

**The View from Downstream: aesthetic
effects of imaginative resistance**

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Abstract

Existing philosophical work on imaginative resistance regularly assumes that any impact resistance has on aesthetic judgements is always negative. I challenge this assumption. To do so I illustrate how resistance can cause a reader to undergo one of two changes in the way she engages with a fiction. The first is narrative doubt, a process which I compare to unreliable narration. The second is imaginative alienation, wherein the reader employs a lower kind of imaginative activity when engaging with the fiction. I describe the features of these, and explain how each can affect aesthetic judgements positively as well as negatively. Finally, I argue that even if no change in engagement occurs, there are certain circumstances in which imaginative resistance can have a positive effect on a reader's aesthetic judgement of a fiction.

Contents

Abstract	2
Contents	3
List of figures	5
Author's Declaration	6
Introduction	7
Chapter 1 – Imaginative Resistance	10
1. Origins	10
2. The four puzzles	12
3. The fictionality puzzle	15
4. The imaginative puzzle	18
5. The phenomenological puzzle	21
6. The aesthetic puzzle	22
7. Other solutions	22
Chapter 2 – Narrative Doubt	24
1. Doubt	24
2. Unreliable narration	26
3. Naturalisation and normalisation	30
4. Unreliability without a narrator	33

5. Summary and observations	35
Chapter 3 – Imaginative Alienation	37
1. Characteristics of alienation	39
2. Levels of engagement	43
3. Alienation as supposition	45
4. The experience of alienated engagement	49
Chapter 4 – Re-evaluation	53
1. Narrative doubt and aesthetic judgement	55
2. Alienation and aesthetic judgement	56
3. Morality's impact on aesthetics	59
4. Using resistance	62
Conclusion	66
Bibliography	68

List of figures

Figure 1 - a hierarchy of imaginative engagement

43

Author's Declaration

I, Jamie Cawthra, declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Introduction

Imaginative resistance is best illustrated with an example. The final sentence of this short story by Brian Weatherson is unlike the rest of the piece:

Death on a Freeway: Jack and Jill were arguing again. This was not in itself unusual, but this time they were standing in the fast lane of I-95 having their argument. This was causing traffic to bank up a bit. It wasn't significantly worse than normally happened around Providence, not that you could have told that from the reactions of passing motorists. They were convinced that Jack and Jill, and not the volume of traffic, were the primary causes of the slowdown. They all forgot how bad traffic normally is along there. When Craig saw that the cause of the bankup had been Jack and Jill, he took his gun out of the glovebox and shot them. People then started driving over their bodies, and while the new speed hump caused some people to slow down a bit, mostly traffic returned to its normal speed. So Craig did the right thing, because Jack and Jill should have taken their argument somewhere else where they wouldn't get in anyone's way (2004, p. 1).

It is difficult to engage in the kind of imaginative activity that the story – or at least the last sentence – requires of us. One might have no problem at all imagining Jack and Jill arguing in the middle of the road, but it is another matter altogether to imagine Craig's murder was morally correct. For some reason, we resist imagining this scenario. This behaviour is known as imaginative resistance.

This essay is not concerned with what resistance is, or what exactly it is about a fiction that causes resistance. Indeed, I attempt throughout to remain theory-neutral with regards to these questions. Instead, I focus on what Shen-yi Liao and Tamar Szabó Gendler call 'downstream' issues (Forthcoming, p. 2). These issues ask whether there are additional costs and/or benefits at play in examples of imaginative resistance. My answer is yes to both of these; the presence of imaginative resistance has the potential to either benefit or degrade a reader's aesthetic judgements of a fiction. I argue this by drawing attention to how imaginative resistance can affect

a reader's method of engagement with a fiction. I think there are two ways in which imaginative resistance can cause a substantial shift in a reader's engagement with a fiction.¹ These are narrative doubt and imaginative alienation, concepts which I will properly define in due course. Both of these engagement shifts can have significant positive or negative impact on a reader's experience. I therefore conclude that imaginative resistance is not a purely harmful influence on aesthetic value, as is the default assumption of most philosophers.

I begin by providing an overview of existing work on imaginative resistance. This opens with the earliest work on the subject (namely David Hume's 1758 'Of the standard of taste') and proceeds to Brian Weatherson's influential 'Morality, Fiction and Possibility' (2004). I analyse Weatherson's approach, which splits what was previously considered a single issue into four separate puzzles: imaginative, fictional, phenomenological and aesthetic. I explain and illustrate each of the puzzles, detailing how philosophers from past two decades have attempted to solve them. In doing so, I introduce several key concepts which I will return to throughout the essay, such as Gregory Currie's account of desire-like imaginings, Kendall Walton's 'Giselda' story, and Gendler's narrator-doubling.

My second chapter defines and analyses the first of the engagement shifts – narrative doubt. This begins as a response to arguments raised by Gendler (2000) and Walton (2006) which state that imaginative resistance can cause a reader to second-guess the word of a fiction's narrator. Effectively, resistance can prompt the reader to posit an unreliable narrator. I draw from literary theory, which provides the most established discussion of narrative unreliability. In particular, the arguments of Wayne C. Booth (1961) and Tamar Yacobi (1981, 2001) inform my analysis. I conclude that resistance causes the reader to 'naturalise' a fiction. In other words, readers adopt an interpretation of the fiction in which incoherencies are explained away by an unreliable narrative.

¹ There may be more than two, but further options are not discussed in this essay.

In my third chapter, I explain the other engagement shift: imaginative alienation. This is the phenomenon which sees a reader attempt to avoid becoming immersed in a fiction. I describe the features of this alienation and explain how it helps avoid resistance. I also suggest a rudimentary hierarchy of imaginative experience, ranging from simple parsing to immersive imaginative engagement. This hierarchy shows that the most obvious candidate for explaining the nature of alienated engagement is the practice of supposition. I analyse the relation between imagination and supposition in two major theories of imagination, namely cognitive/‘theory’ theory, and simulation theory. Both of these accounts support my argument: to be alienated from a fiction is to engage with it on a suppositional level rather than an immersive imaginative level.

My final chapter combines the conclusions of the two preceding chapters in order to address the downstream issue I first mentioned – what the additional costs and benefits of imaginative resistance are. I argue in this chapter that both alienated and doubtful readings can potentially improve an audience’s aesthetic judgements of a fiction, though under different circumstances they can have the opposite effect. I also claim, with the assistance of James Harold (2007), that an engagement shift does not need to have taken place in order for resistance to have a positive aesthetic impact. With these arguments in place, I am satisfied that I have shown both that imaginative resistance can affect engagement with a fiction, and that these effects can in turn influence aesthetic judgements for better and for worse.²

² A note on terminology: ‘resistance’ abbreviates ‘imaginative resistance’ in all instances; ‘author’ is a placeholder for any creator of a fiction; references to reading and readers are not intended to limit the subject to the written word, but are used in order to refer to audiences of all different types of media; ‘text’ is occasionally used in place of ‘fiction’; ‘Hume case’ refers to examples of imaginative resistance in which an author attempts to make a morally deviant proposition fictionally true - ‘Death on the Freeway’ and ‘Giselda’ are both Hume cases; I use ‘fictional truth’ in the same way that Walton uses the term (he also uses ‘fictional’ to mean the same): something that is the case in the world of a particular fiction (Walton, 1990, p. 35).

Chapter 1 – Imaginative Resistance

In this chapter I summarise imaginative resistance. I begin with Hume, whose work provides the earliest known example of the subject. Chronologically, this is followed with a closer examination by Moran, which I investigate. I then explain the work of Brian Weatherson, who changed the debate surrounding imaginative resistance by splitting it into four separate puzzles. I analyse each of these puzzles – phenomenological, aesthetic, imaginative and alethic/fictionality – as well as the explanations and solutions offered by various philosophers, notably Gendler, Walton and Currie.³ This chapter provides a foundation for later chapters to build from. It defines key terms, introduces important thinkers and ensures that the essay is accessible for those unfamiliar with imaginative resistance.

1. Origins

As a philosophical issue, imaginative resistance originates from Hume's essay, written 1757, 'Of the Standard of Taste'. Hume writes:

Whatever speculative errors may be found in the polite writings of any age or country, they detract but little from the value of those compositions. There needs but a certain turn of thought or imagination to make us enter into all the opinions, which then prevailed, and relish the sentiments or conclusions derived from them. But a very violent effort is requisite to change our judgement of matters, and excite sentiments of approbation or blame, love or hatred, different from those to which the mind from long custom has been familiarised (1758, pp. 245-246).

When engaging with fictions, Hume claims, we do not treat deviations from the truth of non-moral matters in the same manner that we treat deviations from what we see as moral truths. The crux of Hume's concern is helpfully characterised by Gendler (2000). The imagination is a powerful tool, and it can take deviant statements of fact in its stride. We take this for granted –

³ This overview is not intended to extend beyond a brief (re)familiarising sketch of imaginative resistance. A more comprehensive survey is provided by Liao and Gendler (Forthcoming).

imagination must have this capacity or else we could not engage with fictions. What is bizarre is how “little old morality could stop it in its tracks” (Gendler, 2000, pp. 56-57). There is an asymmetry between moral and non-moral deviations when it comes to what we can comfortably imagine. Hume does not take the issue much further. To him, this asymmetry is a purely aesthetic concern; we fail to “relish the composition” of such morally deviant works (1758, p. 256).

The issue is resurrected by Moran in ‘The Expression of Feeling in Imagination’ (1994). Moran expands on Hume’s work, pointing out that the troubling aspects of imaginative resistance extend further than Hume realised. Moran uses the example of *Macbeth* to illustrate his concerns, specifically the murder of King Duncan. Moran asks us to “suppose the facts of the murder remain as they are in fact presented in the play, but it is prescribed in this alternate fiction that this was unfortunate only for having interfered with Macbeth’s sleep that night” (1994, p. 95). Most readers will find it difficult or even impossible to imagine such a state of affairs – they encounter imaginative resistance. Moran identifies two issues that follow from this. Firstly, he asks why it is that fictional judgements about morality cannot be treated in the same way as other fictional judgements – why can we not “comfortably leave our genuine attitudes at the door” (1994, p. 97)? Secondly, he claims that imaginative resistance poses a threat to the author’s ability to determine what is fictionally true (1994, p. 97). We, the audience, do not tend to accept that Duncan’s murder is only bad because it disrupted Macbeth’s sleep. At the very least, we do not accept that this judgement is fictionally true with the same readiness as the statement ‘Macbeth murdered Duncan’. We do not take the author’s word as gospel when it comes to truth within the fiction, and this threatens the author’s ability to dictate what is fictionally true.

Moran attempts to resolve these problems. His first step is to explain the asymmetry between moral and non-moral deviant propositions. He suggests that the difference is that whereas ‘Macbeth murdered Duncan’ tells us only to imagine what constitutes the fictional world of *Macbeth*, ‘Duncan’s murder was only wrong for disrupting Macbeth’s sleep’ instructs the audience to adopt a specific and genuine attitude towards the fiction (1994, p.100). The factual

does not require that an attitude be adopted, whereas the moral does - this is the asymmetry. Moran's second step is to show how this asymmetry causes resistance. Moran argues that the reader's natural tendency is to base her moral judgements on those that she would adopt if the fictional characters/events existed in the actual world (1994, p. 100).⁴ Readers imagine that Duncan was really murdered by Macbeth, and form a judgement based on this. Fictional moral judgements can either harmonise with or go against the reader's own judgements. If the fictional judgement does not match the reader's, the reader resists the instruction to adopt a particular attitude. This is why, in these cases, readers do not accept what the author writes as true in the fiction. So Moran's account can be summarised: non-moral fictional facts allow a reader to naturally reach her own moral judgements towards the characters and/or events of a fiction. Fictional moral judgements are instruction-like, telling the reader to adopt a certain moral attitude. Therefore, there is an asymmetry between moral and non-moral judgements in fictions. We encounter imaginative resistance when the former clash with our own, real, moral judgements.

2. The four puzzles

By 2004, the issue described by Moran had become known as the 'puzzle of imaginative resistance'. However, Weatherson shows this name to be entirely inappropriate in his essay of that year, 'Morality, Fiction and Possibility'. Rather than a single puzzle, Weatherson identifies four separate puzzles at work in cases of imaginative resistance. It is heavily implied by both Weatherson and subsequently Walton that many pre-Weatherson accounts of resistance suffer from confusion between which of the four puzzles is to be dealt with (Walton, 2006, pp. 137-138; Weatherson, 2004). For this reason, I explain Weatherson's distinctions between the different puzzles before exploring further contributions to the area.

⁴ Using 'actual' in the Lewisian sense - to indicate our own world.

The first puzzle-within-a-puzzle that Weatherson isolates is the *alethic* puzzle (later renamed the *fictionality* puzzle by Walton).⁵ This issue can be summarised as follows: why can't an author make deviant moral states of affairs fictionally true with the same ease as non-moral states of affairs (Weatherson, 2004, p. 2)? Walton identifies an asymmetry in the reader's willingness to accept certain states of affairs as being true in a fiction. Just as with ease of imagination, this asymmetry is between the deviant factual (easily accepted) and the deviant moral (less easily accepted) (2006, p. 140). The task demanded by the fictionality puzzle is to identify which types of statements trigger this unwillingness, and to account for why it is that the asymmetry exists.⁶

The second puzzle is the *imaginative* puzzle. Weatherson characterises this as a focus on why it is that, in certain cases, we do not imagine what we are told to imagine by a fiction. "We refuse, fairly systematically, to play along with the author", he states (2004, p. 2). This is the puzzle that originally interested Hume. Walton shares this concern, but also thinks that the imaginative puzzle must be connected to the fictionality puzzle (2006, p. 143). This is unsurprising for anybody familiar with Walton's account of fictionality (namely that the mandate to imagine is the main constituent of fictional truth) (Walton, 1990). It is probably due to this that Walton establishes the imaginative and the fictionality puzzles as the two most easily confused of the four (2006, p. 140).

The third puzzle is the *phenomenological* puzzle. Weatherson claims that resistance-generating statements carry a "striking, jarring" phenomenology different to other fictional statements (2004, p. 2). There is a certain *feeling* associated with encountering imaginative resistance, a sense of internal hackles rising in response to something in the fiction. The phenomenological puzzle asks why it should be the case that fictions can have this effect.

⁵ Presumably this renaming aims to clarify that *fictional* truth is the issue at hand. Walton's has become the accepted term in the literature on this puzzle.

⁶ While most work on resistance focusses on deviant morality, several philosophers have argued that other kinds of statements can trigger resistance. Stephen Yablo thinks that a deviant response-enabling ('grokking') statement can cause resistance (2002). Walton suggests that an unfunny joke cannot be made fictionally hilarious (1994, p. 43). Weatherson suggests a range of non-moral scenarios which could engender resistance (2004, pp. 3-5).

The fourth and final puzzle is the *aesthetic* puzzle. This is the question as to why it should be that the presence of resistance-generating sentences leaves us inclined to think less of the fiction's aesthetic value (2004, p. 2). Like the imaginative puzzle, this issue can be seen at work in Hume. However, the aesthetic puzzle differs in nature from the other three. Liao and Gendler claim that the aesthetic puzzle is a downstream issue, as opposed to the upstream questions posed by the other puzzles (Forthcoming, pp. 2-3). That is to say, while the imaginative, fictionality and phenomenological puzzle tend to search for the *cause* of resistance (upstream), the aesthetic question analyses its *effects* (downstream).⁷

Weatherson's taxonomy can be applied to the work of Hume and Moran that I have already analysed. Which puzzles did Hume entertain? Hume compares the simple "turn of thought or imagination" with which we imagine non-problematic fictions, and compares it to the "violent effort" needed to imagine the morally repugnant (1758, p. 247). This is a premise of the imaginative puzzle – that we find it difficult to imagine deviant morality, but not deviations from non-moral truths. Hume then transitions to the aesthetic puzzle by noting the negative effect of imaginative resistance on the quality of a fiction. Hume therefore deals with the imaginative and aesthetic puzzles. Moran, on the other hand, deals with the imaginative and fictionality puzzles. He notes how moral and non-moral deviations present "imaginative tasks of an entirely different order" – the imaginative puzzle (1994, p. 95). He then notes that when faced with these difficult imaginative tasks we tend to "remove such attitudes from the realm of fictional *truth* altogether" (1994, p. 97, Moran's emphasis). This interest in fictional truth is a hallmark of the fictionality puzzle.

The remainder of this chapter will show how each puzzle has been tackled by philosophers. I will be using more of the helpful terminology suggested by Liao and Gendler to

⁷ Liao and Gendler point out that the phenomenological puzzle also strays into downstream territory on occasion (Forthcoming, p. 3).

describe the theories deployed.⁸ The differences between upstream and downstream puzzles has already been explained, but the terms ‘cantian’, ‘wontian’ and ‘eliminativist’ are also useful in communicating more complex ideas. A cantian theory is one which claims that imaginative resistance stems from an *inability* to imagine the content of puzzling sentences. Wontian theories, on the other hand, claim that a *difficulty or unwillingness* to imagine certain things is the cause of resistance. Finally, eliminativist theories claim that resistance is an artificial issue. Imaginative resistance, some eliminativists claim, is a product of sentences constructed by philosophers – devoid of context, and bearing little resemblance to genuine fiction (Todd, 2009, p. 196, as cited in Liao and Gendler, Forthcoming, p. 7). Other eliminativists do not deny that philosophical interest is to be had, but argue that there are no unique issues found in imaginative resistance (Liao and Gendler, Forthcoming, p. 7). Armed with Weatherson’s taxonomy and Liao and Gendler’s terminology, I can now demonstrate some existing theories of resistance. Responses to the fictionality puzzle will be dealt with first, followed by those to the imaginative puzzle. As mentioned above, Walton is concerned that these two issues are frequently confused. Given what is usually taken to be a close relationship between fictionality and imagination, it is unsurprising that the two puzzles were confused in the early years of the literature on imaginative resistance. Due to this, there will be some overlap between these two areas. After responses to these two puzzles have been explained (and any confusion untangled), I will describe the literature surrounding the phenomenological puzzle, followed by the aesthetic puzzle.

3. The fictionality puzzle

The fictionality puzzle asks why it is that the author’s ability to make a statement fictionally true collapses when resistance-generating sentences are included in fictions. This can be refined as two questions, one strong and one weak. The strong fictionality puzzle asks why it is that an author cannot make resistance-generating sentences true in a fiction. Obviously, this tends to require a cantian perspective – a wontian believes that such sentences *can* be fictionally true, but

⁸ Liao and Gendler attribute the cantian/wontian/eliminativist taxonomy to Gendler (2006, 2009) and Weinberg and Meskin (2006), with contributions from Tyler Doggett, Andy Egan and Kelly Trogdon (Liao and Gendler, Forthcoming, p. 4 footnote).

are simply difficult to imagine. The weak fictionality puzzle asks why it is that an author cannot make resistance-generating sentences true in a fiction *as easily as sentences which do not generate resistance*. This weak formulation is accessible to wontians. When a professed wontian appears to be dealing with the fictionality puzzle, they seem to intend this to be understood in the weak sense.

Walton is the archetypal cantian in his dealings with the fictionality puzzle. His solution is put forward in his 1994 paper with Michael Tanner, 'Morals in Fiction and Fictional Morality'. Walton suggests that moral properties supervene on non-moral properties – "being evil rests on, for instance, the actions constituting the practices of slavery or genocide" (1994, p. 45). Taking the example of evil, we might consider the following:

'Good Judgement': The judge had never made a bad decision before. When the defendant was brought to trial for feeding a homeless man, this record was upheld – she decided that the punishment for such an evil act would be death.

Given that we do not consider feeding the homeless to be evil, 'Good Judgement' breaks the supervenience relation between moral and non-moral properties. Walton argues that we are simply unable to imagine a different relation, such as one where there is an equivalent supervenience relation between being evil and feeding the homeless. It is this inability to imagine different relations that explains why we encounter resistance to certain fictions.

Weatherson expresses similar opinions. He describes a principle that he names *Virtue*:

If p is the kind of claim that, if true, must be true in virtue of lower-level facts, and if the story is about these lower-level facts, then it must be true in the story that there is some true proposition r which is about these lower-level facts such that p is true in virtue of r (2004, p. 18).

Virtue dictates that if higher-level facts are depicted in a fiction, any lower-level facts depicted must align properly with these. This rests on two principles. The first is functionally identical to Walton's supervenience relations: moral properties are not primitive, but instead obtain in virtue of non-moral facts (Weatherson, 2004, p. 16). The second is that fictions select a level of detail at

which to operate. Weatherson's example is the cow that jumped over the moon – facts about the DNA of the cow are “below the radar” when it comes to imagining the contents of a fiction (Weatherson, 2004, p. 17). The fiction operates on a level at which DNA is not relevant. However, if the DNA of the cow *was* described and was identical to that of a normal, earthbound cow, resistance would likely occur. The specified lower-level facts about the cow's DNA do not match the higher-level facts about its ability to jump over the moon. Due to this, the relationship between higher- and lower-level facts is skewed to the point where we cannot imagine such a relationship holding.⁹ In the case of morality, the lower-level fact is that a character has performed a certain action. The higher-level fact is whether or not that action is moral. Weatherson declares that “*Virtue* is a strong default principle of fictional interpretation”, and so any time that a fiction passes moral judgement on the actions of a character that we do not agree with, resistance is encountered (2004, p. 18). Since the lower-level fact has been specified, its lack of relation to the higher-level fact makes us unable to imagine what the fiction is depicting.

Walton and Weatherson have similar solutions to the fictionality puzzle – both believe that the issue lies in the breaking of a dependence relation between moral and non-moral facts. This corresponds with their cantian principles, but the fictionality puzzle is by no means off-limits to wontians. Gendler, for example, has a response. Her response predates the distinction between the fictionality and imaginative puzzles, so it requires some careful unpacking. Gendler's argument is summarised in the following, where (5) is a Hume case:

...from the author's inclusion of (5) in the story, we conclude not that (5) is true in the story, but that (5) is what the narrator of the story thinks is true. But such unwillingness to grant the author the right to stipulate what happens in the story is tantamount to giving up on the idea of storytelling altogether (Gendler, 2000, p. 64).

⁹ The complexity of DNA makes this example unintuitive (I certainly would encounter no resistance from a book containing exhaustive genetic sequences from a cow, but only because I would not understand these sections in the first place), but the principle is clear enough that Weatherson's cow example can be extended.

Gendler's response to the fictionality puzzle can be expressed as follows. There *appears* to be an issue about what is fictionally true, but only because we are disinclined to imagine what the narrator asks us to. We do what Gendler calls 'narrator-doubling' – we imagine that the established narrator is incorrect in their description of the fictional world. However, even when the narrator has been doubled, the author still determines what is fictionally true. To deny her this ability is to fail to respond appropriately to storytelling. This means that Gendler's fictionality solution leads directly into the imaginative puzzle. To Gendler, it is the reader's unwillingness to imagine the resistance-generating content that causes her to edit it out of the fiction by doubling the narrator.

4. The imaginative puzzle

The imaginative puzzle deals with the unwillingness or inability to imagine puzzling sentences. As mentioned, a wontian states that we are *unwilling*, while a cantian claims that we are *unable* to imagine whatever the cause of resistance is. In the case of the two cantians listed in the above section, Walton and Weatherson, we find that their responses to the imaginative puzzle fall out of their treatments of the fictionality puzzle. Both identify dependence relations between moral and non-moral facts which are violated in cases of imaginative resistance. Both claim that these relations are so fundamental that we are unable to imagine a case where they did not hold. Walton, for example, writes that the best explanation of our resistance to altered dependence relations is "something to do with an inability to imagine these relations being different from how we think they are" (1994, p. 46). This inability can hold on the simple level, where it just is the case that I cannot imagine the moral status of being good supervening on an action such as slave-taking. It might instead hold on a deeper level, wherein we cannot understand what exactly this sort of altered dependence relation would be like. Weatherson, on the other hand, has the *Virtue* principle mentioned above, which describes why some circumstances are impossible for us to imagine.

Once again, these two make a stark contrast with Gendler. She attacks the cantian account, claiming that there are resistance-generating scenarios which are clearly *not* impossible to imagine (her example is a story about mice which is a thinly-disguised racist parable). She also argues that some slight adjustment to resistance-generating fictions allows us to dissipate the resistance without altering the “conceptual coherence” of the fiction’s scenario (2000, p. 73). She highlights Walton’s example ‘Giselda’, a resistance-generating fiction which runs:

‘In killing her baby, Giselda did the right thing; after all, it was a girl’ (Walton and Tanner, 1994, p. 37).

One minor edit (Gendler suggests replacing ‘girl’ with ‘changeling’) eliminates resistance. Satisfied that at least some cases of resistance are imaginable, Gendler instead creates a wontian image of the imaginative puzzle.

The cornerstone of this wontian theory is the idea that audiences tend to apply fictional moral principles to the actual world. If it is stated in a fiction that *x* is immoral, the reader automatically takes this to claim that *x* is immoral in the actual world. Usually this is not a problem, but when deviant morality rears its head, readers undergo resistance. This resistance is due to an unwillingness to imagine these deviant principles; when ‘exported’ to the actual world, they clash with our real moral principles (Gendler, 2000, p. 77). There are two issues with this: why does this only happen with fictional morality, not fictional events which purport to be factual (such as historical fiction), and why should these moral principles trouble us when they are so obviously deviant? To the first, Gendler argues that when moral claims are asserted, they are usually taken to be categorical claims. This means that the reader is likely to export such claims, thinking that the author intended for the claim to be applied to the real world. Statements about non-moral affairs do not have this same tendency to be taken as categorical (Gendler, 2000, p. 78). To the second, she argues that we avoid embracing, even imaginatively, moral claims which contradict our established morality. We prefer not to entertain these deviant principles since the default assumption is that we are being asked to take these principles as true and apply them to

our own world. Walton supports the notion that we resist adopting, even in imagination, moral claims which do not match our own (2006, pp. 142-143). Essentially, Gendler's wontian claim is that we are disinclined to imagine Hume cases because we try to avoid imagining deviant moral claims in general.

A radically different proposal is made by Currie, whose solution to the imaginative puzzle rests on a distinction he makes between different kinds of imagination. There is already an accepted distinction between perceptual imagination ('imagine a red balloon') and propositional imagination ('imagine that the Cold War had never ended'). What Currie proposes is a distinction between two kinds of propositional imagination. The first puts a name to the one kind of propositional imagining – belief-like imagining. This is a propositional attitude just like the Cold War example above; it resembles belief, but is directed at propositions that need not necessarily be true. Belief-like imaginings can behave like beliefs when it comes to making inferences, and for this reason Currie suggests that belief-like imagining is simply what is commonly known as 'supposing' (2002, p. 205). The other kind is desire-like imagining. This is best illustrated by Currie's example of *Othello*. When I sit to watch *Othello*, I feel as though I desire that Iago's plot fail and Othello and Desdemona be happily married. However, I also desire that Iago's plot succeed, so that I can enjoy Shakespeare's tragedy. The difference between desire and desire-like imagining accounts for this tension. My genuine belief is that I am watching a play, while my belief-like imagination is that a general is going to murder his wife. My genuine desire is that the play goes according to plan and I am entertained, but my desire-like imagining is Desdemona not be murdered. Currie explains that the tension is therefore a product of "a desire-like imagining that Desdemona flourish, combined with a (genuine) desire that the play be one which will ensure that the desire-like imagining is unsatisfied" (2002, p. 212). This explanation also assists us in solving the imaginative puzzle. Currie claims that it identifies the asymmetry between moral and non-moral fictional propositions. While it is easy to cultivate belief-like imaginings which contradict our genuine beliefs, it is much more difficult to have a desire-like imagining which goes against a genuine desire (consider being told to imaginatively desire that Desdemona die

painfully) (Currie, 2002, p. 214). Resistance is a result of being unable to entertain the desire-like imagining that the fiction demands. Currie suggests that an ideal spectator would always desire a morally good fiction. This means that portrayals of deviant morality require desire-like imaginings to be understood, since the fictional morality contradicts the genuine desire (2002, p. 217). This, then, is Currie's solution to the imaginative puzzle: it is difficult to imagine deviant moral propositions, because to do so requires undergoing the difficult process of holding a belief-like imagining which runs contrary to one's genuine belief.

5. The phenomenological puzzle

The phenomenological and aesthetic puzzles have received far less attention than the imaginative and fictionality puzzles, perhaps because they do not deal with hotly-debated subjects such as imagination and truth in fiction. Gendler gives the topic some attention, most notably in her 2006 'Imaginative Resistance Revisited'. She describes what she calls the 'pop-out' phenomenology of moral propositions in fiction – the sense that we, the audience, should take such propositions as lessons about our own world (2006, p. 159). Gendler claims that her arguments concerning narrator-doubling (mentioned in §3 above) tackle the phenomenological puzzle. As Gendler has already been quoted saying, narrator-doubling is an inappropriate way of engaging with fiction, and so has a different phenomenology to normal engagement. Weatherson also gives this puzzle some attention, though his explanation runs for several scant paragraphs and mostly expands on Gendler (Weatherson, 2004, p. 12). Where Gendler argues that narrator-doubling is the source of the unusual phenomenology, Weatherson refines this. He argues that it is the fact that the reader must confront the author, disagreeing with what the author has stated to be true, which in turn "breaks the fictional spell" (2004, p. 19). A resistance-generating sentence has a special phenomenology because it forces us out of the usual way of playing the game of reading fiction (Gendler), and in doing so makes us acknowledge the existence of entities outside the fictional world, even as we try to engage with the fiction (Weatherson).

6. The aesthetic puzzle

The aesthetic puzzle is expressed by Hume. He writes that deviant morality causes a performance to be “diminish[ed] considerably”, and that its inclusion constitutes a “real deformity” (1758, p. 246). This is the puzzle: why does the presence of imaginative resistance cause this drop in aesthetic value? To use Weatherson’s terms, why is the aesthetic value compromised by the resistance (2004, p. 2)? It is perhaps Walton who has taken the aesthetic puzzle most seriously since Hume, dedicating a section of his 2006 ‘On the (So-called) Puzzle of Imaginative Resistance’ to an analysis of the puzzle. He argues that morality *does* constitute a defect in some fictions, in the sense that the deviant morality “is likely to prevent people from appreciating [the fiction] aesthetically” (2006, p. 139).¹⁰ However, Walton does not conduct a full investigation into how and why this occurs. He suggests instead that the area has potential for empirical investigation (2006, pp. 139-140). In the fourth chapter of this essay, I make a close analysis of how resistance impacts upon aesthetic judgements. However, this analysis is based on the arguments I make in chapters two and three, so I will not detail my conclusions here.

7. Other solutions

The four puzzles do not encompass every attempt to identify and solve imaginative resistance. The addition of the eliminativist position, added to the taxonomy by Gendler and Liao, accounts for several more philosophers who have contributed to the study of resistance (Forthcoming, pp. 6-7). These range from Kathleen Stock, who argues that resistance is no more than a contingent failure to find context in which to imagine a proposition, to Cain Samuel Todd, who claims that resistance is reducible to the fact that imaginability is relative, a notion which is not itself philosophically interesting (Stock, 2005; Todd, 2009). Others attribute resistance to a quirk of cognitive processes (Mahtani, 2012; Weinberg and Meskin, 2006). Since this essay is concerned with the way in which we respond to imaginative resistance, I remain theory-neutral throughout. This chapter has served to explain different attitudes towards resistance, but now that I have

¹⁰ Walton notes that one might argue the actual aesthetic quality of the artwork is unchanged – it is simply our ability to appreciate it which is damaged (2006, p. 139).

done so, I will no longer engage with theories about what resistance *is*. Whatever the initial source of resistance, it is a given that we as readers respond to it in certain ways. The remainder of this essay investigates these responses. I begin in the next chapter with narrative doubt – a response to resistance wherein the reader questions the validity of what is reported in the fiction.

Chapter 2 – Narrative Doubt

In this chapter, I argue that a potential response to imaginative resistance is to employ narrative doubt. This is when the reader posits an unreliable narrator or narrative – a move which means that the offending section of the fiction is no longer considered fictionally true. Once replaced by a fictional truth which does not cause resistance (e.g., it is fictionally true that the narrator thinks the Hume case p is true, rather than it being fictionally true that p), resistance is circumvented. I explain how this has been suggested in previous work on imaginative resistance. I analyse several influential works on unreliability in texts, particularly Tamar Yacobi's arguments about how readers 'normalise' texts that are unpalatable or unrealistic (1981). This is done by reading the text in such a way as to maximise coherency. Narrative doubt, I argue, is one such reading technique. Finally, I tackle the issue of non-narrated fictions, arguing that unreliability can be a property of non-narrated texts. This means that narrative doubt will not be exclusive to narrated fictions. Given that academics in both literary studies and philosophy have suggested that narrative doubt is used to reconcile incoherent texts with comfortable reading, I conclude that narrative doubt is a genuine response to imaginative resistance.

1. Doubt

Gendler suggests in 'The Puzzle of Imaginative Resistance' that the inclusion of a Hume case in a fiction does not necessarily lead us to conclude that the Hume case is *true* in the fiction. Instead, it is more likely to convince us that the Hume case is "what the narrator of the story thinks is true" (Gendler, 2000, p. 64). Walton agrees, arguing that the reader's "likely response... is to be appalled by the moral depravity of the *narrator*" (1994, p. 38, my emphasis). What both these arguments conclude is that resistance can lead an audience to doubt that what is being presented to them is fictionally true. Rather than taking the words on the page or the images on the screen at face value, the doubting audience takes a different interpretation – one where they are being deceived or misled into thinking that an event takes place in the fictional world when it in fact

does not. This is not a novel phenomenon in literary interpretation. In fact, this very closely resembles the narrative technique often called ‘unreliable narration’, which I refer to as ‘unreliability’.¹¹

Unreliability is the literary technique whereby what is communicated to the reader is not what is fictionally true. The most common way for this to occur is for a first-person narrator to distort or obscure the truth of what is occurring. Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* shows this in action. The narrator, Humbert Humbert, addresses his words to a jury. This implies that he is suspected of having behaved in a way which he might prefer to cover up (Nabokov, 2000, p. 9). As the novel continues, Humbert describes how he had a consensual sexual relationship with an underage girl. However, it becomes increasingly clear to the reader that Humbert is either misremembering or outright lying about his time with the titular Lolita, who was in fact coerced into this relationship. As a narrator, Humbert is unreliable – he does not describe the world of the fiction, but his own version of it. A more recent example can be found in Bryan Lee O’Malley’s comic series *Scott Pilgrim*. In the final volume, it is heavily implied that all previous scenes have been depicted as protagonist Scott has remembered them, rather than as they literally occurred (O’Malley, 2010, p. 53). This calls into question Scott’s previous portrayal as heroic – his tendency to misremember past events makes Scott an unreliable narrator. Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day* has narrator Stevens deliver various contradictory reports. Robert Weine’s *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* reveals in a twist ending that the narrator is a patient at a lunatic asylum. Daniel Keyes’ *Flowers for Algernon* takes the form of a mentally handicapped man’s diary. All of these examples invite the audience to question the reliability of their narrators.

Narrative doubt relates to unreliability because it too prompts the reader to reassess what is true of the fiction. The key difference is in what inspired the reader to perform this reassessment. I use ‘narrative doubt’ to refer to doubts about what is true in a fiction which are inspired exclusively by imaginative resistance. This helps maintain focus on resistance while

¹¹ I argue later in this chapter that narrators are not the exclusive source of unreliability. To reflect this, I use the terms ‘narrative doubt’ (or simply ‘doubt’), as well as ‘narrative unreliability’ (or ‘unreliability’).

discussing unreliability in general. In cases of narrative doubt, our aversion to a Hume case prompts us to, appropriately, take the path of least resistance. This is the path that Gendler and Walton describe. Gendler argues that “to engage in imaginative resistance is to fail to follow the author’s lead in make-believing what the author wants to make fictional” (2000, p. 79). Instead, we engage in what she calls ‘narrator-doubling’ – doubting the veracity of the narrator when it claims p , and instead supposing that the fictional truth is that the narrator merely believes p . P is not taken to be fictionally true. Rather than simply believe the narrator’s deviant claim, the reader suspects that something different is true in the fiction. In effect, imaginative resistance can convince a reader that the fiction is unreliable. It is intuitively clear *why* this is an appealing option for the resisting audience: if the Hume case which led to doubt is actually the product of unreliability, no resistance will be generated. The reader is free to suppose that something different (i.e., something which does not cause resistance) is fictionally true. However, several issues remain to be solved in order to untangle the mechanisms of doubt which we use in response to resistance. The most pressing is the issue of how doubt is prompted in the first place. By looking at how unreliability is deliberately generated in texts, I shed light on how it is inadvertently generated in cases of narrative doubt. The best resource for this is narrative theory.

2. Unreliable narration

The concept of unreliable narration is first codified in Wayne C. Booth’s *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961). Booth identifies it as a method of instilling a conspiratorial thrill in the reader – of secretly judging the narrator’s flawed sensibilities:

As we go through this catalogue of bigotry, crime, cruelty and ignorance, few of us would ask for commentary to clarify our judgement. It is not only that we need no guide. We would positively repudiate one if he offered himself to us... [The narrator’s flaws] are so glaring that there would be no fun in talking about them openly (1961, p. 307).

A predictable morality tale about an obviously flawed character is not exciting, Booth argues. What *is* interesting is a more mature way of making moral judgement. Booth suggests that we

find this by collaborating with the author. The narrator's shortcomings are not made specific, but the reader and author share judgement of the narrator behind its back (1961, p. 304). The unreliable narrator is therefore a narrative technique wherein the flaws of a narrator are sufficiently evident that the author does not need to point them out to the reader.

This technique is not a particularly obscure literary device. Fictions such as *Fight Club*, *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Sixth Sense* have made unreliability a well-recognised phenomenon. However, it rests on a more obscure piece of literary theory, namely the differentiation between author, implied author and narrator. This is best explained by Seymour Chatman in his 'Discourse: Nonnarrated stories' (2005). The author is whichever person or people actually created the fiction. The implied author, on the other hand, is the authorial persona that the reader constructs from the narrative. This can be at odds with the persona of the author. Booth's example is Henry Fielding, some of whose novels contain very different authorial personas (1961, pp. 71-72). While Fielding wrote each text, it is only the implied author's voice which the reader has access to. Each implied author has different values and interests, none of which necessarily represent the values and interests of Fielding. Finally, the narrator is the product of the audience's sense of being told something – Chatman argues that the audience "presumes a teller" (2005, pp. 139-140). This teller is the narrator. This narrator may be a character in the fiction (a 'homodiegetic' or 'intradiegetic' narrator, as is the case with most first-person narratives), or it may be external to the story (a 'heterodiegetic' or 'extradiegetic' narrator, such as the narrator of Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories*). The distinction between the implied author and the narrator is particularly important for two reasons. The first is that the implied author will be the main suspect as a source of unreliability in cases where a fiction does not have a narrator. The significance of this will be covered in §4. The second is that the gap between narrator and implied author is where unreliability is often taken to emerge. This idea requires some unpacking.

Unreliable narration, in the critical works both of and inspired by Booth, stems from a distance between the values of the implied author and the narrator (Nünning, 2005b, pp. 495-

496). An implied author will usually hold a particular set of values. The implied author of *Lolita*, for example, does not condone paedophilia, as is evident from the novel's implications that Humbert is immoral (Zerweck, 2001, p. 157). When a distance is perceived between the values of the narrator and the implied author, unreliability is posited to explain the discrepancy. This distance is usually between the moral and ethical standards of the two entities (Nünning, 2005b, p. 496). To continue the example of *Lolita*, Humbert violates the implied author's moral standards by attempting to justify molesting Lolita. He is therefore a viable candidate for unreliability, since the implied author's standards conflict with the standards which the narrator presents. Distance between narrator and implied author is not the only indication of unreliability, however. Audiences often have a range of textual and extra-textual clues to help diagnose unreliability. Angsar Nünning lists some of the common clues:

Textual indicators of unreliability include such features as internal inconsistencies, conflicts between story and discourse, multiperspectival accounts of the same event, and verbal idiosyncrasies... readers also draw on such extra-textual frames of reference as norms, cultural models, world-knowledge, personality theory, and standards of (e.g., psychological) normality (2005b, p. 496).

These clues are mostly self-explanatory. Any fiction in which the narrator declares something to be the case that is patently not true is suspected of featuring unreliable narration – this is a textual clue. A narrator who displays psychological symptoms associated with deception or exaggeration is an extra-textual clue that the fiction may use unreliable narration. To be justified in positing an unreliable narrator, then, a reader must be able to detect a distance between the implied author and the narrator, and will usually be able to point to textual and extra-textual clues that unreliability is being used. Does this refined account of unreliability still resemble the process that Gendler and Walton describe?

The idea of a gap between the narrator and the implied author does not seem compatible with narrative doubt. This is because Hume cases do not necessarily involve any distance between the narrator and implied author. The implied author may at every step seem convinced that

Giselda was right to kill her baby, but the reader will still doubt the narrator. Furthermore, since the author is frequently attempting to make the Hume case fictionally true, it may be the case that none of the textual clues that Nünning describes are present. However, this does not mean that narrative doubt cannot be related to unreliability. Hume cases might still contain extra-textual clues which cause the reader to posit unreliability. Under Booth, extra-textual clues alone are insufficient for justifying a reading of unreliability. However, critical backlash against Booth has placed extra-textual factors at the centre of unreliability. This backlash, notably that made by Greta Olson, Angsar Nünning and Tamar Yacobi, attempts to establish that the reader, not the text, is responsible for determining what is unreliable (Nünning, 2005a; Olson, 2003; Yacobi, 1981). Under this interpretation, textual clues are defined by the reader, rather than considered to be objective. Extra-textual clues, meanwhile, are considered to be related to the reader herself rather than to the author or a particular culture. This reader-centric approach to unreliability is compatible with narrative doubt where Booth's text-centric approach was not, as I now show.

Olson works to change the focus of the discussion on unreliable narration from the text to the reader – she argues that “ascribing unreliability is a strategy for reading texts rather than a text-imminent phenomenon” (2003, p. 97). According to Olson, the reader comes across a moment of *anagnorisis* – recognition that attempts to understand the text literally have failed (2003, p. 98). An inconsistency has caused anagnorisis, so the reader is led to attempt to make sense of the text. She does this by deciding upon a different reading, such as one wherein the narrator of the text is unreliable. Rather than being a conclusion reached by careful analysis of textual and extra-textual clues, unreliability is posited by the reader because a literal reading has failed. This is the reader's interpretation, not an objective or critical understanding. While Nünning agrees with Olson in principle, he also argues that since the reader's norms and values come into play while making this reading, unreliability is a product of cultural norms and standards (2005a, p. 96). This means that there *are* some textual clues, namely violations of these

presupposed norms.¹² This synthesis is supported by Bruno Zerweck's work on the role of historicity in unreliability – that “because unreliability is the effect of interpretive strategies, it is culturally and historically variable” (2001, p. 151). Textual clues are seen to take a role, since specific aspects of the text can be identified as inspiring an unreliable reading. Reader interpretation is nevertheless the driving force behind such a reading, as these textual clues exist relative to the reader's cultural norms and standards. This reader-based theory of unreliability is compatible with narrative doubt, which is after all a feature of the reader's engagement with fiction rather than a feature of the fiction itself. What remains to be shown is how exactly inconsistencies and incoherencies lead to unreliability, and whether resistance might lead to narrative doubt in a similar way.

3. Naturalisation and normalisation

Imaginative resistance is caused when the fiction contains something incoherent or inconsistent to the reader. ‘Giselda’ prompts resistance because its morality is incoherent to us. Literary theory can offer insight into why it is that a reader will naturally edit their reading of a text in response to how they perceive its consistency and coherency. If the phenomenon of resistance can be married with this insight, then I will be a step closer to explaining how and why resistance prompts narrative doubt. Jonathan Culler describes the reader's tendency to reinterpret texts according to taste in his work on irony. According to Culler, it is possible that the reader will envisage a ‘true’ meaning of the text; one which runs contrary to its literal meaning (2002, p. 183). He calls this ‘recuperation’, or ‘naturalisation’ – the way in which we interpret the text in such a way that we are comfortable with its meaning (2002, p. 184). We naturalise because our tendency is to “assume that [the text] refers to a world with which we are familiar” (Culler, 2002, p. 182). There may be a tension between states of affairs in the familiar world and states of affairs in the text. Naturalisation aims to remove this tension by reinterpreting the text. Given that Hume cases have exactly this sort of tension, it is possible that narrative doubt is a kind of naturalisation.

¹² Nünning argues that certain stylistic features in a text can also indicate unreliability, such as use of certain devices associated with unreliability (character archetypes, narrative inconsistencies, etc.).

By doubting the narrative, we naturalise the incoherent Hume case. This possibility even sheds light on why it is that certain situations *do not* generate resistance. Take Gendler's discussion of 'Giselda' (2000, p. 75). Gendler observes that the story 'In killing her baby, Giselda did the right thing; after all, it was a girl' generates resistance. Under Culler's picture of naturalisation, this is because we assume that the text applies to the familiar world. Unable to marry our world to the idea that gender-inspired infanticide is morally correct, we might instead posit an unreliable narrator. However, Gendler continues, the story 'In killing her baby, Giselda did the right thing; after all, it was a *changeling*' does not inspire resistance (2000, p. 75, my emphasis). This story is less likely to be taken to refer to the actual world, which does not contain changelings. Therefore, the reader is unlikely to make the assumption of reference to the real world that Culler describes, and accordingly will not feel the need to naturalise the text. This is a feasible explanation as to why it is that the two Giselda stories inspire different levels of resistance.

This story of naturalisation, renamed 'normalisation', is refined by Tamar Yacobi in her 'Fictional Reliability as a Communicative Problem' (1981). The paper is mainly concerned with unreliability, but Yacobi attempts to characterise normalisation as a general phenomenon. She establishes that "referential difficulties, incongruities or (self-) contradictions... whether external or internal [to the text]" can prompt efforts to normalise the text (1981, pp. 113-114). Under Yacobi, normalisation can be caused by contradictions between the text and the actual world. This is significant, as the incongruity of Hume case morality and actual world morality can therefore prompt anagnorisis. Yacobi continues, listing several principles of normalisation which explain how readers attempt to resolve these incongruities. It is her fifth, the perspectival principle, which is relevant to this essay. 'Perspectival' refers to the perspective of the source of transmission in the fiction. This source of transmission is the teller of the story (as described by Chatman in §2), and is usually the narrator.¹³ The perspective is taken to be duplicitous or misinformed; in other words, it is unreliable when it reports incongruities. The fiction is therefore normalised (Yacobi, 1981, p. 119). This accounts for Gendler and Walton's observations in the

¹³ I explain in §4 how this is not exclusively the case.

same way as Culler's theory of naturalisation, but is specifically linked to unreliability rather than irony. However, it prompts a new question: whether one of Yacobi's other forms of normalisation might instead come into effect when a reader faces resistance. This question is answered by ticking off Yacobi's four other principles.

(1), the genetic principle, interprets textual oddities as the product of the author and/or the author's culture. This cannot resolve imaginative resistance. Resistance is characterised as far back as Hume to be impervious to cultural considerations. Hume writes that we cannot enjoy morally deviant fiction "however I may excuse the poet, on account of the manners in his age" (1758, p. 246). This observation has led to environmental influences bearing little weight on discussions of resistance since Hume. So the genetic principle does not represent a typical response to resistance. Next is (2), the generic principle. According to this, incoherencies are attributed to the framework of the genre to which the fiction belongs (a magic spell is not an incoherency in a fantasy film, for example). Can resistance be lessened according to genre? Liao argues that empirical data indicates that this is indeed the case (Liao, Strohminger et al., 2014). However, this does not strike me as a convincing response to resistance. Instead, I think this is confirmation of the phenomenon that Gendler observes in her reformulation of 'Giselda': the experience of resistance varies according to how unusual the fiction is. Giselda killing a baby causes resistance, but Giselda killing a changeling does not. Rather than the reader using genre to normalise resistance, I am more inclined to think that genre plays a role in whether or not the reader encounters resistance in the first place. (3) is the existential principle, where the reader naturalises by finding a referential framework in which the text makes sense. These frameworks can be constructed using genre and institutions as ready-made references. For example, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* can be normalised by using a frame of reference wherein misogyny is the fundamental organising factor of society. However, resistance is strange precisely because we are unable to deal with the referential framework we would need to contextualise the fiction. It is clear that 'Giselda' can be explained with a framework in which infanticide is morally appropriate if the baby is a girl, but it is the difficulty or impossibility of considering such a

framework that characterises resistance. Accordingly, the existential principle is not a possible response to resistance. Finally, (4) is the functional principle. This normalises by considering something in the fiction to be a textual necessity – a function-serving entity. Applied to resistance, the murder of Giselda’s baby might be a function to show how unusual the morality of this particular fictional world is. However, this does not solve any of the puzzles. It is still difficult or impossible to imagine these circumstances, even if we understand their functional role. It is not clear why we would be any less inclined to undergo narrative doubt. The functional principle therefore cannot normalise resistance. This exhausts alternative principles of normalisation suggested by Yacobi, so I can answer the question I posed above: the perspectival is the only principle appropriate for responding to imaginative resistance. Yacobi has therefore shown why we tend to doubt Hume cases - we cannot normalise them in any other way. Her contributions do not end here, however – her arguments also help show unreliability can be extended to non-narrated fictions.

4. Unreliability without a narrator

How can a non-narrated story be unreliable? In the case of ‘Giselda’, there is no clear first-person narrator, and yet Gendler still argues that we undergo narrative doubt. A simple answer is therefore that we always posit an implicit narrator, even in cases where one is not obvious. This sort of argument has been attacked by assorted philosophers and critics, and I will avoid entering the debate.¹⁴ Instead, I attempt to justify use of Yacobi’s perspectival principle in cases where there is no narrator in the text. There is some controversy in literary theory over whether unreliability is a property exclusive to narrators. Zerweck writes as recently as 2001 that positing unreliability as a process of naturalisation requires that the text be “mediated by a strongly anthropomorphosized narrator-character” (2001, p. 156). This is a strong claim – that not only is a narrator required, but that this narrator must be homodiegetic. This reflects an assumption,

¹⁴ A good overview of arguments concerning the existence of implicit narrators is provided by Thomas E. Wartenberg (2007). More recently, the notion has been attacked by Currie (2010).

detectable in other works on the subject, that a narrator is the only feasible source of unreliability in a text (Booth, 1961; Phelan and Martin, 1999). This leads Yacobi to observe:

[Q]uite a few old dogmas still persist, however questionable in theory and false in practice. High among them stands the dogma that embodied voices from within the tale's fictional world (so-called homodiegetic narrators) are alone fallible (2001, p. 223).

Yacobi argues that narrators are not the only candidates for unreliability. Instead, she claims, it is always the *mediator* (the source of transmission mentioned above) of the fictional world which has the potential to be considered unreliable (2001, p. 224). This need not be the narrator, and Yacobi draws attention to what she calls the 'narrator-portrait' fallacy: the idea that narrators are either heterodiegetic and hence reliable, or homodiegetic and hence potentially unreliable (2001, p. 224). Given that unreliability is a product of normalisation, it is obvious that these portraits do not hold up. If unreliability provides a way of normalising incoherencies in a text, then the reader is able to posit an unreliable mediator. It does not matter what kind of mediation is available, only that a mediator exists. There are no package deals in narratives, Yacobi argues throughout, but merely typical configurations (2001, p. 223). Accordingly, we cannot assume that only homodiegetic narrators are plausibly unreliable. It is simply the case that most unreliable texts have homodiegetic narrators. This means that narrative doubt can be applied to stories with heterodiegetic narrators, and, I argue, to stories without narrators at all. If a mediator can be identified in non-narrated fictions, then using the perspectival principle when normalising the text will be entirely legitimate. In other words, a text might still be considered unreliable even if it has no narrator.

Prior to Yacobi, Currie argues for exactly this attitude. He states in his 1995 'Unreliability Refigured: Narrative in Literature and Film' that "narrative unreliability is a concept separable from the concept of an unreliable *narrator*" (1995, p. 19). If this is true, all that remains to be seen is whether normalisation is compatible with Currie's account, and a sufficiently detailed model of narrative doubt will be complete. Perhaps the most important tenet of 'Unreliability Refigured',

certainly important enough for Currie to revisit almost two decades later in his book *Narratives and Narrators*, is the notion than what some critics see as a narrator is in fact the implied author. Currie argues that “it is an error to dispense with the notion of an intelligence that communicates the story to us” – significant here because this ‘intelligence’ takes the role of the mediator that is needed for the perspectival principle to function (1995, p. 26). However, his key point is that this intelligence is not necessarily a narrator. It is entirely logical that a narrative can have an implied author solely responsible for its mediation, rather than depending on a narrator (Currie, 1995, p. 27). The question can therefore be refined: can an implied author be doubted? Currie thinks that the answer is yes. The implied author can have a two-tiered (Currie terms it a ‘complex’) intention in what they portray to the audience. The first, superficial level is evidence of one thing. However, inconsistencies in this first level indicate a deeper, second tier which has a more coherent narrative (Currie, 1995, pp. 22-23). This account is completely consistent with (in fact, it is very similar to) Yacobi’s perspectival principle: perceived incoherencies cause the reader to doubt the text. In this case, however, the unreliability is on a narrative rather than a narratorial level. Between the perspectival principle and complex intentions, it is possible to doubt the reliability of both the narrator and the implied author. It is for this reason that I use the term ‘narrative doubt’ – any aspect of the narrative may have its reliability questioned in order to be normalised. In any circumstance, narrative doubt is a consistent response to imaginative resistance.

5. Summary and observations

When faced with resistance, one method that we naturally use to bypass the uncomfortable experience is to reinterpret what is presented by positing that the mediator is unreliable. To understand the mechanics of this, I have explained accounts of unreliability. I conclude that the reason we posit unreliability is our tendency to attempt to naturalise fiction that we find incoherent or uncomfortable. Yacobi and, to a lesser extent, Culler describe this phenomenon, and argue that normalisation/naturalisation is an extant phenomenon which can lead to a reader interpreting a text as unreliable. Yacobi calls this the perspectival principle. The moment of

anagnorisis comes about due to the experience of resistance. It is by appealing to Currie's work on narrative unreliability that I show the perspectival principle can be deployed when engaged with fictions which do not have narrators. This behaviour – positing unreliable narration as a result of encountering resistance – I call narrative doubt. It is clear now that narrative doubt is the deployment of the perspectival principle in an attempt to naturalise resistance-causing fictions.

Identifying the practice of narrative doubt contributes to the overall goal of this essay by clarifying precisely how readers respond to encountering resistance. This will allow me to properly analyse how resistance changes the experience of a fiction. However, several free observations fall out of the arguments I have made. One is that Gendler's account of resistance – that it is the experience of having to narrator-double – is not particularly distinctive. It is no more than the sensation of anagnorisis, but with the perspectival principle as the only available solution. However, this is not to say that Gendler should be considered eliminative about resistance – there are still interesting questions that are unique to the subject. Literary theory does not, for example, explain the asymmetry between moral and non-moral deviations. Furthermore, this offers Gendler a convincing answer to the phenomenological puzzle – resistance has such a distinctive phenomenology because, unlike other moments of anagnorisis, it only has one possible solution. This restriction characterises the phenomenology of resistance.

The next chapter of this essay concerns another response to encountering resistance – imaginative alienation. Much like narrative doubt, alienation is a method by which the reader avoids dealing directly with the resistance-causing aspect of the fiction. I return to doubt in my fourth chapter, where I will explore precisely how deploying narrative doubt changes the reader's experience of a fiction. Since I will be doing the same with imaginative alienation, I will explain this phenomenon first before investigating these aesthetic issues.

Chapter 3 – Imaginative Alienation

Imagine you are in an art gallery. You have a keen interest in art, and are ensuring that you take the time to study each piece properly and fully appreciate its composition. Turning a corner, you find yourself in a special exhibition, titled 'Just Punishment upon Those Caught Stealing Sweets'. On entering, you see that this exhibition contains paintings depicting human torture. Being of a sensitive moral nature, you are upset by these graphic depictions. However, as an art aficionado, you cannot help but acknowledge that the pieces on display are of extremely high quality. You know that to fully appreciate the images as works of art, you would have to engage with them and imagine the pain of the subjects, along with the helpless or perhaps sadistic sensations of the spectator who has painted the piece. You must appreciate how the artist has captured a spray of arterial blood, or the horror in the eyes of a victim as they are branded. It is also important to consider the implications of the title – the nature of the crime that the subjects are being punished for. I do not think you would be interested in imaginatively engaging with the exhibition – in fact, I think you would encounter heavy resistance at the thought of such a minor crime deserving such horrendous punishment. However, you enjoy art, and wish to appreciate the skill of the artist. And so, you begin to study the pieces whilst consciously minimising imaginative engagement. You skim over the implications of the art on display, and focus instead on the aesthetic nature of the pieces themselves. You cease to engage and instead only admire, but in doing so bypass resistance. It is this activity that I call imaginative alienation.

Alienation is one possible response to imaginative resistance, and the elaborate description above is intended to communicate what I mean when I use the term. Unlike in the case of narrative doubt, I do not have a wealth of background (such as narrative theories of unreliability) to call upon when describing this response. Due to this, I make more of an effort to justify alienation as a convincing account of a possible engagement shift. Just like narrative doubt, alienation is something that the audience of a fiction will actually *do* when resistance occurs. The

theme of my argument in this chapter is therefore that alienation is a realistic portrayal of our behaviour when faced with resistance. In essence, alienation is when the audience attempts to avoid imagining everything that they would were they fully engaged with the fiction. They do this in order to avoid having to attempt to imagine whatever it is that causes resistance. There are several other immediately apparent features, listed in the next section.¹⁵

The second part of my argument in favour of taking alienation seriously is the fact that the phenomenon can be readily observed in cases of resistance based purely on distaste (that is to say, not on Hume cases). One might resist imagining unpleasant fictions, particularly those which are relentlessly violent and/or gory. It is easy to conceive of powering through an unsavoury novel without much attempt at imagining its contents, or begrudgingly watching a horror film while trying not to be drawn in by the unsettling atmosphere. Furthermore, alienation is already recognized and used for aesthetic effect in some media. Brecht makes frequent use of what he calls *verfremdungseffekt* – translating varyingly as ‘distancing’, ‘estrangement’, and (the term I have borrowed) ‘alienation’ effect. Brecht’s technique, lifted from Chinese theatre, aims to strip the audience of emotions towards fictive characters and events, and instill a critical, intellectual attitude towards the fiction itself (Brecht, 1974a). This type of engagement is very closely related to the alienation that I discuss, and Brecht’s work in the subject shows that I am not the only person to be interested in this type of engagement with fiction.

The remainder of this chapter clarifies the features of alienation, before investigating how the phenomenon fits into existing theories of imagination and engagement with fiction. I sketch out a hierarchy of imaginative engagement, beginning with basic comprehension and rising all the way up to immersion. One member of this hierarchy is supposition, an activity which I take to be related to imagination. Supposition greatly resembles the alienated state of engagement. I investigate how two competing theories of imagination have interpreted supposition. Both

¹⁵ Note that these features are not all necessary for circumventing resistance. However, I think that these features tend to occur regardless.

cognitive theory (particularly that of Jonathan Weinberg and Aaron Meskin) and simulation theory (that of Alvin Goldman, as well as Gregory Currie and Ian Ravenscroft) view supposition as a low-level type of imagination. I compare these accounts of supposition to my own definition of alienation, finding them very similar. After explaining the observable differences between alienated engagement and suppositional engagement, I conclude that alienation entails adopting a lower level of imaginative engagement with a fiction. This level of engagement exhibits all the necessary features of supposition. Finally, I use several examples to demonstrate how alienation helps a reader avoid encountering imaginative resistance.

1. Characteristics of alienation

What happens when an audience becomes alienated? Four features can be identified. Firstly, they will resist the state of immersion that audiences often enter when engaged with a fiction. The term 'immersion' requires a little explanation. Jean-Marie Schaeffer and Ioana Vultur suggest that immersion is "any state of absorption in some action, condition or interest", but also admit that "the psychological and representative features of the state of imaginative immersion are still very poorly understood" (2005, p. 238). This may not help provide a working definition, but does tell me that when I say an audience becomes immersed in a fiction, it is apparent on some level what I mean. What is known about psychological features of immersion is found in the psychological literature on 'transportation', chiefly the work of Melanie Green (2000, 2004 and with Brock and Kaufman, 2004) and Richard Gerrig (2004). According to Green, to be transported is to be swept away by a fiction, losing track of real time and events (2004, p. 247). The alienated audience does not 'lose themselves' to this degree. Ralph Richardson once described acting as "the art of keeping a large group of people from coughing" (2008). The immersed audience are the non-coughers, those who are so fascinated that they cease paying attention to their bodily needs. The alienated audience cough at will, not diverted to such an extreme point.

The second feature is that an alienated audience will fail to infer things from fictions which they would have were they not alienated. Weinberg and Meskin observe that "It is not just

the hero in the horror movie who hypothesizes about the origins, nature and motivations of the monster – viewers of such fictions engage in such ratiocination too” (2006, p. 181). This sort of interaction with a fiction requires the audience to be willing participants, following clues in order to arrive at a conclusion about something the fiction has (to this point) left unspecified. In *Forrest Gump*, it is never explicitly stated that Jenny is abused by her father. However, a viewer can infer from Forrest’s naïve narration, as well as Jenny’s fear, that the abuse has been taking place. To do so requires a certain level of engagement with the film. If we are not engaged at a level where we notice the significance of these clues, we will not make the inferences that we are guided to. Alienation is a state wherein we attempt to avoid engaging with a fiction at such a level, and accordingly we will not make these inferences. However, it should be stressed that some level of inferential engagement is inevitable, such as the inferential link between a camera shot of a character in an emotional state, and a shot immediately following this of something that could feasibly have caused this emotion (Carroll, 1998, pp. 284-288). Steven Spielberg’s *Jurassic Park* has a convenient example - the juxtaposition of a character’s gaze of astonishment in one shot, followed by a shot of living dinosaurs. We automatically infer that the dinosaurs have caused the character’s astonishment, and I think that inferences on this much simpler level are unavoidable.¹⁶ The key feature of alienation is this: the audience is less disposed to make inferences based on fictional truths that have been presented to them. The first victims of this are complex inferences of the same sort as Jenny’s abuse in *Forrest Gump*.

The third characteristic of the alienated audience is that they will not imaginatively elaborate on the content of the fiction. Perhaps the simplest example of this is a return to the torture exhibition from the beginning of this chapter. When engaging with artworks at a non-alienated level, we tend to imagine things that are not specified by the image. When I engage with Matisse’s *The Parakeet and the Mermaid*, I imagine the warmth of the sea and the drifting of the currents. Yet if I were to take a walk through ‘Just Punishment upon Those Caught Stealing

¹⁶ Assuming the inference-maker has no trouble recognising and understanding facial expressions, which can occur with certain autism spectrum disorders.

Sweets', I would not make these imaginative leaps. The source material is repellent enough that I do not wish to invent further detail. Consider a real example – the short story 'Guts', by Chuck Palahniuk. The story describes a boy trapped in a swimming pool by his own prolapsed intestine, and is so vividly unpleasant that Palahniuk claims to have had sixty-seven audience members faint across his reading tours (Palahniuk, 2005). A *very* graphic extract follows, which illustrates my point but some may prefer to skip:

[W]hat you have to do is – you have to twist around. You hook one elbow behind your knee and pull that leg up into your face. You bite and snap at your own ass. You run out of air, and you will chew through anything to get that next breath... If I told you how it tasted, you would never, ever again eat calamari (Palahniuk, 2004).

We do not tend to imagine that, for example, there is blood in the water during this extract, despite the fact that there undoubtedly would be. 'Guts' is so gruesome that we do not volunteer new things to imagine in the same way that we do when viewing the work of Matisse. This is not an isolated phenomenon, but can be seen in other works which depict unpleasant things. Franz Kafka's *In the Penal Colony*, Iain Banks' *The Wasp Factory*, even classic works like Dante's *Inferno* – all of these contain drawn-out descriptions of torment, torture or trauma which readers do not elaborate on. While examples become sparser, I argue this same principle applies to things other than depictions of the painful and/or disgusting. A devout Christian is unlikely to find herself imaginatively elaborating on the description of Heaven and its angels from Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy – as a corrupt and tyrannical regime. A non-Christian reader is more likely to elaborate imaginatively, perhaps by imagining how angels might go about suppressing dissidence in Heaven. The Christian's faith, however, might well cause her to become alienated from the fiction and so fail to imaginatively elaborate, just as our revulsion alienates us from 'Guts'.

Unpleasant or resistance-causing material like the examples above has another effect on its audience. I think that, when dealing with fictions like these, the audience undergoes an

attempt to imagine selectively; to filter out certain things which the fiction describes. This is the fourth feature of alienation. It can be seen at work in my opening example of the resistance-causing art gallery, with the effort made to avoid imagining its contents in too great an amount of detail. The idea that people consciously attempt to limit what they imagine has been investigated by Colin McGinn, who writes about the practice of controlling imagination in his 2004 *Mindsight*. McGinn writes that “It is a familiar experience to find oneself compulsively imagining certain things, for images to come unbidden, for images to resist the effort to eliminate them” (2004, p. 13). I do not deny that attempts to control the imagination may be unsuccessful, as McGinn describes here. However, he proceeds to claim that “even when the image is resistant to the will... it is still in principle subject to it – though this may require greater effort” (2004, p. 14). It is this claim which supports my own: we have some measure of control over what we imagine. While it may, as McGinn suggests, take mental discipline to do so, the activity itself is possible. There is a range of reasons why efforts to control imagination may fail – the stimulus may be particularly strong, or the person in question very suggestible. Therefore, to characterise alienation, it is only necessary that an *attempt* is made to control what one imagines. If we are alienated from a fiction, we are driven to try and avoid imagining parts of it. Whether or not we succeed (McGinn and I think we sometimes do, while Stuart Brock, for example, thinks we never do) is contingent, but the fact that we make the attempt can be agreed upon (Brock, 2012).

These four features may appear unrelated. However, I argue that a refusal to infer, to elaborate, to become immersed and to properly imagine might all be the result of one thing: a different level of imaginative engagement with fiction than is found in non-alienated readers. Accordingly, the remainder of this chapter will deal with imagination, and attempt to clarify what exactly this shift in level of imaginative engagement is. The engagement must be at a non-vivid level, but one that still allows not only for some small measure of inferential ability, but for the ability to actually understand the narrative of the fiction. I must investigate how imagination breaks down into different levels of complexity. This will help me find a level at which an alienated reader imagines the contents of a fiction.

2. Levels of engagement

A hierarchy of imagination can be sketched out, starting at the most basic level of comprehension and rising to full imaginative immersion.¹⁷ I describe that hierarchy in this section. This is no more than a rough illustration of how one can imaginatively engage at different levels. It is misleadingly coarse-grained, since it would likely be impossible to describe every different level of complexity. What it is designed to do is show how engaging with fiction is an activity which can occur at more than one level. Ideally, it takes place at a very high level, but in cases of alienation, it occurs at a lower level. A diagram of this hierarchy follows (Figure 1), explained in greater detail below.

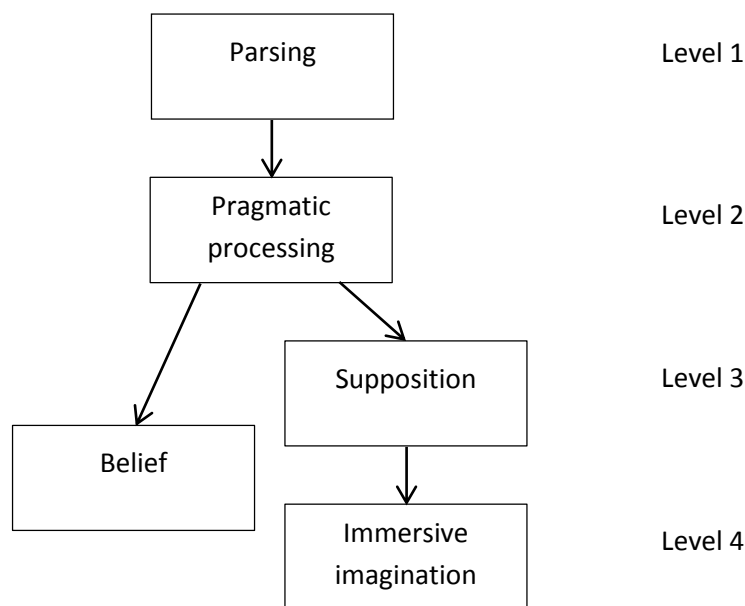


Figure 1

At its most basic, responding imaginatively to stimulus requires primitive understanding. Call this Level 1 engagement. This is not truly imaginative activity, but rather the abilities required in order to respond imaginatively to stimulus. It involves the ability to parse, to comprehend information. A fire exit sign is merely comprehended; we understand its meaning, but on a typical day will barely register reading it. In an emergency, we may even forget where the fire exit is,

¹⁷ This hierarchy was developed with Gregory Currie.

despite having read the sign earlier on. It is this type of activity which I see as the lowest kind. No commitment is made at this point to either imagination or belief. The next rung up on the ladder is the ability to pragmatically process the information which is gained by Level 1 engagement. This is the ability to make basic inferences - to connect a look of surprise with something that is surprising. Pragmatic processing connects the aforementioned fire exit sign with the doorway beneath it. This, then, is Level 2 engagement. Again, this level of mental activity does not imply either belief or imagination. However, to rise further up the hierarchy requires committing to one of these two. Therefore, the ladder splits. The left column in figure 1 is belief – different levels of belief may exist, but I do not detail them here. In the right column, the hierarchy of imagination continues. Level 3 engagement involves the ability to make inferences while aware of the fact that these inferences do not apply to the world. It is the type of imagination used for reasoning with logic - one may suppose that P, no matter what P is. This type of activity is usually considered to be supposition, which I will return to it later in this chapter. Level 4 engagement is the most diverse of the levels, as it consists of the range of extents to which one can be imaginatively immersed at a level higher than supposition. This level of immersive imagination involves emotional affect and vivid perception-like imaginings, as well as other features which do not occur during supposition. It is also this Level 4 engagement which is (ideally) used when engaging with fiction. For example, Level 4 is where Currie's desire-like imaginings are found. Level 4 might be divided into many different levels, but since the hierarchy is fine-grained enough to distinguish between imaginative activities which are suitable and unsuitable for engagement with fiction (Levels 4 and 3 respectively), these four levels should be sufficient to locate alienation. However, I must first explain existing notions of appropriate imaginative engagement.

It is not controversial to say that imagination is a crucial element of our engagement with fiction. It is the imagination which underpins the account of make-belief, variations of which have been used in an attempt to explain the nature of fiction.¹⁸ Susan L. Feagin is of the opinion that "Having imaginal and emotional experiences is part of appreciating an artwork", while Noël

¹⁸ E.g., Currie (1990) and Walton (1990).

Carroll mentions “the different kinds of imaginative activities that viewers of paintings and readers of fictions [engage in]” (Feagin, 1997, p. 60, Tullmann and Gatalo, 2012, p. 2). These examples aim to show that imagination is a major aspect of engaging with fiction. The psychological literature, meanwhile, gives imagination a central role in transportation – the study of immersion in fiction described in §1 of this chapter. To be transported, mental processes such as imagery, emotional responding and narrative comprehension must be engaged (Mazzocco, Green et al., 2010, p. 1). These are all processes that call upon imagination. It is a popular stance in both philosophy and psychology to hold that imaginative engagement/transportation is a major ingredient in enjoying and appreciating a fiction (Green, Brock et al., 2004, p. 314). Given the importance of strong imaginative engagement, to argue that some fiction is engaged with on a lower imaginative level is not an intuitively obvious proposal. However, this seems to me the most obvious explanation of how alienation takes place. The imaginative experience of an alienated reader more closely resembles Level 3 engagement – supposition – than it does the more immersive type of imagination found at Level 4. The question then is how alienation can be related to supposition when supposition tends to be the realm of the premiss or the thought experiment, not of fiction. To answer this, I investigate accounts of imagination and supposition.

3. Alienation as supposition

This section describes how supposition is related to imagination, and how an alienated reading of a fiction closely resembles suppositional engagement. I argue that engagement with fiction at an alienated level (a-engagement) should be understood as a switch from full imaginative engagement with a fiction (i-engagement, the Level 4 engagement of the previous section) to lower-level, suppositional engagement (s-engagement, or Level 3). It is by making this switch that imaginative resistance is circumvented. Two accounts of imagination support this view of engagement. The first is cognitive theory, as defined by Shaun Nichols and Stephen Stich (2000) and refined by Weinberg and Meskin (2006). The main difference between imagination and supposition under cognitive theory is the operation of so-called emotional ‘affect systems’.

Weinberg and Meskin argue that while imagination is affective, supposition is not. Imagination frequently engages the emotions, whereas affect is never more than an “unintended side-effect of some supposition” (2006, p. 195). Affect, even if it occurs, is not the intention of supposition. Furthermore, Weinberg and Meskin argue that i-engagement is characterised by ‘script elaboration’. In other words, somebody who is suitably imaginatively engaged will embellish the details that they have been given to imagine. However, Weinberg and Meskin claim that the same cannot be said for s-engagement (2006, p. 195). Somebody engaged at this level will not elaborate or embellish. Finally, there is the issue of acquiring propositions to imagine. High-level engagement tends to acquire propositions by “open[ing] the gates, as it were, to a stream of incoming information (*as in the case of standard film spectatorship*)” (Weinberg and Meskin, 2006, p. 182, my emphasis). S-engagement, on the other hand, uses a more ‘punctate’ method of acquiring propositions (Weinberg and Meskin, 2006, p. 196). When engaged at this lower level, a reader will be selective about what is imagined rather than imagining whatever is prescribed to them.

The characteristics of alienation overlap markedly with those of supposition in the case of Weinberg and Meskin’s cognitive theory. Due to this, I am inclined to believe that alienation simply *is* engagement with fiction on a suppositional level rather than at a higher imaginative level. However, there is one difference between a-engagement and s-engagement which must be addressed: inference-making. While I have suggested that inference-making is notably absent from a-engagement with fiction, Weinberg and Meskin claim that inference-making is typical of supposition (2006, p. 196). Where have alienation and supposition come apart? I argue that the divide is illusory. Weinberg and Meskin discuss supposition as “*almost always* used for epistemic purposes, though it can be used for fairly specialized recreational purposes, such as playing with logic puzzles” (2006, p. 193, my emphasis). It is still possible to use supposition to engage with fiction. Inference-making is not a necessary feature of supposition. That is to say, nobody would claim that a supposition made without drawing any inferences does not count as a supposition – not even Weinberg and Meskin. In fact, when using supposition for epistemic or logic purposes,

inferences are made consciously and deliberately. It is therefore reasonable to say that we can avoid drawing inferences while s-engaged. Due to this, I am willing to classify a-engagement as s-engagement, despite differing views about the role of inference-making in supposition. Since Weinberg and Meskin's objective is to describe the typical properties of supposition rather than its actual nature, I do not think they would resist my use of the term.

By being added to this account of supposition, alienation gains a proper identity within cognitive theory. Weinberg and Meskin argue that the lack of essential features, as well as the ability to bring certain mental processes on- and offline while supposing/imagining, means that we should not draw a qualitative distinction between imagining and supposing. Rather, both are variants of a particular kind of activity (2006, p. 197). This benefits my argument in two ways. Firstly, it justifies my placement of supposition on the hierarchy of imagination. To the cognitive theorist, supposition is a stripped-down version of imagination, just as it is in my hierarchy. Secondly, it shows that the existence of alienation is supported by existing philosophical work on imagination. A-engagement is a type of imagining. It is on the same level as supposition rather than full imagination, but it is nevertheless a member of the particular class of cognitions to which both of those belong. A cognitive theorist is therefore able to accept alienation into her imaginative architecture as a particular kind of imaginative activity. If the same can be said for a competing theorist, such as a simulationist, my account of alienation is made even stronger.

Simulationists tend to agree with one of the main points described above: to suppose is to imagine, but in a certain way. For a simulationist, to imagine is to perform a mental activity wherein the mental states that would occur in the situation are mimicked by one's own mind (Davies and Stone, 1995, p. 3). This is simulation, or recreative imagination (to give it Currie and Ravenscroft's appellation). Goldman contrasts enactment-imagination (i.e., simulation) with supposition-imagination (2006, p. 48). The chief difference between s-imagining and enactment-imagining something is the level and type of detail used in the simulation/recreation. To suppose something is to imagine it at a more stripped-down level than if it were properly, recreatively

imagined. What isn't immediately clear is exactly what gets stripped out when engaging at the suppositional level. Goldman argues that "supposing one owns a mug doesn't re-create the psychological circumstances operative in a decision-making task" (2006, p. 175). What exactly are these psychological circumstances?

Currie and Ravenscroft help answer this question. Currie has written on exactly how recreative imagination explains resistance. The feature of recreative imagination he identifies that causes resistance must therefore be forgone when supposing. As Currie and Ravenscroft write:

When I am asked to suppose some (possibly alien) moral proposition, I succeed if I manage to restrict my imaginative engagement to the recreation of belief-like states. This turns into an imaginative project that is more than merely suppositional if my desire-like imaginings are engaged as well... my supposition has become a more richly imaginative project and probably no longer deserves the title 'supposing' (though we are not assuming there is any sharp boundary here) (2002, pp. 35-36).

This extract requires a little unpacking to explain its full impact on alienation. The first important point is that Currie and Ravenscroft too think of the supposition/imagination distinction as one of degrees rather than an essential difference between the two. As was the case with cognitive theory, this supports the idea of supposition as stripped-down imagination. The second point is that use of desire-like imaginings is the differentiating feature between supposition and imagination. Supposition (Level 3 engagement) does not generally deploy desire-like imaginings, whereas imagination (Level 4 engagement) does. This tells us what is stripped when one engages with fiction at an alienated level rather than an immersed one – we do not have desire-like imaginings. However, simulationists also tend to view inference-making as a feature of s-engagement. Neither Currie and Ravenscroft nor Goldman rule out an ability to make inferences while supposing something. Indeed, Currie argues in 'Desire in Imagination' that the tendency to make inferences is an important feature of supposition (2002, p. 205). Once again, the lack of specific definitions used allows me to argue that inference-making is not a necessary feature of supposition. It is a capacity that one can make use of while remaining merely s-engaged, but one

does not need to make inferences in order to be s-engaged. The simulationist can therefore take alienation to be a kind of recreative activity which happens at a suppositional level. This means that alienation is compatible with simulationist accounts of imaginative engagement.

Alienation can be accounted for under both simulationism and cognitive theory, two competing theories of imagination. This shows that alienation is a recognisable type of engagement which existing theories can incorporate. Alienated engagement is no more than suppositional engagement, but with the added feature that inference-making is not performed. This keeps us emotionally and imaginatively distanced from whatever the subject of our imagination is. This does not necessarily have to be a fiction. A stressful or emotionally intense job, such as being a soldier, undertaker, executioner, etc., might cause a person to alienate herself from whatever she imagines. The executioner tries not to imagine the distraught family of the prisoner she is about to hang; she alienates herself from the image. The effect of alienation that I am concerned with, however, is its role in responding to imaginative resistance. The final section of this chapter describes how the alienated reader engages with fiction, and how that affects the experience of resistance.

4. The experience of alienated engagement

When alienated, the reader ignores the emotional impact of the fiction. Instead, she focusses on the form of the fiction, on the fictional truths it contains, and other formal aspects. Brock uses *American Psycho* as an example of a fiction so unpleasant that most simply do not read it. I propose instead that one can still read *American Psycho* without committing oneself to imagining the gory detail to the same degree that Brock thinks is unavoidable (2012, p. 461). Take the scene which Brock highlights, wherein protagonist Patrick Bateman rapes and mutilates a woman (Brock, 2012, pp. 460-461). The alienated reader understands that a woman is being tortured in this fiction. However, she does not imagine anything further, nor does she attempt to bring this scene to vivid life inside her imagination. In the same way that one can suppose a round square exists without actually imagining a round square, the alienated reader understands the content of

the fiction but does not represent it to herself. By avoiding immersion and inference-making, by refusing to elaborate and by attempting to selectively imagine the contents of the fiction, the reader skirts around the unpleasant content of the fiction while still engaging with it at a low imaginative level. This approach may not always be successful – we are often empathic to the point where we cannot help but imagine how the tortured woman might feel. However, I think that many will attempt to alienate themselves, successful or not, in order to be shielded from the unpleasant content of *American Psycho*.

Another example of alienation in action is Psalm 137 from the King James Bible – a piece which is deeply unpleasant to imagine, but so aesthetically pleasing that most readers instinctively alienate themselves instead of looking away. The psalm is a sorrowful, bitter description of the state of the Jewish survivors of the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem. A sensitive reader may already attempt to engage at the level of alienation to avoid empathy with this described anguish. The final two lines, however, best suit my purposes:

O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed: happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.

Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones (*The Holy Bible: King James Version*, 2011, p. 310).

The idea of pleasure at infanticide is so troubling that few will attempt to imagine it. Instead, most will marvel at the wrenching twist in the psalm, the curse so bitter that it communicates the pain that the Jewish refugees feel. Aesthetically, the psalm is beautiful (while this will certainly be disputed by some, the sheer number of musical adaptations of Psalm 137 shows that my opinion is uncontroversial). It is worth reading in order to experience this beauty. However, the infanticide prompts alienation. A typical reader will not automatically elaborate on this description by, for example, imagining the screams of dying children. She will not make the inference that the Babylonian gene pool will be greatly reduced by this event, leading to a rise in congenital diseases. She will happily imagine the refugees hanging their harps on willow branches, as the

psalm describes, but will attempt to avoid imagining children being dashed against stones. The shock of the image is likely to make her reluctant to become immersed in the psalm further, in case more such cases of pleasure at infanticide are included. This response makes Psalm 137 a perfect example of a text which alienates its reader. It is beautiful, but it is unpleasant, and so the reader attempts to enjoy it without becoming imaginatively engaged at a high level.

Psalm 137 is also useful because it is arguably a Hume case. The notion of enjoying killing children, with the connotations of righteousness given in the psalm, is morally alien to most readers. This allows me to demonstrate how alienation helps avoid resistance. By alienating oneself from the final verse of the psalm, one avoids the source of resistance. To Gendler, the source of resistance is implication in the moral deviation. Alienation alleviates this; this implication does not occur because of the lower level of imagination used. The psalm is read at the same level as a thought experiment or similar hypothesis. Gendler writes that “as long as I take the claims of [the deviant moral proposition] to be restricted to the realm of the merely hypothetical, I feel no more resistance in supposing [the deviant moral proposition] than supposing [a non-moral proposition]” (2000, p. 69). The alienated reader does not attempt to export the morality of the fiction, because they do not imagine it at the level where exportation might occur. Thus resistance (as Gendler understands it) is averted. Currie’s account of resistance is also compatible. He believes the source of resistance to be the difficulty of forming certain desire-like imaginings (2002, p. 220). As mentioned in the previous section, the alienated reader never attempts to form desire-like imaginings about the Hume case. Therefore the case will not prompt resistance. Any similar account of imaginative resistance that deals with the imaginative puzzle will, I am confident, be compatible with alienation. The reader is able to alienate herself in order to avoid resistance, and I think *does* frequently alienate herself during encounters with imaginative resistance.

To be alienated is not an ideal state, however. If it were, readers could simply engage with all fictions at an alienated level, and never have to worry about things they find distasteful. This is

not the case. Alienated engagement is not a desirable way to consume a fiction. As I described in §2 of this chapter, philosophers have frequently cited emotional and imaginative engagement with a fiction as the key to appreciating it. Alienation deliberately dispenses with each of these in the name of avoiding resistance. By becoming alienated, the reader maintains *some* level of engagement with the fiction, rather than having to choose between encountering resistance and ceasing to engage altogether. This is the trade-off of alienation: have the experience of the fiction interrupted by resistance, or attempt to use alienation as an ersatz workaround and avoid experiencing resistance altogether. Precisely how each of these options can affect the reader's experience of the fiction is the topic of my next chapter.

Chapter 4 – Re-evaluation

In the previous two chapters, I discussed two ways in which readers respond to the presence of imaginative resistance. There are therefore (at least) three ways in which a resistance-causing fiction can be read. The first is by doubting the narrative, the second is by alienating oneself from the fiction, and the third is the simple reading – avoiding engagement shifts and simply encountering resistance. In this chapter, I will explore what effect these different modes of reading have on the actual experience of the fiction itself. In other words, this chapter asks what the effect of resistance is on aesthetic judgements about fiction. This may seem like an attempt to answer the aesthetic puzzle. Certainly, the aesthetic puzzle asks why it is that the presence of imaginative resistance can cause a fiction to be judged poorly as an artwork. However, I make no such assumption of devaluation. Instead, I will first discuss *what* occurs in cases of resistance that might prompt a change in aesthetic evaluation. Only then will I analyse how aesthetic judgements might be influenced. Unlike most philosophers who have touched on this area, I do not think that imaginative resistance is an exclusively negative factor in aesthetic judgements. Instead, I describe how it can be used to improve the quality of fictions in certain circumstances. I call this variability ‘re-evaluation’ – not to imply that a reader evaluates the fiction twice, but to denote the fact that the type of reading used to respond to the presence of resistance has had an impact on evaluations of the fiction’s aesthetic quality.

First, I question how narrative doubt affects aesthetic judgements. I claim that it has the potential to be a negative influence, but also to be a positive one. Narrative doubt is a state which an author can exploit for aesthetic gain, usually by allowing the author to avoid tiresome and obvious statements about a character’s moral nature. However, it can also overcomplicate fictions which gain their aesthetic effects from simplicity. In these cases, doubt will damage evaluations of the fiction. Second, I argue for a similar position with regards to alienation. Lack of imaginative engagement with a fiction can easily cause the reader’s experience to be negative.

However, I also analyse Brecht's arguments in favour of fictions gaining aesthetic effect by alienating their audiences. Third, I examine the aesthetic impact of imaginative resistance experienced directly – without narrative doubt or alienation being used. In these cases, the block between reader and imagination is often negative. However, once again there are circumstances, usually non-realist fictions with ironic narratives, which can use imaginative resistance as a technique to strengthen the fiction's aesthetic value. This means that imaginative resistance is a more complex phenomenon than has been previously suspected – it is not simply a puzzle about asymmetries between moral and non-moral deviations in fiction. Instead, it is a fully-fledged narrative technique which can be used to great effect.

Before exploring this variety of aesthetic responses, it is useful to consider what factors influence which of the three methods a reader chooses in response to resistance. I do not take this choice to be a necessarily conscious one. Instead, the reader will tend to find herself naturally assuming a particular reading once resistance has been encountered. This reading will typically be whichever happens to be most suitable for the media involved, and for the nature of the resistance-causing aspect of the fiction. Helmut Bonheim discusses a distinction between 'hot' and 'cool' media – cool media invites audience participation by leaving gaps to be filled in, whereas hot media requires only that its audience is paying attention to achieve its full effect (1982, p. 47). While hot media is suitable for a passive audience, cool media requires an active, interested audience in order to be experienced to its full effect. This distinction clarifies why it is that audiences respond to resistance in different ways. Gendler argues that resistance always causes a doubling of the narrator, but this is not the case. Hot media, such as certain types of film and painting, lends itself far more to alienation than to narrative doubt. This is because, given that unreliability is not usually a factor in this kind of media, this method of naturalisation is not so immediately obvious. In contrast, cool media, such as many novels, is more likely to prompt narrative doubt. Its coolness means that the audience will more readily question the narrative. This is why 'Giselda' prompts narrative doubt, while 'Just Punishment upon Those Caught Stealing Sweets' alienates. The former is cooler, the latter more hot. Other factors can influence the

choice of engagement shift. For example, some fictions are so unpleasant that the reader is disinclined to engage so closely as to naturalise it. Instead, alienation may be the option which is easier to stomach. Why the simple reading is chosen cannot be so easily answered. For whatever reason, the doubting and alienating readings are not viable and/or appealing options in these cases. Both engagement shifts prevent the reader from actually engaging directly with the resistance-causing facet of the fiction – doubt by removing this facet from fictional truth, alienation by keeping the facet at imaginative arm’s length. Perhaps, then, the simple reading is used when the resistance-causing facet is so central to the fiction that it cannot be bypassed in this way.

1. Narrative doubt and aesthetic judgement

I argue that narrative doubt is accompanied by an aesthetic re-evaluation of the fiction, as compared to a reading in which narrative doubt does not occur. In other words, I hold that a reading which treats the narrative or narrator as unreliable typically results in a different aesthetic judgement. Though it makes my argument weaker, I resist claiming it is necessarily the case that aesthetic judgements are re-evaluated. It is not incoherent to think of a reader so insensitive to different types of reading that no re-evaluation takes place. However, for the average reader, reading a fiction as unreliable results in a different experience and a different judgement of its aesthetic quality. I do not think this is a contentious claim, particularly since I accept that this change in judgement can be positive in some respects and negative in others. In this section, I demonstrate how this can be the case. I do this in order to show how resistance can be a powerful tool – a skilled author can use resistance to prompt a reader to undergo narrative doubt. By doing so, she changes the reader’s experience of the fiction.

It has never been in doubt that unreliability can make a fiction more interesting and absorbing. Booth, in one of the earliest codifications of the trope, mentions the “exhilarating sport” of judging the narrator’s moral virtue (1961, p. 307). I agree with Booth’s argument: unreliability transforms what could otherwise have been a pedestrian, bland moral fable into a

more interactive experience. Consider *The Catcher in the Rye*. It is Holden Caulfield's lack of self-awareness which makes him an interesting character; his alternating self-aggrandisement and self-deprecation play out across the novel. Imagine if Salinger had instead simply written that Caulfield is confused and insecure. To do so would be to break one of the classic rules of writing prose - 'show, don't tell'. Unreliability is an extension of this rule. Rather than being told that the narrator is immoral, or that the narrative is in some way misleading, the audience is allowed to reach this conclusion through the narrator's words and actions or the narrative's inconsistencies.

Bonheim's aforementioned hot/cool distinction also shows why unreliability can cause a negative aesthetic impact on a work. The level of engagement which cool media encourages is not suitable for some genres or narratives. For example, certain pieces of spectacle cinema (Alfonso Cuarón's *Gravity*, Gareth Evans' *The Raid* and, to a lesser extent, Steven Lisberger's *Tron* and James Cameron's *Avatar*) rely on visual impact for aesthetic appeal, rather than character development or plot complexity. In these instances, unreliability would be a distraction from spectacle, and compromising the spectacle would compromise the film (as anybody who has watched *Gravity* on a small screen will agree). Fostering narrative doubt is not always a worthwhile strategy, and some fictions benefit from the relative simplicity that reliability brings. Even in cool media, unreliability can misfire if the reader fails to recognise it. As Olson highlights, there is often a level of disagreement about whether a narrator is unreliable or not (2003, p. 97). A too-subtly unreliable narrative can end up simply confusing or frustrating for a reader who has for whatever reason missed certain clues intended to indicate unreliability. Due to these features, I argue that a reader who employs narrative doubt to avoid confronting a source of resistance is very likely to have their experience of the fiction take on a different aesthetic quality. Similar arguments can be made for the alienation engagement shift.

2. Alienation and aesthetic judgement

In the previous chapter, I touched upon the role of alienation in aesthetic judgements. I will now return to this topic to demonstrate that, just like narrative doubt, alienation can cause re-

evaluation of a fiction. As in the previous section, my objective is to show that this aesthetic impact is not necessarily positive or negative, but has the potential to be either. In the case of alienation, the more intuitive scenario is that alienation leads to aesthetic devaluation. In fact, most philosophers of art warn that imaginative engagement is central to enjoying a fiction. However, there are dissenting voices, most notably in the theory of Brecht and his Chinese influences. This fits my own theory – that alienation can be used for deliberate aesthetic effect, but that it can also be an unfortunate negative influence on the aesthetic experience.

Alienation prompts a negative aesthetic judgement when it interferes with an attempt to become immersed in the fiction. As mentioned in Chapter 3, it is fairly common amongst philosophers to think that the imagination takes a central role in immersion within or engagement with a fiction. It is popular in turn to consider immersion and engagement essential for understanding and enjoying a fiction. Given that alienation is a blockage in this initial process of becoming immersed, it follows that alienation prevents a reader from appreciating the fiction in question. There are cases where this is a likely explanation for a fiction's poor critical reception. One mentioned in the previous chapter is *American Psycho*. The violence depicted in the novel causes many readers to fail to appreciate the novel's satirical humour (Jordison, 2010). I think that some of these readers were alienated by the violent content of the novel. This is a perfect example of how alienation can cause aesthetic devaluing – perhaps if some of these readers had not been alienated to the point where they did not realise that the novel is satiric, they would have enjoyed it despite its graphic violence. The same principle holds true on the level of genre appreciation. Being alienated from a horror film will make it less likely that one is appropriately scared, and will therefore think less of the film. A comedy will not be as funny, an action film less thrilling. By interfering with immersion, alienation can easily cause aesthetic devaluing. Furthermore, there is some indication that imagining something in a way which is richly visual and auditory results in a stronger emotional response (Van Leeuwen, 2011, p. 66). This strong response is lost when the reader is alienated, reducing the emotional impact of the fiction. This too is likely to result in devaluation.

It is less clear how alienation can make a positive impact on the experience of a fiction. However, despite the emphasis often placed on immersion, some have argued that there are circumstances in which a richer experience can be gained from deliberately avoiding immersion in a fiction. The most notable is Brecht, who thinks that his style of epic theatre benefits from an alienated audience. The playwright's primary motivation for celebrating alienation is that the audience should "come to grips with things" rather than lose themselves in a shared experience (Brecht, 1974b, p. 23). The audience should consciously decide whether to accept or reject the behaviour of the characters, rather than subconsciously deciding while distracted by immersion in the drama. When describing how this can take place, Brecht mentions several aspects of Chinese theatre. For example, he draws attention to its complete lack of fourth wall (1974a, p. 92). Where European audiences have a sense of being unnoticed observers of the narrative, the Chinese theatre that Brecht describes makes no such pretence that the actors do not see the audience. With this technique, there is no spell or illusion to be broken – the audience is constantly reminded that they are witnessing a fiction performed by actors. This does not make the performance emotionless, Brecht argues, but rather allows the audience to rationally reflect on the emotions which are portrayed. In fact, he thinks that this style of acting is intellectually superior to naturalist theatre (i.e., theatre which attempts to create the illusion of reality), arguing that "it demands a considerable knowledge of humanity and worldly wisdom, and a keen eye for what is socially important" (1974a, p. 95). This supports Brecht's view of how an audience should be made to engage with a play: rationally, not by being swept up in emotion (Brecht, 2003, p. 88). His satire of Hitler's ascension to power, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, emphasises song, dance and stage technology in order to ensure that the audience is suitably alienated, and thus receptive to the social critique that the play makes (Aaron, 1981). In this play and others, Brecht practices what he preaches; he makes efforts to alienate the audience.

A dissenter might argue that alienation benefits social and political interest rather than aesthetic judgements – the alienated audience might feel more enlightened, but may not be better entertained. However, this argument does not stand up. For one thing, the aesthetics of

Brecht's epic theatre are inseparable from the social and political commentary of his plays. In other words, it is the aesthetic experience which communicates the commentary. By observing events unfold onstage, the audience can better understand the issues which are being discussed. Furthermore, aesthetic (i.e., not socio-political) uses of alienation are included in the Chinese theatre that he describes, as well as other theatrical styles like Noh and Kabuki. The reasonable conclusion then is that alienation can indeed be used to aesthetic effect. Just as in the case of narrative doubt, there are times when alienation will take place without the author intending, or when intentional alienation is too weak or too strong to achieve the desired effect. However, I am happy to say that despite the potential pitfalls, the aesthetic effects of alienation and narrative doubt can be beneficial to a reader's experience of a fiction. If the same can be said for the simple reading of imaginative resistance (i.e., the resistance-prompting aspect of the fiction is not sidestepped), then I will have shown that resistance can, in the hands of a skilled author, be a legitimate technique in fiction-writing.

3. Morality's impact on aesthetics

Imaginative resistance is usually taken to have a negative effect on a fiction's aesthetic value. Yet precisely why this should be case is not entirely clear. Certainly, resistance can have a negative effect if the reader is alienated or employs narrative doubt, as I have described above. However, it is also entirely feasible that the simple reading of resistance can cause devaluation as well. To show this, I use examples of resistance generated by morally deviant propositions. While some philosophers have argued that other kinds of proposition can generate resistance (see p. 6), I focus on this most common kind of resistance for the sake of space. That resistance can have a negative effect on an artwork's quality can be shown by investigating Carroll's work on the interplay between art and ethics. Carroll argues that immorality can, in some circumstances, constitute an aesthetic defect. Subsequent work by Daniel Jacobson (1997) and A.W. Eaton (2012) has shown that this is too extreme a position, and that immorality can sometimes contribute to

an artwork's aesthetic value. However, I show that cases of resistance are too extreme for these counterarguments – if the simple reading has aesthetic value, it cannot be found in its immorality.

Carroll's moderate moralist position argues that moral qualities can, but do not always, contribute to aesthetic evaluation (Carroll, 1996). This position seems promising for explaining why it is that Hume, Walton, Weatherston and others think that imaginative resistance can have a negative effect on aesthetic judgements. Carroll's objective with moderate moralism is to argue that some artworks prompt moral responses, and warrant moral evaluation (Carroll, 1996, p. 227). He claims that some narrative artworks require the audience to deploy moral concepts in order to understand the events depicted (1996, p. 228). His example is *Madame Butterfly's* wedding scene, and its requirement that the audience recognise Pinkerton to be unworthy of his bride. Other examples are not hard to find, such as Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, the entire plot of which deals with immorality, guilt, and ultimately redemption. If no moral concepts are used, the plot of *Crime and Punishment* will not make sense. This shows that fictions have moral features, but it still remains to be seen how these can play a role in aesthetic evaluation. Carroll answers this, beginning by asserting that since artworks have moral features, they may be either morally commendable (in the case that they deepen our moral understanding) or morally defective (if they confuse or corrupt our moral understanding) (1996, p. 230). Given that artworks deliberately try to instill a moral position in their audience (to scorn Pinkerton, to will Raskolnikov to confess, etc.), this means that artworks with defective moral features are at a disadvantage. If an artwork attempts to instill a moral lesson in its reader, but fails to do so because the viewer rejects its flawed morality, the novel is aesthetically flawed (Carroll, 1996, p. 232). This is a feasible explanation of how resistance can harm aesthetic judgements about a fiction.¹⁹

¹⁹ Importantly, this rejection can be symptomatic of either an unwillingness or an inability to deploy the moral concepts needed to adopt the position that the fiction attempts to prescribe. This account of aesthetic effects is therefore applicable to both cantian and wontian views. Furthermore, this could apply to imaginative resistance towards non-moral aspects of a fiction. For example, we could consider the reader to have rejected the flawed humour of Walton's unfunny joke. The fiction has failed on some level because of this, and so our aesthetic judgement is affected.

While moderate moralism provides an account of how resistance can harm the reader's experience, the fact remains that there are examples of deviant morality which do not damage the fiction's aesthetic value. Films which portray sadistic violence, such as Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* or Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*, are often celebrated in spite of and occasionally because of the immoral events depicted. Clearly a more nuanced account than Carroll's is required in order to explain why this occurs. Efforts have been made to understand the appeal of immoral fiction by Daniel Jacobson and A.W. Eaton. What both of these disagree with is the underlying assumption of Carroll's moralism, made explicit by Berys Gaut – that "if a work manifests morally bad attitudes it is to that extent aesthetically flawed" (1998, p. 184). Instead of insisting that moral deviance necessarily results in aesthetic devaluing, Jacobson argues that immorality can have an aesthetic value of its own. He agrees with Carroll that moral value can contribute to aesthetic value, but adds that "the immorality of some art – like the offensiveness of some jokes – is equally inseparable from its aesthetic value" (1997, p. 182). Eaton takes up a similar idea, but also attacks the notion that depictions of immorality in fictions are inaccessible to moral readers. She notes in a theory she calls 'immoralism' that audiences *do* sympathise and identify with "the vicious sentiments of fictional characters" (2012, p. 281). These include moral deviants such as Macbeth and Milton's Satan, as well as more modern examples such as Hannibal Lecter and Tony Soprano. It is possible to engage with fictions that depict these sorts of characters, but it is more difficult to do so than with morally virtuous characters. This explains why immorality can be perceived as an aesthetic defect, but Eaton argues that there are two sides to this coin. Immoral fictions which fail to engage their audience are aesthetically flawed as a result, but immoral fictions which succeed in engaging their audience must be of high quality. She argues that "the capacity to make an audience feel and desire things inimical to their considered views and deeply held principles is... an aesthetic achievement" (2012, p. 281). Some fictions therefore benefit aesthetically from the inclusion of moral flaws. Not only is this significant in itself, it is also coherent with the notion that some moral flaws may indeed be aesthetic defects. The difference between the two is whether the fiction is well-composed enough to draw in the

audience despite the difficulties imposed by the morally flawed subject matter. If it fails, it is correspondingly worse off aesthetically. If it succeeds, then its value increases as a result.

This approach, a blend of moderate moralism and Eaton's immoralism, explains how moral flaws can benefit a fiction aesthetically. However, it does not satisfactorily explain how the simple reading of resistance can be aesthetically beneficial. As Eaton points out, this is an adequate explanation for a wontian, who can overcome their resistance and engage with the immoral features (2012, p. 287). For a cantian, however, to undergo resistance implies that one does not engage at all. If the audience is persuaded to engage despite moral flaws, as they would have to be according to immoralism, it is not clear that they are still undergoing cantian imaginative resistance. In order to maintain theory-neutrality, I must find an account which can apply to both the cantian and the wontian. The next section of this chapter examines a different technique for positive use of imaginative resistance.

4. Using resistance

This technique is demonstrated in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*. James Harold suggests that this novel puts imaginative resistance to an aesthetically beneficial use. Rather than close engagement with the plot and characters, Harold argues that it is the author's ironic voice which provides excitement and enjoyment (2007, p. 151). The voice and its humour are products of this distance between the reader and the narrative. The characters of the novel are morally twisted and grossly exaggerated, making the matter-of-fact narration ironically inappropriate. The characters themselves are not believable or sympathetic. If we were to simply attempt to engage with these characters as we normally would with a novel, Harold suggests, *Catch-22* would not be anywhere near as enjoyable (2007, p. 151). However, because we undergo imaginative resistance, we do not make such an attempt. We therefore recognise the characters as parodies, and are able to appreciate the fact that they are not realistic, but rather humorously exaggerated. This is an example of imaginative resistance being met head-on (i.e., not being normalised via narrative doubt or alienation) and yet making a positive contribution to aesthetic judgements about the

fiction. I am not entirely convinced that *Catch-22* is an example of imaginative resistance, but Harold's example of how resistance might benefit a fiction stands regardless. He makes the following observation:

Imaginative resistance is properly thought of as a demerit on many realistic novels because of the way it interferes with the kind of engagement characteristic of realism. In *Catch-22*, imaginative resistance is part of what makes the work engaging. The absurdities and moral outrages of the work provide much of the emotional substance that makes the book's quite acentral perspective emotionally rich (2007, p. 152).

Whether or not *Catch-22* is considered to cause imaginative resistance, Harold identifies a circumstance in which imaginative resistance is aesthetically beneficial. In a work of fiction which does away with realism and instead depicts moral deviancy (without any indication that the incoherent morality should be normalised), the resistance felt by the reader is a positive element of the experience. It might be argued that this is simply a slight variation on alienation. However, this is not the case. The reader cannot be alienated, because she can still make detailed inferences about the fiction, can still engage with the fiction's moral content (else the twisted morality of *Catch-22* would not be so funny), and she may still attempt to imagine and to imaginatively elaborate upon the content of the fiction. As Harold describes, the moral deviancy of *Catch-22* prevents her from fully engaging with the fiction in the manner typically desired of the reader. In this state, the 'ironic, distanced view of the world described in the novel' is more accessible (Harold, 2007, p. 151). Harold also observes that this distancing serves to throw the final section of the novel into stark contrast. When, in the closing chapters of *Catch-22*, the narrative becomes far more serious and loses its detachment, the novel acquires enormous emotional impact. Harold argues that "the experience of being drawn quite non-ironically into a detailed description of a character's death is more powerful *because* the reader has been mostly protected from such intense sympathetic feeling... up to that point" (2007, p. 151, Harold's emphasis). The key point to take away from Harold's work is that it can be aesthetically beneficial to imagine in this detached (yet not alienated) manner.

It is helpful to consider an example of a fiction which *attempted* to use the same technique that Harold describes but, it is commonly thought, failed to do so. A good example has already been discussed in the context of alienation – *American Psycho*. Perhaps Ellis’ intended to use the same sort of literary technique as Heller when writing the novel, but misjudged his audience or his work. Critics and academics have argued that the novel is intended to be a satire. In this reading, the gruesome scenes depicted are not simply for shock value, but are barbs at consumer culture in Eighties America. However, the descriptions of torture and sexual abuse are so intense that many readers simply miss the satiric intention. Instead of keeping the reader distanced in order to appreciate the ironic narrative, *American Psycho* is disgusting enough that it can force the reader to alienate herself instead. In other instances, this alienated state could have been turned to aesthetic advantage, but *American Psycho* does not deploy any of the techniques required for this to happen (like those described in §1). It is a novel which attempts to use imaginative resistance (or something very much like it) to a positive effect, but is generally seen as failing to do so. Some readers, those of a particularly strong constitution, are not alienated by the violence but instead see the satire. In these cases, the resistance caused by the narrative is beneficial in the same way that Harold posits – it makes the ironic narrative the focal point of the fiction rather than the gruesome events depicted. A reader immersed in the plot would fail to recognise the satiric narrative, and so would miss out on this aspect of the fiction.

Before I proceed to conclude this essay as a whole, I will take a moment to reflect on what this chapter has contributed. The key argument is this: the experience of imaginative resistance has the power to contribute to aesthetic judgements about a fiction. There is a myriad of different ways that it can do so, and these different techniques can be ultimately positive or negative influences on aesthetic judgements. This means that previous examinations of the aesthetic puzzle have been simplistic. Rather than asking why imaginative resistance makes a fiction less enjoyable, it is more sensible to ask how reader responses to imaginative resistance influence aesthetic judgements. As this chapter has argued, the answer is not that the variety of reader responses all result in a judgement of aesthetically poor fiction. Instead, the themes and

style of the text may well be enhanced by imaginative resistance, as is the case with *Catch-22* and, arguably, with *American Psycho*. In other cases, the deviant morality on display in the text does indeed cause aesthetic judgements to turn against the fiction. Imaginative resistance makes engaging with the fiction difficult (or impossible, depending upon which theory is being used), and engagement is usually an important part of enjoying the fiction. This can damage the aesthetic response, though its impact must be weighed against other factors. This balancing act is seen in Roger Ebert's review of the infamously racist *The Birth of a Nation*. Ebert writes that 'The most exciting and technically accomplished sequence... is also the most disturbing, as a white family is under siege in a log cabin, attacked by blacks and their white exploiters, while the Ku Klux Klan rides to the rescue' (2003). Ebert clearly encountered resistance to this scene and its positive depiction of the Ku Klux Klan. Despite this, other factors (such as the excellent cinematography) resulted in his aesthetic experience being an ultimately positive one - he awards the film four out of four stars.

Conclusion

One of the underlying assumptions of the aesthetic puzzle is that the experience of imaginative resistance is not aesthetically profitable. It claims that a fiction is worse off for the imaginative resistance that it prompts. I have argued that this assumption is mistaken; imaginative resistance is not necessarily a bad thing. Instead, resistance is something that can improve a reader's experience. I have listed two significant ways in which this occurs. One, suggested by Harold, is when resistance makes the reader focus more on narrative voice than characters. This allows the narrative tone to be appreciated – Harold's example is the ironic tone of *Catch-22*. The other is when resistance encourages the reader to undergo an engagement shift. There are in turn two ways in which this can occur. The reader might come to believe that the narrative is unreliable, forced to naturalise an incoherent fiction by interpreting it non-literally. This engagement shift is called narrative doubt. Another possibility is that the reader will change the way she imagines the fiction. Rather than engaging in a phenomenologically rich, emotionally affective type of imagining, she imagines at a suppositional level. This is imaginative alienation. Both of these engagement shifts have the potential to increase the reader's enjoyment of the fiction. Narrative doubt can draw the reader into a more active role, engaging their judgements rather than leaving them as passive receivers of exposition. Imaginative alienation can be used to assist in the transmission of a fiction's themes. By preventing the audience from becoming immersed, a more reasoned critical eye can be applied to the fiction, making it easier to recognise whatever message the fiction conveys. It is also the case that engagement shifts do not need to occur for imaginative resistance to improve judgements about a fiction. Non-realist texts can benefit greatly from the shift in focus from characters and events to narrative voice which a simple reading of resistance can cause.

I do not think that this essay covers all possibilities for the aesthetic effects of resistance. Other engagement shifts and other methods of using the techniques I have described may well

exist. Just as Walton says – “I have learned never to say never about such things. Writers of fiction are a clever and cantankerous lot who usually manage to do whatever anyone suggests can’t be done” (1994, p. 38). What I have shown is just how true Walton’s words are – that even a phenomenon like imaginative resistance, almost invariably assumed to damage the aesthetic impact of a fiction, can be a positive addition to a text.

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