

EMOTION, REASON AND TRUTH IN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

In this essay I want to offer an analysis of the structure of the fictional emotions that we have reading novels. I shall start with a presentation of the structure of emotions in general and their relation to aesthetic fiction. Afterwards, I shall offer a critical review of the current positions on fictional emotions. The aim of this section is to question the presuppositions that dominate the current debate on fictional emotions in particular and on emotions in general. Finally, I shall develop my own account on this issue. The thesis that I am going to defend is that fictional emotions possess doxastic and practical rationality and that they are full fledged emotional experiences the reality of which we should not doubt, even though they show some peculiarities.

Key words: Fictional emotion, quasi-emotion, doxastic rationality, practical rationality, assumption.

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EMOCIÓN, RAZÓN Y VERDAD EN LA LITERATURA

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RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta un análisis de la estructura de las emociones fictionales que tenemos cuando leemos novelas. En un primer momento, me centraré en la estructura de las emociones en general y en su relación con la ficción estética. Ofreceré luego una revisión crítica de las principales teorías sobre emociones fictionales. El objetivo de esta sección es cuestionar las presuposiciones que dominan el debate actual sobre las emociones fictionales, en particular y sobre las emociones, en general. Finalmente, voy a presentar mi propia posición y a defender la tesis según la cual las emociones fictionales poseen racionalidad doxástica y práctica y pueden ser consideradas como emociones reales, a pesar de presentar en algunos aspectos características particulares.

Palabras clave: Emoción ficcional, quasi-emoción, racionalidad doxástica, racionalidad práctica, suposiciones.

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1. Emotion and fiction: a paradoxical relation?

1.1 Analytic paradigms of the emotions

ANY ACCOUNT ON FICTIONAL EMOTIONS implies working with a specific concept of emotions in general, even though it may be very rough. But which model, which theory of emotions do we take as a point of departure? In this section I want to explore the different paradigms of emotions in the current analytic tradition and offer a concept of the emotions that I think does justice to their nature.

Since the publication of Anthony Kenny's book *Action, Emotion and Will* (Kenny 1963), emotions have been one of the most important topics of analytic philosophy and the number of analyses and theories on the subject has been increasing during the last decades. Characteristic of the analytic theories of the emotions is their focus on the relation between emotions and elements of thought —especially judgements. As a result of this focus of attention on cognitive elements, analytic philosophers proposed “cognitivist theories” of the emotions.

Cognitivist theories emerged partly as a response to the so called “feeling-theories” which focus on the qualitative felt dimension of the emotions. The most prominent theory of the emotions in this field was formulated at the end of the 19th century by William James.¹ James claimed that emotions are the feeling of the bodily changes that occur after a perception of an exciting fact (James 1967, 13). Feeling theories explain the emotions following the model of perception instead of the model of judgement or belief and they explain the emotions as they are experienced by the subject in a first person perspective. But although these theories can be very plausible in an intuitive level, they have been object of criticism. The way in which emotions are bodily felt is not enough to distinguish one emotion from another. The theories also ignore the possibility to have more than one emotion simultaneously. Furthermore, they neglect the possibility to have unconscious emotions and ignore the fact that emotions are directed towards the world and have intentional objects. These problems make feeling theories unattractive to the analytic tradition.

¹ Feeling theories have a long tradition. Descartes' definition of the emotions as perceptions of the soul and Wundt's definition of the emotions as feelings of pleasure and pain are good examples of influential feeling theories.

Analytic philosophers were more interested in explaining the emotions by the model of judgement, thought, language and belief. The relation between emotions and perceptions was thus disregarded for the benefit of the relation between emotions and judgements and a focus on cognitive aspects of the emotions. However, under the label of “cognitivism” we find a variety of concepts of emotions which differ quite substantially. A very popular conception defended by Anthony Kenny and Gabrielle Taylor takes for granted that emotions have to be necessarily based on judgements (Kenny 1963, 195; Taylor 1985). Other philosophers try to reduce the emotions to combinations of judgements and other states. In this theoretical framework, we furthermore find Joel Marks’ (Marks 1982, 227-242) and Harvey Green’s (Green 1992) belief-desire theory of the emotions according to which emotions are combinations of judgements and desires as well as Aaron Ben-ze’ev’s componential theory that defines the emotions as a complex of judgements, cognitions, sensations and motivations (Ben-ze’ev 2000, 49). Other authors like Robert Solomon and Martha Nussbaum go further and claim that emotions are judgements or evaluations (Solomon 1993, 126; Nussbaum 2005, 22).

These positions have the virtue to stress that emotions are related to rational elements and are per se rational, but they forget that emotions are first of all bodily felt. Another problem of these theories is that they cannot explain the nature of those emotions —such as disgust— that are not based on judgements. It is therefore necessary to postulate a non reductive cognitivism for the emotions that can explain these as bodily phenomena and that includes emotions that are not grounded on judgements.

With regard to the thesis about the cognitive basis of the emotions there are different versions of this non reductive cognitivism. According to Michael Stocker and Patricia Greenspan (Stocker 1987, 59-69; Greenspan 1988, 223-250), judgements as well as fantasies can be the basis for emotions. Jon Elster recognises the same role for perceptions (Elster 1999, 250). Kevin Mulligan affirms that the bases of emotions are perceptions, judgements and memories (Mulligan 1998, 168) and Peter Goldie includes fantasies, judgements and perceptions (Goldie 2002, 45). I position myself among these authors and claim that emotions can have as cognitive basis perceptions, fantasies, memories, beliefs, assumptions and other cognitive acts (Vendrell Ferran 2008). Following some of Brentano’s pupils like Scheler and Meinong,

I claim that the cognitive basis of emotions can be not only judgements but also other states. It is true that I cannot envy my sister if I do not judge that she has something I deserve and that I am at disadvantage, but it is also true that I cannot be afraid of the dog if I do not perceive it; I cannot regret my words if I do not have memories; I cannot fear the monster I do not imagine; I cannot pity Anna Karenina if I do not assume that she is in a sad situation. Therefore the cognitive bases of emotions can be: perceptions, memories, fantasies, judgements, beliefs, assumptions and other acts. It is important to stress this point because it will be a crucial element in the debate on fictional emotions, as I will show later on.

In this article I will work with a conception of the emotions that understands them as those states that possess a certain quality of being felt and that are intentional at the same time. To put it very briefly: I understand the emotions as felt and as feelings. Emotions have a qualitative dimension in the sense that when they are felt, we experience them in a very particular and characteristic way.² For example, envy is felt as narrowness in the breast and as a movement impulse to destroy the envied. In my model, emotions have necessarily a cognitive basis. This cognitive basis has to be of an intellectual nature, i.e. affective acts like desires cannot work as a basis for the emotions. However, this cognitive basis of the emotions cannot be reduced to mere judgments —perceptions, fantasies, memories and assumptions are also an appropriate basis for the emotions. This cognitive basis can be seen as an integrative part of the emotions. Emotions are also intentional and directed to the world. This intentionality cannot be reduced to the intentionality of their cognitive basis even though it is based on this. Some of these aspects will be object of further elaboration below, when I develop my own proposal to understand fictional emotions (for a more detailed view Vendrell Ferran 2008).³

² I distinguish between having an emotion and feeling it. We can have emotions on an underconscious level where they are not felt in the same sense that conscious emotions are.

³ Some philosophers like Prinz or Goldie have given complex accounts of the emotions that try to combine both traditions: the feeling theory tradition and the cognitivist tradition. Cf. Prinz 2004, Goldie 2002.

1.2 *Reviewing aesthetic fictions*

THE QUESTION OF THE ONTOLOGICAL STATUS of fictions has been one of the main worries of occidental philosophy. Fictional worlds, characters and situations do not have the same kind of reality as the world in which we live in our everyday life. Anna Karenina, Romeo and Juliet, and Terminator are not objects with the same kind of reality as the editor of the journal or the reader of this article. In this essay though, I am not interested in the ontology of fictions, my interest is more of a psychological nature: How can fictions move us? For this purpose I will consider only aesthetic fictions and I will understand the concept of aesthetic fiction as the successor of the old concept of mimesis. When referring to aesthetic fiction I shall speak simply of fiction. Following an Aristotelian perspective I think that mimesis can be interpreted in two senses: a representation or imitation of the reality as well as a creation of a new reality. Especially in this second sense of mimesis it is clear that the imagination as a creative force plays a crucial role for the concept of mimesis and consequently also for the concept of aesthetic fiction.

In my model, fiction cannot be reduced to falsehood, deception or lie. In the current debate on fictional emotions it seems to me that these concepts are often presented as synonymous. Philosophers of fictional emotions that do not have aesthetic sensibility tend to follow the old critique to poetry by Plato that associates aesthetic fictions with lies. However, fictions and lies have a different structure at least in what concerns their original intentions. Inherent to the structure of lies is the intention to deceive and to make the other believe that the lie is true; on the contrary, in the structure of fictions we do not find this malicious intention and the authors of fictions do not have the aim to make the reader or spectator believe in the truth of the fictional object.

Another regular presupposition of the recent debate on fictional emotions that I want to avoid here is that the binary opposition between fiction and reality is taken for granted. However I think that these cannot be the only two dimensions in which human life takes place. There is at least the dimension of the imaginary.⁴ What is the imaginary? If I am scared of going downstairs to the cellar, because I am convinced that there is a cadaver

⁴I take this denomination from Wolfgang Iser (Iser 1991), even though I interpret these terms in a different sense.

there, or if during a dream I am scared of a big elephant that is able to go through walls without breaking them, these emotions —I would say— are neither emotions on real objects nor on fictional objects. The objects of these emotions are imaginary. The realm of the imaginary objects can be close to the realm of fictions, but one cannot be reduced to the other. The imaginary seems to be close to the terrain of subconscious projections and I do not want to enter in this field. But one thing seems clear to me: While I do not take fictional objects to be real, imaginary objects seem to have the stronger force to occupy the realm of reality and to be taken as real by the subject. I have to mention this distinction here because in the debate on fictional emotions some philosophers recurred often to the analogy between fictional emotions and phobic emotions and in doing so ignored the distinction between fictional and imaginary that I proposed above.

There is a third remark about the concept of aesthetic fiction that I think necessary. In the debate on fictional emotions philosophers usually focus only on certain types of aesthetic fictions that they take to be paradigmatic, such as novel, theatre and film. In doing this they ignore that sculpture, painting and dance can also sometimes be understood as aesthetic fictions. And furthermore, they ignore that between novel, theatre and film there are essential differences. For example, the novel requires the reader to imagine the characters while in theatre and film there is another human being that gives life to the characters. Also, we watch these characters while being part of an audience with which we may interact. Watching theatre and film, our senses are also more implied than when we are reading a book, where each image or sound, smell or gustative or tactile impression of our senses is ultimately the result of the imaginative capacity of the reader. These differences have to be kept in mind, although I shall review the main theories on fictional emotions and they do not distinguish between aesthetic genres. Furthermore, the current debate on fictional emotions only considers those emotions that we have as spectators or readers of fictions, ignoring absolutely the question whether the actor and actress of a film or representation also experience a fictional emotion while they are playing a role in which emotions occur. I myself will, the end of this article, offer an account which until now only claims validity for fictional emotions in the sense of *emotions we have while reading novels*.⁵

⁵ I leave open the question whether my account can be also applied to other aesthetic fictions. I think so, but it is important to remark the differences between the genres.

1.3. *Fictional emotions under suspicion*

ONCE THE ANALYTIC DEBATE on emotions in general was initiated, the question how fiction can trigger emotions appeared very soon. The first article on this subject appeared only ten years after the publication of the first book on the emotions in analytic tradition. Anthony Kenny published this book in 1963 and ten years later Colin Radford wrote the article “How can we be moved by the fate of Anna Karenina?” This essay inaugurated an own field of the aesthetics and up to this day led to a long sequence of reactions.

Within the dominating cognitivist paradigm of the emotions, fictional emotions were seen as highly problematic. They raised two kinds of suspicions. The first suspicion was that fictional emotions might be a challenge to rationality. Philosophers thought necessary to explain how it was possible to have an emotion about something that we know not to be real. This suspicion led Colin Radford to believe in the extreme claim that fictional emotions are irrational.

Fictional emotions can be seen as a challenge to rationality in two ways. On one side, it is not clear how it is possible to defend the belief to have the emotion and at the same time to defend the belief that the object is fictional. On the other side, fictional emotions are also a challenge from the standpoint of practical rationality. Most philosophers engaged in the debate on fictional emotions take for granted that emotions on real objects motivate actions, while emotions on fictional objects lack the link to motivation. However, I think that both tensions, the tension between beliefs and the tension between emotion and motivation, as well as the assumptions about emotions underlying them, have to be object of an accurate review.

The second suspicion concerns the reality of fictional emotions. Is what I feel while reading a novel, watching a movie or a theatre representation real? This suspicion also has to be taken seriously because there is a long tradition of philosophers who claim that emotions on fictions are not real emotions at all. Meinong, Ryle, Kenny, Budd and especially Walton subscribed to this thesis —and I am mentioning only the most illustrious names of this tradition (Meinong 1910, 309; Ryle 1949, 103; Kenny 1963, 49; Budd 1985, 128; Walton 1978, 6 and 1990, 196).

These suspicions find their ultimate expression in the so called “Paradox of fiction”, that is in the claim that fictional emotions are paradoxical. A paradox is a contradiction with no solution. There are different formulations of the paradox in question in the analytic debate, but in essence they all express the alleged tension between emotion, reason and action that I presented above. The premises of the paradox are the following:

1. We experience emotions towards characters or situations we take to be fictional.
2. We experience emotions only if we believe that the object of the emotion exists.
3. When we know that the object of our emotion is fictional then we do not believe that the object exists.

Each of these premises seems plausible but all of them taken together are contradictory. Thus at least one of them has to be false. Contemporary authors have been denying one or the other of these premises and there are solutions for all tastes. Underlying these theses are assumptions and hypotheses about the general structure of emotions that cannot be left unquestioned. In what follows I shall offer a critical review of the main positions. This review can be seen as a deconstructive strategy before I offer my own account on the structure of fictional emotions in particular.

2. Irrationalism

AS I MENTIONED ABOVE, Colin Radford was the first to write an article on the problem within the analytic tradition. His thesis is provocative and radical: “our being moved in certain ways by works of art, though very “natural” to us and in that way only too intelligible, involves us in inconsistency and so incoherence” (Radford 1975, 78). This proposal is called irrationalism and Radford is the only author who supports it. He defended his claim in several articles despite all criticism (Radford 1975, 1982 and 1995). Radford’s strategy to tackle the problem consists in supporting the second premise according to which having an emotion implies the belief in the existence of its object.

Radford argues pointing to some mental experiments. One of them consists in imagining that someone explains us that he has an ill sister and that we feel compassion for him. However, if we discover that in fact he

has no sister at all and that it was only a kind of joke, our compassion will disappear (Radford 1973). In another thought experiment Radford proposes a comparison between the fear that I feel watching a monster in a movie and the fear that I feel after the movie walking home alone and thinking that the monster may attack me in the dark street (Radford 1982, 263).

Radford supports his claim with a detailed analysis of the problematic aspects of fictional emotions. Fictional emotions are by this understanding irrational because they contain two judgements that are in fact contradictory. On the one hand, fictional emotions have to presuppose the existence of the object, on the other hand we believe in the case of fictional emotions that the object does not exist. With this claim Radford is indirectly supporting the thesis that emotions are necessarily based on judgements, and these judgments presuppose the existence of the object. Radford establishes an abysmal difference between “rational emotions” such as pity for the death of a real person and “irrational emotions” such as pity for the death of Mercutio, Romeo’s friend in Shakespeare’s play *Romeo and Juliet*. In this sense, fictional emotions are doxastically irrational because they contain contradictory judgements. Aside from this doxastic irrationality, fictional emotions are also irrational from the point of view of practical rationality.⁶ They are irrational in this sense because they do not motivate actions, while emotions on real objects —by Radford’s understanding— do motivate action.

I think that Radford’s proposal is thoroughly mistaken and has rightly received criticism. I do not want to repeat the critic and I will only emphasize the aspects that by my understanding are fundamentally wrong. The comparisons between fiction and other states that Radford establishes with his examples are from my point of view totally inappropriate and misunderstand fully the nature of fiction. In the first of his examples of feeling compassion for an inexistent sister, Radford just understands fictions as lies. In the second example of the monsters in the movie following us on our way home, he is just comparing fictional objects to phobic fantasies. Both comparisons seem to me unacceptable as I showed before.

Aside from this misconception of fiction, Radford ignores the influence that engaging with fictions has on us, questions the moral value of art and transforms passionate book readers, cinema fans and theatre freaks in

⁶ I take the terms doxastic and practical rationality from Richard Joyce (Joyce 2000)

irrational beings. Radford misunderstands the nature of emotions also in the sense that he makes emotions depend exclusively on judgements and in this case affirmative existential judgements.

The concept of irrationality is also too strong to be taken seriously. From my point of view, fictional emotions would be irrational if we were unable to give a reason for having them. However, in general we can argue and explain why we have an emotion when we read a novel, watch a film or visit the theatre. After a film we can say that we were afraid of the monster because it incarnated danger or that we felt pity for the heroine because she was in a troubling situation. I am led to the conclusion that Radford's proposal is unsatisfying and that it is necessary to look for other accounts on fictional emotions.

3. Emotions, facts and thoughts

IN THIS SECTION I SHALL EXAMINE two different proposals about fictional emotions that focus on the role of thoughts rather than specifically that of judgments. The first reaction to Radford's statements on fictional emotions was that of Michael Weston. His proposal is known as "factualism". The other proposal is given by Lamarque and is more known as "thought theory". Some authors speak of the Weston-Lamarque solution, even though both proposals differ in important aspects.

In his reply to Radford Weston develops a strategy to deal with the problem of fictional emotions. His strategy consists in focussing not on the contradictory judgements but on the objects of fictional emotions (Boruah 1988). Weston affirms "(...) we can be moved, not merely by what has occurred or what is probable, but also by ideas. I can be saddened not only by the death of my child or the breakdown of your marriage, but also by the thought that even the most intimate and intense relationships must end. Such feelings are not responses to particular events, but express, I think, a certain conception of life and are the product of reflection on it" (Weston 1975, 85-86). In this account the object of a fictional emotion is not a specific situation or person, but a "conception of life" or a "vision of life". Fictional emotions are emotions about a specific aspect of life represented in the fiction that invites us to reflect about ourselves. Weston thus claims that when I am sad because Mercutio is dead, in fact I am sad because it came to my mind that people in general die. Mercutio's death in this way invites us to reflect on death in general and this makes us sad.

This proposal has also been object of criticism. When I am sad because of Mercutio's death, I am not sad due to the general fact of death, but due to the fact that Mercutio —this specific Mercutio of Shakespeare's play— is dead. This does not exclude that my sadness about Mercutio's death may lead me to ponder on the issue of life and death in general. But the object of the sadness about Mercutio's death is only Mercutio's death.

Another problem of Weston's account is that in many cases of fictional emotions there is no analogue object in the real world. And if there is no analogy, then Weston's main thesis cannot be defended any more (In this sense see also Yanal 1999, 35). For example, if I am afraid of Dracula or Terminator, or if I fear that the end of the world or the resurrection of zombies is about to come, there are no sensible corresponding objects of fear in the real world, at least as far as I know.

With his account Weston confuses the object of an emotion with the cause of an emotion. It may be that the cause of my being sad about Mercutio's death lies at least partially in the fact that death is an unavoidable part of human life. However, the cause is different from the object of the emotion, which is Mercutio's death.

There are some sophisticated versions of factualism like the one offered by Barrie Paskins. This author claims that the object of fictional emotions is not the fiction itself but a real world analogue. For example, we are not sad about the destiny of Anna Karenina but about the destiny of somebody that is like Anna Karenina but real, i.e. persons that are in a similar situation (Paskins 1977). This position shares some of the problems of Weston's account such as the fact that not all fictional characters and situations have real world analogues. Paskins approach is also problematic because the object of our fictional emotions would be a "general type" instead of something specific.

Another more sophisticated account is given by Peter Lamarque. His position is shared by a higher amount of authors and is known as "thought theory". The general assumption is that in order to have an emotion it is not necessary to have a specific judgement, since a mere thought is enough. In fact, Lamarque claims that the real objects of our fictional emotions are thoughts. In his account images, fantasies, suppositions are understood as

thoughts (Lamarque 1981, 293). When they are lively and when we focus our attention on them, it is more probable that the thoughts lead to an emotion. Furthermore, Lamarque claims that when we have a fictional emotion we interpret the fiction in some sense (Lamarque 1981, 300-303). This account resembles Weston's account because both focus on the importance of the interpretation of fictions.

An objection to this account is that the notion of thought is too vague and imprecise to be taken seriously. What is also problematic is the fact that Lamarque is confusing the object of the emotions with their cognitive basis. As far as the cognitive basis of the emotions is concerned, I think that it cannot be reduced only to judgements, because otherwise we would be unable to explain the nature of, for example, disgust, which is based on a perception. Lamarque seems to perceive this, but he then thinks that what I call cognitive basis is in fact the object of the emotion. Emotional objects however cannot be mere "thoughts". Why? Answering this question requires introducing a concept into the debate on fictional emotions that —despite being rather basic— has often been neglected. Lamarque ignores —as do most of the theorists working on the paradox of fiction— one of the most important insights of the philosophy of mind in modern times. At the end of the 19th century, Brentano introduced the thesis of the intentionality of mental states, including the emotions. Emotions are intentional in the sense that they are directed towards objects. In Brentano's theory of the intentionality of the emotions we can then find a thesis that Kenny made popular in analytic tradition. I am talking about the thesis that emotions have two different kinds of objects: material and formal objects. Let me explain this using an example. Suppose that I feel fear of a storm. The storm is then the material object of my fear. The formal object is the quality of the dangerous that is in this moment given in the storm. The material object of an emotion can change and may vary in relation to social, historical, cultural and individual parameters. The material object is given to us by a perception, a fantasy, a supposition, a judgement and so on. The formal object of, say for example fear, is on the other hand always the same: the quality of the threatening or the dangerous. Kenny writes: «The formal object of ϕ ing is the object under that description which must apply to it if it is to be possible to ϕ it. If only what is P can be ϕ d, then «thing which is P» gives the formal object of ϕ ing» (Kenny 1963, 192). The thesis here is that each emotion essentially has its own formal object. Disgust has the disgusting as a formal object,

fear has the dangerous as a formal object and we cannot change this connection. One of the implications of the described thesis is that emotions can be appropriate or inappropriate in regard to their objects (Cf. de Sousa 1987, Tappolet 2000). Disgust in the face of something disgusting is appropriate but disgust in the face of something dangerous is inappropriate.⁷ Given this distinction it seems to me clear that the material object of my fictional fear is the monster, not the thought of the monster, even though I need to have some kind of “thought” about the monster —taking this word in a very general sense— in order to be fictionally afraid of it. And the formal object of this fictional fear is the quality of the threatening that is in this moment incarnated by the monster.

Another objection to Lamarque is that thoughts in his general sense may well be very detailed and lively and may yet not trigger any emotion. For example, I can have a very detailed presentation of some joyful situation and I can interpret this scene and at the same time be completely indifferent towards it. Also, Lamarque’s claim that there must be an interpretation of the fiction seems false, for sometimes a fictional emotion may arise without any process of interpretation of the content. Finally, the claim that we have emotions about general thoughts instead of having them about specific objects seems to misinterpret the nature of the emotional object as I expounded above.

4. Disbelief or believe in fictions

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT NEITHER the mere interpretation of facts nor the claim that the emotional objects are simply thoughts in a very general sense, are adequate points of departure for an investigation of fictional emotions. To dissolve the paradox of fiction and explain the authentic nature of fictional emotions —to my understanding— we have to focus on the propositional elements involved in our engagement with fictions.

⁷ For Kenny the intentionality of the emotions derives from the intentionality of the judgements that they have as a basis. I leave this point untouched here. However, I think that the emotions receive their intentionality from their bases —the latter being not only judgements but also perceptions, fantasies, memories, expectations and assumptions— and that they transform this intentionality into an emotional intentionality sui generis that cannot be reduced to the intentionality of their bases.

To examine the structure of these propositional elements some authors focus on the thesis of the so called “(willing) suspension of disbelief” attributed to 19th century thinker Coleridge. The thesis of the Suspension of Disbelief affirms that the spectator or reader of fiction accepts to suspend the judgement that one is dealing with fictions and takes what is presented to him as reality. This allows to accept some premises of the fictional world that otherwise would be absurd or impossible. However, this thesis does not correspond to our experience of fictions, because we do not suspend disbelief when we are engaged with fictions or in the case that we do suspend it, it is only for a short period of time. I would say that even though we can become very involved in a work of fiction, we hardly ever stop knowing that it is fiction. Moreover, we cannot manipulate at will our beliefs and it is not always easy to forget that we are dealing with fictions; especially when the content or the structure of the novel or film is too strange or the language is highly artificial and elaborated. As Paul Harris showed in *The Work of the Imagination* (Harris 2000, 60) and Meinong pointed out hundred years ago in *Über Annahmen* (Meinong 1910, 111), even small children are able to distinguish between reality and fiction in their plays.

In a critical response to the thesis of the suspension of disbelief and reacting to the Radford-Weston debate, at the end of the 70ies Eva Schaper elaborated a very inspiring account of fictional emotions. Schaper thinks that fictional emotions are real emotions, even though the conflict with the propositional aspect of the emotions has to be resolved: “That emotions are felt (...) is then not an illusion or misrepresentation of the facts: only the belief conditions become problematical” (Schaper 1978, 32-33). Shaper leaves the cognitivistic paradigm of the emotions untouched and defends that beliefs are essential to emotions, but she introduces two important innovations into the debate.

The first innovation consists in the thesis that beliefs are not always existential beliefs, i.e. that believing does not involve the commitment to the existence of the object of belief. As Shaper puts it, “the view that beliefs always involve commitment to the actual existence of that about which the belief is held conflicts not only with what we might feel we know about responding to fiction. It also conflicts in general with belief situations in which the issue of actual existence does not arise because the objects of such beliefs are, as the saying is, within somebody’s intentionality.” (Schaper 1978, 41) If the commitment to the existence of the object were necessary

for a belief, then beliefs about non actual things such as future situations or hypothetical cases would also be problematic.⁸ As we shall see further on, this argument was also developed years later by Richard Moran and Peter Goldie.

The second claim is that the beliefs involved in fictional emotions are not contradictory at all. Departing from the thesis that reality and fiction are two different ontological realms, Schaper claims that the judgements that arise in each of these realms differ in their nature. She calls judgements about reality “first order judgements” and judgements about fiction “second order judgements”. By this theory, a first order judgement is the judgement that we are dealing with fiction, for example, that we are reading a novel or watching a movie. A second order judgement concerns the content of fiction, for example, that Anna Karenina is unhappy with her marriage. Second order judgements according to Schaper do not imply an existential judgement about their object. Given that first order judgements and second order judgements pertain to different ontological levels and make different kinds of claims, the possibility of a contradiction is excluded. What is more, in this account first order beliefs are necessary for second order beliefs. Schaper says: “These two kinds of belief, far from being contradictory, are such that the second-order beliefs could not take the form they do (that is, without existential commitment) unless the first-order beliefs obtained” (Schaper 1978, 39).

With this strategy, Schaper can save fictional emotions from the abyss of irrationality, but she also compromises her account because she feels obliged to affirm that also second order beliefs have truth conditions. The fact that second order beliefs refer to fictions does not imply that they are simply false. This claim is important because it separates two predicates that often appear mixed up and confused in the debate on fictional emotions: the predicate of existence and the predicate of truth. By this differentiation, for something to be true does not necessarily mean that it involves existing objects. The problem however arises because with this claim Schaper is pleading for a truth theory of fiction. But how establish truth or falsehood for something that is a fiction? I hold this point to be very problematic and

⁸ She distinguishes also very clearly between fiction and imaginary worlds, when she traces the line between being involved in fictions and being involved in dreams, affirming that the first demands first and second-order beliefs while the dream does not.

shall defend a different theory of these aspects later on. Schaper herself, in order to overcome the problem, claims: “Within the context of what we know to be a play, a novel, a painting and so on we have a perfectly serviceable analogue to the space-time co-ordinates which ordinarily allow for the determination of the truth value of declarative sentences. In this obvious sense, the second-order beliefs are true or false according to whether they are correctly or incorrectly identified within the analogue” (Schaper 1978, 40). In writing so, the author seems to defend a theory of fictional truth that makes the truth conditions depend on the fictional context. Unfortunately, Schaper does not develop this point any further.

I hold Schaper’s article to be one of the most perspicuous attempts to solve the paradox of fiction in the early stage of the discussion. But it leaves the premise that beliefs are necessary for emotions untouched and subscribes thus to a cognitivist theory of the emotions that I described before as problematic. Moreover, Schaper claims that first order beliefs are necessary for second order beliefs. Within that terminological framework, I think this is right. But necessary does not mean sufficient. The author does not explain why and how second order beliefs arise in the mind of the reader or spectator, i.e. what causes an aesthetic experience. After the introduction of second-order beliefs, one would like to have an account of the nature of these beliefs and their exact relation to first order beliefs. Years later Kendall Walton will offer a more exhaustive theory on second-order beliefs and the emotions aroused by them, as I shall explain below.

Taking as a point of departure Lamarque’s thought theory and modifying the thesis of the suspension of disbelief attributed to Coleridge, Yanal develops an own account of fictional emotions. According to this author, fictional emotions arise because the subject is involved in vivid and detailed thoughts —Yanal elaborates the notions of vividness and detail for fictional emotions and takes into consideration also non propositional thoughts. When the emotion emerges, the disbelief of the subjects is “relatively inactive” (Yanal 1999, 102). What does this mean? Yanal thinks that there are degrees of activity of beliefs, so that some beliefs may be highly active, others less active and others totally inactive. In fictional emotions —so he claims— we have a belief of the unreality of the fictional character or situation, but this belief is one that shows the lowest degree of activity. Yanal writes: “The spectators inactivity of disbelief should be low enough for him to pity Anna Karenina

but high enough so that he doesn't attempt to communicate with her, stop her suicide, tell off her prig of a husband and so on" (Yanal 1999, 105). In his account, Yanal observes that fictional emotions have two kinds of objects: material and formal, and in doing so, the author is right. But then he claims that the material object of a fictional emotion is "nothing" while the formal object of an emotion a thought (Yanal 1999, 118). With this account, Yanal wants to emphasize the fact that readers and spectators of fiction are not naïve and they do not ignore that they are dealing with fictions. Nevertheless, I think that Yanal's proposal of beliefs that are there but nevertheless inactive is not convincing at all. It is difficult to imagine what exactly this "inactivity" means. Does it mean that these beliefs are not expressed in action? Or does it mean that they do not influence other beliefs? Or maybe he has in mind the possibility of beliefs that are not embedded into the whole psychic life of the subject? This question seems to remain unanswered by Yanal. It also remains unclear why—if the belief in the non existence of the object is inactive—we sometimes want to feel pity and sorrow when we deal with fictions and we feel them with pleasure.

But even more serious is Yanal's claim that the formal object of a fictional emotion is a thought. The concept of "thought" is too vague to be used here as the formal object of the emotion as such. The claim ignores all the latest accounts on the nature of emotions in general that identify the formal objects with specific qualities (Kenny 1963, de Sousa 1987, Tappolet 2000, Johnston 2001).

5. Make-believe and quasi-emotions

KENDALL WALTON DEVELOPED IN SEVERAL ARTICLES and in his book *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (1990) an account of fictional emotions that is known under the name fictionalism or pretence-theory and that—even though it has been object of strong criticism—still maintains some of its appealing force. Walton takes as a point of departure the distinction between first order judgements and second order judgements—calling the latter make-believe. This distinction has a certain resemblance to Schaper's distinction that I described above but Walton adds an interesting point. In addition to the distinction between two types of judgement there is a distinction between two types of emotions depending on the type of judgement that they are based on. Emotions in real-life-situations are based on first order judgements

and are therefore, according to Walton, real emotions. Emotions about fictional objects are based on second order judgements or make-believe and they are, in Walton's terminology "make-believe emotions" or "quasi-emotions" (Walton 1990, 255). The latter term was used by the way a century ago by Meinong and just like Meinong Walton also defends that fictional emotions are not emotions at all, but affective acts with a special status. In an often quoted paragraph, Walton asks whether Charles—a cinema-goer—is afraid of the green slime in a movie. Walton's answer is a radical one: "I think not. Granted, Charles's condition is similar in certain obvious respects to that of a person frightened of a pending real-world disaster. His muscles are tensed, he clutches his chair, his pulse quickens, his adrenaline flows. Let us call this physiological-psychological state *quasi-fear*. But that alone does not constitute genuine fear" (Walton 1990, 196). According to Walton, there are two reasons why this quasi fear is not a real fear. First of all, quasi-fear is not based on first order judgements, but on make-believe; secondly, quasi-fear does not show any link to motivation. Therefore quasi-fear resembles fear but is not fear.

Walton defines "make believe emotions" as imagined emotions that emerge by "imagining from the inside". This means that we have a "make believe emotion" when we imagine ourselves to be in a fictional situation. For example, we have a "make believe emotion" when we are at the cinema and imagine being the leading character of the film. Walton claims: "Charles is participating psychologically in his game of make-believe. It is not true but fictional that he fears the slime. (...). It is fictional that he is afraid, and it is fictional that he says he is" (Walton 1990, 242 & 244). This explanation allows Walton to argue that quasi-emotions have a structure similar to the emotions of children when playing games of make-believe (This analogy can be found also in Meinong 1910, 111). When one child acts as if it were afraid even though it knows there is no real danger, then this feeling can be considered an instance of quasi-fear because—according to Walton—it has the same structure as the quasi-fear of the cinema-goer. Both the child and the cinema-goer are by this interpretation pretending to have an emotion, but in fact what they have is not wholly serious. Fictional emotions are therefore in Walton's account fictitious, imagined, invented and pretended emotions.

Such a claim is provocative and Walton has been object of strong and multiple criticisms. From all the arguments brought up against Walton, I shall therefore discuss only those that are most important for developing my own account. Let me start with the claim that fictional emotions are pretended emotions. In claiming this Walton defends something very contra-intuitive for all of us who read novels or watch movies. When I pretend to have an emotion and I act as if I had one, I can stop this pretence whenever I want to. This however, is not so when I feel fear in the cinema or when I feel sad reading a novel. It is true that I can get fictional emotions under my control better than some emotions about real objects, but I cannot feel fictional emotions at will.

Moreover, in games of make-believe I can form and configure the situation, but I do not feel this freedom when I am engaged with fictions because the framework of the fiction is already given to me as something finished and determined and I cannot change the conditions.

When I pretend to have an emotion and during children's games of make believe I am aware that the emotion is pretended. Fictional emotions on the contrary are not accompanied by such awareness because we do not pretend to be afraid, we really are. Reducing fictional emotions to pretended emotions, Walton is simply interpreting the necessary role of the imagination in our engagement with fictions as an illusion. He does not distinguish between counterfactual exercise of the imagination and the creation of an illusion through our imagination. Fictional emotions are not pretended emotions that we take to be real; rather they are by my understanding real emotions in which imagination plays an important role. This role of the imagination shall be considered below in my own account.

A further problem associated to this account is that emotions about hypothetical scenarios will, for Walton, also be quasi-emotions because they are based on second-order beliefs and often they do not motivate to actions.

Walton's assumptions about the nature of emotions are by my understanding also problematic. Walton has an implicit concept of the emotions according to which emotions show three essential features: a specific bodily phenomenology, a belief in its bases and a desire that motivates to action. Emotions and quasi-emotions share the first of these features, i.e.

both are bodily felt, but quasi-emotions lack the two other features, and because of this, Walton denies them the full recognition as emotions. He also leaves untouched the assumption that emotions ground necessarily in judgements and that they necessarily motivate actions thanks to the power of desires.⁹ But if we want to solve the puzzle of fictional emotions, then — this is my thesis — we have to work with a weak cognitivism that allows also other acts to be the basis for emotions. If emotions are grounded not only in judgements but also on other states, we will be able to solve the paradox. That would also mean that we give up Walton's theoretical construct.

6. Emotion and judgement: doxastic rationality

6.1. *Against strong cognitivism*

AFTER THIS CRITICAL REVIEW of the main positions, it is now time to present a positive account of this topic. It seems to be a common place among the authors involved in the debate on fictional emotions that there is a tension between emotion and judgement that has to be solved. In what follows, I want to defend a thesis against strong cognitivist approaches to the emotions. As mentioned at the beginning of the article, to my understanding, emotions are not judgements, nor are they a combination of judgements and other elements. Instead they are a phenomenon *sui generis* that cannot be reduced to cognitions. Surely, emotions need to be grounded in a cognitive basis, but that is not the same as reducing the first to the latter. Moreover, the cognitive basis are not only judgements, but also in other states like perceptions, memories, fantasies, assumptions, etc. are able to serve as a basis for the emotions. Some of the recent proposals to understand the emotions go precisely in this direction of a non-reductive cognitivism as I showed at the beginning of the article.

In the field of aesthetics, some authors like Gendler, Kovakovich and Matravers have also recognised that understanding aesthetic emotions requires a broader kind of cognitivism. Gendler and Kovakovich claim that fictional emotions are rational and genuine and that they do not necessarily

⁹ In some footnotes, Walton seems to express some sceptical thought about these theses, but he never makes the move to abandon that common place of analytic philosophy.

require a belief in the actuality of their object (Gendler and Kovakovich 2006, 251-252). Both authors think that emotions have response patterns that cannot be changed in reaction to the presentation of reasoned evidence, so that belief does not play a role here. For example, standing on a high see-through platform, one can be afraid of falling down even though one *knows* that one has a firm albeit transparent platform below the feet and is *convinced* of being safe. The same can happen with fictional emotions: We react to the fiction even though we know it is not the case. Based on Damasio and Harris, Gendler and Kovakovich also show that fictional emotions, as emotions about non actual objects, are fully rational and contribute to rational decision (Gendler and Kovakovich 2006, 247). However I think that the concept of rationality involved is a bit problematic, because in fact the authors affirm that any emotion playing a role in decision making would be rational. Moreover, their claim that we react following a reaction pattern seems to me to reduce the emotions to mere instinctual elements, ignoring the human ability to model them.

Matravers also defends a broad cognitivism for the emotions, but he defines the “broad cognitive theory” as follows: It “agrees that emotions involve some cognitive component, but allows such a component to be a state other than a belief” (Matravers 2006, 254). Matravers’ purpose is to show that fictional emotions are rational, even though they are not based on beliefs. He offers an account of the rationality of fictional emotions, but does not explain in any greater detail what the cognitive bases are.

I agree with these authors, because in the two types of strong cognitivism—the one that reduces emotions to beliefs or combinations of beliefs and other states and the one that takes beliefs to be the only basis for the emotions—there is no place for those emotions without belief being involved. For example, strong cognitivism neglects the case of disgust, which is based on perception, or the fear of a ghost based on fantasies. But I think that the accounts by Gendler, Kovakovich and Matravers are unsatisfying because they lack a positive theory of the structure of fictional emotions. They are right to claim that these emotions do not ground on judgements, but what is the cognitive basis? In the above accounts, this question remains unanswered.

6.2. *Believing vs. Assuming*

WHEN WE ARE CONFRONTED with aesthetic fictions and when we are open to these fictions, we change our natural attitude into an aesthetic one. This specific aesthetic experience of fiction is to my understanding guided by the will for pleasure, enjoyment and entertainment. Enjoyment is an important concept that is often forgotten by the aesthetic.¹⁰ In this attitude, we are open to whatever the author of the fiction will tell us about the characters, the situations and the conditions of the specific fictional world. We accept to imagine these things but we do not fall into the illusion that they exist. We imagine them as a counterfactual world and we imagine a person called Anna Karenina that is unhappily married, has a lover and is sad.

But: Is this readiness to imagine the same as believing in the content of the fiction? My claim is that it is not. Radford would contradict me and because of that he would say that fictional emotions are irrational. Schaper and Walton would also contradict and point to second order judgements, Weston and Lamarque would say we do not believe in the content of fictions, because the bases of fictional emotions are mere thoughts. Gendler and Kovakovich would say that we are reacting following a pattern, even though we do not believe in the fiction and Matravers would say fictional emotions do not ground on beliefs but on other states without specifying them. I cannot support any of these answers and nevertheless I think that fictional emotions are rational. It seems to me that there is something like a propositional element similar to judgements in fictional emotions that we cannot ignore. On the other hand however, this propositional element is not a belief. I cannot say that I believe that Anna Karenina is unhappily married, that she has a lover and is sad, because in fact I do not.

Let us examine more in detail this propositional element. The cognitive basis of fictional emotions cannot be a belief because we do not believe in the fiction. I think that the role imagination plays changes the structure of the cognitive basis of fictional emotions. In fact, I do not believe Anna Karenina is unhappily married, has a lover and is being sad, but rather I *assume* all this—in the sense in which Meinong, for example, uses the term, i.e. the german

¹⁰ In recent years, some authors like Jauss and Barthes tried to introduce the concept of pleasure into the field of aesthetics (Jauss 1977, Barthes 1973). Nevertheless, I think that their accounts focus too strongly on the Freudian theory of pleasure.

word “Annahme” (Meinong 1910).¹¹ My claim is that the structure of the cognitive basis of fictional emotions suffers a transformation due to the power of the imagination. We assume the characters, situations and facts of the fiction, we do not believe in them. Assumptions are —as Meinong pointed out— like beliefs, but without the moment of conviction concerning the object. Assumptions —by Meinong’s understanding— occupy an intermediate position between representations and judgements. They are contemplative experiences that make us to attend and observe objects, without having any conviction concerning them (Meinong 1910, 309; Findlay, 1933, 107; Poli 2001, 287). Following this account I propose that emotions on fictions have a propositional structure, but this propositional element is not a belief, but an assumption. Once we assume the given conditions, characters and plot of the fiction we can have emotions about them. In the same way as in logic we can make a supposition and then realise logic operations that are *per se* perfectly reasonable, in the case of aesthetics we can assume a fact and then basing on this assumption feel emotions towards it.

It is important at this point to distinguish between genres and between emotions. In the case of reading a book, assumptions take the guiding role, but in the case of film, perceptions like strange noises, cries, shouts, strong images play an important role and not only assumptions. And it is not the same to feel disgust while reading a description in a novel, whereby we imagine the disgusting object in our fantasy, than to feel disgust watching a disgusting picture in a movie, visual perception being involved. I think it important to distinguish between genres, because it seems to me that assumptions are important in the case in which the emotion is engaged in some narrative structure,¹² while in other emotions like disgust fantasies and perceptions are enough and there is no assumption or judgement required.

The proposal is inspired by Meinong’s account on fictional emotions as based on assumptions. In fact, Meinong held that each psychic act could appear in two forms, that is, as serious or as non serious, the non serious variant of an act being the act modified by imagination. Following this idea,

¹¹ The German word “Annahme” would be better translated as “supposition”, but I follow the English translation of the text.

¹² I am not reducing fiction to assumption (Meinong), “as if” model (Vaihinger) or “if” model (Hamburger) here. I only claim that we make suppositions, assumptions on fictions.

Meinong claimed that perception, judgement and emotion have as their counterparts: perceptual fantasies, assumptions and quasi-emotions. However, my account differs from Meinong's thesis in an important aspect: Meinong arrives to the conclusion that fictional emotions are quasi-emotions in the sense of Walton. This claim is precisely where I think Meinong goes wrong.¹³

Summarizing: I deny that judgements are essential to emotions. Emotions may ground in other states that are not judgements like perceptions, fantasies, memories or assumptions. When we deal with works of fictions and want to be in an aesthetic attitude in which the counterfactual imagination has a guiding role, then we are receptive to the plot of fictional worlds and we are willing to have an aesthetic experience for our pleasure. This is the reason why reading novels we do not believe that these worlds, its characters and what happens in them exist. We just assume then, for the sake of our pleasure and entertainment, the content of the fiction. In doing so, we are in no way irrational.

6.3. Truth and Fiction

NOW THE DELICATE QUESTION ARISES, what the truth conditions for fictional emotions might be. Emotions on real objects have truth conditions in the way that they can be appropriate or not, but in what way does this hold for fictional emotions? If emotions have conditions for being appropriate and inappropriate, fictional emotions should also fulfil this requirement if they are to be real and rational emotions, which is precisely the claim I am defending.

1. The emotion of disgust is inappropriate if I do not have a perception of something. Fear is inappropriate if I do not perceive, remember, fantasize or judge something. What happens with fictional emotions? The material object of a fictional emotion is fictional, but fictional objects are nevertheless objects.¹⁴ About these material objects we can have assumptions, fantasies

¹³ My position rather resembles Witasek's approach, who, unlike Meinong, claimed that emotions on fictions are real.

¹⁴ Barbero showed from the point of view of Object Theory in a convincing way that fictional objects are also objects (Barbero 2007). However, there are some points of her account that I cannot subscribe to. First: she has a reduced view on emotions

and in some cases perceptive experiences. In the case of emotions that arise while reading literature, they are based—as mentioned before—in assumptions.

I think that assumptions in the above sense leave the question of truth or falsehood untouched. In this respect, beliefs and assumptions differ, even though they show a similar basic structure as propositional acts. When we assume something we do as if some entities and situations were real, and we do as if they were true. In these cases we have an as-if reality and an as-if true. Judgements are affirmations, while assumptions are provisional affirmations. I can say “let us assume, for the sake of the argument, that...”, but I cannot say “let us judge, for the sake of the argument,...” In assumptions, taking as a point of departure a first premise we can make deductions and inferences in order to obtain knowledge about something. In the case of fictional emotions, assumptions—as a modified propositional element—are the basis for fictional emotions and we accept the given conditions of fiction without affirming that they are true or false.

2. The appropriateness or inappropriateness of fictional emotions does not depend only on the existence of cognitive acts concerning the material object. A second condition is necessary here. Fictional emotions, as emotions in general, are true or false, appropriate or inappropriate according to their formal objects. Fear is directed to the dangerous and a toxic, extraterrestrial, green slime has the quality of the dangerous just as much as does a hail stones storm in the real world. Fear is thus in both cases the appropriate emotion. Therefore the fictionality of the material object does thus not affect the appropriateness or falsehood of a fictional emotion.

and on fictions. Barbero takes for granted the fact that emotions are based on judgements ignoring the advantages of broad cognitivist theories on this phenomenon. She has a reduced view of fictions because she claims that a writer in the origin of the creation of fictions writes false statements pretending that they are true about the characters. In doing so, Barbero seems to understand fiction as falsity. Secondly: I think that the fact that the material object of fictional emotions is fictional conditions also the kind of “judgement” that we formulate about it. For Barbero judgements about real objects and judgements about fictional objects are of the same kind. For me on the contrary, the fact that we know that we are dealing with fictions and that the machinery of fantasy is at work makes the judgements on fictions special in the sense I pointed out using the term “assumptions”.

7. Fictional emotions and practical rationality

7.1. Motivation and action: actual and non actual objects

I SHALL NOW TURN TO the question of practical rationality. In most accounts of fictional emotions, the thesis that real emotions necessarily motivate actions is taken for granted. When I see a man that wants to hurt another man in real life and thus feel pity, I will try to help the latter; but when it happens on stage I undertake nothing of the sort. Because fictional emotions do not motivate—according to most authors—they are practically irrational. This thesis, though, cannot be left unquestioned.

We could follow different strategies to reject the above claim. One move would consist in affirming that fictional emotions do not motivate, because in fact emotions in general do not have motivating force. Authors like Wollheim, for example, defend the claim that not emotions, but desires are the real motivators to action (Wollheim 1999, 32). His account seems to me too problematic because Wollheim understands the emotions as elements derived from desire, denies their autonomy and cannot explain the cases in which emotions motivate even though there is no underlying desire (Vendrell Ferran 2008)

We have to find another strategy that allows us to defend the thesis that emotions—including fictional emotions—may motivate to action, even though they must not do so necessarily. The solution to this problem has, to my understanding, already been pointed out by Schaper and was later on developed further by Moran and Goldie (Moran 1994, Goldie 2003). These authors claim a distinction between emotions about real objects and emotions about fictional objects as well as a distinction between emotions about actual objects and emotions about non actual objects. Emotions directed to non actual objects are emotions about hypothetical situations, emotions about future states and emotions about historical past, to give only a few examples. Following this differentiation, fictional emotions can be regarded as a subtype of emotions directed to non actual objects.

In this theoretical framework the claim is that emotions about non actual objects do not always motivate to actions: They can motivate but it is not necessary that they do it. I can, for example, imagine myself being in trouble

within a hypothetical situation and then feel fear but this fear will obviously not motivate any action. This would be a case of an emotion on a non actual object without motivational force. A case of an emotion about a non actual object that does motivate could be when I —taking an example from Peter Goldie— read a historical book about slavery, feel pity with the oppressed and donate money to a charity institution (Goldie 2003). Fictional emotions as a subtype of emotions about non actual objects are subjected to the same logic: They sometimes or maybe even mostly do not motivate to actions, and sometimes they do.

The point is that emotions about non actual objects, even though they can motivate, do so in a more indirect way than in the case of emotions towards actual objects.

7.2. Functionality, instrumentally and the pleasure factor

THERE IS ANOTHER SENSE IN WHICH fictional emotions can be seen as a challenge for practical rationality and it concerns their function (Gendler and Kovakovich 2006, 252). Should we react emotionally towards what we know does not exist? Should I feel pity for someone that I know does not suffer because he doesn't exist? I seems irrational or at least dysfunctional or inadaptative for the individual and the species to react emotionally towards fictions.

Against this possible objection to fictional emotions some authors have claimed that fictional emotions have a function. Following Aristoteles, for example, Martha Nussbaum —among others like Joyce, Feagin, Gendler and Kovakovich— attributes an instrumental role to fictional emotions (Nussbaum 1990, Nussbaum 1997). The instrumental role of fictional emotions, according to Nussbaum, consists in helping us obtain knowledge about other possible lives, to have experiences that otherwise we would never have, to amplify our repertoire of sensibilities and the range of our sentiments. This theory endorses processes of sympathy and empathy with fictional figures that afterwards we can apply in our real life. She claims that it makes us especially good judicious spectators of the fiction endorsing our ability to perceive the qualities of a situation and to act right (Nussbaum 1990, for example 140). This makes us more sensitive and aware of the human diversity and its different aspects. However, despite the attractiveness

of this thesis I think that empathy has its limits. We sometimes reject imagining what the author wants us to. This is the phenomenon called “imaginative resistance”. Also the empathy with characters and problems of fictions can make us indifferent to the real sufferings and troubles of our fellow men. This last phenomenon that I want to call “saturation” was already pointed out by William James and Dickens (James 1914, Dickens 1998).

In this context of a possible instrumentality of fictional emotions, it is important not to forget that we engage with fictions not with the aim to obtain instrumental advantages, but moved by the search for pleasure that we obtain engaging in fiction (as pointed out by Matravers 2006, 260).¹⁵ Fictional emotions therefore have an intrinsic value.

Summarizing: From the point of view of the doxastic and practical rationality, fictional emotions are not paradoxical. When we leave the field of a strong cognitivism and the commitment to the existence of the object towards we have emotions, then the second premise of the paradox vanishes. Also from the point of view of practical rationality, it becomes clear that fictional emotions are not essentially different from emotions about real objects. Fictional emotions are—in the same way as real emotions—rational.

8. Real emotions vs. quasi-emotions

BUT ARE FICTIONAL EMOTIONS REAL EMOTIONS, or do differences remain? Some authors like Meinong or Walton claimed that fictional emotions, despite their being rational, are quasi-emotions, i.e. not real emotions at all. Quite on the contrary, I want to affirm that fictional emotions are full-fledged emotional experiences. This is so because fictional emotions fulfil the five criteria that I think are essential to emotions (for a more developed view cf. Vendrell Ferran 2008). These criteria are the following:

1. Cognitive basis in a broad sense not reduced to beliefs. Also perceptions, fantasies, memories, judgements, assumptions can be the basis for the emotions.
2. Special quality in which they are bodily felt.

¹⁵ Cf. For a more detailed account on pleasure and fiction: Vendrell Ferran 2009.

3. Resistance to be manipulated at will.
4. Influence on cognitive states and volitions.
5. World-directed.

Fictional emotions fulfil all these criteria —as I showed in this paper— even though they show in each one of these points some peculiarities. Fictional emotions, when they have a narrative structure, ground on assumptions as their cognitive basis. The aesthetic attitude in which we find ourselves when we deal with aesthetic fictions and the fact that imagination is at work determine the cognitive basis for fictional emotions. While emotions on real objects can have several sorts of cognitive bases as perceptions, fantasies, memories, judgements, beliefs, assumptions and so on, the emotions that we have reading novels are based on assumptions. Here there are some differences in genres. For example, in novels the assumption plays an important role. The narrative structure of novels impulses us to assume every given description. But in cinema and theatre visual, acoustic, tactile sensations play a role: Our fictional fear can be increased not only by the content of a narration, but also by shouts and direct images. This shows how important an account that distinguishes between all these genres as different means is.

Fictional emotions are bodily felt but with a different quality than the emotions directed towards real objects. This lead some philosophers as Hume to characterise them as not really fully felt, as felt with less weight, less consistency. Because of this difference, Meinong and Walton thought fictional emotions to be quasi-emotions. How can we explain this qualitative difference without defending the thesis of quasi-emotions? My claim is that this qualitative difference can be accounted by the fact that when we have a fictional emotion we are in a specific aesthetic attitude. This attitude, as I mentioned before, is a predisposition to enjoy the fiction. It colours our psychic life while we are engaged with fictions and it is responsible for fictional emotions being felt as if they were not full-fledged emotions. This can explain the pleasures that we feel watching a tragedy. Sadness, pity and sorrow are highly hedonistic negative emotions. But we want to feel them and we enjoy having them because of this aesthetic attitude that colours and influences our emotional experience. Despite being real emotions, they are thus experienced as not belonging to us, as occurring rather on the surface of our psychic life, and we can enjoy feeling them.

As I showed in the critique against Walton's pretence theory, fictional emotions are not subject to our control as merely pretended emotions are, even though they seem easier to manipulate as emotions on real objects. They also influence the way we think and they can motivate us to actions. Finally, as real emotions, they are directed to material objects and to formal objects, with the only difference that their material object is a fiction and as such was created by another human being and is also accessible to others. We can therefore not doubt about what we are feeling when we engage with fictional characters and situations in novels.

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