



Artículo de Investigación

Psychic identification. Inquiring into Aristotle and Noël Carroll

La identificación psíquica. Una indagación en Aristóteles y Noël Carroll

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Abstract: This paper proposes a re-reading of Aristotle's well-known reference to fear and pity in terms of *identification* and *empathy* respectively: fear (intentional and propositional) as a form of experience in which the spectator puts himself in the position of the character and updates his experience (identification) *from the outside inwards*; pity as moral feeling that contains necessarily the moment of the empathy: intentional and imaginary occupation of the character's conscience and update of its experience *from within outwards*. This consideration can be useful to review the critic that Noël Carroll addressed of the strong meaning of the term identification.

Keywords: identification - empathy - sympathy - Aristotle - fear

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Resumen: Este artículo propone una relectura de la conocida referencia de Aristóteles al miedo y a la compasión en términos de *identificación* y *empatía* respectivamente: miedo (intencional y proposicional) como una forma de experiencia en la que el espectador se pone en la posición del personaje y actualiza su experiencia (identificación) *desde afuera hacia adentro*; compasión como sentimiento moral que contiene necesariamente el momento de la empatía: ocupación intencional e imaginaria de la conciencia del personaje y actualización de su experiencia *desde adentro hacia afuera*. Esta consideración puede ser útil para revisar las críticas que Noël Carroll dirigió al sentido más intenso del término identificación.

Palabras clave: identificación - empatía - simpatía - Aristóteles - miedo

1. Introduction

The status of psychic identification is uncertain, despite the persistent presence of the notion in the daily language and of its relevancy in the scopes of aesthetics, psychoanalytic meta-psychology and film theory. This character is largely determined by the fact that the history of the idea is more extensive than that of the term, which is also true for the terms “sympathy” and “empathy”, which is usually confounded with.

The first philosophical use of the term “identification” is found in the second Rousseau’s *Discourse*, precisely in the moment when the critic of the modern paradigm of the identity begins rising:

En effet, la commisération sera d’autant plus énergique que l’animal spectateur s’identifiera plus intimement avec l’animal souffrant : or il est évident que cette identification a dû être infiniment plus étroite dans l’état de Nature que dans l’état de raisonnement (1992, p. 214).

But we can trace its implicit presence in the philosophical thought up to Book X in Plato’s *The Republic* or up to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, and observe its relevancy in the reflexive traditions about the sacred and the dramatic.

On the other hand, since the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*, all the reflexive tradition about pity encompasses the intuition of *empathy*, which encounters different ethical-esthetic formulations—i.e., in Spinoza’s *Ethics* (2009, p. 141, 142, 144). Even though, it is not formulated by the term *Einfühlung* until the awakening of the symphronist concerns in the first historical hermeneutics of Goethe (1885), Herder (1994) and Schleiermacher (1977), among others. In a similar way, *sympathy* (*Fellow feeling*) is re-formed as a modern concept by the moral philosophers of the 18th century as an experience that founds the affective union of subjects, although its intuition has long trajectory. *Identification*, *sympathy*, and *empathy* were formulated successively to operative concepts since the Modern Age but maintain their history as intuitions inside the traditions of reflection

about the drama, the pity and the sacred.

In the 20th century, two traditions have tried to discard the intuition of the identification as being a term without reference: Phenomenology first—except Scheler (1973)—and the analytical philosophy later. Within the husserlian phenomenology, we must underline Edith Stein's (1964) critic disapproving of that character of identification in Lipps's (1906) concept of *Einfühlung*; in the analytical-cognitivist philosophy, there is also a significant attempt by Noël Carroll (1988, 1988b, 1990) to dismantle the idea of identification as it has been assumed for the most part by film theory. Phenomenology has denied the character of lived experience of identification, the analytical philosophy its character of genuine experience.

However, these refutations of the idea of identification turned out to be shallow and hasty, at least when compared with the extension that intuition has enjoyed for centuries. As I have pointed out, these traditions that thought about pity, drama and the sacred were those who developed this idea, and this causes those moral, fictional, and numinous features have played a determinant role in its formation. Such features survived—although elaborated—in the usage of “identification” by psychoanalysis and film theory. To understand the motivation of the identification as intuition, before we can discard it, it is necessary to consider these three dimensions. In Aristotle we recognize the moral-fictional reference that served as foundation for the traditions of both pity and drama — for this reason Brecht (Willet, 1964) directly associate identification with the author of the *Poetics*—. The sacred character of these merged identities or of the denial of one's own identity can be traced in many religions, being especially significant its formulation in the mystique of the Spanish *Siglo de Oro*.

This paper proposes a re-reading of Aristotle's well-known reference to fear and pity in terms of *identification* and *empathy* respectively: fear (intentional and propositional) as a form of experience in which the spectator puts himself in the position of the character and updates his experience (identification) *from the outside inwards*; pity as moral feeling that contains necessarily the moment of the empathy: intentional and imaginary occupation of the character's conscience and update of its experience *from within outwards*. This consideration, that adds the experience of the *placement* to the beliefs, desires and propositional attitudes implied in the emotion of fear, can be useful to review the critic that Noël Carroll addressed of the strong meaning of the term identification.

2. Fear and pity in terms of identification and empathy

Aristotle does not configure pity and fear (ἔλεος and φόβος) only as ways of feeling; it would not make sense then that Aristotle associated these emotions with the catharsis, but not others equally caused by the play like anger, hope or suspicion. The Stagirite finds something in both that leads him to place them in a narrow relation between themselves and with the catharsis. A characteristic of both is that they operate as *forms of relation* between spectator and character, in case of the fiction; they are figures of implication or adherence. With them, Aristotle specifies the reception theory, which is present in every part of his definition of tragedy. Obviously, such theory cannot count on concepts that would define the psychological participation of the recipient in terms of subject and identity. As it will continue for centuries, the theory of *moral feelings* constitutes the previous paradigm to psychology. Most interpretations on the reference to pity and fear by Aristotle have seen an *egoistic* attitude in Aristotle's

affirmation that compassion arises when fear of evil that happens to others could get to us; but in the *Poetics* there is not only the philanthropic nature of pity or egoist of fear at stake, but the value of both emotions like complementary forms of reception that define two ways of mentally placing the spectator in the tragedy.

A point of the definition of the tragedy that is also decisive in the intuition of the phenomenon later termed as identification is the one that affirms that tragedy is an imitation that is realized by characters who act, and not narratively [δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας] (1449b26-27). If we transpose Aristotle's terms to a modern scheme, we can affirm that, facing the nature—the presupposed attributes of a character—the spectator can only *sympathize*, in the sense of being recognized in the same quality or in a shared value, for example; in this case there is a certain conscious distance, while in the action, a more intense and *unbiased* mechanism can be activated. This is the mechanism that Lessing (1986, pp. 124-125) and Mendelssohn (1997, p. 142) outright termed as *identification*. Individual nature cannot be imitated, only the actions for which he is recognized, or which form this nature, can; therefore, if the spectator *identifies himself* with a character, it is not as much for what the character is at the beginning, but for what he does in the development of the plot. In a beginning, the spectator can *sympathize* with a character in whom he recognizes himself, who is considered to be similar to him, but he can only go as far as to *identify* with a character who *acts*, even if he was not *sympathetic* initially. It is true that Aristotle does not conceive the identification with the antagonist, with the anti-hero or with the evil one, but not because of a moral constitution presupposed at the beginning of the drama, but for the intention that directs its actions—“There will be an element of character in the play”, –clarifies Aristotle– if (as has been observed) what a personage says or does reveals a certain moral purpose [προαίρεσίτινα]; and a good element of character, if the purpose so revealed is good (Aristotle, 1996, p. 1454).

Identification is a matter of *placement*. Freud expressed this for the first time in 1921: “The mechanism is that of identification based upon the possibility [*Versetzenkönnens*] or desire [*Versetzenwollens*] of putting oneself in the same position” (Freud 1955, p. 117). But the structuralist vision of Barthes will enunciate it in a more decisive way: “identification does without psychology and is a purely structural operation: I am the one who has the same place as me” (Barthes, 1979, p. 153).

In the *Poetics* we read that pity takes place in regard of someone whose situation is greatly different from ours, someone struck by misfortune. The spectator updates the internal state of the character through his imagination (empathy) and immediately feels sorrow for him or for her. This happens without the circumstances that surround the character overcoming the recipient. Pity, thus, contains two moments: that of the empathy, in which the spectator is aware of the other's sorrow and updates it imaginatively suffering *like* him but without seizing its conditions, and that of the properly compassionate affection, in which the receiver suffers for the character. Empathy requires just to be placed in the conscience of the character updating its affection or its pain, putting aside the external circumstances, the environment.

In fear, the spectator becomes similar [τὸν ὅμοιον] to the character, similar not in a moral, but a situational sense: what happens to the character might happen to me, but not necessarily in the same way as thought by Lessing and other interpreters of the *Poetics* who read this clause in terms of egoism. With fear (excepting fear *for sb.*), the recipient suffers more clearly like the character because he *surrounds* himself with his

situation. The fear is related to what is called identification, because in it, spectator and character share more elements—the complex imaginary structure of the surroundings. It is this *virtuality* what approaches the common idea of identification.

Pity and fear, two forms of relation spectator/character, are therefore two complementary ways of experience: pity represents, on the one hand, the spectator's participation in the subjective or interior states of the character (empathy) and, on the other, the transfer of feelings that the spectator actualizes on the nature of fiction (projection). Fear represents, firstly, the virtual participation of the spectator in situations of the plot *as if* he was the character, occupying its position (identification), and secondly, the set of affections that are assimilated by the receiver from these situations (introjection).

Hence, in Aristotle action is more determinant than moral quality, because the identification relates more to spatiality, motility, circumstance, than to interiority: we identify more with others for the recognition of the *outside* than the *inside*, or the latter arises from the former. In empathy, adherence takes place imaginatively from the interior of the other, in which we feel as if we were placed in its intimate jurisdiction. Empathy is simultaneous to awareness of the other's suffering. Awareness and affection do not turn out to be incompatible. Film music has made us see this in a clearer way: it can fulfill the significant and cognitive function that makes us understand the emotion that a character experiences while letting us actualize this state. We know the affection of the character but we also experience it, to an agreed extent, according to the genre of the fiction.

Aristotle's definition of compassion (ἔλεος ἢ οἶκτος) in *Rhetoric* shows some nuances in relation to that:

Let pity then be a kind of pain excited by the sight of evil, deadly or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it; an evil which one might expect to come upon himself or one of his friends, and when it seems near. For it is evident that one who is likely to feel pity must be such as to think that he, or one of his friends, is liable to suffer some evil, and such an evil as has been stated in the definition, or one similar, or nearly similar (Aristotle, 1959, p.1385).

The idea of fear is here implicit in the experience of the compassionate experience, as a first moment or condition that is previous to the feeling of pity. Aristotle underlines two motivations of sorrow (λύπη): the contemplation of the evil that befalls someone “who does not deserve it”, raising in us a feeling of justice, and the consideration of the similarity or proximity (ἡὄμοιονῆπαραπλήσιον) of such evil to our own circumstances, causing fear. We cannot examine here the ethics aspects of pity, more clearly sketched in *Rhetoric* and in Aristotle's ethics works, but we should make some remarks on this issue: 1. That fear is presented not as much as an affection that is alternative to compassion, but as a previous or constitutive moment. This would mean, in our opinion, that not only *empathy* can work as a condition to pity, but also *identification*. 2. That the fact that compassion is addressed to “he who does not deserve it” needs not to be regarded as a reductionist view of the feeling or as a decrease in the ethical attitude of the compassionate but should rather be understood as a way of summoning the idea and the experience of justice. 3 That the similarity and proximity of evil imply, when one is conscious of these qualities, a *recognition* that could lead to *sympathy* (Hume noted *similarity*, *proximity* and *contiguity* as paths to sympathetic affection) or to *identification* when such similarity and proximity, such apprehension is unconsciously actualized inside us.

Thus, in *Rhetoric* the phenomena of *sympathy*, *empathy* and *identification* are interlocked in a more complex way than in *Poetics*, but only this latter would allow some understanding of these phenomena.

This dissertation does not intend to remove what pity and fear have as specific affections: both in *Poetics* and in *Rhetoric*, his exposition is very clear: pity means pity and fear means fear. But we should not neglect that, in *Poetics*, Aristotle also defines these phenomena as factor of the different relations between spectator and character, and it would seem advisable, therefore, understanding them also out of this aspect.

At this point, a relevant terminological clarification is required: the terms “Sympathy” and “Empathy” have a quite different meaning when used in the anglophone or the continental scopes. For anglophone philosophy, notably after Hume, “Sympathy” has a *formal* sense, it is a *formal* way of the intersubjectivity of emotion; “Empathy”, on the other side, has a *substantial* sense, because it assumes a content, is determined by qualities. However, in modern and contemporary continental philosophy, “Sympathy” has a substantial sense and “Empathy” a formal one. In this scope, Empathy is only a way of imaginary access to another conscience—Phenomenology understands this—and Sympathy implies the recognition of commonalities with something that we consider positive. The English meanings of “sympathy” and “empathy” can be recognized in Giovanelli (2009, pp. 89-95).

3. Carroll’s critic to the idea of identification

Carroll operates dismantling the idea of identification so as to dismiss it as a term. The key issue, however, is not so much to try to save or definitely clear the term “identification”, but rather to analyze the motivations and contexts that led to generating such an intuition. Carroll departs only from the senses that the term has in the popular expression and in a generic vision of the film theory—he does not seem to bear in mind the important texts of Morin (2005) and of the *Revue internationale de filmologie*—, and neglects all the meanings and connotations that the term was possessing earlier, even before being formulated.

Amongst these meanings of identification, it is worth stressing the idea of identification as placement—partly intentional, imaginary and unconscious, although not necessarily—as can be read in Freud’s *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* and, most clearly, in Barthes.

In my opinion, this sense of identification as *placement*, regardless the psychoanalytic and structuralist tradition, allows us to maintain the term and adjust it to a more concrete and objective type of experience.

The fact that Carroll deals with the matter of identification in his work about terror in film, about fear—even if he is restricted to what he calls “art-horror”—shows in my opinion how clear the phenomenon of identification is revealed in certain experiences of fear, something that Aristotle had already sensed, as I have tried to explain briefly. Therefore, in order to understand Carroll’s critic and tackle a review of his arguments against identification, we need to make some fundamental considerations about the experience of fear, notably in the cinematographic situation of terror film, the point that Carroll deals with.

A first consideration, that Carroll is aware of, is that of the difference, proposed by Heidegger in *Being and Time* (1967, p. 140) and by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations* (1986, p. 135), between the object and the cause of fear. The object is what we are afraid of, either a thing, quality of context. However, fear can be brought by objects which do not necessarily have a threatening load. Horror film recalls this again and again: remember the cornfield, for instance. Recent neuroscience has also explained and stressed this ability of *objectualization* that fear has. On the other hand, the cause of fear is what we are afraid *for*, usually ourselves, or the person we fear for. As Carroll closes his analysis to scenes with monsters, he seems to give more relevance to the object of fear rather than to the cause of fear, to what we are afraid of rather than to what we are afraid *for*. For this author, the object of “art-horror”, with its features of threaten and disgust, turns to be more determinant than the cause, this is, the person for *whom* we are afraid, either ourselves or another. This is the background of his critic to the traditional idea of the spectator’s identification with the character.

In Carroll, moreover, the object that is relevant is a formal object: the evaluative category that makes me apply features of threaten or disgust to the monster (Carroll, 1990, p. 28). This category constitutes the necessary condition of fear that he terms “art-horror”. The threatening and disgusting being does not determine itself fear as much as our evaluation and our belief do: “Saying that we are art-horrified by Dracula—Carroll affirms—means that we are horrified by the thought of Dracula where the thought of such a possible being does not commit us to a belief in his existence.” (1990, p. 29)

This primacy of evaluation and of the formal object is absolutely compatible with the ability of fear to objectualize what brings it: fear in the darkness becomes a fear of darkness, says Mannoni (Mannoni, 1982, p. 20). However, such a primacy of the object—even a formal one—makes Carroll, in my opinion, partly undervalue the cause of fear, the *reason why* of fear. We should consider in which extent the fear *for* the character and the fear *for* myself play their part in the situation of film terror in order to grasp the consistency and specificity of the identification phenomenon. In this sense, film reception is always built with a constant alternance of our subjectivity and that of the character, because our own subjectivity, regardless fiction, operates perceiving from inside and from outside imaginarily. Film editing, with the alternance of objective and subjective shots, of shot and reverse, is nothing but an adaptation to this psychic mechanism. This is why traditional film fiction does not rely only on the thoughts or feelings we address to the character but needs us to somehow actualize his: only when we confer our psychic life on the character, experiencing it as being his, fiction becomes consistent and effective. In the case of terror cinema, when the character is seeing the monster and is, therefore, conscious of its threatening presence, our fear *for* him is not strong enough to build the effective fiction of traditional narrative cinema; it becomes necessary that we *perform* this fear *for ourselves*. For the traditional film theory, in this fear *we identify* with the other in the sense that we are placed in the same point, we see the monster just as he sees it, and we experience what he experiences. Carroll does not accept this identification, neither in the weak sense of equality or experiences nor in the strong one of fusion of identities. To him, our conscience as spectators makes our experience different than that of the character. My review of Carroll’s arguments is based on this: that outside fiction we operate in a similar way, since we are agents and spectators of our own mental life.

Carroll argues that the spectator’s identification with the character does not exist as such, because the former does not have the same belief in the existence of the monster

as the character (Carroll, 1990, p. 88 ff.). As spectators, he says, we apply the formal object of art-horror and actualize some fear and repulsion, but not to the same extent as the character does. The confidence in some cognitivist criteria makes him lessen the power of fiction as regards the suspension of disbelief and the subjective implication. But the fictional pact, notably in the horror cinema, requires precisely a partial waiver to belief, a relax and a confidence, and not so much, as Carroll seems to defend, a belief status on the same level as the one we have when we buy the ticket. Fear before the presence and before the own's image of actualized fear is undeniable, although most of the times it does not reach the level of fear we would experience if the terrific situation took place out of the movie theater. Carroll is obviously lead by the idea of a certain "aesthetic distance" favored by art and supported by our evaluative activity and by the operation of our beliefs. But it is necessary to have in mind that terror, fear and horror, precisely, have always been the most difficult emotions for such aesthetic distance.

In my opinion, the relevance given to the belief factor in emotions, and specially in fear, has turned our attention towards a cognitive process that, although essential, is not necessarily constituent of some fears; at least it is not the state of mind that founds or causes fear. The source of this relevance of belief as regards fear in the analytic tradition can be traced again in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*: "The belief that fire will burn me is of the same kind as the fear that it will burn me." (1986, p. 134) Wittgenstein's idea applies only to the *epistemic* and *propositional* side of fear, in the sense that Gordon (1987) or Hansberg (1996) have exposed, but not to other ways of fear in which evaluation takes place unconsciously. In this aspect, the contributions of neuroscience in the last two decades have been quite revealing stressing the role of brain amygdala in the process of fear, even if the hippocampus, the center of conscious memory, is damaged. This implies that fear before an impure and threatening presence does not always come out of propositional attitudes, either beliefs or desires.

Identification takes place, in fear, when we are surrounded by the character's situation and we perceive or note the same as he is perceiving or noting. Fear offers some forms of position, of placement on the part the person who exercises fear, far more effective than other emotions, or faster, at least. It is in fear where we actualize the same experience that the other one is possessing—though not always completely. Other emotions do not convey so clearly this possibility of placing ourselves in the same place as the other one. They can take us to the usual empathy in pity, or to co-feel in participated rage, or to congratulation in joy... They can make us experience a feeling that is directed to the character, *co-living* or sharing with him, but do not normally offer the possibility of feeling *the same* as the character feels, being so completely surrounded by the situation. It is undeniable that we are afraid of Dracula, and we do not feel that as subjects docked to a theater seat, but also intentionally as constituent subjects of fiction and aside of the conscience of fiction.

Briefly, the alternation of the two causes of fear—for oneself and for the character—constitutes our mental state in the experience of fear, just in the same way that, outside fiction, we are actors and spectator of our own mental life as we are also, imaginarily or intentionally, spectators of the mental life of others. It would seem necessary to overcome the modern paradigm of subjectivity and its latter review in the paradigm of inter-subjectivity and accept that they both are intimately connected in a single reality, as Hume (2000) had pointed in his theory of sympathy.

Moreover, the experience of "art-horror" is undoubtedly the most paradoxical of

among those involving a relation between emotion and art, insofar as the fear felt can be genuine and intense in a context of aesthetic experience. An explanation in terms of *narrativity* and *dramaticity* could be useful so as to understand the status of fear in fiction and in the aesthetic experience. These art principles have a solid psychological basis: the global situation of a terror film is generally narrative. Within this continuous narrativity there are certain intensifications, peaks marked in certain moments; this is what we call *dramaticity*. Identification has to do with these dramatic intensities and, in them, it is clear that the assumed genuine aesthetic experience of narrativity—presumably conscious and distanced—gets weakened.

Narrativity and dramaticity alternate and live together as two types of experiences that humans are able to perform simultaneously. This simultaneity is another feature I would add to Carroll's theory. He reckons that identification does not describe the receptor's experience because this latter has opinions and experiences that the character lacks of. However, our mental life is able to experience several ways simultaneously. We often say that "you can't have your cake and eat it", but actually our brain can. Think, for instance how, inside the dizziness of a new love, we are still able to maintain a certain degree of precaution. In this situation, we surrender to the sweetness of infatuation, enjoying it, but at the same time we keep some reserve of prudence, without depriving the positive feeling of its intensity. Both feelings sometimes alternate, as if we were continuously passing from one state to the other. In my opinion, something similar happens in the situation of "art-horror": our spectator's pact with fiction, the pact that is the corner stone of literary and film genres, allows us to keep the prudent distance secured by the confidence in the film mechanism, while making possible our surrender to adventure.

Identification, then, should not be understood as a continuous state, parallel to narrativity. In this case, the traditional film theory—from Balázs (2010) to Mitry (1997)—has always talked of *participation* on the part of the spectator, not of identification. Identification is a specific state that takes place punctually, that is in constant alternation and even simultaneity with other states and cognitive processes. This way, we could rescue and maintain the long-term tradition intuition in the theories of sacred, of drama and of the philosophy of emotions.

Therefore, we are making two basic critics to Noël Carroll's theory: first, that our states of mind can alternate, and even take place simultaneously although, in occasions, they get reciprocally inhibited, and this constitutes the psychic basis of the aesthetic principles of narrativity and dramaticity, allowing states of continuity and circumstantial states in simultaneity and alternation. And second, that identification, together with certain episodes of intensification of the mental life, generally unconscious, is not a state that is maintained in a continuous manner, but specific and located, in alternation with other states and even simultaneous to other states normally kept in the reserve.

Thus, fiction needs the subjective implication in its normal way of performing. This must be the start point of a cognitive theory, in my opinion. It is evident: if we do not activate our mental and subjective life in the manner as required, fiction—especially cinematographic—does not take shape. However, this implication in the narrative context maintains some distance, perspective and conscience, because it needs our subjectivity to apply some beliefs, and make judgments, recognitions, projections, or introjections. But in the dramatic context, in those moments of intensification in the character's and the spectator's subjectivity, our reception is no longer distant

nor conscious, it “acts”, as Aristotle would say, like pure subjectivity or like mental life. It is not about “believing” that one is the protagonist, but about experiencing in a genuine—mental—way what the character is experiencing. Our fear is absolute, authentic and genuine, and our state of mind is not that of *Conscience* but of *Awareness*.

There is no question of speaking in terms of equality ($A = A$) or fusion ($A \text{ is } A$) because this means taking into account the ontological statute of fiction beings, as Carroll does, we just need to analyze the status of our experience in the cinematographic situation. It is important, moreover, to consider that our mental life in film fiction gets accompanied by a loss of mobility and a substantial change in the connection and relations between our body and the environment, which disappear in the situation of dramaticity-identification. If we take in consideration these experiences, we can accept the specificity of identification. Carroll proposes an understanding of identification as “assimilating the situation” and this would seem near to the idea of placement that I am proposing, but Carroll departs from the relevance of thought and evaluation, from our intellection as spectators of the character’s ideas and appraisals:

This means, partly, to have an idea of the comprehension of the internal situation of the character, this is, to have an idea of how the character assesses the situation (...) I must have a conception of how the main character sees the situation; I must have access to what makes his assessment understandable (Carroll, 1990, pp. 205-6).

This evaluation takes place in the field of narrativity, but not in dramaticity. Think, as I have previously mentioned, of the functions played by film music. It lets us know what the character is thinking or feeling. This is its significant contribution, especially in moments when the situation and the visible elements do not provide us with this understanding. But music also, and essentially, plays an affective function: it makes us think and feel certain things, not just understand them. Not only understanding a character’s state of mind, but also making possible that such state becomes actual in us. Our affection does not arise as a consequence of comprehension, as Carroll affirms. There are affections that do not come from the fact of understanding the character’s situation. In these cases, the situation is ours and, if we see ourselves partly through the character it is in the same manner as, in our daily life, we see ourselves imaginarily *from the outside*.

As I have already pointed out, the specificity of identification can be described in terms of *placement*, as Freud and Barthes did. This means that our mental life, which has assumed and made effective its symbolization as a subjective life, always develops in contexts, adapting to situations, either real or imagined, born in perception or in fantasy. Our experience is always *in* and *from* a determined position. We have the capacity to perceive, think and feel—intentional and imaginarily, but this does not make it less effective—from different positions than those in which we really are. This is the origin and the condition of feasibility for fiction.

And this leads us to the third and deeper consideration regarding Carroll’s arguments about identification. I do not think that fiction was created as a specular alternative to reality—although we have assumed its evasive and aesthetic function face to an often devastating reality. Fiction was generated in the daily experience, inside it. In fact, it still makes part of it. It is in the normal experience where we produce the genuine fictional mechanisms. Only that art, providing these mechanisms with a body, a representation or a mean, brings us our fictionality back, but objectified, symbolized and, sometimes, stylized. Cinema, for instance, has made us experience our “daily

fictionality” in a cinematographic way. Moreover, art did not generate fiction, it is quite the contrary: fiction was one of the founding manners of some of the forms that we now so comfortably call art.

Finally, I would be quite reluctant to absolutely discard the notion of identification as “fusion of identities”. To what extent the metaphors of the aesthetic situation, such as *distance* or *identification* did not become effective? Have these aesthetic and artistic experiences not assimilated these symbolizations, to the point of making them part of themselves? These metaphors, intuitions or however we might call them, do not exist in a poetic dimension external to the real and effective world. All our emotions are imbued with historic symbolizations that come, in the greater part, from art. Art-horror, as termed by Carroll, gets into our terror because it had already become symbolic to a great extent before entering into the scope of art. Likewise, has not somehow the intuition of identification as fusion, which has generated so many texts and theater production, in the literary mystic, in the comprehension of compassion and sympathy, become effective as a constituent of our aesthetic experience?

Debates on identification have continued in the analytical and cognitive theory, and almost always around Carroll’s arguments (Gaut, 1999, pp. 200-2016; Coplan, 2004, pp. 141-152; Carroll, 2013, pp. 234-246). However, in these debates the differentiation between identification, empathy and sympathy, crucial for the present investigation, remains insufficient.

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