is apparently essential for using reasons to guide actions.

Gendler and Kovakovich think that this shows that what we feel when deliberating are genuine emotions, and by parity of reasoning, so is what we feel when engaged in fiction. Jenefer Robinson comes to the same conclusion.[15] She advances her own version of a non-cognitive account of emotions. Emotions are processes that begin with a stimulus producing a non-cognitive "affective evaluation." This may lead later to a more cognitive evaluation and other psychological states, but the affective evaluation seems to be the hallmark of emotion

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[13] This sketch is derived from the work of Jesse Prinz in *Gut Reactions: a Perceptual Theory of the Emotions*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004 and *The Emotional Construction of Morals*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, 50-68.

[14] Gendler and Kovakovich, "Genuine Rational Fictional Emotions."

[15] Robinson. *Deeper than Reason*, 140-154.

for Robinson. At least it is the part of the process she emphasizes in her discussion of the paradox of fiction. Her point is that the same non-cognitive affective evaluation occurs in connection with the reception of fiction and from this she infers that the same emotions occur in this context as in others.

But none of these conclusions are as obvious as the authors just mentioned assume. What Gendler and Kovakovich show is that emotional responses that occur in deliberation have much in common with emotional responses to fiction. But both of the main solutions to the paradox of fiction recognize and can accommodate this fact. Those who deny that we feel full fledged pity or fear in reaction to fiction do not deny that they have much in common with those emotions. In particular, they assert that they can be physiologically indistinguishable. They would classify neither the responses to fiction nor those occurring in deliberation as true instances of pity or fear.

Regarding Robinson's approach, let us grant that the same affective evaluation occurs in responding to actual events and to fictions, although I do know whether this is actually true. (For one thing, there is no generally accepted theory of the emotions either within psychology or philosophy. For another, while Robinson claims that affective appraisals always occur, it may be that they do for primitive emotions like fear and disgust, but not for emotions like pity or indignation.) But accepting Robinson's supposition, two points can still be made. First, she never makes entirely clear what an effective evaluation actually is. Plausibly, it is identical the embodied appraisal mentioned above: a sensation of a physiological change that is a non-cognitive representation of a concern. The second more important point is that, such a sensation, as we will demonstrate below, has a somewhat different functional role when we are responding to fiction than it does in other contexts. This different functional role makes it less clear how to classify it.

First, in being dissociated from action, our responses to fiction are in this respect further removed from mainline emotions than the simulated emotions that occur during deliberation. However, as we saw early on, even mainline emotions can sometimes fail motivate and guide action. Nevertheless, responses to fiction have further interesting features that allow them to function in rather special ways. One is that even as we undergo strong emotional reactions to fictional events or characters, we can maintain distance from those events. This allows us to aesthetically appreciate the fiction in ways we could not do with emotion-inducing events that actually occur. It also enables us to reflect on these fictional events and our reactions to them in such a way as to learn from them. This could also happen with emotional responses to real events but it is much harder to do so in the moment. Finally, whether and how we respond to fiction seems much more optional than whether and how we do so in the face of real events. People have blamelessly different emotional responses to the same fictional events. Also, some people are just a lot cooler in their reception of fiction than others, and they are also blameless. But it is a failing to lack pity for the suffering of a close friend or even for strangers suffering in distant lands. Finally, we have more control (though hardly complete control) over our emotional reactions to fiction. For example, we can tell ourselves a work does not warrant a certain response and this can stop an emotional reaction that

would otherwise occur. All this suggests that, despite their similarity with typical emotional responses, such responses to fiction have a rather different functional profile than mainline emotions.

Other Emotions

So far we have focused on a single emotion: pity. Pity, like a number of emotions, is other directed. The one pitied is not the person who has the emotion but another person (except in the special case of self-pity). This is why I can pity someone in my imagination even when I don't imagine sharing a world with the person pitied. When I imagine someone suffering with sufficient vivacity, I have an emotional reaction that resembles mainline pity. There are other emotions that are subject directed. If I am afraid of an approaching storm, I'm typically afraid for me and mine. (Fear can also be other directed as when I fear for people in the path of storm that does not affect me.) There are various artistic genres that seem to evoke emotions that are subject directed like fear, and the question arises whether they can be treated in the same way that we have treated pity, or whether they need a different approach.

There are at least two quite different reasons for believing that a different approach is needed. One reason promotes skepticism about whether we feel genuine subject directed emotions like fear in connection with at least many fictions. (Neill 1993, Davies 2009) The initial point here is that, while it is straightforwardly true in the fiction that Anna suffers, this is far from being so with propositions like *the monster threatens me*. So if one approaches the paradox of fiction with a cognitive theory of emotions, and look for some *belief* about what is true in the fiction had by viewers of horror movies which might underwrite their fear, it won't be found. However, we have already argued that it is not merely beliefs about what is true in the fiction that move us to emotional responses but vivid imaginings that are needed. So we have to ask whether there are appropriate imaginings that might bring about a fear-like response.

Even when in my imagination I share a world with monsters, there are different cases to consider. If I imagine that I am being told a factual account where monsters threaten people and I am spatio-temporally distant from these events, it is plausible that I would not imagine being threatened by *those* monsters at the time and place related in the story. They don't threaten me even in my fictional game. However, I might imagine that the monsters might pose a more general threat to me. Since we share a world, I can imagine that where I am in that world, monsters could be lurking. (This resembles Lamarque's idea that Charles is afraid of being attacked by *a* ferocious slime.) It then might be fictional that I'm in danger and that I'm afraid. This may cause a feeling to well up in me in some ways like mainline cases of fear, but in some ways different in its functional role. But this feeling is not directly related to or directed toward the events narrated in the story.

It is different if I imagine I am actually witnessing the events of the story such as when I watch a horror movie. Then when the monster appears to turn toward the audience, it

would be easy to imagine it is threatening me, a member of that audience.

So there are cases where appropriate imaginings can bring about a fear-like response. However, when I leave myself out of the fictional world I am imagining, there is no place for me to imagine true the proposition that the monster threatens me. If the monster and I don't share a world in my imagination, it's just inappropriate to imagine that there is such a threat. I still might be startled when the monster suddenly appears on screen and this might produce some of the same physiological phenomena as fear.

A proponent of a noncognitive theory of emotion might claim the phenomenon just mentioned is not just fear-like in its physiology but a straightforward case of fear. "Fear can be triggered by hearing a loud noise, feeling a sudden loss of support, seeing a snake, or judging that I am in danger."[16] If any of these cause the appropriate physiological response, along with a sensation that noncognitively represents danger, we have a case of fear on a noncognitive theory. This leads to a second argument that fear should be treated differently than pity. It is well nigh impossible that a pity-like emotional response in a fictional context can be cause by anything other that a contentful psychological state, in particular, an imagining. But the case we are thinking about now is one where there is no imagining but rather an instance of being startled. What makes this possible, it might be argued, is that fear is a more primitive emotion than pity. It can occur in the absence of an appropriate cognitive content, in fictional contexts as well as elsewhere. This is why fear needs to be treated differently than pity in these contexts.[17]

Since I am neutral between cognitive and non-cognitive theories, I leave it open whether the response initiated by being startled is a fear-like one. Even if it is, it will be modulated by the context in which it occurs giving it a different functional role than in other contexts. This means one might still assert that it is fear but of a special kind, or that it is fear-like, but not strictly fear. In this instance, which one we should say really depends on the which theory of emotion is true.

There is one additional situation where I might feel something akin to fear, viz when I empathize with characters threatened by a monster. Empathy involves feeling what another feels. So If I empathize with a character who is afraid, I might feel something like fear. Empathic "fear" is not quite the same as real fear or at least standard cases of fear, since I don't believe or even imagine *myself* in danger. I imagine someone else is in danger and then put myself in their shoes or simulate their mental life. However, one characterizes what I feel

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[16] Prinz, The Emotional Construction of Morality, 63.

[17] Another way to put what is going on in the case of the startle induced response is to invoke the notion of *alief* introduced by Tamar Gendler. Alief is an automatic associated stated that typically consists of a representation, an affect, and a behavior. It is caused by a perceptual input. Being startled by the sudden appearance of a monster looming directly toward him, Charles will alieve: "dangerous creature! Help! Hide!" or some such thing, while believing there is no danger. See Tamar Szabo Gendler, "Alief and Belief," Journal of Philosophy, 510, 2008, 634-63. This seems quite different from what happens when Sally "pities" Anna which is imagination-driven, not automatic, and highly conceptual.

in this case, it is independent of my relation to the world of the fiction. Even if I don't imagine myself in any way sharing a world with the characters of the fiction, I can still empathize with them, and in some manner feel what they feel. It is especially clear with empathy that the qualifier "in some manner" is called for. Whatever it means to feel what they feel, it is not a matter of having precisely the emotion that they have.

Conclusion

There still is a reason to care about the paradox of fiction. The reason is that, in thinking about how it might be solved, we can become sensitive to different ways of responding emotionally. This allows us to distinguish mainline emotional responses from others. Once this distinction is made, it becomes less important whether we call such responses to fiction actual cases of pity or fear or not. What is important is to see that the psychological states in play in fictional contexts have a different functional role than they do in mainline contexts. It suggests that emotional reactions in yet other contexts will also vary in functional role. This sensitivity will be useful in both classifying the emotions and in understanding that what looks like the same thing can serve a variety of different functions. We wouldn't achieve the sensitivity just by denying 2. We owe it to the various approaches that deny 1.[18]

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