

# THE PARADOX OF FICTION

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## 1 Introduction: Paradox, Emotion, Response, Fiction

The paradox of fiction is a comparatively recent problem in the philosophy of literature, around which a considerable industry has quickly developed. Although we take for granted that reading a novel, such as *Anna Karenina*, involves our engaging emotionally with the characters in the novel, Radford (1975) asserts that it does not make sense logically to claim that a reader responds emotionally to Anna Karenina and her travails, when reading the novel. Radford's claim that it is paradoxical to have an emotional response to a fictitious character was received, by a generation of theorists, as an invitation to demonstrate why an emotional response to a fictional character is not, in principle, paradoxical.

The form of the paradox is widely accepted, and, in a review of the literature on the paradox, Levinson (1997, 22–23) sets out the premises that give rise to the paradox in the following terms:

- (a) We often have emotions for fictional characters and situations known to be purely fictional.
- (b) Emotions for objects logically presuppose beliefs in the existence and features of those objects.
- (c) We do not harbour beliefs in the existence and features of objects known to be fictional.

This is a paradox because the experience it describes appears to involve a contradiction (namely, that we believe in the existence of the object and we do not harbour beliefs in the existence of the object), and yet it also appears to be true that we do experience fiction in this contradictory way.

Although there is consensus about how to state the paradox, there is disagreement about how to break it. If any one of the three premises is denied, then the paradox does not arise. Each premise has been challenged in a way that, it has been claimed, breaks the paradox:

1. Walton (1978) has been taken to reject (a), when he claims that what we have in response to fiction is not (ordinary) emotions, but 'quasi-emotions'. A quasi-emotion has the phenomenology of an ordinary emotion, but does not presuppose an existence belief in the quasi-emotion's object. The quasi-emotion involves our engaging in 'make-believe', and having the psychological and physiological response to the 'make-believe' that we would have to a belief about the world in (ordinary) emotional

- experiences. This quasi-emotional response does not presuppose an existence belief in the fictional object, even though an ordinary emotional response does presuppose such an existence belief.
2. Lamarque (1981), Carroll (1990), and Smith (1995) reject (b), claiming that the (ordinary) emotions we feel in response to fiction do not presuppose belief in the existence of the objects of those emotions. These theorists accept that emotional responses to non-fictional objects do presuppose beliefs about the existence of these objects. However, they claim that it is a mistake to treat these cases as being paradigmatic of emotional responses in general. Rather, we would do better to see that all that is required is that we 'mentally represent' (Lamarque), 'entertain in thought' (Carroll), or 'imaginatively propose' (Smith) the existence of the object, as they claim that we do when we respond emotionally to fictional characters. If these theorists are correct, the emotional response to fiction is a better paradigm for understanding emotional response generally, and emotional response to non-fictional objects is a peculiar case in which we do harbour existence beliefs, even though these are not necessary for emotional response in general.
  3. pseudo-Coleridge\* (1907) rejects (c), maintaining that we *do* harbour beliefs in the existence of objects known to be fictional. Coleridge famously spoke of "that willing suspension of disbelief" as an account of how it is that we temporarily harbour beliefs in the existence of objects that we otherwise know do not exist. Film theorists have also adapted Freud's concept of 'disavowal' as a means of achieving the same theoretical end.

Predictably enough, learned papers were soon to be found disputing each of these 'solutions' to the paradox:

1. Walton's critics have adopted two distinct lines of attack. First, Walton's argument depends upon an analogy between the make-believe games played by children and emotional responses to fiction. Carroll (1990) has argued, however, that these two cases are not analogous: whereas children choose to play make-believe, and retain control over their participation in it, filmgoers do not have this kind of control over their emotional responses when they are watching a film. Second, exception has been taken to the idea of quasi-emotions, which are thought to be unnecessarily theoretical entities, for which film theory provides simpler and better accounts (Saateala 1994 and Hartz 1999).
2. Lamarque's critics are fewer than Walton's, and his appears to be the preferred solution at the moment. Turvey (1997) has argued that our responses to the concrete presentation of cinematic images are often indifferent to their existence, suggesting that Lamarque's concern about existence claims is redundant, more than incorrect. The strongest line of attack seems to have been anticipated by Radford at the outset: why is merely entertaining a thought about Anna Karenina and her travails (rather than believing the thought about her existence and her travails) enough to generate an emotional response?
3. pseudo-Coleridge's critics have devoted very little time to criticising this position. Currie (1990) makes short shrift of the solution, pointing out that it is very rare for anyone to believe the content of what he knows to be fiction, but, even when this occurs, it is too fleeting to account for the often sustained emotional responses to fictional objects.

This chapter could take the form of a reverential treatment of Radford's paradox, the three proposed solutions, and the critiques of these solutions, but it will not. Instead, we shall examine in turn the four concepts that give us the paradox of emotional response to fiction, namely: paradox, emotion, response, fiction.

## 2 Paradox

The *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy's* entry for 'paradox' instructs us:

A paradox arises when a set of apparently incontrovertible premises gives unacceptable or contradictory conclusions. To solve a paradox will involve either showing that there is a hidden flaw in the premises, or that the reasoning is erroneous, or that the apparently unacceptable conclusion can, in fact, be tolerated.

The literature on the paradox of fiction consists of attempts at avoiding the contradiction that arises from the paradox's three premises, by showing the hidden flaws in one or other of the premises.

The paradox of emotional response to fiction is closely connected with other central concerns in the philosophy of literature, in particular, the paradox of tragedy (as well as the related paradox of horror) and the artistic expression of emotion. It is notable that fiction, tragedy, and expression have not only been central themes in the literature, but are also problems that have been subjected to different modes of treatment.

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle (1961) introduces the philosophical discussion of tragedy that ultimately gave rise to the paradox of tragedy. Aristotle's treatment of the subject is something like a practitioner's handbook for the budding tragedian: in order to write a successful tragedy, you will have to provide a *mimesis* of an ethically serious situation, in which the audience experiences fear, pity, and a *katharsis* of fear and pity.

In his essay, "Of Tragedy", Hume (1987) takes up the problem of *katharsis*, and suggests that the pleasure that an audience takes in the experience of fear and pity can better be understood in terms of the concept of 'conversion', through which un-pleasurable emotions are converted into pleasurable ones. Hume's treatment of the subject differs from Aristotle's not only in terms of his solution, but also in terms of his approach. For Hume, the fundamental problem that tragedy raises is a psychological problem, rather than a practical problem: What kind of creatures are we that we would take pleasure in being distressed?

In Radford's (1975) essay, the treatment differs again, and not simply because he is concerned with 'fiction' rather than 'tragedy'. For Radford, the problem is fundamentally a logical problem: it is irrational to respond to fiction in a way that involves a contradiction.

In an influential essay, "The Expression Theory of Art", Bouwsma (1954) addresses the problem not of how we respond emotionally to the fictional character, Anna Karenina, but the problem of how Tolstoy's novel, *Anna Karenina*, can be expressive of emotion. Bouwsma is not concerned with the practical problem of how to write an expressive novel, or some psychological problem concerning how it is that we are the kind of creatures that find novels expressive of emotion. And unlike Radford, he is not concerned with a logical problem. Rather, he has taken the 'linguistic turn', and is interested in understanding artistic expression by investigating the different meanings of a common predicate – 'is sad' – when we make claims such as 'the music is sad', 'the girl is sad', 'the girl's face is sad', and 'the dog's face is sad'.

What this shows us is that there are at least four ways in which a philosopher might frame an inquiry into emotional response to fiction:

1. Practical inquiry: e.g. what are the necessary requirements for me to include in my work of fiction in order for it to invite emotional responses from its audience?
2. Psychological inquiry: e.g. what sort of creatures are we that we are capable of responding emotionally to fictitious characters?
3. Logical inquiry: e.g. is emotional response to fiction irrational?
4. Linguistic inquiry: e.g. what do we mean when we claim to respond emotionally to fiction?

Obviously, in providing their 'solutions', Walton, Lamarque, Carroll, and pseudo-Coleridge take themselves to be addressing a logical problem, and we can assess their solutions as arguments about a logical problem.

But there is no obvious reason (at least not before 1975) why we should treat the phenomenon of the emotional response to fiction as giving rise to a logical problem, rather than a practical problem, a psychological problem, or a linguistic problem. (Similarly, when it comes to tragedy, it is not Hume's solution to the paradox, so much as his very approach in framing his essay as a psychological inquiry, that differs from Nietzsche's (1999) treatment of the same subject in *The Birth of Tragedy* as a broader cultural inquiry.) It is notable that the philosophical treatment of emotional response to fiction did not take the linguistic turn at a time when this turn was fashionable both in aesthetics and general philosophy, and it would be interesting to speculate about why this might be so.

The first sentence of Stock's (2006, 37) article, "Thoughts on the 'Paradox' of Fiction", reads, "This paper concerns the familiar topic of whether we can have genuinely emotional responses such as pity and fear to characters and situations we believe to be fictional." To this first sentence is appended the following footnote: "A different question is whether emotional responses such as pity and fear towards fictional characters and situations can be rational (Radford (1975)). I take it that this question is satisfactorily answered by Gaut (2003)." So, Stock represents the shift in theorists, three decades after Radford's article, who now believe that the interesting inquiries into emotional response to fiction concern psychological, rather than logical issues.

Thus, it behoves us to acknowledge that a big part of our interest in the paradox of emotional response to fiction stems from the inherent appeal of logical problems, especially paradoxes, as much as, if not more than, the value that we attach to fiction as an art form, or emotion in our practical life or aesthetic contemplation. Were this not so, theorists would structure their inquiries into emotional response to fiction quite differently.

### 3 Emotion

In order to get going, the paradox makes certain assumptions about the nature of emotion. It is notable that philosophy of emotion emerged as a growth industry in analytic philosophy at about the same time that the paradox did, with Solomon's (1976) *The Passions*, drawing attention to the judgement theory of emotion the year after Radford's paper was published.

Conceptual analysis of 'emotion' differs from conceptual analysis of 'belief', 'desire', or 'action' in part because it is much less clear what one is attempting to analyse in the case of emotion. Emotion is an heterogeneous category: some emotions, such as startle, seem closer to instinctual reactions, whereas other emotions, such as envy, seem more closely related to higher cognitive activities. Whereas some emotional phenomena seem to be instantaneous, others have a temporal dimension that might span a lifetime; thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations all attend emotions, but different emotions seem more significantly connected to one or other of these. The heterogeneous nature of the category of emotion has led not only to a multitude of attempts at conceptual analysis, but also an outright denial of the possibility of conceptual analysis of emotion because it is not a natural kind term (Griffiths 1997), or because it is in need of deconstruction through the history of philosophy (Rorty 1980).

The contemporary debate in philosophy of emotion emerged in response to William James's (1884) paper which famously advanced the non-cognitive theory of emotion: emotion, James claims, is simply the awareness of the feeling of bodily changes. A century later, a number of theories emerged arguing that James was fundamentally wrong, and that emotions are fundamentally judgements. While the cognitive theorists agree that emotions are judgements, they disagree about the kind of judgments that emotions are: different candidates include belief and desire (Solomon 1976 and Gordon 1987), feeling (Stocker and Hegeman 1999 and Goldie 2000), and evaluative judgement (Nussbaum 2001). However, Damasio (1994) heralded a new era in the philosophy of emotion, by explaining that the neuroscience establishes that emotions are not high-level cognitive responses, like judgements, but rather physiological responses, which can occur before the brain has had time to form a higher cognitive response. This seemed to refute the judgement theorists, and invite a return to (a more sophisticated) non-cognitive theory of emotion. The most recent work, however, has involved offering a conceptual analysis of emotion that incorporates both judgements and physiological phenomena into emotions either by analysing emotion as a 'process' that involves both cognitive and non-cognitive elements (Robinson 2005), or as an 'embodied appraisal' that combines these elements (Prinz 2004).

Our affective lives are composed of a range of phenomena, including moods, as well as emotions. Moods, such as amusement or boredom, are less transient than emotions, and are not directed towards any particular object in the way that (fully developed) emotions usually are (see Wollheim 1999, 76). Fiction typically elicits emotions rather than moods. Or rather, the paradox of fiction focuses on emotional responses rather than evocation of moods, which might seem more relevant to the problem of artistic expression. (*The Catcher in the Rye* seems to me to be an example of a novel in which the reader responds to Holden Caulfield and his narration by being permeated by a quite distinctive mood, aside from whether or not Holden is the object of any emotion that the reader feels.) So there is an assumption in the paradox that what matters is emotions. But there is a good reason for the assumption: emotions are directed towards objects, which means they might presuppose existence beliefs in the objects, and hence give rise to the logical problem (which objectless moods would not).

Given that emotions are directed towards an object, they might involve thoughts about the object, and those thoughts might include a belief about the object's existence. This is all quite natural if one adopts a cognitive theory of emotion as some sort of judgement. If one adopts a non-cognitive theory of emotion, emotions are still responses to

objects. However, when the non-cognitive theorist analyses an emotion as a physiological response to an object (rather than as a judgement about the object), there is no longer any place for a belief (about the object's existence or anything else) within the emotion. So, whereas it fits comfortably within a cognitive theory to claim that a belief in the object's existence forms part of the judgement about the object, it is highly problematic for the non-cognitive theorist to include such a belief within a physiological analysis of emotion. This might be a problem for the non-cognitive theorist's analysis of emotion. But, if the non-cognitive theorist can circumvent the problem, then he can also circumvent the paradox of fiction: beliefs do not form part of an emotional response to fiction, on the non-cognitivist's account, and hence emotional response to fiction does not generate a contradiction.

Robinson (2005, 143) points out that, other than Carroll (1997), almost none of the philosophers writing on the paradox of fiction "have had much of a theory of emotion, yet how one responds to this issue will depend very largely on what one thinks an emotional experience is". This is concerning because the assumptions that the theorists seem to make about emotion are not necessary, and may be avoided, in which case the paradox does not get going. Robinson's own theory of emotion refutes the cognitive theory of emotion, and with it the second premise of the paradox, and so she regards the logical problem as uninteresting, and is more interested in pursuing related psychological problems.

When philosophers write about the paradox of fiction, it not only seems that they are interested in the interaction between fiction and emotions, rather than fiction and moods (or other parts of our affective life), but also that they have, or assume, a commitment to the cognitive theorist's analysis of emotion as a judgement. The paradox does not get going in the same way if one adopts a non-cognitive approach to emotion. The judgement theory was certainly in vogue during the decades in which interest in the paradox peaked. However, this commitment is particularly worrying, given that there has been a notable shift away from (exclusively) cognitive theories of emotion in recent times (the notable exceptions being Nussbaum 2001 and Wollheim 1999). In this way, the paradox reminds us of the importance of thinking carefully about how philosophers of art should approach theory of emotion, and the extent to which theorising about the links between art and emotion might (or might not) be affected by issues in the philosophy of mind and psychology.

#### 4 Response

What we are concerned with in the paradox of emotional response to fiction is the way that a subject responds to an object, and the thought that some feature of a certain kind of object makes it irrational for the subject to respond to that object in a particular way.

Emotions are, by their very nature, responses to the impact of the world upon the subject (for a discussion of Wollheim and Spinoza on the activity and passivity of this response, see Freeman 2012, 34–35). So it is hardly surprising that emotions should form part of our response to the objects of art that we encounter, including expressive works of art, fictional works of art, and the emotions of characters that we encounter in fictional works of art. If a subject responds emotionally to a work of art, this might involve the subject experiencing the emotion that he perceives in the art object (as Tolstoy, 1996, argues in the course of offering a definition of art as expression of emotion), or it might involve the subject experiencing a different emotion in response to the

emotion perceived in the art object (as Aristotle 1961 argues in his account of the tragic audience's experience of pity in response to the perceived fear). Or the response might not involve undergoing the experience of an emotion, but rather the comprehending of an otherwise incomprehensible emotion (as Collingwood 1938 argues in his definition of art as expression of emotion). If the subject's emotional response to an art object involves experiencing emotion, rather than comprehending emotion, there is then a difficult question as to whether this emotional experience involves the ordinary experience of emotion, familiar from our practical lives, or some other form of emotional experience; albeit one that falls short of the ordinary sense in which we experience emotions. Wollheim (1980, 28–29) calls for "a more generous conception of the different relations in which a person can stand to the conscious feelings that he has", explaining that "it is a fact of human nature . . . that, even when feelings enter into consciousness, they can be comparatively split off or dissociated". So we need to consider the relation in which the subject stands to his own emotions when he responds emotionally to a fictional object of art.

In the context of artistic expression, Matravers (1998) has valiantly defended the idea that expressive works of art are expressive in virtue of their arousing the audience's emotions, and that these aroused emotions are experienced in the ordinary sense. However, Walton (1997) has argued that, although it is correct to analyse artistic expression in terms of the arousal of emotion in response to art, this is not a matter of experiencing emotions in the ordinary sense, but imaginatively experiencing emotions. A similar situation occurs in the analysis of the response that occurs when we engage with fictional characters: either the response is an ordinary emotional response, or it is a special kind of emotional response.

Fiction might elicit ordinary emotional responses. However, in this case, the philosopher will have to engage in some fancy footwork to establish, as Lamarque (1981) does, why it is rational to have an ordinary emotional response to a non-existent object. He does this by arguing that an ordinary emotional response occurs when the subject mentally represents the object, without the need for the subject to harbour a belief about the object's existence. A response that requires the subject to believe in the existence of the object of the response would be irrational in the case of an object that the subject knows to be non-existent, such as a fictional character. However, there is nothing irrational about a response to a non-existent object which requires merely that the subject mentally represents the object. Lamarque maintains that we respond emotionally to fictional and non-fictional objects in the same way, but that this same response involves the subject harbouring an existence belief about the object in one case, and merely mentally representing the object in the other case. By clarifying the way in which the thoughts about the object attend the emotional response to the object, Lamarque seeks to prove that it is rational for a subject to have an ordinary emotional response to a fictional object.

Just as expressive music arouses 'make-believe' emotions, according to Walton, it might be that 'make-believe' is central to an account of the response elicited by fictional characters. This involves Walton (1978) in an elaborate argument, in which filmgoers make-believe that they are part of the make-believe world of the film, and have quasi-emotional responses to the 'make-believe'. Likewise, when the reader responds to Anna Karenina, this is a response to a 'make-believe' (rather than a response to a belief), and the response is a quasi-emotion (which shares the same psychological and physiological features of the response that one has to a belief in the case of emotion).

Walton's argument has been subjected to intense scrutiny, notably Neill's (1991) analysis of Walton's 'quasi-emotion' as simulation of emotion, and Neill's claim that at least some emotions, such as fear, cannot be simulated. In this regard, it should be noted that other commentators do not believe that Walton is concerned with simulation of emotion at all: Stecker (2011) believes that Walton's theory is best understood without employing 'quasi-emotion', as this term has been fundamentally misunderstood in the literature. However, Walton's theory is impressive as a solution to the paradox, seeking to demonstrate that, although an (ordinary) emotional response to a non-existent object would be irrational, a quasi-emotional response to a non-existent object is not irrational. But Walton's (1978, 1990, and 1997) approach is also insightful as an account of how 'make-believe' provides new possibilities for responding emotionally to art. This seems to resonate with Wollheim's claim that there is a range of different relations in which we can stand to our emotions, and that art invites unorthodox emotional responses. Walton's quasi-emotional response to fiction is then one of the special ways in which we respond to the objects of art; one of a variety of responses that are rational responses to art and its objects, on account of the peculiar features of those objects (such as their being fictional), albeit responses that are otherwise unknown in the non-aesthetic life of educated Western adults, who are accustomed to responding to more pedestrian objects.

If successful, the solutions demonstrate not only the rationality of our responses to fictional characters, but that art expands our experience by offering us the opportunity to respond to imaginary objects or the opportunity for imaginary response to objects; experiences that rarely occur in Western culture after childhood (possibly because of this culture's inculcation of a certain conception of rationality in its mature members). Viewed in this way, the paradox of emotional response to fiction contributes massively to our understanding of the possibilities for how humans are capable of responding to the world. However, in doing so, we have now moved from the logical problem to the psychological problem.

## 5 Fiction

The foregoing assumes that the interesting or problematic aspect of our emotional response to novels, plays, and films, stems from the imaginary or non-existent nature of these things. But, perhaps, the problem does not have so much to do with the fact that we are dealing with something imaginary, as much as it has to do with some other feature of the art object, such as its narrative structure. 'Fiction' has multiple meanings connected with both the 'imaginary' and the 'narrative'.

Budd (1995, 86) writes that "the possibly fictional nature of poetry in itself presents no obstacle to its appreciation". In the context of the paradox of fiction, such a claim might seem remarkable: we are concerned with a very specific obstacle that is thought to prevent our appreciating art of a fictional nature in a manner that is commonly thought to be central to our appreciation of such art (emotional response), precisely because of its fictional nature. However, Budd's claim must be read in the context of his earlier comment that "what matters in poetry is the imaginative experience you undergo in reading the poem" (1995, 83). Poetry, he claims, always involves 'imaginative experience', and it is sometimes of a 'fictional nature'. It is necessary to clarify what is meant by 'fictional' before we can understand why the fictional nature of novels, plays, and

films is thought to be a serious obstacle to their appreciation, whereas, apparently, it is not an obstacle to the appreciation of poetry.

'Fiction' and 'fictitious' both have multiple meanings. 'Fiction' can mean:

1. something (imaginatively) invented or untrue; or
2. literature in the form of prose, especially the novel, that is concerned with the narration of events and portraiture of people.

In the first sense, 'fiction' is a synonym for 'fabrication', 'untruth', or 'imaginative invention'. In the second sense, 'fiction' is a synonym for 'narrative literature'. 'Fictitious' also has two senses:

1. not true, not real, imaginary, or fabricated; or
2. occurring in, or invented for, fiction.

So the first sense of 'fiction' and 'fictitious' is related to 'fabrication' or 'untruth', and the second sense of these words is related to 'narrative literature'. 'Fictional' is a synonym for the second sense of 'fictitious'; in other words, 'fictional' relates to 'narrative literature', rather than 'fabrication' or 'untruth'.

While all poetry involves fictitious experience, in that it is imaginary experience, not all poetry is fictional in the sense of involving a narrative (hence the classical distinction between lyric poetry and epic poetry). So Budd can claim that all poetry is fictitious, and some poetry is fictional. In contrast, it is a central feature of the major English literary prose form – the novel – and the major dramatic forms – theatre and film – that they are almost always narratives, and so 'fictional' in the sense of 'fiction' as a synonym for 'narrative literature'. Narration is a central feature of novels, plays, and films, but is not nearly as central to poetry. When Budd claims that "the possibly fictional nature of poetry in itself presents no obstacle to its appreciation", he has in mind the sense of 'fiction' as 'fabrication' or 'untruth'. However, when we say that the paradox of fiction presents an obstacle to the appreciation of novels, films, and plays, there is an equivocation: we could mean either sense. But it is notable that the literature on the paradox of fiction is usually concerned with novels, plays, and films, the art forms in which there is a strong element of narration, and less frequently discusses poetry, the literary form in which narration is not nearly so significant.

The paradox of fiction is usually presented as being concerned with 'fiction' in the sense of a 'fabrication' or 'untruth'. The problem of emotional response to fictional characters is thought to lie in our knowledge that they are invented, unreal, untrue, or imaginary. Perhaps, however, the emotional response to novels, plays, and films has more to do with our emotional response to fiction in the sense of narration, than with our emotional response to fiction in the sense of being imaginary: what really matters about fiction as imaginary narratives might not be that they are imaginary, but that they are narrative. In *Narrative, Emotion, and Insight* (Carroll and Gibson 2011), we have a collection of essays in which philosophers of art start to examine how a range of problems in the philosophy of art might benefit from a new approach: focusing investigations on the narrative aspect of some works of art. In his contribution, Matravers (2011) considers how the narrative element of novels, plays, and films (a feature that is common to both fictional and documentary novels, plays, and films) might be what

matters for understanding our emotional response to 'fiction', rather than the imaginary element. The first flowering of this idea in the 2011 chapter bears fruit in his subsequent monograph (Matravers 2014), which offers us a new way of understanding the philosophically significant issues surrounding the paradox.

If what is at stake in our emotional response to fiction is our response to narrative structures, rather than our response to fictional characters, then Levinson's statement of the problem needs rethinking, and this might have very serious consequences for the logical problem that is supposed to arise.

### 6 Should we be worried about the paradox of emotional response to fiction?

Finally, an observation about the pedagogical value of the paradox. Having given at least a dozen seminars on it, I have seen that it has the capacity to captivate and repulse students in equal measure. To some, it speaks to a personal experience of fiction that is deeply important to them; to others, it exemplifies the philosopher's ability to trivialise an otherwise fascinating and meaningful experience. Leiber (1993, 35–36) writes in his book about paradoxes, "If we think that the point of education and research, of our whole cognitive existence, is the accumulation of truths, like stocking the shelves of a library, we are likely to misunderstand paradoxes." This is true of the paradox of fiction. Whether or not one takes pleasure in attempting to solve it, what matters is the insights into emotions, existence beliefs, fiction, and narrative that are revealed along the way.

Wittgenstein wrote (Leiber 1993, 55):

Something surprising, a paradox, is a paradox only in a particular, as it were defective, surrounding. One needs to complete this surrounding in such a way that what looks like a paradox no longer seems one.

Hopefully, the 'defective' surroundings of the paradox of emotional response to fiction have now been completed in a way that makes the emotional response to fiction less surprising. These surroundings include the practical, psychological, logical, or linguistic approach we adopt in our inquiries into the emotional response to fiction, and issues concerning the nature of emotion, the ways in which beliefs attend the experience of emotions, the variety of emotional responses, and the relationship between fiction and narrative.

### Note

\* Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) was an English romantic poet, who gave us the immortal phrase, "that willing suspension of disbelief". However, he obviously did not advance this idea as a means of breaking the paradox of fiction, which emerged over a century after his death. So this solution to the paradox is not strictly Coleridge's. Hence, I attribute it to pseudo-Coleridge. It is commonly identified with Coleridge's name because, although he provides us with a possibility for solving the paradox, no post-1975 theorist has aligned himself with this possibility. It is not that I do not wish to credit Coleridge with a possible solution, so much as I do not wish to credit him with taking the paradox of fiction seriously enough to bother about solving it: it is not at all clear that any philosopher – let alone a romantic poet – would have been troubled by Radford's thoughts before 1975.

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