

# ***The Experimental Solution for the Paradox of Fiction and the Paradox of Tragedy\****

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ABSTRACT. The paper proposes an original answer to the two paradoxes of emotional response to fiction: the Experimental Solution. The first part explains the Experimental Solution, and building on Ronaldo de Sousa's notion of paradigm scenarios, argues that fiction functions as a type of emotional laboratory where emotions are explored and tested, such that with fiction each one of us reworks the subtleties of the structure of paradigm scenarios. The second part of the paper elaborates some of the consequences of taking fiction as emotional laboratories, by showing that the continuum of emotional experience between daily life and literature reveals how emotional learning occurs, such as to provide a privileged space for emotional growth. Finally, the paper presents some of the ways in which the Experimental Solution makes a little step forward though it agrees with many of the insightful conclusions of the make-belief theory pointing out two important modifications that occur with this new solution.

This paper proposes an original answer to the two paradoxes of emotional response to fiction: the Experimental Solution.

The first part highlights how the Experimental Solution demands an explicit understanding of the connection between emotions in the face of fiction and those within daily experience. Using Ronaldo de Sousa's notion of paradigm scenarios, the Experimental Solution argues that fiction

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functions as a type of emotional laboratory where emotions are explored and tested, such that with fiction each one of us reworks the subtleties of the structure of paradigm scenarios. The second part of the paper elaborates some of the consequences of taking fiction as emotional laboratories, by showing that the continuum of emotional experience between daily life and literature reveals how emotional learning occurs in emotional response to fiction, such as to provide a privileged space for emotional growth. Finally, the paper presents some of the ways in which the Experimental Solution makes a little step forward though it agrees with many of the insightful conclusions of the make-belief theory<sup>1</sup> pointing out two important modifications that occur with this new solution.

### ***1. Paradoxes of Emotional Response to Fiction***

Two paradoxes can be identified concerning emotional response to fiction. The paradox of fiction, first stated by Colin Radford in 1975, exposes an inconsistency in our emotional response to fiction, namely that we do not think fictional characters exist and, consequently, it is strange that we have feelings for them. It can be formulated as a set of three propositions impossible to maintain coherently:

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

Since Radford's 1975 article, "How can we be moved by the fate of Anna Karenina?", until now, almost every possible solution has been offered to the paradox, and a long discussion has taken place usually denying one of the three statements given above. Jerrold Levinson provides an excellent

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks for the discussion at ESA 2012 conference and especially to Robert Hopkins and Robert Stecker for specifically pointing this out and making it clear that the paper needed to be more specific about the modifications I thought the Experimental Solution offered in face of other solutions.

summary of the several solutions that have been offered to solve the paradox<sup>2</sup>. The other paradox, which goes back as far as Plato and can be seen clearly discussed in Hume's treatise "On Tragedy," is the paradox of tragedy which highlights the issue of enjoyment of negative valence in the face of fiction. That is, it points out that people seek and enjoy sad and scary stories, though we should expect people to avoid them, because the emotional negative valence of stories elicits parallel responses in readers. Similarly to the paradox of fiction, several solutions have been given.

## **2. Emotional Laboratories**

I want to propose a novel and different answer to the paradoxes: the Experimental Solution. The Experimental Solution explains the paradoxes by showing how emotional response towards fiction is a crucial part of the way we learn, refine, and maintain our ability to be emotional. Building on De Sousa's work<sup>3</sup>, I propose that fiction functions as a type of emotional laboratory where emotional life is explored and tested. The Experimental Solution aims to solve the paradoxes by showing that it is not so much a matter of denying one of the statements given in the formulation of the paradox but of rewording it in light of the continuity between emotional response to fiction and emotional response to real life events. The rewording of the paradox suggests that we learn to feel also by feeling in the face of fiction<sup>4</sup>.

In *The Rationality of Emotion*, Ronald de Sousa presents the notion of paradigm scenarios, stating that it is through them that we are introduced to the vocabulary of emotion, and that these paradigm scenarios are later on supplemented and refined by literature<sup>5</sup>, making a clear connection between emotional experiences of daily life and fiction. He writes,

My hypothesis is this: We are made familiar with the vocabulary of emotion by association with paradigm scenarios. These are drawn

<sup>2</sup> Levinson, Jerrold. "Emotion in Response to Art" in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Ed. Edward Craig, (London & New York, 1998), 273-281, p.274.

<sup>3</sup> De Sousa, Ronaldo. *The Rationality of Emotion*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> Given that the rewriting of the paradox requires understanding some of the points made later in the paper I take up this task at the end of the paper.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 182.

first from our daily life as small children and later reinforced by the stories, art, and culture to which we are exposed. Later still, in literate cultures, they are supplemented and refined by literature. Paradigm scenarios involve two aspects: first, a situation type providing the characteristic objects of the specific emotion-type (where objects can be of the various sorts identified in chapter 5), and second, a set of characteristic or “normal” responses to the situation, where normality is first a biological matter and then very quickly becomes a cultural one<sup>6</sup>.

I think it is accurate to state that we become acquainted with the vocabulary of emotion through paradigm scenarios, but I think the story of how these paradigms are drawn is more complex. Though I am sure that experience before storytelling is crucial for the emotional relevance of stories, I do not think they simply reinforce paradigm scenarios. The constitution of the paradigm scenarios is more likely a complex and creative process between stories and daily life events. Stories, along with daily life events, help us to construct paradigm scenarios by structuring and naming emotions, while the paradigm scenarios remain open to revision and to obtain further complexity with future stories and future life events. Only this can explain that, as De Sousa writes, “a paradigm can always be challenged in the light of a wider range of considerations than are available when the case is viewed in isolation.”<sup>7</sup> That is, stories increase complexity in already existing paradigms scenarios but they can also point out new possible paradigms. The Experimental Solution retains an insight of the Make-Believe Solution: that stories are a form of playing; while it simultaneously reminds us that playing is necessary both for children and adults. Of course, the playing that occurs in the face of fiction gets more and more complex in refinement as the infant becomes a child, later an adolescent, and even later an adult. For as one grows older there is more information available both from daily life experience and from knowledge of fiction, as films, novels and stories become part of one’s emotional references.

The Experimental Solution to the paradox of fiction also solves the paradox of tragedy. If fictional stories are a type of emotional laboratory,

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 182.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 187.

then it is reasonable that we would give a privileged place to emotions with negative valence. For though we do not want to live them, they represent a crucial part of emotional growth, just as it is crucial to study controlled explosions in the laboratory when one studies Chemistry. However, in order to properly understand models we need to understand how they are used in laboratory practice, and how these practices are connected to life occurrences. As opposed to the study of Chemistry, for instance, the rules and methods of 'experimenting with our emotions' are not taught to us in a deliberate and organized fashion. Nevertheless, we learn to guide and profit from these laboratories of emotions. For instance, we choose to enter them, by reading a novel of a certain type and finishing it. Also, we develop a sort of sensibility for what we want to experience by choosing which type of experiment we feel like having, as is expressed by statements such as 'I do not feel like a superficial story,' or 'I feel like a drama.' Therefore, to know how these emotional experimental spaces function we need to analyze in more detail how these laboratories of emotion work.

The second part of this paper further explains emotional laboratories. First, by pointing out the continuum between daily life and literature in emotional experience; second, by examining in what way emotional learning occurs in the face of fiction; and, third, by indicating how fiction can provide a space for emotional growth.

### ***3. Emotional Experience in Daily Life and Literature***

We react emotionally to lots of things: events, mental images, possibilities of future events, reinterpretation of past events, paintings, novel ideas, emotions, other people, toys, machines, and everything else we encounter in our lives and the things we can imagine to encounter in our lives. There is not a single different apparatus to respond emotionally to each of these different entities and, consequently, there is a continuum in our emotional response. Accordingly, stating that we respond emotionally to fiction is just a commonplace about our emotional functionality, and the continuity of emotional response between fiction and daily life is a repetition of that commonplace. However, the paradoxes described question how exactly this emotional response to fiction works, suggesting that there is some-

thing important about this specific type of continuity of emotional response. The proposal of the Experimental Solution says that while we react emotionally to a lot of things (fiction being one of these), fiction enables one to maneuver and further explore emotional response to such an extent that our paradigm scenarios can be refined, attuned, reorganized, and re-created.

This ability granted to us by fiction establishes a different kind of continuity between emotional response to fiction and emotional response to real life events, such that the continuity of emotional response appears more puzzling than it is with other entities. The proposal of the Experimental Solution is one of genealogy: we learn to feel and maintain the ability to feel also by learning to feel in fiction and maintaining our emotional response in the face of fiction, similar to the way one learns to exercise the body in a specific way in a gym, and one continues to go to the gym to keep fit. It is important to note that while we refine, attune and increase the complexity of our paradigm scenarios, we simultaneously exercise our ability to feel. Just as when one goes to the gym to keep the muscles fit, one goes to see love stories to keep the ability to feel all the ridiculous pleasures, and the not so pleasurable emotions, that make up falling in love.

In sum, the suggested continuity between the emotional response to fiction and emotional response to daily life events may mean that we learn to fall in love and love people by being loved by others and watching others love, but we also learn by experiencing love stories. And, once one has acquired a sense of knowing what it is to fall in love, one continues to want to read and experience love stories, so as to ensure the ability to feel love is maintained, fit, alive, and functional.

There is not, however, just one story to be told about one specific emotional situation: there are many. The engagement with fiction can only fully be accounted for by a pluralistic account that provides room for and explains the wide variety of emotional experiences that people have, namely, in the face of fiction,<sup>8</sup> for the reader is neither fixed nor forced to adopt one specific perspective (be it from one of the characters or from the narrator's perspective), nor to have the same perspective when rereading a

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 146.

story, and stories are always open to interpretation. The fact that fiction can be reinterpreted in terms of emotional response mimics the relationship between paradigm scenarios and real life events. That is, given that a story can have an indefinite number of readings, and that there is always the question of which reading is the privileged interpretation<sup>9</sup>, the need to continue to reflect and revise them is a never-ending task. That is, the continuity between emotions in the face of fiction and emotions in daily life is an ongoing complex occurrence in which the paradigm scenarios are continually open to revision through experience but also through the process of interpretation of stories. However, the recognition of the complexity described under the Experimental Solution requires the addition of some modification to De Sousa's definition of paradigm scenario, namely that the two crucial aspects of a paradigm scenario are incompletely described. First, the situation type provides, in addition to the object of the emotion-type, the subject of an emotion-type. Second, the set of characteristic responses in a situation are various and include different levels of response, such as biological, social, cultural, in illness, before ten years old, after forty years old, and so forth. These modifications are important to better understand the malleability of paradigm scenarios and how they stand as models of emotional life, for these aspects of the paradigm scenarios are crucial tools of interpretation.

The emotional continuity of fiction with daily life events that formats the Experimental Solution suggests that the emotional response to fiction is part of the way we learn to feel. Unfortunately, the fact that there is literature is not enough to grant us its emotional experimental space: the need to be educated to read literature is a crucial part of making the experimental space take its proper form. Consequently, in order to fully understand the suggestion it is crucial to more clearly identify in which way fiction grants us emotional learning.

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<sup>9</sup> "What then determines the privileged interpretation? There is an essential ambiguity—a potential multiplicity of meanings—as well as an essential *ambivalence*—a potential multiplicity of values—in paradigm scenarios." De Sousa. "Emotions, Education and Time" *Metaphilosophy* 21:434-446, p. 437.

#### 4. *Emotional Learning*

The educational impact of emotional response to fiction has been stated before, and the fact that fictional emotions have an important educational role is not a novelty. Martha Nussbaum, for instance, stresses the instrumental role of fictional emotions in the cultivation of moral and intellectual character.<sup>10</sup> Also, Gendler & Kovakovich state that, “by engaging emotionally with fictional characters and situations, we broaden our range of simulated encounters, gaining insights about others’ experiences that are processes much as if they had been our own. Without such a capacity, actual experience would be our only source of such emotional encounters, severely limiting the range of our reactive possibilities.”<sup>11</sup> Yet these statements always require further explanation as we can easily imagine a cruel and mentally disturbed person to be totally capable of enjoying and appreciating the most complex works of literature from the emotional point of view<sup>12</sup>. And consequently, being able to emotionally relate to literature requires that we further our understanding of how and in what way does emotional response to fiction help us to become emotionally mature and capable of experiencing and using our emotions well.

The first point to make clear is that emotional learning is not something that only happens until a certain age. Granted that learning occurs differently at different ages, emotional education is an ongoing affair that requires continuous training like the description of the experiential emotional space pointed out<sup>13</sup>. The description of how the different ages modify the way the exploration and exercise occur in the emotional laboratory of fiction demands a paper of its own<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Nussbaum, Martha. *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 428.

<sup>11</sup> Gendler Tamer Szabó & Karson Kovakovich. “Genuine Rational Fictional & Kovakovich, in *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics*, (Oxford: Blackwell, forthcoming forthcoming).

<sup>12</sup> Thanks to Victor Moura to point this out in a question at ESA 2012

<sup>13</sup> Thanks to Erin Flynn for questions and discussion at ESA 2012 showing how the fact that the emotional experiential space of ficiton provides both exploration and exercise-exploration of emotions.

<sup>14</sup> The issue is also relevantly connected to moral education. As Erin Flynn suggested in conversation, the laboratory of emotions I propose would suggest that if a society wants their members to be courageous they would have to train them in dealing with

Secondly, we want to learn about emotions because they have the power to tell us what type of situation we are facing. But though it is crucial to both learn to recognize and accept our feelings, we also learn that emotions can overcome us. For example, when we are afraid, the emotion tells us that we are facing a dangerous situation, but unfortunately it may simultaneously skew our perception of the situation. Goldie points out that “emotions have the power to distort practical reasoning in a variety of ways. Emotions can distort practical reasoning by distorting perception. For example, when we are afraid, things look more frightening than they in fact are.”<sup>15</sup> Consequently, one of the important processes of emotional education is to learn to use the informative aspect of emotional response, and yet become aware of the distorting power of emotion, recognizing the impact of that specific emotion in perception and imagination. As Goldie explains in “Imagination and the Distorting Power of Emotion,” the imagining from the inside presents difficulties for understanding the distorting power of emotion because the distorting of emotions is hard to foresee ahead of time<sup>16</sup> and emotions can distort the process of imagination.

However, fiction provides a place for imagining both from the inside (first person perspective) and from an external perspective (second person perspective), and obtaining double emotional insight accordingly. Goldie writes that “it may be psychologically possible to oscillate between taking a sympathetic perspective on the infant prince and, on the other hand, imagining from the inside his experiences in his blissful ignorance.”<sup>17</sup> The oscillatory movement described by Goldie constitutes the dramatic irony in which each positions calls for the other in the face of the fictional format. The advantage of imagining both ourselves and others from an external perspective, which is given to us by fiction, allow each one of us to better know ourselves and how emotions take over our personalities, such that we acquire much more insight about emotions themselves, about others, and about our own personalities. Goldie writes that there is a psycholog-

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fear, but they would have to do it in a way that is both relevant to the culture and to the age targeted.

<sup>15</sup> Goldie, Peter. “Imagination and the Distorting Power of Emotion” *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 12, No. 8-10, (2005), pp. 130-42, p. 130.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. pp. 138-139.

ical advantage in imagining oneself from the outside because we are less prone to the pitfalls of emotional bias.<sup>18</sup> In sum, fiction helps us to develop and refine our sense of empathy by allowing us to better understand things from the first person perspective of others, and also by developing our capacity to imagine things from the external perspective, which is a crucial and important part of understanding ourselves.

In addition, the learning experience provided by fiction is not given simply by the fact that we are told a sequence of events, but also the fact that reading the story forces us to endure the sequence of events. By providing us with the set plot, the fictional story forces us to undergo the experience until the end, leading us to experience the emotion such as to really show us what it is to feel frustration. In sum, the fact that fiction forces the experience of emotions, allowing for imagination from the inside and from the outside, enables us to better understand others and empathize better with others. Simultaneously, it allows a better understanding of ourselves as it reveals things about our personalities that without such double perspective of imagination would not be available to us.

Finally, fictions provide emotional learning because it allows us to refine and further construct paradigm scenarios in a wholesome way. As De Sousa remarks, “we can’t learn only our own parts. Most likely we learn all the parts of a whole script.”<sup>19</sup>

It should be clear by now that learning to feel and understand the logic of the emotional world is a lifetime task and requires a more complex experience than simply being able to understand that fear is due to a perception of danger. To fully understand fear one needs to understand the role of desires, the conflicts between beliefs and desires, and the variety of different types of interferences from one emotion to others as well as many other aspects of the situational whole (e.g. actions, personality, other persons affected by the situations, implicit memory of life events), such that one story about fear cannot do justice to the complex world of that emotion. This means that emotional learning requires a sense of emotional growth that is more than the acquisition of information about emotions, or knowing how to control them. De Sousa grasps this subtlety of emotional learn-

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 140.

<sup>19</sup> De Sousa. 1990, Op. Cit., p. 439.

ing when he writes, “My own speculation is that emotional learning is indeed structurally like, as well as being affect by, aesthetic development. We learn to feel new emotions much as we learn to experience new art.”<sup>20</sup>

What is implicit in the quotation from De Sousa is that emotional learning requires a type of growth, just as taste requires growth to become refined.

### **5. Emotional Growth**

There are two reasons why fiction and our emotional response to fiction promote emotional learning so as to contribute to emotional growth: emotional laboratories promote experience of emotions at various levels and they promote emotional distance without indifference.

Fiction promotes experience of emotions at various levels because it teaches us how to feel by testing and retesting, but also because it shows us how we feel about how we feel. To fully understand the reach of the experimental space offered by fiction it is necessary to recognize the existence of second order emotions, In an essay called “The Pleasures of Tragedy,” Susan Feagin writes,

It should be noted that in ordinary as well as aesthetic contexts the twokinds of responses cannot be distinguished merely by what words are used to describe them. “pleasure,” shock,” melancholy, and “delight” may all describe direct or meta-responses, and the two are not always clearly distinguishable from each other. A blush of embarrassment may be intensified by embarrassment over the blush. That two things being distinguished cannot be infallibly distinguished, and that there are unclear cases of how and even whether the two are? distinguishable, does not necessarily undermine the utility of the distinction.<sup>21</sup>

Consequently, when we undergo the experience of watching a film or reading a novel, we do not simply respond emotionally to the events given to

<sup>20</sup> De Sousa. 1990, Op. Cit., p. 436.

<sup>21</sup> Feagin, Susan L. “The Pleasures of Tragedy” in *Arguing about Art* (ed. Alex Neill & Aaron Ridley) (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1995), p. 208.

us by fiction, we simultaneously respond emotionally to our emotional response. So we feel sad, but we will also feel quite pleased that we are sad, or we feel similar to a mean and horrible character of the story, and we feel 'not right' about it, and so on. It is by allowing the experience of first and second order emotional response that we learn further about our emotional response so as to provide the possibility for growth.

That is, fiction teaches us to endure our emotional reactions without running away from our own feelings so we experience as much as possible how we feel in face of certain situations. And, in addition, when we endure how we feel in face of certain situations we are more capable of feeling how we feel about our feelings such that the endurance forced by fiction occurs at two levels: feeling with the story and feeling how we feel about our feelings. However, the endurance of emotional response in fiction is less demanding because when we emotionally respond to fiction we do not have to act or make up our mind, there and then, in a decisive way. All we have to do is feel. In addition, emotional experiences can sometimes be tiresome but in face of fiction one can even relax while simultaneously experience feeling. The experimental space of fiction becomes a privilege space for emotional growth because the learning provided by fiction fosters future learning by allowing us to continue learn how to feel, to further explore empathy, and to further understand others and our own person.

Fiction also provides emotional experience to gain a certain type of distance. Perhaps the most challenging part of emotional growth is to learn to feel emotions (and not run away from experiencing them), while at the same time not be totally consumed by them. Thought emotions have a passive character because they assault us and we have little control over which ones we will experience. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which we are also responsible for our emotions. The fact that we are responsible for things (emotions) we do not fully control requires a different type of attitude than the one we have towards things we control. One way to assume the responsibility about our emotions is to learn to create a distance about what we feel, without becoming detached or indifferent to them. This attitude towards our emotions allows us to absorb the information emotions provide and simultaneously not be taken by them. Because we are not detached nor indifferent we can experience our emotions and know ourselves, but the distance grants us some control over expression of emotion

because we know that the value of what is being felt right now, no matter how intense it is, depends on what subsequently happens. For example, a person who is fired but has felt the difficulty of being fired before knows that: though being fired is devastating and really horrible, life continues to happen, and the experience of losing a job may end up not being really determinant of our happiness in the long term, but is highly revealing to who we are and who we want to become. However, it is really hard to know how to explain that to someone who has not gone through that experience. Telling them directly does not do the trick. However, we can imagine the unemployed person watching a film or reading a novel about being unemployed, which portrays the impact of time in that situation, and relativizing the feelings and emotions of that precise period they are living.

Emotional response to fiction teaches wise distance without indifference because emotional laboratories can manipulate time, thus granting us a proper understanding of the temporal dimension of emotions. Time is necessary for emotional processes because emotional processes take time not only because an emotion takes time to fully manifest itself, but also because the second order emotion requires waiting for the manifestation of the first order emotion in order to be properly set in motion. Becoming aware of the temporal dimension of emotional processes provides distance because it enables us to see ‘the whole picture’. In life the picture is never completely given, for it is of the nature of emotional experience to be always on the go, and of life to be open. However, stories have a beginning, a middle and an end, providing a complete experience that allows for one of the special emotional traits of fiction: enabling us to distinguish more clearly the difference between first order and second order emotions.<sup>22</sup>

Of course, everybody wants to feel well but sometimes feeling not so well now may mean feeling really well in the long run. That is, knowing the value of what we feel now may not be the value of the entire emotional experience requires a good understanding of the relation of emotions with time. In fiction, time takes a different duration than chronological time, while it simultaneously imitates some of the real life outcomes of temporality.

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<sup>22</sup> Feagin. *Op. Cit.*, p. 208.

The manipulation of time in fiction can be done directly or indirectly. It is done directly by stating temporality within the story itself, such as when it is said 'Last Sunday', or when stories refer that another year has passed, but also by providing references of repetition and temporal cyclical events. In addition, stories manipulate time indirectly by the use of tools of style that provide a sense of rhythm and temporality within the story, such as by the repetition of a word or a sentence (e.g. the use of 'and then,' 'and then,' 'and then'). Though the manipulation of time in fiction may be done directly or indirectly, the outcome is always to provide the experience of how emotions need time to unfold offering an insight into their nature and their effects.

### **6. Beyond the Emotional Laboratory**

The first part of my conclusion rewords the paradox of fiction showing that its simplistic formulation is a consequence of missing the complexity of emotional processes. Given what has been said the statements of the paradox should more properly be written in the following way:

1) we have emotional responses in the face of stories (organized sequences of events with situations—characters and objects—and various kinds of components (e.g. images, style, patterns) forming a concrete whole).

Our emotional response consists at least in two levels – response and meta-response;

2) emotions for objects logically presuppose beliefs in the existence and features of the objects in question.

Clearly, emotion processes require something of cognitive but what is cognitive is not as clear to identify<sup>23</sup>. Nevertheless, whatever the cognitive requirement is, it is nurtured also by fictional realities; and

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<sup>23</sup> For an interesting discussion of what is cognitive in cognitive emotion theories see Solomon, Robert. "Emotions, Thoughts, and Feelings" *Thinking about Feelings. Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions*, ed. Robert C. Solomon, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) pp. 76-88.

3) we do not harbor the beliefs in the existence and features of objects known to be fictional as if they were real, but we harbor beliefs on certain features of fictional objects as such.

That is, the fact that something is fictional does not mean there are no rules and boundaries. The connection of fiction with real life events is necessary for relevance of fictional space but this connection of relevance is not given by the realistic mark of being close to daily life events in a factual fashion. In fact, the closeness of fiction to real life events and why certain fictional works are grand and others fail may be emotionally explained. This suggests that it may be the case that the secret of the cognitive element of emotional processes may lay on understanding why certain fictional works succeed, and other do not (reasonableness of character description, logic of the plot, sequence of emotional marks, deliberate relevance of details, and so on).

The reformulation of the paradox points out that the paradoxes we face are intimately tied to the way we interpret and understand the world and that their existence is a symptom of the inadequacy of our conceptual frame of work.

The Experimental Solution to the paradoxes proposed that stories function as a type of laboratory for emotions, just as we have laboratories to conduct experiments in Physics and Chemistry. This solution suggests that maybe emotions would be a totally different affair if it were not for the fictional emotional response. Of course, it is hypothetically possible to learn Physics or Chemistry without using laboratory simulation. Similarly, it is possible to respond emotionally without ever experiencing fiction. However, if the Experimental Solution is right, then emotion theory needs to fully understand the impact of emotional response to fiction on the nature of emotion. Namely emotion theory needs to integrate how learning and refinement modifies emotional experiences. When emotion theory takes emotions as innate and stable and immutable mechanisms which once learned are simply used, then not only emotions in face of fiction and art in general become odd but theory is only capable of dealing with emotional processes that fit that description, and will more likely miss the point of certain complexities of the emotional world such as the impact of meta-emotions upon emotions (Mendonça 2012).

Finally, the paper presents some of the ways in which the Experimental Solution makes a little step forward compared to other solutions to the paradoxes. Though the Experimental Solution agrees with many of the explanations and descriptions of the Make-Belief Solution, it makes two important changes: first, it makes emotions in face of fiction (or for that matter emotions in face of all imaginary entities) a fundamental part of learning to feel, thus powerfully explaining the crucial importance of looking for experience of negative emotions in a safe experiential space<sup>24</sup>. This first modification also indicates that dismantling the paradox of fiction by introducing the notion of quasi-emotion is similar to saying that chemical experimentations in laboratories are not like the chemical interactions in Nature but quasi-reactions. That is, by dismantling the paradox with such a distinction between real and quasi, the Solution misses the target and fails to explain why emotions in face of fiction have fundamental and relevant connections for emotions in face of daily situations.

The second modification is much more subtle and requires looking at the assumptions and the conceptual background behind the proposal. The Make-belief theory assumes a certain definition of emotion in order to clarify the paradox. This makes it ignore the complexity of emotional processes and the many issues that are still to be solved and investigated about the nature of emotions and their taxonomy<sup>25</sup>. The Experiential Solution opens the scope of accepted emotional responses to fiction to include both more general feelings and sensations of emotional tone, as well as moods and background emotional impact. The Experimental Solution clearly takes up the claim that emotional processes are complex<sup>26</sup> and failure to reach a consensus about a taxonomy for emotions is part of the rich data that needs to be explored in order to reach the simplicity for explanation. Thus, the Experimental solution prefers to address emotions in face of fiction as a group of complex phenomenon in which the isolated emotions such as fear or pity are presently a more easily identifiable part. The

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<sup>24</sup> Thanks to Robert Stecker for pointing out this was a strong aspect of the Experimental Solution.

<sup>25</sup> See "Emotion" by Peter Goldie where he lists wide variety of facts that a theory of emotion needs to accommodate if it is going to be acceptable (Goldie 2007).

<sup>26</sup> See Collombetti paper on "Appraising Vallence" and her claim that "we should take complexity seriously" (Colombetti 2005, 123)

increase of what counts as an emotional reaction to fiction of the paradox of fiction also diminishes the strength of the paradox, as an important aspect of it is the identification or denial of the cognitive or rational element of emotional reactions.

The Experiential Solution open the possibility of a bolder hypothesis that the ability for a fictional world is a consequence of our emotional response to imagination.

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