NO (FICTIONAL) WOMAN, NO CRY
WHY MEINONGIANS DO IT BETTER

The paradox of fiction goes as follow:
(P1) We feel sad about Anna's tragic end and we know Anna is a fictional character;
(P2) Believing in the existence of x is necessary for having certain emotions towards x;
(P3)We do not believe in the existence of fictional characters.

In opening the philosophical debate on fictional emotions, Radford (1975) maintains that our apparent ability to respond emotionally to fictional characters and events is "irrational, incoherent, and inconsistent". He argues this on the grounds that existence beliefs concerning the objects of our emotions are necessary for us to be moved by them, and that such beliefs are clearly lacking when we read works of fiction. Since such works do in fact move us at times, Radford concludes straightforwardly that our capacity for emotional response to fiction is irrational.
In order to find a solution to the paradox, pretence theorists (Walton 1978 in the lead) robustly deny proposition (P1), maintaining that it is only *make-believedly true* that we fear horror film entities, feel sad about Anna Karenina, etc.
Following a classical line of thought, another possibility to solve the paradox (Lamarque 1981, Carroll 1990, Smith 1995) is to deny proposition (P2), saying that, although our emotional responses to actual characters require beliefs in their existence, there is no good reason to hold up this particular kind of emotional response as the absolute model for understanding emotional response in general.
A further way out is the one challenging proposition (P3) by suggesting a concept of weak (or partial) belief. In this case the emotions involved in response to fictional characters would be weaker if compared with those we experience in response to real life persons (Coleridge 1817).
The solution I find most interesting is the one questioning if existence beliefs are a necessary condition for genuine emotional responses, i.e. the one rejecting proposition (P2). According to the realist position I maintain all we need in order to have a genuine emotional response is to believe in the properties characterizing specific fictional entities and events. Since we believe in some properties Anna has – i.e. the property of being desperate and abandoned, the property of being rejected by her friends, and the property of falling under a train –, we have good reasons to feel sad.
On the one hand, according to the paradox of fiction set forth by Radford, there is a problem with fictional emotions because in those situations there seems to be no object, i.e. no existing object. On the other hand, and in contrast with Radford's point of view, by following a classical meinongian position, I assume that being an *object* and being an *existing object* are not one and the same thing: something like Anna Karenina is an object without being an existing one. From this perspective the paradox does not arise for it may be replaced by the following consistent triplet:

(S1) We feel sad about Anna's tragic end and we know that Anna is a fictional character (and therefore that she *does not exist*);
(S2) To believe that *there is* (and not that there *exists*) an object exhibiting some of the *emotion-inducing properties* specific to sadness is a necessary and sufficient condition for being sad about it (i.e. the emotion has to be directed towards something);
(S3) We do believe that *there are* fictional characters exhibiting emotion-inducing properties (e.g. *there is* a fictional character whose name is "Anna Karenina" and whose end is tragic).

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