

PHIL 4403: Philosophy of Art

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Lamarque, "How Can We Fear and Pity Fictions?"

I.

*Lamarque describes a "paradox of beliefs": We do not really believe that any suffering occurs in the performance of the play. Yet, we have emotional responses that seem to make sense only on the assumption that we do have such beliefs. (328)

--Lamarque's approach:

"I suggest that the best way to reconcile our intuitions and get a clearer perspective on the matter is to shift the focus of discussion away from beliefs to the fictions themselves and correspondingly from the emotions to the objects of the emotions." (328)

--Lamarque's approach is the opposite of Walton's. Whereas Walton has the audience member entering the fictional world (and experience only make-believe emotions), Lamarque brings the fictional world into the real world (so to speak).

II.

*Lamarque claims that the objects of our emotions in fictional contexts are mental representations (or, as he describes it, thoughts—though not necessarily beliefs—under descriptions).

*Lamarque distinguishes being frightened *by* something and frightened *of* something:

"What we frightened *by* I will call the 'real' object of our fear, what we are frightened *of* I will call the 'intentional' object. It is my contention that the real objects of our fear in fictional cases are thoughts. We are frightened *by* thoughts, though we are not frightened *of* thoughts, except in special circumstances." (330)

--Lamarque makes 4 points about being frightened by thoughts, on pp. 330-331. Importantly, these are "real", as opposed to "quasi", fears.

"Walton's argument might establish that Charles is not and cannot be, given his beliefs, afraid *that the slime is threatening him or that he is in danger from the slime* but it does not show that he is not frightened. We need to distinguish between Charles's being frightened *by the slime* and his being frightened *by the thought of the slime*. (331)

III.

*How do we tell whether a sentence is fictional?

"I will define a fictional use of a sentence in terms of a writer's illocutionary intentions and the conventions of story-telling." (331)

--Fictional uses of sentences are *pretend* illocutionary acts.

--Note Lamarque's distinction, on the right-hand column, p. 332, between the fictional/non-assertive use and the non-fictional/assertive use of 'Othello killed Desdemona'.

*Lamarque makes a Fregean move here:

"In application to our own case, the Fregean suggestion would be that when we truly assert 'In Shakespeare's play, Othello killed Desdemona' the names 'Othello' and 'Desdemona' refer only to their senses and not to any non-existent referents. That is to say, the reference of a fictional name in a non-fictional use is precisely its sense in a fictional use." (333)

--Here, think of a name's sense as its 'mode of presentation'—e.g., the description of the character as given by the text.

IV.

*In order for our thoughts to be of the proper fictional characters both a *causal* and *content* condition must be met. The latter condition need not be met perfectly (i.e., there need not be a perfect correspondence between the description in our mind and the one in the text).

V.

*Is Lamarque correct when he claims:

"Although, indeed, we do not react to the killing of Desdemona as we would to a real killing before our eyes, we do react much as we would to the thought of a real killing." (335)