

## HOW LITERATURE EXPANDS YOUR IMAGINATION

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Many great authors claim that reading literature can expand your phenomenal imagination, and allow you to imagine experiences you have never had. How is this possible? Your phenomenal imagination is constrained by your phenomenal concepts, which are in turn constrained by the phenomenology of your own actual past experiences. Literature could expand your phenomenal imagination, then, by giving you new phenomenal concepts. This paper explains how this can happen. Literature can direct your attention to previously unnoticed phenomenal properties of your own past experiences, brought to mind by involuntary memory. This process gives you the opportunity to notice those phenomenal properties for the first time, and so also to form phenomenal concepts of those properties. Forming a new phenomenal concept strictly expands the range of your phenomenal imagination. It gives you the capacity to imagine more than you could have before, including certain kinds of experience that you yourself have never enjoyed firsthand. Literature's capacity to expand your phenomenal imagination in this way is central to its social, moral, and epistemic value.

One of the transformative effects of great literature is to broaden your imaginative horizons.<sup>1</sup> Many great authors claim that reading literature can extend the range of your phenomenal imagination—the kind that calls to mind the lived feeling of conscious experience.

How does literature accomplish this feat of imaginative expansion? This is our question.

If literature really does this, it must do so in a way that respects a fundamental constraint on the range of your imagination. In rare philosophical consensus, philosophers of mind agree that your capacity for phenomenal imagination is limited by your own past experiences. You cannot imagine experiences involving feelings you've never had yourself.

This doesn't rule out imaginative expansion in literature. We might simply point out that literature expands your phenomenal imagination by giving you experiences of new kinds, with feelings you haven't had before. Call this "the quick answer" to our question.

The quick answer is incomplete in two ways. First, having a new experience is simply not sufficient to expand your phenomenal imagination. Second, having a new experience is also

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not necessary for imaginative expansion of this kind. One key observation can help us see both of these points: you have to *notice* a feeling to come to be able to imagine it later on.

This point clearly implies that having a new experience is insufficient for imaginative expansion. But it also opens another avenue of inquiry into more possibilities for expansion.

If we understand the importance of noticing, we can see that the unnoticed qualities of your own past experiences constitute a deep but untapped reservoir of resources for the imagination. Feelings that you have felt but never noticed before might be ones that the skilled poet or novelist could get you to notice for the first time.

To see how this works, we need to see how the conditions under which you can notice a feeling for the first time can be recreated in thought. For this, I appeal to our understanding of involuntary memory, as conceived by Marcel Proust and described by contemporary cognitive science. Then I explain how metaphors and other literary devices of comparison can activate involuntary memory and point your attention towards previously unnoticed shades of feeling in these involuntarily recalled past experiences, to get you to notice them. Close readings of some passages of poetry illustrate how it feels to undergo this process.

This discussion results in a capacious view of literature's powers to expand your imagination. Literature can expand your phenomenal imagination not only by giving you new feelings—as the quick answer to our question suggested—but also by directing your attention to subtleties of your own past experiences. You can use your concepts of these feelings in predicative combination with others to imagine what it's like to experience particular permutations of feeling you have never enjoyed firsthand. That can help you understand and empathize with others in ways that would otherwise have been unavailable to you. This is just part of the reason that this transformative power of literature has been celebrated by great authors like George Eliot, Marcel Proust, T.S. Eliot, and others.

## 1. The writers' claims

Let's begin with bold statements from great writers, to get a grip on the phenomenon to be explained. I'll first let them speak, and then abstract three core claims from what they say.

In her letters and essays, George Eliot (1901, 1963) wrote both of the following:

If art does not enlarge men's sympathies, it does nothing morally ... the only effect I ardently long to produce by my writings is, that those who read them should be better able to *imagine* and to *feel* the pains and the joys of those who differ from themselves in everything but the broad fact of being struggling, erring, human creatures. (pp.306-7)

Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot. (p.271)

Along similar lines, T.S. Eliot (1957) wrote in his essay "The Social Function of Poetry:"

Beyond any specific intention which poetry may have ... there is always the communication of some new experience, or some fresh understanding of the familiar, or the expression of something we have experienced but have no words for, which enlarges our consciousness or refines our sensibility. (p.7)

Through Marcel, the narrator of his magnum opus *In Search of Lost Time*, Proust (1913) said:

art, if it means awareness of our own life, means also awareness of the lives of other people ... it is the revelation, which by direct and conscious methods would be impossible, of the qualitative difference, the uniqueness of the fashion in which the

world appears to each one of us, a difference which, if there were no art, would remain for ever the secret of every individual. (p.299)

These quotations represent just a small sample of many similar claims made by great authors.<sup>2</sup>

Three core claims can be found in these quotations. I'll lay out all three here. The first will form the main focus of this paper; I'll return to the second and third claims near the end.

The first and most important claim is that literature can expand the range of your imagination. This is a range over possible experiences; the claim is that literature makes you able to imagine experiences you would not have been able to imagine otherwise. George Eliot puts the point in terms of enlargement, amplification, and extension; T.S. Eliot puts it in terms of enlargement and refinement; and Proust in terms of awareness and revelation. It is important to distinguish this claim from other, weaker claims. For example, it is simple to see how literature can spur you to imagine experiences you have never actually imagined before (Scarry, 1999). It might also be true that literature might make your imaginative episodes more vivid or specific (Currie, 1996; Llanera, 2014; Nussbaum, 1990; Walton, 1990). But these authors are saying something stronger: that literature can give you the ability to imagine experiences you would not have been able to imagine otherwise.

The second claim, which is less central to our discussion but is itself even bolder, is about the extent of this imaginative expansion. All three authors quoted above claim that literature makes you able to imagine experiences that you yourself have never had. Note that this second claim is not implied by the first. Literature might make you able to imagine more experiences than you could otherwise have imagined without extending the range of your imagination to cover experiences that you have never had yourself.

The third claim is that literature's expansion of the imagination is good and important. In particular, such imaginative expansion is meant to be socially beneficial, in that it helps us understand and empathize with one another. For this reason, we can see that these authors' statements are not just meant to dazzle the reader in their boldness. They are vital. They are meant to offer some justification for the lifelong, laborious effort of writing.

The truth of the second and third claims depends on the truth of the first. If the first claim were false, and literature could not expand the range of your imagination at all, then it could not expand it to cover experiences you haven't had (as the second claim states); and there would be no relevant expansion that is good and important (as the third claim states).

Although these authors voice deep commitment to the existence and the importance of such imaginative expansion, they don't themselves explain how this imaginative expansion works. That is our question: how can literature expand your imagination?

This discussion aims to answer this question partly in order to vindicate the claims made by these great authors. For this reason, our discussion will partly be constrained by how these authors themselves think of the power of literature to expand the imagination. But we also need to respect a substantive constraint on the imagination, which is accepted by consensus in the philosophy of mind. This is the experiential constraint.

## 2. The experiential constraint

The **experiential constraint** on phenomenal imagination is just this: to phenomenally imagine an experience with a certain feeling, you must have actually experienced that feeling.

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<sup>2</sup> See Coetzee (1999) through alter ego Elizabeth Costello, pp.34-5; Lorde (1984), pp.37-8; and Tolstoy (2008), p. 239. I also read Schiller (2008) as making a similar point.

Thomas Nagel and Frank Jackson have done the most to popularize and explain the experiential constraint. Nagel (1974) famously used it to argue that you could not imagine what it is like to be a bat. Jackson (1982) used it to argue that a brilliant and otherwise omniscient color scientist (“Mary”) kept in a black-and-white room all her life could not imagine what it is like to see red. Aside from Nagel and Jackson, its most prominent proponents include David Chalmers (1996, 2003), Janet Levin (2007), David Lewis (1999), Brian Loar (1990), Lawrence Nemirow (1990), L.A. Paul (2014), and David Papineau (2007).

The constraint is so widely accepted that it is rarely given any significant defense. I will not defend it from scratch here, either. But I will explain what it means, and explain some of the motivation for accepting it, so that we can see how it will constrain our discussion about literature’s powers to expand your imagination.

The experiential constraint applies only to phenomenal imagination, which is not the only type of imagination. To imagine is, generally speaking, to entertain mentally something that is not present, or is not real. For instance, you don’t imagine red by actually seeing red. But **phenomenal imagination** is distinct from other kinds of imagination, even kinds that we sometimes call “imagining what it’s like” (Snowdon, 2010). You can imagine what Bernie Sanders’s administration might be like just by thinking of the domestic policy decisions he might make, without entertaining any sensations or other feelings at all. If you do that, you’re not engaging in phenomenal imagination. Phenomenal imagination is imagination of **phenomenal properties**. A phenomenal property is technically a property of an experience. For an experience to have some phenomenal property is for it to feel some way to its subject. Thus phenomenal imagination necessarily involves imagining feelings. (I often refer to phenomenal properties themselves as “feelings,” to avoid unwieldy formulations.)

Some say that phenomenal imagination is imagination of an experience “from the inside.” This spatial metaphor is intuitive, but it is best not to take it literally. It can obscure the fact that the best way of describing what some experience is like is with reference to those things it seems to present (Strawson, 1974). My experience right now, for example, is (as) of a large cypress tree behind a mess of power lines, all delineated sharply against a flat white sky.

Since experience usually seems to present various features of the world around us, and those features usually produce the same feelings in us, many phenomenal properties are usefully individuated with reference to those features of the world. For example, the scent of pink jasmine is, properly speaking, a property of pink jasmine, the flower type. But we often use the phrase “the scent of pink jasmine” to label a phenomenal property of an experience. What we mean to capture by that is the feeling of an experience of smelling pink jasmine.<sup>3</sup>

With this understanding of phenomenal imagination and phenomenal properties, we can better appreciate the motivation for the experiential constraint. Phenomenal imagination necessarily involves the use of phenomenal *concepts*, and a phenomenal concept of a phenomenal property can only be acquired in an experience that instantiates that property.

A **phenomenal concept** is a concept of a phenomenal property that represents it in the special, unique way that allows you (i) to recognize that phenomenal property as such in experiences that instantiate it and (ii) imagine what it feels like to have an experience with that property (Lewis, 1999; Nemirow, 1990; Papineau, 2007). It is important to note that not every concept of a phenomenal property is a phenomenal concept of a phenomenal property. If you have never tasted durian, you have a concept of the taste of durian—perhaps a descriptive concept (Block, 2007), best captured in just those terms as a concept of “the taste

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<sup>3</sup> I leave aside the metaphysics of phenomenal character—whether it is constituted by properties of objects, or by qualia. See Block (1995), Harman (1990), Martin (2002), and Strawson (2011).

of durian (whatever that is)” —but this is not a concept that lets you recognize or imagine the taste itself (Paul, 2014). On this understanding, it simply falls out that you need a phenomenal concept of a phenomenal property to call that property to mind in phenomenal imagination.

This gives us part one of a background explanation of the experiential constraint: the claim that phenomenal concepts are required for phenomenal imagination. Part two is the claim that experience is required for phenomenal concepts. This sometimes falls out of an analysis of phenomenal concepts, since these are often taken to involve your past experiences in partly constitutive, so ineliminable, ways (Balog, 2009; Levin, 2007; Alter and Walter, 2007).<sup>4</sup> But we need not give any further analysis of phenomenal concepts to see the plausibility of the experiential constraint as a whole—and the plausibility of the more restricted claim that phenomenal concepts are constrained by phenomenal experience.<sup>5</sup> These I will simply take for granted for the purposes of our discussion.

The experiential constraint, then, is just the claim that phenomenally imagining an experience with some phenomenal property requires having had an experience with that property. The explanation of the experiential constraint proceeds by way of phenomenal concepts: phenomenal concepts are required for phenomenal imagination, and having an experience with some phenomenal property is necessary to form a phenomenal concept of it.

Accepting all this doesn’t make it impossible for literature to expand the imagination. On the contrary, this suggests a quick answer to our question about literature’s powers.

### 3. The quick answer

If the range of your actual experiences places an unavoidable limit on the range of your imagination, then there may be one simple way for literature to expand the range of your imagination. Literature, we might say, simply gives you new experiences—ones that have phenomenal properties that none of your past experiences had—and this is the way in which it expands the range of your imagination. Call this “**the quick answer**” to our question.

This is not a very plausible suggestion as it concerns classically perceptual or sensory types of phenomenal property. Literature does not seem to offer brand new colors, sounds, tastes, smells, tickles, and the like for your consideration. But this suggestion is a plausible one for another type of phenomenal property: literature can give you new *emotional* experiences.

Several authors have described this function of literature. T.S. Eliot (1957) wrote:

[the poet is] not merely a more conscious person than the others; he is also individually different from other people, and from other poets too, and can make his readers share consciously in new feelings which they had not experienced before. (p.9)

George Eliot (1901) also mentioned communication of new emotions; she was concerned to make readers “*feel* the pains and the joys of those who differ from themselves” (pp.306-7).

Feeling genuine emotional phenomenology in reading literature should be familiar. You might feel angry at King Lear for his selfish narcissism. You could feel resentful frustration on behalf of Jane Eyre. The fact that literature can elicit real emotional feelings—not by naming these feelings, but eliciting them in response to fictional events—suggests the

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<sup>4</sup> For skepticism about phenomenal concepts, see Ball (2009) and Dennett (2007).

<sup>5</sup> All those who endorse the experiential constraint endorse this claim too. Those who less explicitly endorse the experiential constraint, but still endorse the corresponding constraint on phenomenal concepts, include Balog (2009), Block (2007), and Harman (1990). Cf. Nida-Rümelin (2007), p.310.

possibility of feeling *new* emotional feelings for the first time in reading literature.<sup>6</sup> You might feel the sour curl of terror for the first time in reading a horror story. Your first romantic crush might be a crush on a fictional character.<sup>7</sup> The first time I felt the stunning blankness of trauma was in reading these lines of Pablo Neruda's (2004) treatment of the Spanish Civil War in "Explico algunas cosas" ("I explain some things"):

Bandits with airplanes and with Moors,  
bandits with finger-rings and duchesses,  
bandits with black friars making blessings,  
kept coming from the sky to kill children,  
and through the streets the blood of the children  
ran simply, like children's blood.

These examples of new emotional experiences enjoyed in reading literature are genuine ones, and considering them here really does help us answer our question about imaginative expansion in literature. But the quick answer to our question is not complete, for two reasons.

First, enjoying an experience with a new phenomenal property is simply not *sufficient* for expanding the range of your phenomenal imagination. There is a significant cognitive step left out of the quick answer: you need to *notice* a new feeling in your experience in order to form a phenomenal concept of that feeling, and thus to come to be able to imagine that feeling. Perhaps there are cases in which a new feeling is so salient that you cannot help but notice it, and so this additional noticing condition is easily met. Nonetheless, a full account of imaginative expansion in literature needs to describe and explain this noticing condition.

Second, enjoying an experience with a new phenomenal property is also not *necessary* for expanding the range of your phenomenal imagination. Surprisingly, this fact can also be understood via noticing condition. When we consider the vast range of unnoticed phenomenal properties in any experience you enjoy, and we appreciate the noticing condition on phenomenal concept formation, we can see that you don't need to have a *new* experience to have an opportunity to gain a new phenomenal concept. The vast landscape of unnoticed phenomenal properties of your own past experiences can provide such opportunities too.

These are two different reasons that the quick answer is too quick, but they are both understood in terms of the noticing condition on phenomenal concept formation. Let's turn now to this condition, so that we can start to build a more complete answer to our question.

#### 4. The noticing condition

To acquire a phenomenal concept of a phenomenal property, you must first notice that property. This is **the noticing condition**. Once we appreciate this condition, we can see why literature's giving you new feelings is not strictly *sufficient* for expanding your imagination, and we can see how literature can expand your imagination even without giving you new feelings.

Many philosophers with otherwise divergent views—including R.G. Collingwood (1938), Martine Nida-Rümelin (2007), and Paul Churchland (1985)—have already realized that you

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<sup>6</sup> Even those who deny that we feel *real* emotions in fiction can allow for the presence of genuine experiences that share the phenomenology of these emotions. Cf. Radford and Weston (1975), Lamarque (1981), Walton (1990), Sections 5.2 and 7.1, Carroll (1990) Ch. 2, and Paskow (2010), Ch.1.

<sup>7</sup> Thanks to an audience member at the 2018 Pacific Division meeting of the American Philosophical Association for this example. Cf. Carroll (1990), p.77 and Moyal-Sharrock (2009).

must notice a phenomenal property in order to form a phenomenal concept of it. This point also enjoys intuitive plausibility in experiences of teaching by ostension. If you want to give someone a new phenomenal concept, it is usually not enough to give them an experience with the relevant phenomenal property. You usually need to help them notice that property, too.

But it is one thing to accept the noticing condition, and another to understand why it holds. I'll say a bit here to explain and motivate it.

Start with noticing itself. Noticing (in the sense intended here) is a relation you take to a property, not to a state of affairs. Though we do say true things like "I noticed it was raining," here I use "notice" in a different way than it is used in that context. Noticing a state of affairs relies on conceptualization of it; when you notice that *p*, you recognize that *p*. Noticing a property, however, can be pre-conceptual. You can notice the cold, or notice the color of a jar, before forming a concept of the color or the cold. To **notice** some phenomenal property is (inter alia) to attend consciously to an instance of that property. To notice a phenomenal property is thus to establish a *de re* cognitive connection with an instance of it that supports demonstrative reference to it—for at least as long as your experience has that property.

This minimal characterization of noticing starts to bring out why the noticing condition is a substantive one. You simply could not notice all the phenomenal properties of any experience you have. You could not do that because any given experience has an unlimited number of phenomenal properties. What's more, attention is inherently exclusive: it foregrounds some properties at the cost of backgrounding others (Watzl, 2017; Wu, 2011). Since noticing involves conscious attention, and attention is inherently selective, so is noticing. You simply cannot notice all there is to notice in your experience. Having an experience with a phenomenal property is not alone sufficient for noticing that property.

The noticing condition is a substantive one. Now we will see why noticing a phenomenal property is necessary for acquiring a phenomenal concept of that property.

Contrast merely noticing a phenomenal property with having a phenomenal concept of it. When you notice a phenomenal property of your ongoing experience, you have *de re* cognitive contact with an instance of that property. This contact allows you to think about what that feeling feels like, and it allows you to compare the feeling with others you are currently having. You can say whether the taste in the left of your mouth is the same as the one on the right, or whether two patches have the same color. But if you have merely noticed the relevant property without forming a phenomenal concept of it, these cognitive capacities are temporary, enabled only by the ongoing instantiation of the property itself in your experience (Soteriou 2013, p.187ff.).

Having a phenomenal concept entails the long-term (if not permanent) enjoyment of similar capacities. When you have a phenomenal concept of a particular feeling, you can think about what that feeling feels like even in the absence of actually feeling it; that's part of what phenomenal imagination involves, and phenomenal concepts enable such imagination. You can also compare some such absent feeling with others you are currently having, or with others for which you have phenomenal concepts. One such kind of comparison is a form of recognition; you can *recognize* a feeling as the same as a feeling you have had before.

We can now think of having a phenomenal concept as extending the temporary capacities of noticing across time to enable more powerful judgments and more extended thought about the nature of phenomenal properties. This can help us see why noticing a phenomenal property is required for acquiring, and thus having, a phenomenal concept of it: you must first establish, at least temporarily, the type of cognitive contact that enables these cognitive capacities before such contact can be extended into the longer term. Noticing a phenomenal property simply establishes that cognitive contact, without guaranteeing its extension beyond

the bounds of your ongoing phenomenal experience.

There simply is no other way to establish such cognitive contact with a phenomenal property. No method of definition, implicit or explicit, will give you a *phenomenal* concept of a phenomenal property (although such definition might give you a descriptive concept of that property). What's more, there does not seem to be any other way of acquiring a concept other than by direct cognitive contact with an instance of a property or definition in other terms. This implies that noticing a phenomenal property is not merely conducive to the acquisition of a phenomenal concept; it is absolutely necessary for that acquisition.

Thus noticing a phenomenal property is a substantive necessary condition on gaining a phenomenal concept of that property. Once we recognize this, we can see one reason why the quick answer to our question was simply too quick. The quick answer said that literature can expand your phenomenal imagination by giving you an experience with a new phenomenal property. But if literature could do that getting you to *notice* this new phenomenal property, it would not thereby expand the range of your phenomenal imagination at all.<sup>8</sup>

## 5. Noticing and the past

At this point we might be tempted just to supplement the quick answer to our question with an explanation of how literature gets you to notice new feelings. But this new and admittedly improved answer to our question would still be seriously incomplete for another reason. Not only is the enjoyment of some new experience not *sufficient* for gaining a new phenomenal property; it is also not *necessary* for gaining a new phenomenal property, and thereby expanding the range of your phenomenal imagination.

This much becomes clear when we recognize an implication of the fact that the noticing condition is a substantive one—that is, that you must fail to notice some phenomenal properties of each of your experiences. There is a deep, untapped reservoir of unnoticed phenomenal properties of your *past* experiences to which literature could draw your attention. If literature can get you to notice phenomenal properties of your past experience then literature can thereby get you to form new phenomenal concepts *without* giving you new experiences at all. This is a possibility the quick answer to our question did not even consider.

It is also a possibility that respects the experiential constraint, which does not demand that phenomenal concept acquisition be synchronous with the relevant experience itself. The experiential constraint itself does not demand that phenomenal concept acquisition take place during a firsthand experience instantiating the relevant phenomenal property. That constraint is simply this: to phenomenally imagine an experience with a certain kind of feeling, you need to *have actually had* that kind of feeling. Can you, then, acquire a phenomenal concept of a

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<sup>8</sup> This proposal about the importance of noticing also dovetails nicely with the way in which T.S. Eliot, Marcel Proust, and others think about the role of literature in imaginative expansion. T.S. Eliot (1957) wrote: “in expressing what other people feel [the poet] is also changing the feeling by making it more conscious; he is making people more aware of what they feel already, and therefore teaching them something about themselves” (p.9). Proust (1913b), through Marcel, claims that “we have to rediscover, to reapprehend, to make ourselves fully aware of ... that reality which it is very easy for us to die without ever having known and which is, quite simply, our life. Real life, life at last laid bare and illuminated—the only life in consequence which can be said to be really lived—is literature” (p.298). The literary critic and novelist James Wood also provides an excellent characterization of noticing in *How Fiction Works* (2008, p.64-5), as well as the titular essay in his new anthology *Serious Noticing* (2019, pp.49-73).

feeling *after* having had an experience of it—by noticing it after the experience has ended?

This might at first sound bizarre. Acquiring a phenomenal concept requires that you notice the phenomenal property in question. Doing that involves establishing a *de re* cognitive connection to an instantiation of that property. How can this connection be established when the phenomenal property isn't instantiated by your ongoing conscious experience? Intuitively, a phenomenal property needs to be 'there' for you to notice in some way. The most obvious way for it to be there for you to notice is for it to be a property of your current experience. Are there any other ways for a phenomenal property to be 'there' for you to notice?

Phenomenal imagination itself might seem to be well suited for this job, given that imagination involves entertaining what is, in some sense, not there. But phenomenal imagination is constrained by your extant phenomenal concepts: to phenomenally imagine some feeling, you must already have a phenomenal concept of it. This precludes phenomenal imagination from providing the resources for *first-time* noticing of phenomenal properties, as each property of which you have a phenomenal concept is one you have noticed before.

What else can provide these resources? We are looking for some operation that raises phenomenal properties of your past experiences to mind—thus making them available for noticing—without using your pre-existing cognitive grasp of those same properties. What we need for this job is a form of memory whose activation is not modulated by your use of concepts to call properties to mind, but rather by some other mechanism within the mind.

## 6. Proust on involuntary memory

What we need is just what Proust (1913b) wrote about as **involuntary memory**. Involuntary memory brings to mind, in rich and vivid detail, the phenomenology of past experiences. It is triggered by association, not called to mind intentionally.<sup>9</sup> Such memory plays a crucial role in Proust's magnum opus *In Search of Lost Time*; it is a key part of the method by which the narrator, Marcel, recovers the experiences of his past to find a sense of continuity through his life (Landy, 2004). Let's look briefly at the two most famous examples of its operation.

In *Swann's Way*—the first volume of *In Search of Lost Time*—Marcel tries often to recall the dreamy summers he spent as a child at Combray at his grandmother's house. He fails to recall how it really felt to be there, despite great effort. One day, involuntary memory rushes in to fill the void. After tasting a madeleine dipped in tea, his past summer life comes back to him:

as soon as I had recognized the taste of the piece of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-blossom which my aunt used to give me ... immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage set to attach itself to the little pavilion opening on to the garden which had been built out behind it for my parents ... and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I used to be sent before lunch, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine. (p.64)

In the last volume, *Time Regained*, Marcel describes another case of involuntary memory. Here he is much more explicit about the role of sensation and association in its operation. One evening, in the Guermantes' courtyard, after stumbling on some uneven paving stones, he

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<sup>9</sup> This is consistent with involuntary memories' arising during episodes of otherwise voluntary recall; some thought or word that comes to mind might trigger an involuntary memory, which was not the one targeted. See, e.g., Mace (2006), Mace (2007), and Mole (2017), pp.568-9.

recognized [a] vision: it was Venice, of which my efforts to describe it and the supposed snapshots taken by my memory had never told me anything, but which the sensation which I had once experienced as I stood upon two uneven paving stones in the baptistry of St. Mark's had, recurring a moment ago, restored to me complete with all the other sensations linked on that day to that particular sensation, all of which had been waiting in their place—from which with imperious suddenness a chance happening had caused them to emerge—in the series of forgotten days. In the same way the taste of the little madeleine had recalled Combray to me. (pp.256-7)

The richness of involuntary memory is directly related to its freedom from Marcel's cognitive grasp of his past feelings. Involuntary memory is only ever triggered by associations over which he has no control, and into which he has little insight. He speaks of the past as "hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of the intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) of which we have no inkling" (pp.59-60).

The features Proust finds in involuntary memory are precisely those it must have to play the role we need it to play. It must be strictly richer in phenomenology than phenomenal imagination, to be able to provide resources for noticing that could lead to the formation of new phenomenal concepts. It must be bound by past phenomenology, to accord with the experiential constraint, but not by the range of your existing phenomenal concepts.

Perhaps most importantly, involuntary memory makes available a *de re* cognitive connection to particular instantiations of phenomenal properties in your past experiences (Martin, 2001). Recalling the phenomenal properties of past experience in this way is not just to have an abstract conception of such properties; in fact, it is not necessarily to have any abstract conception of such properties at all. Instead, it is to bear a connection to a particular instantiation of a phenomenal property—a *past* instantiation of that phenomenal property. This makes involuntary memory a rich resource for the sort of first-time noticing that takes place when you first acquire a phenomenal concept of some phenomenal property.

Involuntary memory, then, meets the job description: if it is a genuine phenomenon, it can provide resources for phenomenal concept acquisition *after* experiences that instantiate the phenomenal properties to be conceptualized. But how can we be sure it exists?

## 7. The science of involuntary memory

Involuntary memory is not merely a figment of Proust's imagination. It was mentioned by several nineteenth-century psychologists before Proust gave it such lucid phenomenological treatment (Galton, 1907, p.187ff; Ribot, 1887, p.177ff; Ebbinghaus, 1885, p.2). Proust himself probably first heard of the phenomenon from Henri Bergson, who wrote about "spontaneous" memories activated by perceptual stimuli in his book *Matière et mémoire*. Proust heard Bergson speak in 1900, and read *Matière et mémoire* by 1911, two years before *Swann's Way*—the first volume of *In Search of Lost Time*—was published in France.<sup>10</sup>

In the last few decades, a good deal of research in the cognitive sciences has robustly demonstrated the existence of involuntary memory (Berntsen, 2009, 2010; Bradley et al., 2013; Mace, 2007). Some relevant studies survey subjects about previously occurring

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<sup>10</sup> See Landy (20014), p.7, and notes to pp.9-11. Cf. Ricoeur (1978) on Bachelard's (1958) notion of *retentissement*. Van Campen (2014) describes further examples of involuntary memory activated by olfactory cues from nineteenth-century writers such as Sand, Baudelaire, and Flaubert. Salaman (1982) gives earlier examples from Chateaubriand and De Quincey too, pp.44ff.

involuntary memories (Berntsen and Rubin, 2008). Other studies recruit subjects to record episodes of involuntary memory as they take place in the course of everyday life (Berntsen, 1996, 1999; Berntsen and Hall, 2004; Ball and Little, 2006; Mace, 2004; Salaman, 1982). Further research has used associative paradigms to trigger involuntary memories in the laboratory (Ball, 2007; Mace, 2006; Schlagman and Kvavilashvili, 2008).

This research in cognitive science reinforces three of the key aspects of Proust's conception of involuntary memory that matter for our purposes. I'll summarize.

First, involuntary memories tend to be of particular past events (Berntsen, 1998, 2009, p.61, 126-7; Berntsen and Hall, 2004; Mace, 2006; Schlagman and Kvavilashvili, 2008). This matters for our purposes because memory of a particular past experience is required to establish the *de re* cognitive contact with particular instances of phenomenal properties that is necessary for noticing those properties for the first time.

Second, involuntary memories can be extremely vivid and rich in contextual detail, as first-person reports of their phenomenology demonstrate (Berntsen, 2009, pp.62-3; Salaman, 1982, p.48; van Campen, 2014, p.49). This general finding lends greater credence to the vividness of Marcel's personal episodes. It is important to our developing proposal, because bringing *more* phenomenal properties of past experiences to mind makes it more likely that *previously unnoticed* phenomenal properties could come to mind in this way.

Third, the cuing and elaboration of involuntary memories—that is, how they are triggered and which details follow on—is governed by ordinary laws of association in psychology (Berntsen, 2009, pp.21-2, 106ff; Mace, 2007; Tulving and Thompson, 1973). This finding matters because it shows how involuntary memories can come to mind *without* exercising cognitive grasp of the phenomenal properties of the remembered experience. For two sensations to be associated in your mind is not necessarily to have a concept of either.

These three findings are crucial to the story being told here. Involuntary memories tend to be specific, they can be extremely vivid, and their triggering is associative in nature. The empirical confirmation of these central features aligns with Proust's conception of involuntary memory. What's more, nowhere do these empirical studies of involuntary memory disconfirm the features of Proust's conception that matter to our discussion.<sup>11</sup>

However, there is one key feature of involuntary memory that has not yet been demonstratively identified by empirical research. This is its capacity to bring to mind as yet unnoticed phenomenal properties. Above, I proposed that phenomenal concept acquisition can happen for the first time during the activation of involuntary memory. For this to happen, there must be more phenomenological features in an involuntary memory than those of which you already have phenomenal concepts. The richness of these memories must at least sometimes be able to overflow your phenomenal conceptual repertoire. This possibility is certainly compatible with, but is not yet positively confirmed by, empirical study.

There are some suggestive details in empirical research that make such phenomenal overflow seem more plausible. Above, I noted that the sheer richness of involuntary memory makes it more likely that previously unnoticed phenomenal properties could come to mind in this way. This suggestion is also bolstered by certain findings concerning the ways in which involuntary memories are triggered. The fact that involuntary memory is not brought to mind by you, in the terms you usually use to search for events from your past life, means that

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<sup>11</sup> This is consistent with rejecting a "classic Proustian view of involuntary memory" of another kind (Ball et al., 2007). This view claims that cues to involuntary memory come (i) "primarily from low-level sensory sources" and (ii) "from peripheral aspects of the remembered experience" (p.119). For our purposes, we can reject both (i) and (ii)—as Ball et al. themselves do. Cf. Berntsen (2009), p.90ff.

involuntary memories trend (at least more than voluntary memories) towards distinctive or unusual experiences from your past (Berntsen and Hall, 2004; Berntsen, 2009, p.116ff). Some research has even found that a majority of involuntary memories involve such distinctive experiences (Ball and Little, 2006, p.1175ff). Those distinctive experiences might well involve feelings that you have not previously noticed, precisely because you have not yet had much opportunity to notice them in these distinctive—and so rare—experiences.

Further suggestive research describes cases with an unfolding cognitive profile that sounds a lot like first-time noticing, although it is not noted whether or not it involves any such first-time noticing. In these cases, it is not initially obvious what triggers an involuntary memory. Further effort is required to identify a feeling in common between the past and the current experience that could have cued the memory. In these cases, further effort can yield such a commonality (van Campen, 2014, p.49). These are not obviously cases in which the subject did not have a phenomenal concept of the relevant common feeling beforehand. But these cases do involve a cognitive process that would be shared by first-time noticing of a phenomenal property: initial inability to identify a feeling in a web of associations, followed by a sudden realization that consists in noticing a commonality between two experiences.

Although there are further questions to be answered, empirical research is unequivocal about the existence of involuntary memory.

Nonetheless, empirical study does not obviate the need for Proust's own insights into the nature of involuntary memory (Salaman, 1982, p.42). There are at least two reasons why.

First, since involuntary memories can enjoy such rich and vivid phenomenology, they deserve the caliber of sensitive first-personal phenomenological description that only a phenomenologist as great as Proust can give. It is one thing to mark, as such, the richness or vividness of an involuntary memory, as many of the subjects in empirical studies do; it is another thing to capture what it is like from the inside to suddenly remember something involuntarily. This is what Proust does so beautifully, in both the madeleine and the Guermites passages above. This kind of description can make the experience of involuntary memory a recognizable phenomenological type, as opposed to an empirically established phenomenon that might make little or no contact with your own experiences.

Second, a writer like Proust is much better placed than any current scientist to assess the way in which involuntary memory can actually be put to use in literature.

This recalls us to our purpose in studying involuntary memory in the first place. Let's briefly recall where we are in our explanation.

Above, I claimed that new experience is not *necessary* for imaginative expansion. The substantiveness of the noticing condition seemed to imply that you have a vast realm of unnoticed phenomenal properties in your past experiences. If the sensitive author could tap this deep reservoir of phenomenal resources, then she could help you gain new phenomenal concepts without giving you new experiences at all. This is the possibility currently under consideration, as part of a more complete answer to how literature expands your imagination.

But it was initially puzzling how the phenomenal properties of your past experiences that went unnoticed—and thus uncaptured in phenomenal concepts—could be brought back to mind for noticing for the first time. You certainly couldn't do that yourself intentionally, by phenomenally imagining them, as *ex hypothesi* you have no phenomenal concepts of them yet. But Proust's understanding of involuntary memory explained how the mind can recreate the phenomenology of your past experiences, in ways that plausibly allow you to notice phenomenal properties of those experiences for the first time. To finish an explanation of this possibility of imaginative expansion, we now need to consider how literature can activate involuntary memory and guide a reader to notice phenomenal properties for the first time.

The first question has an empirical answer that again bears out what Proust says. ‘Abstract’ cues like words, instead of sensory cues, can indeed cue involuntary memory (Ball, 2007; Ball et al., 2007; Berntsen, 2009, p.56ff, 91; Mace, 2004; Schlagman & Kvavilashvili, 2008). Words trigger involuntary memories of experiences that had the features the words name (Ball et al., 2007, p.120).

But the second is partly a question of literary technique. Let’s turn to this question now.

## 8. Metaphors and other literary comparisons

How can you come to notice a phenomenal property in involuntary memory if you’ve never noticed that phenomenal property before? Proust (1913b) again lights the way:

by comparing a quality common to two sensations, we [can] succeed in extracting their common essence and in reuniting them to each other, liberated from the contingencies of time, within a metaphor.<sup>12</sup> (p.290)

This suggests that the most successful pointing in literature happens not when just one involuntary memory is triggered, but when two or more are brought to mind. When several involuntary memories are triggered, they offer a comparison between past experiences. This comparison elicits a search for a common sensation. To succeed in this search is to notice a phenomenal property—perhaps for the first time ever—and thereby gain the opportunity to acquire a phenomenal concept of that property. This might be what Proust meant when he said we can “liberate” our sensations “from the contingencies of time:” we can gain phenomenal concepts, which allow us to call feelings to mind in phenomenal imagination, rather than waiting for them to reoccur to us in the accidental cuing of involuntary memory.

There is much more to be said about how metaphors accomplish what they do. Many philosophers have already said much more than I can possibly say here (esp. Davidson, 1978; Moran, 1989; Ricoeur, 1978); Elisabeth Camp (2006) in particular has even noted that metaphors might highlight previously unnoticed phenomenal properties. Rather than delve deeper into the general mechanisms of metaphor, we will rest content with the above abstract characterization of the role that metaphor can play in concept acquisition, run in terms of the triggering of involuntary memory, the direction of attention, the search for a commonality, and successful noticing of phenomenal properties, which gives you the opportunity to form a phenomenal concept. We should also recognize that there is nothing inherent to metaphor that is strictly necessary to trigger involuntary memory, individuate a surprising commonality, and lead to phenomenal concept acquisition. Other comparisons that call to mind unexpected juxtapositions of involuntary memories can guide first-time noticing of phenomenal properties and give you the opportunity to form new phenomenal concepts.

Instead of diving into the philosophical intricacies of metaphor and other comparisons—to which we simply cannot do justice here—let’s examine some particular examples that can do what I have claimed. These literary comparisons can help you notice a phenomenal property for the first time, and give you the opportunity to gain a phenomenal concept.

First, consider Marianne Moore’s “Poetry,” from 1920. “I, too, dislike it,” it begins;

... there are things that are important  
beyond all this fiddle.  
Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it,

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<sup>12</sup> Compare Epstein (2004) on “narrative metaphors.”

one discovers that there is in  
it after all, a place for the genuine.

The poem is multiply surprising. It draws in detractors of poetry. It is written in plain, unadorned terms, as though to pander to the reader's assumed inclinations. But it is absurdly typeset, in jarring, broken lines, as though to irritate the very reader it asks to engage. It masterfully embodies and expresses the tension of writing a poem for those who hate poetry. In reading it, "with a perfect contempt for it," you might reasonably start to suspect that it is merely a poem written *as if* for people who dislike poetry, a joke played on those who thought they might gain any real argument from it—that is, an argument that would not require their engagement with this poem on its own terms, as a poem.

One line in particular is most relevant in this discussion. As though she couldn't help herself, Moore inserts a subtly derisive metaphor into a line in the third stanza. It stands out from its surround in part for its indulgence of a recognizably poetic urge.<sup>13</sup> "We / do not admire what / we cannot understand," Moore tells us, including

... the immovable critic twinkling his skin like a  
horse that feels a flea ...

This is a line that provided this reader, at least, with a new phenomenal concept. Where Moore writes "twinkling," she draws a comparison between the motion of light in a star and the motion of a horse shaking off a flea. The comparison is such an unusual one that our imagination reaches beyond what it does with "twitching." It is the stretch of the metaphor itself that challenges the imagination to target a new property.

What happens is a bit like pointing. A juxtaposition is made between the way stars look—as brought to mind in involuntary memory—and the way a horse's skin shivering in a particular way, also brought to mind in involuntary memory. The reader seeks the commonality between the two, and, alighting on the commonality of a certain quick rippling, comes to notice a phenomenal property in common between these visual experiences. That gives her an opportunity to acquire a phenomenal concept of that property.

This metaphor draws attention to a phenomenal property of a visual experience of a certain motion. But not all comparisons relate the phenomenology of experiences in the same sense modality. Take these two lines, from T.S. Eliot's "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" (1920):

Every street lamp that I pass  
Beats like a fatalistic drum...

Through involuntary memory, these lines can bring to mind past experiences of lamps passing rhythmically by and past experiences of fatalistic drumbeats. In juxtaposing those experiences, these lines draw attention to a commonality between pulsing variation in light and pulsing variation in a sound's volume. Even if you have never noticed this more abstract phenomenal property that a particular kind of visual experience shares with a certain kind of auditory experience, your involuntary memories can still bring back to mind this phenomenal property. These two lines then direct your attention towards this diachronic, rhythmic feel to both the passing of lamps and the rhythm of drumbeats. Once you have noticed the common property, you have the opportunity, at least, to form a phenomenal concept of it.

Sometimes the involuntary memories to be compared can be cued in different ways—for

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<sup>13</sup> Moore later edited the line to replace "twinkling" with twitching. The edit ruins the effect discussed here, but it falls closer in line with the prosaic, offhanded, decidedly unpoetic tone of the whole.

instance, one by the sounds of the words used, and another by the meaning of the words used. There is an example in Andrew Motion's recent poem "Waders" (2017), which refers to "tissue footprints in the frost." The early sibilance in *tissue* early on, as read before *ff* and clipped *ts* and *st* sounds later on, can call your attention to the auditory qualities that footprints in the frosty ground share with the way this line itself would sound, if spoken aloud. You might hear, in involuntary memory, the *ffff* of snowy buildup beginning to depress, a closing towards a brief hiss, and a clipped *ssst* of icy material packing hard onto the ground underfoot. After noticing the auditory qualities of this extended sonic sequence, you can come to form a phenomenal concept corresponding to the sound of a frosty footprint even if you never once noticed that sound while actually walking on the frost.

Of course, not all comparisons will have any effect on your stock of phenomenal concepts. Sometimes you will simply miss the point. Other times, a common feature of two things so compared will be something we have all already noticed. A comparison between a boat and a crib, for example, might draw your attention to the feel of a familiar rocking motion, but it is unlikely to make you notice that feeling for the first time. The comparison is too common, and the feeling too familiar as a feeling in its own right, for that.<sup>14</sup>

It is one thing to cue involuntary memory, and bring back to mind the phenomenology of a past experience. It is another thing to 'point' to a particular aspect of this phenomenology by effectively directing a reader's attention. Literary devices of comparison, and especially metaphors, are especially effective at pointing. This direction of attention allows readers to notice phenomenal properties for the first time as they arise in involuntary memory, which in turn gives them the opportunity to form phenomenal concepts of those properties.

The discussion in the past five sections has all built towards a better answer to our original question about imaginative expansion in literature. With our new understanding of the importance of noticing, the nature of involuntary memory, and the workings of metaphor, we now have the resources to put the pieces of this answer together.

## 9. Vindication for the writers

Our question was: how can literature expand the range of your phenomenal imagination? However it does this, it has to respect the experiential constraint: you can only phenomenally imagine experiences with phenomenal properties actually instantiated by your experiences. That's because you need to have a phenomenal concept of some feeling to imagine it, and you need to have an experience with that feeling to form a phenomenal concept of it.

An initial answer to our question respected the experiential constraint: perhaps, it was suggested, literature expands your phenomenal imagination by giving you experiences with new phenomenal properties. This answer was too quick in two ways: having a new experience is neither sufficient nor necessary for expanding your phenomenal imagination.

First, just having an experience with some new phenomenal property is not enough to form a phenomenal concept of it; you also have to notice the property in question to have an opportunity of conceptualizing it in this way. This was the noticing condition on phenomenal concept formation. It is a substantive condition, in that it does go unmet for many phenomenal properties of the experiences that you enjoy.

Second, recognizing that the noticing condition is substantive also suggested another way for literature to expand the phenomenal imagination, which the quick answer left out. If literature can bring you to notice previously unnoticed phenomenal properties of your *past*

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Moran (1989) and Davidson (1978) on dead metaphors.

experiences, then it would let you form phenomenal concepts of them, and thereby expand the range of your phenomenal imagination. We now have the resources we need to understand how this works. Let's put them together with the original bold claims of the writers to see how our more complete answer to our question vindicates these claims.

The writers with whom we began—T.S. Eliot, George Eliot, and Marcel Proust—made three claims: first, that literature can expand the range of your imagination; second, that it can expand that range beyond the range of experiences you have actually had yourself; and, third, that this expansion of the imagination is both good and important. I'll take these one by one.

The first claim, that literature can expand the range of your phenomenal imagination, has been vindicated by the following explanation. Literature can activate involuntary memories of your past experiences. These memories bring back to mind richer phenomenology than you could call to mind using your extant suite of phenomenal concepts. In doing so, they make aspects of that phenomenology available for you to notice for the first time. Literary comparisons, and metaphors in particular, are particularly effective at triggering involuntary memory and directing attention in this way. In finding the commonality between two past experiences recalled to mind through involuntary memory, you can come to notice a phenomenal property for the first time, and go on to form a phenomenal concept of that property. In this method of imaginative expansion, you need not have an ongoing concurrent experience instantiating some phenomenal property to form a phenomenal concept of that property. This imaginative expansion draws upon the rich phenomenology of involuntary memory instead to provide the raw material for first-time noticing of phenomenal properties. It is also fully consistent with the experiential constraint.

This explanation of imaginative expansion relies upon the power of literature to give you new phenomenal concepts. Because the range of phenomenal imagination is itself constrained by phenomenal concepts, gaining a new phenomenal concept is a way of directly expanding the range of experiences you call to mind in phenomenal imagination. Having a new phenomenal concept lets you call to mind, via your own cognitive grasp of particular feelings, various kinds of experiences that instantiate the phenomenal property represented by that concept. This "liberate[s] [sensations] from the contingency of time," as Proust put it. Instead of waiting for a network of associations to be triggered by some cue to involuntary memory, having a phenomenal concept lets you call a feeling to mind *intentionally*, in imagination.

This explanation constitutes an answer to our question of how literature can expand the phenomenal imagination. This answer is more complete than the quick answer we first considered. But it is perfectly consistent with an important point from the quick answer, which can be supplemented to describe another form of imaginative expansion in literature. A piece of literature really can give you new emotional experiences, and direct your attention towards particular phenomenal properties of those experiences. In doing so, it can help you notice those phenomenal properties, and go on to form new phenomenal concepts. This method by which literature brings about imaginative expansion may not involve comparison, although it can. Neruda's lines are an interesting case: in this deliberately flat non-metaphor about children's blood, he tightly directs attention to a feeling of blunt trauma. In this method of imaginative expansion, new emotions provide the resources for first-time noticing of phenomenal properties, which can lead to acquisition of phenomenal concepts. This kind of imaginative expansion is fully consistent with the experiential constraint.

Now let's turn to the writers' second claim. The phenomenal concepts you can gain by the methods of imaginative expansion glossed here are still phenomenal concepts of feelings you have actually felt. How, then, can literature be a "mode of amplifying experience" beyond that which you have yourself enjoyed or suffered?

The answer has to do with the nature of the cognitive ability gained when you gain a concept. To acquire a new concept is to come to be able to predicate a property of any object that falls into the relevant category. Without the concept BLUE, for example, you cannot entertain anything's being blue at all, but to have that concept is to be able to think of any (physical) thing's being blue.<sup>15</sup> Phenomenal imagination is itself predicative: with a phenomenal concept of a particular phenomenal property, you can phenomenally imagine all sorts of experiences with that property. Over time, you can gain more and more abstract phenomenal concepts that allow you to imagine ever finer shades of feeling.<sup>16</sup>

To gain a phenomenal concept, then, is to gain an indefinite capacity to imagine experiences with the phenomenal property it represents. This is also a capacity to modulate what you have felt in imagination to better approximate that which you have not felt. This is a powerful capacity which is directly relevant to empathy and social understanding.

Consider an example. You might not have noticed a tone of relief that can modify otherwise overwhelmingly negative feelings like the shame of confession, or rage towards someone who has wronged you. This tone of relief is especially salient when some event you wished would not happen actually does come to pass.

After gaining a concept of this subtle emotional shading—perhaps from a particularly powerful novel, or a piece of verse—you would be able to phenomenally imagine all sorts of experiences you have never had in full specificity. For example, if you also had phenomenal concepts associated with grief and loss, you could imagine an overwhelmingly negative feeling of loss or grief that is nonetheless shaded by a sense of relief. Since you could imagine what it is like to feel that feeling, even if you had never felt it in its full specificity yourself, you could better empathize with a friend who seemed calmer after the death of a parent. By imagining your friend's grief from the inside, you could see her emotional reaction as relatable, and understandable. Without the relevant phenomenal concept of that subtle shade of relief to otherwise overwhelmingly negative feelings, you might have simply found your friend callous.

Note that performing this imaginative exercise is still completely consistent with the experiential constraint. The experiential constraint is just this fact: to phenomenally imagine an experience with a certain kind of feeling, you need to have actually had that kind of feeling. Here, you imagine grief or loss—a feeling you have had—with a particular shading of relief, which is also a feeling you have had. You are not here imagining a fundamentally different kind of feeling, one which you have never experienced. You are, however, imagining an experience which you have not enjoyed in its maximal specificity, by using your existing phenomenal concepts to recombine, in thought, the feelings you have experienced firsthand. It is important to see that this is still consistent with the experiential constraint.

This example has a further virtue: it helps us see how the third claim of the authors is vindicated as well. The imaginative expansion that literature offers is good and important for social, moral, and epistemic reasons. George Eliot wants her writing to serve as a moral education, to “enlarge men's sympathies” by letting them in on the feelings of others very different from themselves. According to T.S. Eliot, poetry's power to expand an individual reader's imagination allows it to preserve local cultural sensibilities that would otherwise be lost in the generalizations of prosy history. Proust identifies a human obsession with seeing the world through each other's eyes, with knowing “the uniqueness of the fashion in which the world appears to each one of us;” and it is only by reading the literature of a great artist, he thinks, that we can gain such intimacy, by really feeling how another person feels.

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<sup>15</sup> See Evans (1982) on the “Generality Constraint” on concepts (Section 4.3, pp.100-105).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Hume's (1975, 1978) discussion of the “missing shade of blue” (*Treatise* I.1.1.10; *Enquiry* II.8).

Though each of these authors has quite different reasons to praise imaginative expansion, these reasons need not compete with one another. Together they illustrate the great moral, social, and epistemic advantages of imaginative expansion in literature.

### 10. Questions for further research

Because this discussion took the form of a possibility proof, I had to set some details of imaginative expansion aside to get a synoptic view of the whole process. This strategy opens several fruitful avenues for further research. I'll briefly summarize some here.

The first concerns normative standards on this process of imaginative expansion. I have set aside ways in which this process might go *wrong*, in order to explain how it can take place at all. But once we accept that it does take place, normative questions start to come into view.

It is easy to describe how a reader might misunderstand or misuse a piece of literature. You might notice something other than you are 'meant' to notice in a metaphor, by fixing on an unintended commonality between two experiences, or you might mistakenly apply a new phenomenal concept in a context where it does not belong. But relevant normative standards might constrain an author's choices just as much as a reader's reaction to them, so we must not assume that the entire role of the author is just to set standards for the reader. There are many further questions to be framed here. What is it for imaginative expansion not only to take place, but for it to go *right*? Is there any objective standard of correctness here? Is it simply identical with the standard of success given the author's intentions? How might any such standard connect with the aesthetic value of works of literature?

That line of questioning zooms out to broader fields of study. Another line of questioning zooms into the details. We might press on one point in particular: what exactly happens between *noticing* a phenomenal property and forming a phenomenal *concept* of that property?

This is no small question. It concerns the general relationship between temporary and extended cognitive contact with a property. I have left this question unanswered in this paper in part because this is a general, difficult question in the philosophy of mind, one which needs much more sensitive discussion in its own right. But it is worth highlighting here, at the close of our discussion, for precisely the same reason. To see how imaginative expansion rests upon this point is to see how our understanding of mental dynamics can feed into our understanding of the value of literature. Conversely, philosophy of mind can benefit from the further constraint and example of cognitive development in response to great works of literature, one step removed from the conditions of original phenomenal experience. To understand phenomenal concept formation, we must understand it in this context as well.

This paper likely raises many more questions than just these. My hope is that they can now be addressed with greater confidence that literature really does expand your phenomenal imagination, and with deeper understanding of how this remarkable process takes place.

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