ABSTRACT

Reporting Theory of Fictionalizing

John William Rosenbaum, Ph.D.

Mentor: Alexander R. Pruss, Ph.D.

This is a dissertation in the philosophy of language. My main objective is to give the correct account of the speech act of fictionalizing, aka *fiction-making* or *creating a fiction* or *storytelling*, stipulating that this last excludes nonfiction stories and lies. The Introduction and Chapter Five work together to establish the exhaustiveness of the following trilemma of viable accounts of fictionalizing: David Lewis's and John Searle's pretend-assertion theory, Manuel Garcia-Carpintero's and Greg Currie's neo-Gricean audience-make-belief theory, and my reporting-on-fictional-situations theory. Chapter Four details an account of paradigmatic cases of reporting needed to understand my fictionalizing account, which is itself argued for in Chapter Five. Chapters Two and Three (with a smattering of Chapter Five) are meant to take pretense and make-belief theories out of the running altogether. Along the way readers will find contributions to discussions on assertion and other speech acts, pretense and other facsimile actions, the nature of propositions, fake news and misinformation, and even a potential resolution to a paradox related to tragic works of fiction, to name a few.

Reporting Theory of Fictionalizing

by

John William Rosenbaum, B.A., M.A.

A Dissertation

Approved by the Department of Philosophy

_____

Todd Buras, Ph.D., Chairperson

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved by the Dissertation Committee

_____

Alexander R. Pruss, Ph.D., Chairperson

_____

Todd Buras, Ph.D.

_____

Hud Hudson, Ph.D.

_____

J. Lenore Wright, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School
August 2022

_____

J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

Page bearing signatures is kept on file in the Graduate School.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To myself
because Halfway Henry can go to hell

To Rhiannon
Everything I am and everything I have is yours anyway

"In short," I continued, "I have decided that [this present work] should remain buried in the archives of [my head] until heaven provides someone who can adorn [it] with all the things [it] lacks; for I find myself incapable of correcting the situation because of my incompetence and my lack of learning, and because I am by nature too lazy and slothful to go looking for authors to say what I know how to say without them. This is the origin of the perplexity and abstraction in which you found me: the reasons you have heard from me are enough reason for my being in this state."

On hearing this, my friend clapped his hand to his forehead, burst into laughter, and said:

"By God, brother, now I am disabused of an illusion I have lived with for all the time I have known you, for I always considered you perceptive and prudent in everything you do. But now I see that you are as far from having those qualities as heaven is from earth."

<div align="right">Miguel de Cervantes</div>

All I do is sit at the typewriter and start hitting the keys. Getting them in the right order—that's the trick.

That's the trick.

<div align="right">Garth Marenghi</div>

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Things to Know

I.   *Fictionalizing*

This is a philosophy-of-language dissertation. My main objective is to give the

correct account of the speech act of fictionalizing, aka *fiction-making* or *creating a fiction*

or *storytelling*, stipulating that this last excludes nonfiction stories and lies.

Speech acting is doing things with language. Speech acts come in three parts.

There's the locutionary act—that which is uttered or scribed (the English sentence "Are

you using the salt?" when the salt is clearly out of the speaker's reach). The illocutionary

act is the act speakers or authors perform with their speech (asking you to pass me the

salt). The perlocutionary act is the actual effect on the hearer or reader (getting you to

pass me the salt, you forming the belief that I want salt, you realizing that the salt is

closer to you than to me, etc.).[1]

Some types of speech acts have received lots of attention since speech acting was

raised to the level of awareness in our discipline. Some so-called hot topics include the

speech acts of asking questions, of presupposing, and of making promises. Assertion—

both with respect to truth-telling and to lying—is perhaps the speech act over which the

most ink has been spilled. However, there's a speech act that's in some sense situated

between truth-telling and lying that almost no one has given serious attention. That

---

[1] Mitchell Green, "Speech Acts," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta (2015).

speech act is—you guessed it—fictionalizing. And in this dissertation I give fictionalizing serious attention.

To be fair, it's not that fictionalizing has received *no* attention. It's just that about 40-60 years ago some notable philosophers[2] turned their attention briefly to fictionalizing, staked out two major camps (and two minor ones), then moved on. A couple people have recently looked back at those accounts and tried to shore them up a bit. But—so it seems to me—no major work was done even at the start of all this to take serious stock of fictionalizing as a distinct speech act, only as it contrasts with asserting. As such the treatments seem perfunctory.

I'm not exactly sure why fictionalizing hasn't received more serious attention, especially given the prevalence and prominence of fiction globally and throughout history. My best guess, first, as I just alluded to, is that recent philosophers of language fell into the same sort of pattern that led philosophers prior to J. L. Austin—and of course Wittgenstein before him—to treat assertion as the primary purpose or use of speech. That is, conveying truth and falsity was treated as the premier speech act, the point of human communication. Saints Augustine and Aquinas, e.g., (and so, too, presumably Plato and Aristotle) suggest as much.[3] It took Austin's groundbreaking *How to Do Things with Words* to open the eyes of our discipline to the varied ways of acting via our speech (and presumably Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* to open Austin's eyes before that). While obviously philosophers needed to start somewhere in their analysis of various speech acts in light of this new theory, and assertion is as good a place to start as

---

[2] St. Augustine being the exception to this timeframe.

[3] See, e.g., Augustine's *On Lying* and Aquinas's II-II:110, also on lying.

any, my guess is that it was hard for philosophers to shake the historic precedence of focusing on assertion.

Second, and likely more weightily, there's simply the pragmatic concern of sharing information that assertions, promises, and question-asking do for us that fictionalizing doesn't. Were we to lose fictionalizing as an ability our lives and cultures would be poorer for it. But life could pretty much go on as it does. However, we'd lose science, ethics, aspects of religions, and some forms of art, and—in some significant sense—even society generally if we lost assertion, promising, or question-asking. Given these acts are more integral to society it makes sense that they've received lots of attention.

As a preview to my readers, my view of fictionalizing is that it is a type of reporting, roughly on something that the author / speaker does not take to be actual. Interestingly, though not surprisingly, at least in analytic philosophy, the speech act of reporting got wrapped up with assertion. The "not surprising" part is that both speech acts are about conveying what or how the speaker takes things to be (or, to cover lying or intentional misreporting, about conveying what or how the speaker *falsely* takes things to be). The "interesting" part is that, as it turns out, the speech acts are distinct, as in neither identical nor hierarchically related, despite often coinciding in one utterance. I'll develop an account of at least paradigmatic cases of reporting in Chapter Four to lay groundwork for my fictionalizing theory, which in turn I develop in Chapter Five. My case for the distinction between asserting and reporting starts in Chapter Four and concludes in 5. (There might be an argument implicit to this dissertation that reporting—typical nonfictional reporting and fictional reporting—is the primary information-sharing human

speech act, if there's any. But as I want to limit the number of branches I'm sitting on in this dissertation, I'll just leave that idea there.)

II.   *What I'm up Against*

The two main, popular theories for the speech act of fictionalizing are pretend-assertion (pretense) theories, *à la* David Lewis, and variations of authorial-intent accounts. The most promising of the latter is the neo-Gricean make-belief (MB) theory of Manuel Garcia-Carpintero (G-C). In each of the first two substantive chapters I describe one of these accounts of fictionalizing, motivate it, undermine that motivation, and then move to directly attack the view.

In each popular case, the philosopher starts with an account of truth in fiction then comes up with a fictionalizing account that is at least fitting for, if not implied by, that truth account. David Lewis applied his possible-world semantics to come up with his counterfactual account of truth in fiction. Manuel Garcia-Carpintero's is an account of fictional truth that his literary interpretation seems to require wherein, roughly, what's true in a fiction is whatever the author successfully communicates is true.

As a first, rough pass, Lewis's account of truth in fiction has it that some proposition p is fictionally true if and only if, were the relevant story told as known fact in some world, p would be true at that world. So, what makes it true that Sherlock Holmes has a liver? That in the world(s) where the narrative as detailed in the various Sherlock Holmes fictions is told as known fact, Sherlock has a liver. Presumably though not necessarily, the story is not known fact in the world of its telling. This suggests that the author takes the story to be false or simply doesn't know that or care if it's true. So, fictions are—if at all—only accidentally true. By 'accidentally true' I mean to refer to the

narrative generally (thus allowing for some mistakes in getting all the details right). There is some science fiction, e.g., that includes details for which the authors have gone to great lengths to be scientifically accurate (see Jules Verne, Andy Weir, or the pseudonymous James S. A. Corey for examples). For example, if Sir Arthur Conan Doyle meant to refer to a Detective Sherlock Holmes in this world, he'd be biographizing, not fictionalizing. But neither is he lying, wanting to convince his readers that the statements referring to Sherlock Holmes are true. What to make of the fictional sentences that are also accidentally true? Given they are only accidentally true, it is not the case that the author asserted them. The fictional sentences that look like assertions must be pretended, the author simply acting as if these are statements of known fact. And if that's the case with the accidentally true assertion-like sentences, so it must be with all the assertion-like sentences, given the author had no reason to treat the accidentally true assertion-like sentences differently than the nonaccidentally true sentences. They were accidentally true, after all. And so we have Lewis's pretend-assertion account of fictionalizing.

It's worth noting that Lewis spells out very little of his reasoning for this view in his published works. So the argument I extrapolate on his behalf in this dissertation is one of my contributions to the literature.

G-C has a view of fictional truth according to which whatever the author successfully communicates to her audiences to make-believe is true in her fiction just is true in the fiction. What makes it the case that Sherlock Holmes has a liver on this view? That Doyle successfully communicates to readers to make-believe that Sherlock is a being more or less like us, and since we have livers, we should make-believe Sherlock does, too.

G-C goes on to argue against Lewis's view of fictional truth to establish his own in the following way. According to G-C there are certain fictional truths that only authorial communicative intention can account for. Case in point, he thinks there are stories that are nonaccidentally simultaneously fictitious and true, that there are, e.g., fictions in which it is true that a character in that fiction is simultaneously and nonaccidentally a character in a fiction in that fiction. To make this concrete, G-C thinks that it's possible that there is a fiction within, say, the world of Jane Austen's *Pride & Prejudice* wherein Elizabeth Bennet is a character, and that this fiction-within-the-*P&P*-fiction also nonaccidentally truly describes Elizabeth Bennet's life. So, according to G-C, Ms. Bennet might read a fiction starring herself but also learn something nonaccidentally true about her own life—even things prior to or just as they're happening to her!

If all this leaves you thinking you're misunderstanding what G-C is up to, that some sort of category mistake as afoot, take heart. That's a fair assessment, though there may be something workable here. Anyway, here's what G-C takes to be going on. What accounts for nonaccidentally simultaneously fictitious and true fictions is that the author intends that it is true that the fiction is simultaneously and nonaccidentally fictitious and true. G-C argues that other accounts of truth in fiction—Lewis's, say—contradict these sorts of fictional truths.[4] So, since authorial communicative intent is the only way to account for all the truths of a fiction, any account of fictionalizing that doesn't make use of such intent can't be right. And since his account of fictional truth requires authorial intent, and since authorial intent plays a major part of Gricean speech acts, it's natural

---

[4] Page 204 … "nonnegotiable" is doing lots of work given that his interpretation is negotiable as we'll see.

and fitting that fictionalizing just is a Gricean speech act. The relevant authorial intention for G-C is the audience make-believing the sentences that constitute the fictional work, hence why I call G-C's view "make-believe theory."

One may wonder why I chose these two views to address with full-length chapters rather than some other views. Here are my reasons. I'll take the various camps from which I might pull views to treat in turn, starting with the pretense accounts.

Lewis's pretense view has an intuitive appeal to it and as such is pretheoretically a strong contender. Any reader who is familiar with the literature would find it amiss if I did not address his account, anyway. But also, Lewis's view grows out of his comprehensive philosophical views. So, the account seems to stand on an extensive—if not solid—foundation. This further adds to the view's initial appeal I take it. Some other, one-off view might have less "street cred" up front (though as we'll see, there aren't really any noncredible one-off views to date).

John Searle also has a pretense account.[5] Searle's view depends on the same motivations and makes use of the same moves and assumptions as Lewis's. His view is that though fictionalizers look like they're asserting, they aren't in fact trying to abide by the norms of assertion or its felicity conditions, etc.; though neither are they lying. So they must just be pretending to assert. In short, if it's not the action of which the behavior is typical, it must be a pretense of that action. We don't, e.g., expect Mary Shelley to provide us evidence for the claim that Frankenstein's Monster learned human language by observing people in a cottage beyond simply telling us that's how he learned to speak (and so eloquently!). Neither do we call her a liar for her statements about reanimating

---

[5] John Searle, "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse," *New Literary History* 6 (1975).

dead tissue. Since she's not trying to assert despite appearing to, it must be a pretense of assertion.

Further, both Lewis and Searle make use of pretend references to fictional characters as a way to motivate pretend assertion. Doyle seems to assert by reference to Sherlock Holmes, but there is no actual Sherlock Holmes to refer to. So the reference is a pretense, and so too seemingly must the relevant assertions be pretended.

One problem with Searle's account over and above Lewis's—at least insofar as Searle himself characterizes it—is that he pits fictional utterances (fictions) against serious utterances, e.g. assertions. "It is raining outside" in the mouth of one asserting is a serious utterance, for hearers are meant to take the utterance seriously by believing it. "It is raining outside" in the mouth of one fictionalizing is not a serious utterance, for hearers are not meant to believe it; hence they aren't taking the utterance seriously.

Searle is right that there *is a sense* in which hearers aren't meant to take fictionalizers or their utterances seriously. I'm not meant to take it *as true*, e.g., that Elinor Dashwood from Jane Austen's *Sense & Sensibility* was an actual person. However, it seems to me obviously false that I'm not meant to take Elinor Dashwood seriously as a person through the course of the narrative. Similarly for Austen's portrayal of the virtue-vice spectrum of sensibility through the text. Elinor starts off just a bit too stuffy whereas her sister Marianne is too free-spirited. Through the narrative we can see how Elinor's excess of sensibility and Marianne's deficiency of the same hurt each of them. It takes Elinor's loosening and Marianne's sobering up for each of them to start to flourish. Of course, virtue theory and the relevant picture of human nature that explains or justifies

human flourishing in Austen's sense might be false. But the views aren't therefore not presented for serious consideration.

Searle probably has the resources to deal with this complaint. In any case, without getting any further into the minutiae of the similarities and differences of their views, take it for granted that if Lewis's view is false—as I argue in Chapter Two—Searle's is false. The main way I will undermine Lewis's, and by extensions Searle's, view is to show that there are alternative so-called facsimiles to an action other than pretense. This is on top of noting that there are pretenses to assertion that aren't fictionalizings, e.g. mockings. For example, LaVonne asserts something. Don mocks her: "Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah." He is clearly pretending to assert but is not fictionalizing. But neither Lewis nor Searle gives us means to distinguish fictionalizing cases of pretend assertion from nonfictionalizing cases of the same. So far as I can tell, that there are nonfictionalizing cases of pretend assertion doesn't seem to cross either of their minds.

After undermining Lewis's view in these ways I attack it directly. To this end I use the dual points that people aren't surprised by their pretenses but fiction authors can be surprised by their fictional characters.

Now for the other major camp in the fictionalizing literature. G-C's make-belief theory is just one of several accounts that appeal to authorial intention. Other such views include Plantinga's[6] and Currie's[7]. These are otherwise big names that show up in the philosophy of fiction literature (and beyond), arguably with more of that street cred than G-C's view has. However, as a relative newcomer G-C's account is designed to fix the

---

[6] Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford University Press, 1974).

[7] Gregory Currie, *The Nature of Fiction* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 30ff.

glaring issue generally recognized to plague authorial-intention accounts. As such, it represents the best of its pool of fellows. Taking it down will by default undermine these other versions, hence why I only give G-C's view the full-chapter treatment.

While I speak to the issue with authorial-intent accounts and G-C's fix in Chapter Three, here it is in brief. According to fictional truth authorial-intentional accounts, what's true in a fiction just is what the author intends to be true. And the relevant illocutionary speech act that conveys the author's truth-intentions is that the audience make-believe those fictional truths.[8] However, sometimes authors can be wrong about what's true in their fictions. Suppose, e.g., that J. K. Rowling intended that Dolores Umbridge be a sweet, caring, pro-student friend of Harry and of Dumbledore in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Well, if that's what she wanted to be true, she failed to convince her readers. For the reader is compelled to make-believe (if make-believe is what readers do) that Umbridge is a cruel, spiteful, student-hating enemy of Harry and of Dumbledore. For that's how Umbridge comes off as written. And it seems that what's written is the canon by which readers are left to determine fictional truths. No *Harry Potter* reader would reasonably abide, e.g., the denial that Harry has a lightning-shaped scar on his forehead (barring some further claim in the text indicating that the scar isn't real). G-C's view is nuanced enough to account for this potential divergence between what an author personally intends to be true in her fiction and what she communicates is true in it. However, in Chapter Three I'll give what I take to be a decisive argument against make-belief authorial-intentional accounts, whoever's form.

---

[8] Though Plantinga doesn't explicitly use the term 'make-believe' for what he takes authors' expectations for audiences to be up to when fictionalizing, it's a good term for it.

I handle this second major fictionalizing camp generally, as I noted, by addressing G-C's more refined account. Since G-C finds the major motivation for his view in attacking David Lewis's account of fictional truth, in Chapter Three I come to Lewis's defense, despite the work I did against it in Chapter Two. Then I make a number of arguments directly against G-C's account.

A third, albeit minor camp is St. Augustine's view according to which to fictionalize is to lie. This view has some obvious issues. First, lying presumably is asserting and whatever asserting is, that doesn't seem to be what fictionalizers are up to. There's a certain sort of sincerity element to assertion that fictionalizing doesn't have, conveying something like 'this is how I—the asserter—take this world to be.' Second, Jesus told fictions (parables) but presumably Jesus never lied. (That, or lying isn't always wrong.) It might be that many of the stories told in St. Augustine's day were myths presented with something like a presumption of actuality. If that's right, then there's at least an error theory in the neighborhood as to why he'd take fiction to be lies. In any case, no more need be said for or against his view.

Ken Walton's lone voice regarding fictionalizing is the fourth, minor camp I mentioned above.[9] He denies that fictionalizing is a speech act at all. Instead he takes fictionalizing to be one type of game of make-believe. His motivation for this move in part is so that he can offer one theory to rule them all, as it were. "Them all" picks out all types of representational, nonactual arts and activities as diverse as writing novels, drawing comic books, painting murals, sculpting, and children playing Cops and

---

[9] Kendall Walton, *Mimesis and Make-Believe* (Harvard University Press, 1990).

Robbers. Clearly some of these arts and activities are nonlinguistic, so fictionalizing can't be linguistic generally.[10]

However, as G-C and A. J. Close each argue, Walton is nevertheless tacitly committed to illocutionary-type, i.e., speech-act, theories perhaps with art-making generally but at least with respect to fiction.[11] For Walton accepts a principle of relevance as a guide to inferring implicit truths in a fiction from explicit statements and other implicit truths in it (e.g., again, inferring that Sherlock has a liver despite no explicit statement in Doyle's works that he does).[12] And what's relevant are the illocutionary aspects of the fictionalizer's utterances. We chortle at—rather than scoff at or get confused by—Douglas Adams's sentence "The ships hung in the sky in much the same way that bricks don't" because we recognize the author's illocution that we pick up the irony (or whatever literary device this instantiates) communicated in this particular utterance.[13]

Some fiction, especially but not only children's fiction, depends for some of its fictional communication on illustrations. (In adult fiction, this may be a map or a diagram of an alien inscription.) Similarly, a bard telling a tale might (I assume) include sound effects, such as a wolf howling or quiet steps. Walton's view obviously has an advantage on this score. These elements are simply props or behaviors added to or necessary for the

---

[10] Walton, *Mimesis and Make-Believe*, 5.

[11] Manuel Garcia-Carpintero, "Fiction-Making as a Gricean Illocutionary Type," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65/2 (2007), 209f, and A. J. Close, "Don Quixote and the 'Intentionalist Fallacy'," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 12 (1972).

[12] Walton, *Mimesis and Make-Believe*, 85ff and 166f.

[13] From *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* … but you already knew that.

imaginative game being played between author and audience. We'll see in Chapter Five, however, that my reporting view can handle this, too. After all, paradigmatic reports often include graphs, charts, and diagrams.[14]

But even if G-C or Close go wrong with their similar arguments, there's reason to think that fictionalizing is a linguistic game. For obviously there is a linguistic component to literary fiction. We grant that Cops and Robbers is a chasing game despite the fact that no other nonactual representational arts or activities involve children chasing each other. So why not just say that nonactual representational arts and activities are games generally, and literary ones are linguistic games in particular? Then we can quibble about what sort of linguistic game it is.

To that end, a case might be made that as a linguistic game fictionalizing amounts simply to a form of pretense, much like Searle's and Lewis's views ("mimesis as make-believe" after all). And if that's right, then Walton's view plausibly will go the way of Searle's and Lewis's in light of the work I do in Chapter Two.

Add to this, as my director points out, that it's also not clear whether you can have a game without anything like a score or other sort of success condition. This casts a suspicious light on the fictionalizing-as-game view generally as fictionalizing seems to lack such things.

In light of all that, I won't directly address Walton's view any further in this dissertation.

Otherwise there is only one half-baked view of fictionalizing with which I am acquainted, a view that does not even appear in the literature, is not fully developed, and

---

[14] Thanks to my director for these thoughts.

hasn't (so far as I am aware) even been argued for. The view is that fictions are hypotheticals, an imaginative exercise performed by authors given some actually false details. On this view, as I understand it and for example, *The Wizard of Oz* is L. Frank Baum's take on how things play out given these antecedent facts: a girl from Kansas is magically whisked away to a magical land of witches, munchkins, tinmen, and flying monkeys. That is, authors dream up some hypothetical scenario, then write a story seeing what follows from that setup. One nice thing about this view is that it allows for the author to be surprised by things her characters do, which is as I noted above a critique that will come up against a main contender in the following chapters.

Another way to understand the hypothetical view of fictionalizing is that fictions are incomplete hypotheticals, akin to "If you don't surrender, …" with the listener expected to imagine the "…". On this reading the entire narrative is the antecedent, and the "…" is all the implied stuff maybe, like that Holmes has a liver.[15] This understanding of the view has a nice, intuitive appeal to it.

However, here are some reasons not to give this view a chapter-length treatment. First, it's both an underdeveloped view and an undefended one. It's a view that a couple colleagues have proffered in private conversation without argument and is as yet not addressed in the literature.

Second, it seems false in the way the first case of COVID-19 hit, namely *right off the bat*.[16] For there are cases of hypothesizing that aren't fictionalizings. It seems anything we might appeal to in an attempt to differentiate fictionalizing-hypothesizing

---

[15] Thanks to my director for this reading.

[16] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=937zhQ27XK8

from, say, legal- or scientific-hypothesizing might just give us a non-hypothetical account of fictionalizing.

Third, I take it that generally authors of fiction don't take themselves to be supposing or hypothesizing anything. While of course authors can be wrong about what they are in fact up to, it seems a strong initial mark against a view of fictionalizing that those who perform it don't take themselves to be doing it that way (even accounting for differences of description). Pretending a story is actually true, offering a story for audiences to pretend is actually true, or reporting on things that didn't actually go on seem like fairer characterizations of what authors take themselves to be doing.

Further, audiences of fiction I take it generally don't take themselves to be engaging with hypothetical or suppositional scenarios. Again, while audiences can be wrong about what they are in fact up to, it seems a strong initial mark against a view of fictionalizing that those who engage with fiction don't take themselves to be doing it that way (even accounting for differences of description). Engaging with an author who is pretending a story is actually true, themselves pretending a story is actually true, or simply enjoying a telling of things that didn't actually go on seem like fairer characterizations of what audiences of fiction take themselves to be doing.

Pressing the initial implausibility of the view, what is the hypothesizing theory of fictionalizing to say about historical fictions wherein the setting, scenarios, characters, and—in the typical case—laws of nature are meant to be identical with actual settings, scenarios, people, and laws? In what sense are these fictions if everything hypothesized is as it was? Maybe 'historical fiction' is a misnomer, of course. But I'd like to see an

independent reason to think hypothesizing theory is true before pronouncing "anathema" to an entire genre.

Relatedly, it seems that on hypothesizing theory all nonhistorical fictions are proffered by their authors as all trivially true in the actual world. For the starting hypotheses are false. But it's a strange result indeed for an account of fictionalizing that basically all fictions are actually trivially true.

In sum, I'll be focusing directly on only two accounts of fictionalizing in the literature, ones that I take to be the best on offer.

III.   *How I'm Proceeding*

The structure of this dissertation is an extended disjunctive syllogism. The previous section of this Introduction and Chapter Five work together to establish the exhaustiveness of this trilemma of viable accounts of fictionalizing: (Lewis's & Searle's) pretense theory, (G-C's et al) make-belief theory, and my reporting theory. Chapter Four details an account of paradigmatic cases of reporting needed to understand my fictionalizing account, argued for in Chapter Five. As noted above, Chapters Two and Three (with a smattering of Chapter Five) are meant to take pretense and make-belief theories out of the running for good.

The Conclusion to this work does what good philosophical conclusions do: sketches potential future projects based on the positive contributions of and noted gaps in this dissertation.

With that, I'll close out this Introduction with some key terms and distinctions found throughout this dissertation.

IV.   General Background (Terms & Distinctions)

In this section I offer some important background information or distinctions that should be helpful to my readers throughout the rest of this dissertation.

A. *Truth* in *Fiction and Worlds*

One nice thing about my account of fictionalizing as we'll see is that it's fictional-truth-theory neutral. Both Lewis and G-C, as I've noted, give accounts of fictionalizing that grow from their views of fictional truth. I think there's a case to be made for a pretense theory, at least, that doesn't depend on Lewis's fictional-truth account. In any case, I'll typically grant each philosopher his favored view as relevant for the sake of argument, though I will for the sake of convenience throughout this dissertation speak in terms of possible worlds (whatever those are).

And in this project I tend to refer to *the* world a fiction picks out (you may have even noticed me doing that above!). But I use this as shorthand for the set or class of worlds that a fiction describes. For example, the text of *The Hobbit* describes an infinite number of worlds wherein a hobbit named Bilbo Baggins finds himself caught up in a hair-raising adventure with dwarves, elves, men, and wizards. The differences among these worlds vary as widely and wildly as they can while being consistent with the explicit truths detailed in the text and those implicit therefrom. For example, Middle-earth worlds, as we might call them, include those where closet interiors are painted all sorts of colors, if painted at all, and worlds where all and only closet interiors are painted mauve, etc.

Of course, the more the various worlds comport with the text, the closer that world is to the core of the relevant set. For example, the set of Middle-earth worlds

includes worlds where electricity had yet to be invented while Bilbo ran around and worlds where electronics were used concurrently on the other side of the sea. But since *The Hobbit* is written as a mythological or fantastical story, worlds where electricity is used on the other side of the sea concurrent to Bilbo's running around are more distant from the core of the set of Middle-earth worlds than are the worlds in which electricity had yet to be invented. And worlds where the laws of nature are such that every seven millennia gravity works in reverse are more distant still.

Relatedly, fictional worlds are more or less like—i.e. closer to or more distant from—our world depending on what's true or false in them. Worlds where Trump (undisputedly, if that's an important qualifier for you) won the 2020 US Presidential Election aren't, for that reason, too far from ours, whereas worlds where all stars are doughnut shaped are presumably quite far.[17]

Finally, I'll be using Lewis's notion of actuality as an indexical. The world you and I inhabit, what we call *the real world*, is actual to us, though merely possible relative to Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*'s "whiskey priest." The possible world in which the whiskey priest finds himself is actual to him though merely possible for us. Nothing in this dissertation turns on whether nonactual possible worlds are concrete (i.e., e.g., whether or not the whiskey priest is a flesh-and-blood human moving about in a spatiotemporal material world).

---

[17] Lewis gives the details of his account of closeness in his "Counterfactual Dependence and Time's Arrow," *Noûs* 13/4 Special Issue on Counterfactuals and Laws (1979), which is useful for illustrative purposes though I do not thereby commit myself to his account.

It's generally accepted in the literature that the narrator is distinct from the author. Least of all because the narrator is of the fictional world whereas the author is of the actual world. But often enough the narrator has evident features different from the author, e.g. political or moral views, or perhaps may even be of a different gender or species. Of course, complications arise when considering fictions that continue even after the fictional fact, e.g., "there was no one left to tell the tale." Cases like this inspire Currie to argue that there is the author, the narrator, and (distinct from the narrator) the fictional storyteller. Whether Currie is right or whether something else is going on is another matter; however there's no need to settle things this second. For the most part we'll just take it for granted that there's the actual-world author and the of-the-fictional-world narrator.

(Here are two narrator-related issues that don't quite fit anywhere else in this dissertation, so I'll address them here briefly.

(First, there is an odd phenomenon that I believe my reporting theory of fiction would account for that the standard theory does not. Sometimes the narrator writes in such a way that they are clearly addressing themselves to an audience in the actual world. For instance, they explain things that to someone in the fictional world would be obvious. The narrator of *The Chronicles of Narnia* frequently "breaks the fourth wall" in this way. Getting into the details here is out of scope, but my view might account for these cases like so. Many paradigmatic reports are such that the reporter simply signs off or relays another's report. For example, a mid-level manager reports to her superiors a document originally reported to her by an underling. It seems in wall-breaking cases the author is

simply passing along the report of the narrator who—however this gets filled out—knows there's someone passing that report along in another world on her behalf.

(Further, my reporting theory might allow for a resolution to the "there was no one left to tell the tale" problem. Just because there's no one *in* or *of* the world left to tell the tale doesn't mean an author can't peek into a world to report on it from the outside. After all many paradigmatic reports are given by people outside the relevant scenario on which they report.)

Another important aspect of fiction that won't be further addressed in this dissertation is its interpretation or actual-world meaning. For some examples, it's widely held that L. Frank Baum wrote *The Wizard of Oz* as an allegory of—and so in some respects as an argument for the continuation of—the United States using the gold-standard system for its currency. Both *Gulliver's Travels* and *Flatland* are supposedly satiric criticisms of British society in the 18th and 19th Centuries, respectively. It's been said that *The Matrix* movie trilogy is a story of transgender transitioning. In an episode of the comedy-spy show *Chuck* the characters portrayed by actors Brandon Routh and Kristin Kreuk each make comments about Superman in obvious reference to their respective real-world roles as Superman (film) and as a woman who dated Superman (TV).

How do we know these things? What makes it true (or not!) that some story or element of a story is about some real-world thing? I don't know. Or at least, this project has nothing to say directly about how, if, or when actual-world meaning is, can, or should be drawn out from what is true in any given fiction. However, I do think the account I

develop throughout this dissertation can be leveraged to give us some answers here, though I will leave that for future work.

C. *Make-belief vs Imagining*

There is seemingly a tendency among some philosophers of fiction to run together two things that are distinct, namely imagining and make-believing. While I don't have fully worked-out theories of imagination or of make-belief (nor do I need them to satisfy the aims of this dissertation) distinguishing these concepts so far as I can without fully worked-out theories will help me argue against at least one of the rival views of fictionalizing on offer. Further, I think it's important to keep distinct things distinct.

Imagining is doing something like holding images in one's mind, though imagining isn't just visual. I imagine a dog when I hold a picture of a dog in my mind. I can imagine the sound of a guitar squeal without having—let alone being able—to see the sound of a guitar in my mind.[18] The key thing to note here is that one can imagine all sorts of things, whether they are actual or even … *make-believe!*

I imagine a make-believe Sherlock Holmes running around London while reading Doyle's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. And I imagine the real, actual, not-made-up mug of coffee I intentionally poured all over my students' exams just moments ago so I'd have a peculiar-but-true example to recount for you now. Further I might make-believe something unimaginable, e.g. that there is an empty room devoid even of fields, or that 2 + 2 = 5.

I'll speak more on this in Chapter Three.

---

[18] Of course there are synesthetes, people who see in their mind's eye colors (or have some other visual experience) triggered by hearing certain sounds. If anything, this helps my case.

CHAPTER TWO

Against the Pretense Account of Fiction-Making[1]

I.   Introduction

In this chapter I describe and motivate Lewis's view that fictionalizing is pretend

assertion before undermining that motivation and directly attacking it. I do the same with

G-C's view in the next chapter.

II.   Lewis's View

David Lewis's account of fictionalizing grows out of his account of fictional

truth, which ultimately is an application of his possible-world semantics.[2] (Possible

worlds for Lewis are concrete objects but nothing presently depends on this.)

But first, a word to the reader. I have disagreements with Lewis's possible-world

modal semantics generally and his account of fictional truth in particular. (Though it's

worth pointing out Frances Howard-Snyder's (2002) defense of his account of fictional

truth.) But given that his fictionalizing account is motivated by his fictional truth account

(which in turn depends on his modal semantics), presently I grant them for the sake of

argument. Please join me so we don't lose sight of our objective: showing untenable his

fictionalizing theory, whatever else is true.

---

[1] Alternate title: "Pretender to the Throne: Against the Pretense Account of Fiction-Making"

[2] David Lewis, "Truth in Fiction +," *Philosophical Papers I* (OUP, pp. 261-280, first published in *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1978), 1983) and *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

Possible-worlds semantics for fiction are formalized in Lewis's Reality Principle (RP)[3]:

> 'In the fiction F, p' is true if and only if some world where F is told as known fact and p is true differs less from our actual world, on balance, than does any world where F is told as known fact and p is not true.

For Lewis, 'actual world' is indexed to 'our'. The world you, dear reader, inhabit is actual to you, and *Pride & Prejudice* is a work of fiction. In the possible world we might label 'Regency,' were a fellow named Mr. Gardiner to read a bound text entitled *Pride & Prejudice*, he would learn about actual events, though a text describing your life would be nonactual, i.e. fiction, to him.

According to RP, we imagine the story is uttered by someone who knows it to be true (Mr. Bingley, say). Fictions direct us to the set of closest worlds where the words of the text are told as known fact (Regency worlds, in this case), assuming for simplicity there are such closest worlds. What is true in the fiction is whatever is true in all these worlds. Truths explicitly stated by the author are direct truths, as they are directly generated by the fiction. Elizabeth Bennet is a young woman with many sisters. Indirect (implicit) truths are those generated from (implied by) direct truths, necessary truths, or other indirect truths.[4] Bennet's exact height is never explicitly stated. But that she has a

---

[3] See Frances Howard-Snyder, "Truth in Fiction: The Whole Story," *Realism & Antirealism*, edited by William P. Alston (Cornell University Press, 2002). The name "the Reality Principle" is Ken Walton's (from *Mimesis*), as is the explicit distinction between first and second levels of truth in fiction, or what we are calling directly and indirectly generated truths. See Lewis's "Truth in Fiction+." The principle presented here is a slightly modified version of David Lewis's. The word use is simplified and it is in part modified to account for Lewis's *Counterfactuals* and Stalnaker's *Theory of Conditionals* style of counterfactuals. Wolterstorff has a very similar principle, the *a*-principle. See Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 126ff.

[4] This has the result that one fiction can describe an infinite number of worlds. *Pride & Prejudice* describes the world in which Elizabeth is 60" tall and the world where she is 66" tall. But it also describes the worlds where she is 60.1", 60.01", 60.001", etc. So, because her exact height is neither explicitly stated nor determinately implied, her height is undetermined.

height can be inferred from explicit references to her body plus the implicit truth that mid-size bodies are extended.

Note that on Lewis's picture the narrator is not the author. The narrator is of the fictional world whereas the author is of the actual world. 'Storyteller' is either the narrator or the author, depending on context.

As for fictionalizing, Lewis adopts a pretense theory:

> Storytelling is pretense. The storyteller purports to be telling the truth about matters whereof he has knowledge. He purports to be talking about characters who are known to him, and whom he refers to, typically, by means of their ordinary proper names. But if his story is fiction, he is not really doing these things.[5]

To fictionalize, one pretends to assert a narrative. I'll use 'pretense' and 'pretend assertion' as noun forms of this speech act. In possible-world terms, fictions describe "the worlds where the fiction is told, but as known fact rather than fiction. The act of storytelling occurs, just as it does here at our world; but there it is what here it falsely purports to be: truth-telling about matters whereof the teller [here: narrator] has knowledge."[6]

III.   Motivate Lewis's View

David Lewis does not spell out an argument for this pretense theory, but there is one implied by the case he uses to motivate it. I here recount his motivation and draw out an argument for his pretense theory of fictionalizing.

---

[5] Lewis, "Truth in Fiction +," 266.

[6] *Ibid*. There are potential worries here about, e.g., the narrator's false beliefs. The narrator may be deceptive or simply just fallible. Either way fictionalizing won't be truth-telling about matters whereof the teller has knowledge. See Howard-Snyder (2002) for a non-ad-hoc revised RP that resolves these worries.

A problem Lewis quickly bumped up against in his treatment of fictional truth was how to treat stories that were intended as fiction by their authors but whose contents were actually true. In particular, what to make of a name in the fiction that refers (putatively) to an actual entity?

Here's the example Lewis runs. Suppose that, utterly unbeknownst to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and purely by coincidence, our world is one in which a man named Sherlock Holmes (SH)—similarly independent of Doyle's writings—ran around London solving crimes in precisely the manner Doyle's SH did around the time Doyle wrote his texts.

Here's what Lewis asked. Does 'SH' in Doyle's writings refer to the actual (indexed to Doyle) SH? It's in his answer to this question that we find Lewis's account of fictionalizing and the scant details that motivate it. In short, Lewis thinks that Doyle did not refer to the actual SH despite his fictional SH's accidentally identical life and features. This is because Doyle simply pretended to refer to an actual SH. And since he pretended to refer to an actual SH, the seemingly referring sentences must have been pretend asserted. So, to fictionalize is to pretend to assert.

Here's how Lewis reasoned through potentially-actual reference in fiction. I interject expansion, explanation, conjecture, and criticism throughout this construction of Lewis's implicit argument. In the next major section I'll turn my criticisms up to 11.

We are supposing Doyle didn't know to refer to an actual SH. Presumably, given that he set out to write a fiction, he would not have wanted to refer to an actual SH. Of course, he might not have cared if there were an actual SH to confuse references. More likely Doyle didn't even consider an actual detective of the same name up to the same

exploits as his invented detective, name, and exploits a live possibility. Else he would have done some research before publishing. (Not knowing and not caring come to the same thing here in that, either way, he wasn't seeking to write about someone actual.)

It seems a necessary condition of human action—referring included—that one at least intend to perform that action. Any given human index-fingertip at any given time is aimed in the direction of some object, stuff, location, or absence (bracketing weird metaphysical scenarios and without committing myself to the existence or particular nature of any of the aforementioned). But only some of those aimings count as pointings, namely those times the aimer intends to point, even if one is wide of one's mark or ends up picking out surprising things. Similarly with referring verbally. For example, suppose some instance in which Gollum (operating on old news) did not intend to refer to Frodo Baggins when he intentionally referred to the person that currently has the One Ring. He intended to pick out Bilbo, but he went wide. Or suppose the Ring is temporarily held by Gandalf. Gollum refers to the bearer of the Ring. Picking out *wizards* was not Gollum's plan, so he might be surprised to find out that's what he referred to; but we often end up doing (*per accidens*) things that aren't our plan. Given that Doyle didn't know of the actual SH and likely wouldn't have cared to find out about the guy's life had he known, Doyle isn't intending to pick out anything actual (though he still might have picked out something actual as I'll develop below). What's more, Doyle was intending to pick out something nonactual (though perhaps not under that description).

So, as I'm understanding Lewis, Doyle intended to pick out something nonactual with 'SH.' But SH is a possible entity. So Doyle must have been trying to refer to a

merely possible entity, though he wrote as if he was referring to an actual entity. Doyle therefore must have been pretending that SH is actual.

Of course, Doyle might *also* have picked out something actual (indexed to Doyle) despite intending only to reference something nonactual. Gollum from our above scenario might say, "We hateses wizards who possesses my Precious," intending to describe a fictional scenario. But an actual wizard (indexed to Gollum) in fact possesses the Ring, one who Gollum in fact also hates (or add that fact to the supposition if that's undetermined by the text). It seems fair to say that Gollum referred to an actual entity—Gandalf—without intending to (though he couldn't have done that had he not intended to refer to *something*, namely hypothetical wizards).

Given that for Lewis *possibilia* are world-bound (necessary objects aside) it must be that the statements of Doyle's fiction describe the world of the various *possibilia* referred to (in this case SH worlds). That is, on Lewis's picture, where a fiction describes a certain class of worlds, the intended referents have to be in the same world(s).[7] At least one referent is at a nonactual world (Doyle's SH). So all Doyle's referents—bound to the same world(s) as they are—are nonactual (necessary objects aside).

And since Doyle didn't know and either didn't care or think likely that there was an actual SH to confuse things, presumably he didn't think to or in fact use 'SH' differently than how he used other names in his work. So, all of Doyle's references are pretend-actual. As Lewis sees it, it follows, e.g., that Doyle's London is not actual

---

[7] Or accessible from the same world(s), as the case may be. And "intended" allows for accidentally picking out entities in different possible worlds.

London. With 'London' he just pretended to refer to actual London, in fact referring to some nonactual London that his nonactual SH inhabits.

This is of course complicated by the fact that Doyle may not have believed a counterpart theory like Lewis's. Not believing counterpart theory, as I'll expand in the next major section of this chapter, it seems Doyle may in fact have intended to refer to the *actual* London. This potential fact further turns into a strong piece of motivation for my competitor theory of fictionalizing, as I'll detail in Chapter Five.

Back to Lewis's motivation. As charitably as I can discern, "SH is a detective" is not an assertion for Doyle for the same reason "_____ is a detective" is not assertible *simpliciter*. For Lewis states (albeit "less confident[ly]" than his other assumptions or conclusions[8]) that there is no actual referent in these putative sentences (though Doyle pretends there is). The 'SH' shape on the page is just a more ornate version of '_____' in the actual world. Given that there is no actual referent in the utterer's mouth, the phrases are not complete sentences. As such, they cannot be asserted. It looks like an assertion, but it isn't. To boot, the seeming assertion contains a pretend reference. Pretense *in* the speech, so why not pretense *as* the speech? That is, given that there's pretend references partially constituting the speech act, there's some reason to think that perhaps the entire speech act is a pretense, namely of assertion. Since Doyle wasn't lying despite saying actually false things[9], he must have been doing something other than

---

[8] *Ibid*. 268. "We … assign ['SH'] no denotation at [Doyle's world] … even if the plot of the fiction is enacted by inhabitants of [that world]. … ['SH'] is denotationless here at [Doyle's] world."

[9] Or "neither-true-nor-false things" in the case of empty sentences.

asserting. But it looks like assertion. So Doyle must have been pretending to assert about an actual SH when he wrote about his nonactual SH.

To elaborate, the bulk of Doyle's fiction looks like asserted sentences. For the bulk of his fictions are assertions syntactically but with references to nonactual objects. "SH is a detective." And there can be nonassertive sentences in narratives, of course, which may or may not make explicit use of pretend references. "[John Watson narrating:] How did SH know that?"

Even a fiction that consists only of questions or of imperatives has implicit declarative sentences that refer to pretend-actual referents. Here's one entitled "Really?":

> Is that a dog walking towards me? Why is it sniffing my leg? Does it think I'm a fire hydrant? … Do I have time to get home and change my pants?

Some implicit propositions of this story include: There's at least one person, the narrator. The narrator takes some moving object to be a walking dog. The narrator has a leg, recognizes sniffing, and is familiar with the correlation between dogs and fire hydrants. The narrator is not quick-thinking enough to move before disaster strikes. Disaster strikes. Making parallel moves to Lewis's foregoing, we get that all these referents are pretend actual, too.

Given every sentence in a fiction is or is set in the context of these seemingly asserted sentences, we can grant that they offer no complication. So let us just say that Doyle's fictions just are seemingly asserted, i.e. pretend-asserted sentences. And if Doyle's fictions just are pretend-asserted sentences, then Doyle must have been pretend-asserting those sentences. So Doyle fictionalized via pretend assertion, i.e. pretense. And since Doyle is just a stand-in for fiction authors generally, we get that fictionalizing is pretense.

With Lewis's fictionalizing theory and his motivation for that theory in hand, I now move both to undermine and then to upset the view.

IV. Undermine Lewis's Support

I take issue with a hidden false dilemma undergirding Lewis's reasoning in Part A, namely that some intentional token behavior is either a particular action or a pretense of that action. In Part B I argue for two conclusions, again undermining Lewis's reasoning for his pretense theory of fictionalizing. First, that just because Doyle may have pretended to reference one actual object in his fiction does not entail that all his references were pretend-actual. Second, that even if all Doyle's referents are pretend-actual, given Lewis's reasoning it does not follow that all assertion-like sentences with these references are pretend assertions, and so it does not follow that all fictionalizing just is pretend assertion.

A. Not-Assertion and Not-Pretense

I offer cases that show fault in Lewis's reasoning insofar as it depends on a dichotomy between an intentional action and a pretense of that action given physically identical token behavior. Note that his reliance on this dichotomy is only implicit to his reasoning. In any case, the error is that Lewis treats the disjunction in question as exhaustive.

The intuition underlying the disjunction is something like: "If one pretends an action by some behavior, one does not intentionally perform the relevant action by that same behavior." This characterization, while rough, correctly captures (i) that pretense of an action precludes intending to perform the relevant action but (ii) allows for accidental performances of the action. I can't intentionally pretend to wash a window and

intentionally wash the window at the same time. But I might fail to *merely* pretend to wash the window while pretending to wash it, e.g., by misjudging the distance between window and squeegee.

Recall this passage: "Storytelling is pretense. … [I]f [the] story is fiction, [the storyteller] is not really [telling the truth [or as Lewis otherwise puts it, 'he purports to tell the truth'] about matters whereof he has knowledge]."[10] Paraphrasing that gives us, "If the story is not asserted, the storyteller pretends to assert it." Generalizing that paraphrase gets us: If some behavior is not the action it seems to be (though it looks like the action), the behavior is a pretense of that action.

Notice that the intuition (in slogan / Tarzanian form) is 'pretense only if not-action'. But what Lewis states (and which I, on his behalf, then paraphrase and generalize) is (in Tarzanian form) 'pretense if not-action'. But I'm not, thereby, arguing against a strawman. For it seems these things taken together show that Lewis's argument is enthymematic and depends on the exclusive disjunction that authors of fiction either assert their works or pretend to assert their works.

But some action A or a pretense of A are not the only options when it comes to human action. Pretense of an action is just one type of facsimile of the relevant action. *Facsimile action* is the genus which houses pretend action as a species. It also houses, e.g., practice, demonstration, and mockery (I don't need a fully worked-out theory though I do develop it some more below). Sometimes facsimile actions overlap (practice via pretense, e.g.). So long as they aren't all coextensional, Lewis is in trouble.

---

[10] *Ibid.* 266.

To elucidate what I mean by *facsimiles*, here are my counterexamples to the 'pretense if not-action' principle. One might *practice* the action by performing the behavior, as a batter practices hitting baseballs by swinging a bat. One might *warm up* for the action by performing the behavior, as a batter loosens her joints by swinging a bat before stepping up to the plate. One might *demonstrate* the action by performing the behavior, as a hitting coach does when teaching proper batting form *sans* bat. I do not take this to be an exhaustive list of facsimiles.[11]

In short, there are facsimiles to actions that aren't the actions but which use the behaviors paradigmatic of those actions. Pretense is just one type of facsimile. Pretend assertion is just one facsimile to assertion. Presenting propositions for make-belief is arguably another facsimile of assertion.[12] The facsimile of assertion that I offer as the basis of my fictionalizing account is reporting.[13]

One might object that practicing, warming up, demonstrating are all forms or special kinds of pretense.

I reply that while some instances of these facsimiles are also pretense, it's obvious that none of them is coextensive with pretense (not all pretending is practicing), and less trivially, these facsimiles are not all species of pretense.

First, assuming that one cannot intentionally perform an action and pretend that action simultaneously, I can practice *hitting baseballs during a game to score runs* by *hitting baseballs outside a game to develop skill*, and thereby not pretend to hit baseballs.

---

[11] While we're on baseball: If you enjoyed Michael Lewis's (2003) *Moneyball*, you might enjoy its conceptual—though not actual—sequel *Astroball*, by Ben Reiter (2018).

[12] This is Manuel Garcia-Carpintero's thought, detailed in the next chapter.

[13] See Chapter Five.

Or I can mock how my wife hits a baseball as I hit a baseball, thereby doing a facsimile action without pretending the action.

Second, assume that one can intentionally perform an action and pretend that action simultaneously, doubtful as that may be. It seems in any case that pretense requires the intent to pretend. Else every step one takes walking to her office is also a pretense of walking in the park, and a pretense of walking in the grocery store, and a pretense of walking in a 1-g artificial-gravity-enabled space station orbiting Jupiter's third largest moon, and on. Indeed, any unconscious tic or movement (even while asleep) will be pretend versions of a litany of actions, which is absurd. Hence it's false that every facsimile is pretense.

My director challenges the motivating principle of that last argument (pretense requires the intent to pretend) by offering that lower animals may pretend without having intentions. I imagine he has in mind cases like camouflaging or deimatic displays or behaviors. Examples of camouflaging include chameleons changing color to pretend to be a part of the thing they sit on and stick-bugs pretending to be sticks for predatorial or defensive reasons. An example of deimatic display is moths of certain wing patterns pretending to be snake faces to ward off predators[14]; an example of deimatic behavior is frilled dragons pretending to be bigger than they are by popping their "Elizabethan collars" and baring their teeth when frightened.[15] We might even include the tonic

---

[14] See http://insecta.pro/gallery/11424 for an example.

[15] See https://reptilesmagazine.com/the-frilled-dragon/. And, yes, I chose the term "frilled dragon" rather than "frilled lizard" as a way to work "dragon" into my dissertation.

immobility of certain lower or higher animals. Some bugs, snakes, and of course opossums "play"—i.e., pretend to be—dead.

These all seem to me to be anthropomorphic uses of "pretend," analogous to but substantively different than the sort of pretending humans get up to. Tonic immobility and deimatic behaviors are physiological reactions to scary situations. When surprised or afraid the opossum brain floods with blood putting the animal in a catatonic state. This response is as involuntary as a human's increased heartrate when surprised or afraid. Tonic immobility looks like playing dead as much as fear-triggered human heartrate increase looks like a human coming off aerobic exercise. But we don't reasonably describe humans getting scared as pretending aerobics.

Further, it doesn't seem appropriate to say someone is pretending to be an alligator or pretending to have alligator feet when wearing gator-skin boots. Similarly it doesn't seem appropriate to say nonanalogously that chameleons pretend to be rocks or stick-bugs pretend to be sticks. Chameleons react to their environments not unlike opossums and frilled dragons do. Stick-bugs happened to coevolve a sticky appearance and slow movement. They look like sticks just as some cowboys look gator-footed, but neither case is rightly called "pretense" so far as I see it.

If all that's right—that these are anthropomorphic, analogous uses of "pretend"— then they don't undermine my principle at all. But even if they do undermine the principle in general, I think it's fair to bracket those cases from consideration since presently I'm concerned with the purposeful acting of humans (or other higher animals).

Continuing then, even intentional facsimile is not always a pretense. You ask me to sell you an apple. I say I am all out. So you ask me to sell you something like an apple.

I sell you a pear. Selling a pear is like selling an apple, and intentionally so, but there is no pretense here. Similarly, consider taking a quick break to practice fencing with golf clubs while on the back nine. The intent is specifically to practice doing the thing (fencing) using a facsimile (clubs) of the correct thing (rapiers) without pretending to do the thing.

In light of the foregoing, Lewis's pretense theory rests on a false assumption of the exhaustiveness of the categories of intentional performance of an action and intentional pretend performance of that action.

B. *Fictionalizing is Assertion (Maybe)*

Lewis contends that authors of fiction do not assert by fictionalizing. Ultimately, I think this is true, support for which I initiate in Chapter Four and fully develop in Chapter Five. But here are some reasons for doubting Lewis's reasons for the claim.

As a reminder, the first bit of Lewis's implicit argument is to establish that all references in a fiction are to pretend-actual (nonactual) referents. In the second half, roughly, Lewis seems to reason that pretend-actual references make for actually incomplete propositions. And at best one can only pretend to assert an actually-incomplete proposition. So, I undermine his support for pretense theory by attacking the reasoning that undergirds both of these conclusions.

Recall in particular that Doyle pretended that all of his referents were *actualia*. It wasn't enough that Doyle's referents inhabit the same world as his nonactual SH. Lewis also needed that Doyle referred to the other nonactualia the same way he referred to his SH. It required that Doyle had no reason to and did not treat 'SH' differently than any other name in his works. I see two issues here.

First, I think Doyle would object that he in fact had a reason and in fact did use 'SH' differently than he used at least some other names. Doyle thought that he invented 'SH' (the combination, if not the words). But he knew 'London' wasn't unique to him and, plausibly, did intend to refer to the actual London with 'London'. (And if he in fact didn't, we can run a supposition in which he did.) Assuming that pretended action and action are mutually exclusive as Lewis does, that Doyle used all names similarly in his fiction is directly contradicted. That is, Lewis argued for pretend reference to a nonactual SH by assuming that intention to pretend A is necessary for a pretense of A. But not only did Doyle fail to intend to pretend to refer to an actual London with 'London', he also—plausibly and presumably, and if not, then by supposition—intended to refer to the actual London. So, it is inconsistent to insist here that—despite his intentions and without his knowledge—Doyle just had to pretend with 'London'.[16]

One might counter that authors can be wrong about their intentions. Suppose Jane Austen intended that Mrs. Bennet be a great wit. If so, then—despite her intentions and (let us further suppose) without her knowledge—she failed. Mrs. Bennet, as described, is witless. So it's plausible that Doyle pretended without knowing it.

Great counter point! But wrong conclusion. Related to but an inversion of the Gollum example above, that's a point about sense mix-up, this time holding the referent constant. What Lewis needs is that Doyle acted differently than he intended. But this counterexample shows that Austen acted as she intended, but got unintended results. She

---

[16] This hasn't been rigorous enough to attempt the *modus tollens* against Lewis's picture of modality. And it wouldn't be fair to ask my readers to grant Lewis's modal views for argument's sake but not do so myself.

succeeded in intentionally referring to Mrs. Bennet and in attributing some properties to her (just the wrong properties).

This case is like the Austen case. I try to compliment a friend in her native, non-English language on her most recent publication. But my pronunciation is bad, so what she hears is a compliment about her penultimate publication. Or suppose in complimenting her she is reminded of all her failed publications and becomes sad rather than happy. In either case I complimented her—i.e. I did what I set out to do—but with unintended results.

Doyle's London case is more akin to this next one. I tease my nephew, pretending that I have something in my hand. I consider two expressions by which to make my big reveal. First, "Ha! There's nothing in my hand!" Second, "Ha! The hand I was talking about doesn't really exist!"[17] If intention to pretend A is necessary for a pretense of A, then the first response is more appropriate.

The closest Lewis might get is that Doyle pretended that the actual London had the property *being inhabited by a top detective called 'SH'*. But property-pretense isn't enough to get to pretended *reference* to contingent *actualia*.

Second, even if Doyle did pretend to reference *actualia* by referring to nonactualia, here's reason to think Lewis failed to establish that if an utterer uses a pretend-actual reference in a seemingly asserted proposition, the utterer pretends to assert that proposition.

---

[17] We who are familiar with Lewis's modal views know that *nonactual* is not the same as *nonexistent*, and so will please excuse this hand-wavy characterization used with my young nephew.

I can *pretend* that I'm defending myself from ninja attacks as I *punch* a punching-bag.[18] So pretense at one description level of an action does not require that the entire action be pretended.

Here's a more relevant counterexample. Suppose I say of a friend that he is as loyal as Sam Gamgee. That's a clear assertion despite referencing a nonactual person, i.e. despite including a pretend reference. So pretend reference needn't be incompatible with actual assertion.

One might have the intuition that one can simultaneously pretend some action and intend to perform that action by the same token behavior. Manuel Garcia-Carpintero (G-C) outlines a way to undermine Lewis's reasoning using this intuition. He putatively shows that an author can simultaneously and intentionally assert and pretend to assert her fiction. I think G-C is wrong on this point. As I treat G-C's arguments in the next chapter, I'll say no more about this presently.

As I said at the outset of this subsection, I ultimately agree with Lewis's point that authors of fiction do not assert by virtue of fictionalizing; see Chapter Five. My arguments and counterexamples in this section only serve to undermine what seems to be Lewis's support for his pretense theory of fictionalizing. In the next section I argue directly against the now-unsupported pretense account.

V.   *Falsify Lewis's View*

One might respond to the foregoing like so. Lewis got to the right conclusion, just by the wrong means. Forget pretend reference, forget actually-incomplete sentences. The

---

[18] See darebee.com.

author just pretends that some (typically) false sentences are true (however it works). Then, as above, wrap all of a fiction's sentences up with these pretended declaratives. Hence: fictionalizing is pretend assertion.

Fine. Let's skip the arguments and go straight at the conclusion. Here's a conclusive argument to the contrary.

According to studies[19] professional fiction authors tend to describe their characters as having at least some degree of independent agency, as taking on lives of their own, so to speak. For example, "I didn't expect Protagonist to respond that way when I thought of this scenario!" Fans of some fiction complain along similar lines: "That's not the sort of thing Sidekick-man would do." These aren't the sort of things one says of people one takes to be merely pretend-asserted about. This leads me to think that pretended assertion is not how many authors would describe what they're doing when they tell stories. (This is to say nothing of the fiction that the author has no intention of pretending is *actual,* e.g. as with Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea* saga.)

One might think that the surprise in such cases of supposed character agency simply amounts to uncovering (often probabilistic) implications that were buried in the complexities of the narrative. People and situations are multifaceted, and the author just didn't fully appreciate how the brave but gullible heroine would react to the smooth-talking villain when first envisioning the scene. The author expected the heroine to combat the villain for his misdeeds but—*surprise!*—she has been taken in by the silver

---

[19] For example, in this one (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7068700/) 69% of surveyed professional writers (*n* = 181) respond that their characters have at least some degree of *[illusory] independent agency*. The following study has similar findings (https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.2190/FTG3-Q9T0-7U26-5Q5X).

tongue and now seeks to lend aid to the villain. The thought is that the hidden but legitimate complexity of the pieces in play undermines authorial surprise being evidence against pretense.

In reply, compare this complexity response to pretending that one's hand is on fire. Whether the fire leaps from one's hand to one's head, or the fire causes one's hand to turn into an elephant, the pretender is in control of the pretense and the pretend-fire's behavior. Nothing it does surprises the pretender. In fact, nothing happens (so to speak) until the pretender intentionally pretends it. This is the case even when pretending with a partner. "You're dead, I shot you!" one kid shouts at the other while playing Cops & Robbers. "Not-uh, you missed by a mile!" The second kid isn't pretend-shot until and unless she pretends she's shot. Given that one can be surprised by one's own fictionalizing, fictionalizing isn't pretense.

One might respond by distinguishing constrained pretense from mere pretense.[20] Hand-on-fire-to-hand-as-elephant is mere pretense for there are no rules or constraints when pretending by oneself. But pretending with another, as with my example of kids playing Cops & Robbers and one kid not being shot unless she agrees she was shot, requires some ratification and so isn't mere pretense. Or consider semi-scripted improv acting, where actors *faithfully* improv their scenes based on some minimal script.[21] Such pretending to be another person requires meeting some standard, namely whatever is true about the situation, the person, and her personality, behaviors, motivations, etc. So perhaps fictionalizing is one of these constrained sorts of pretense rather than mere

---

[20] This response comes from Nik Breiner.

[21] Christopher Guest movies are fantastically funny examples of this.

pretense. And if fictionalizing is a constrained pretense, then, as I'm understanding the reasoning, it is the author's pretense rubbing up against these constraints that generates the hidden probabilistic upshots that surprise the author. For example, the first kid playing Cops and Robbers is surprised that her co-pretender doesn't ratify being shot, as the second child might be surprised that she was shot at given whatever preceded this detail of their shared scene.

I reply that constraint doesn't solve the problem of authorial surprise undermining the pretense account of fictionalizing in light of the following.

If fictionalizing is constrained pretense, then the constraint on the pretense is either internal or external to the fiction. Self-consistency of the fiction or consistency of character behavior are examples of internal constraints, bracketing perhaps or to some degree fictions with unreliable narrators. Ratification by another party—as in the Cops & Robbers shooting case—is an example of an external constraint, though this would require getting clear on what exactly gets ratified and how when considering works of fiction. But I think a handwavy understanding of it is enough to show its untenability. Genre considerations is another example of external constraint, or perhaps of a combination internal-and-external constraint.

If fictionalizing is pretense internally constrained by consistency, then there's no accounting for the *generation* of character agency. For there are an infinite number of reactions any given character might have to any given situation that are consistent with the rest of the text. You'd be hard pressed to find an instance where a character could not consistently—albeit awkwardly—respond to a situation by reciting the set of positive integers to the first place, or to the second place, or … , or to the nth place. But

consistency constraints aren't going to give characters the independent agency they need to do that. Consistency rules out some options for characters, perhaps gives characters fodder for other options, but does not directly generate character agency.

There's a more interesting, more challenging form of internal constraint than mere consistency: something's being in character, that is, being natural for a given person or situation. While generally people behave the ways we expect them to, sometimes they do something that is surprising to others but is in fact natural for them; it's only after the fact that one realizes that "of course" that's what they'd do. For example, Anne of Green Gables—in *Anne of Green Gables*—lied to Marilla Cuthbert when confessing to dropping a brooch into the lake. (Spoiler Alert: It had, unknown to either Anne or Marilla, caught on a shawl that Marilla put away.) I remember when I first read that bit thinking something like, "Anne tries so hard to be a good girl, I can't believe she'd lie!" But then on further reflection I realized that Anne would lie about losing the brooch when Marilla was unshakably convinced that Anne was lying about not losing it. For she also wants to be in good relationship with Marilla and Marilla just wouldn't take her word for it on the matter, so she made peace the only way she saw how. Now just imagine that Lucy Maud Montgomery had the same experience while writing—pretending, we're supposing—that part of the novel.

I reply by insisting that nothing happens unless and until the pretender pretends it, even when that pretense is constrained by in-character or natural-for considerations. To wit, it's natural for objects to occasionally fall accidentally out of one's hand. But I don't see how it would be possible for someone to genuinely, accidentally drop a pretended item she's "holding." Of course one can pretend to accidentally drop a held item. But

pretended objects don't accidentally drop, break, become soiled, get blown away, or get misplaced despite such things being in character for the pretended objects' nonpretend counterparts. Similarly, pretended pets don't make too much noise, run away, attack a passerby, or drop dead accidentally despite such events being natural for actual pets. And if pretend objects and animals don't surprise their pretenders with in-character behaviors I don't see reason to think that pretend people do either. And so in-character constraints on pretense don't *generate* surprising independent character agency. Nothing—not even in-character things—occur in a pretense unless and until either the pretender intends to pretend that thing or, in a group pretense, all pretenders ratify the proffered thing.

Speaking of group pretense and moving to external constraints, if fictionalizing is third-party-ratified externally constrained pretense, then—even if this constraint were to solve the current problem of explaining authorial surprise in light of characters' seeming independent agency—it raises another devastating problem: Nothing is a fiction until another party engages with it and ratifies it. But that's implausible on the face of it. It's not like *Harry Potter* was indeterminately a fiction until someone other than J. K. Rowling read it and said, "Yep. Fiction." I can grant that the fiction wasn't finalized until J. K. Rowling decided no more edits were needed, and she may have waited to make that pronouncement (figuratively if not literally) until someone else proofread it. If anything, it was a fiction in progress until Rowling was content to stop editing the work. Given that most of what is commonly held as fiction is created in private and likely often not engaged with by anyone other than the author it is implausible that fictions need outsiders to confirm their status as fiction to be fiction. This is especially so if we believe children are in fact creating fictions even when talking to themselves while sitting in time out, say.

(Not capturing fictionalizing by children is a complaint I'll raise with G-C's make-belief view in the next chapter.)

What's more, an external constraint like an outside party's ratification doesn't explain authorial surprise given that the author's surprise is during the writing of the thing, not during someone else's reading or—worse—after the reader finishes the work to then ratify the sum.

If fictionalizing is genre-constrained pretense, then authorial surprise at character independent agency is explained—if at all—in only at best some cases. For example, George Lucas and co. may have been surprised to see Han Solo whip out a blaster pistol when confronted face to face with Darth Vader in *The Empire Strikes Back*, rather than, say, initiate some signature-scoundrel smooth-talking, throw a plasma grenade at Vader, or simply just turn tail and run. However, suppose Jane Austen first pretended that Mr. Darcy whipped out a ray gun to obliterate Mr. Wickham when the two first came face to face in the narrative of *Pride & Prejudice*. She would have been very surprised I'd warrant. But then it wouldn't have been genre constraints that generated the surprise. For she wasn't working in the sci-fi/fantasy genre. Genre constraints would rule out this situation in the finalized work. So where did the surprise come from? Not from pretending constrained by a genre. In fact, Austen would have to contrive her own solution to the situation without a ray gun, thereby doing away with the very independent agency genre considerations were proposed to account for.

But I think that genre constraint does not at all explain authorial surprise at character independent agency. For authorial surprise during the making of genre-creating or genre-bending fictions is impossible in some cases on the genre-constrained pretense

model. It's true that authors can create relevant constraints for their own work, which might account for genre-constrained authorial surprise. But plausibly some surprise invents new genres, e.g. it's plausible that the first work in the time-traveling subgenre of sci-fi/fantasy came about after an author in surprise wrote a scene where two people are face to face and the older said truly to the younger, "I'm you from the future."[22] Further, it seems plausible that some surprising moment comes in during a relatively genre-neutral scene, e.g. during a conversation between two humans about their emotions. I qualify with "relatively" as, for any given thing in some fiction, there's likely some genre that excludes that sort of thing, hence seemingly little to nothing is strictly genre neutral. In this emotions-conversation case, e.g., it is likely to be a part of the genre constraints that these humans do not have emotion-skewing implants unless these were introduced or are later made much of, etc.[23]

These considerations against externally constrained pretense—genre considerations especially—also rule out the inclusive reading of the "or" of "[a] constraint … internal or external to the fiction."

Obviously there are other potential internal or external constraints I haven't directly considered. But I don't have to given that no type of constraint on authorial pretense will permit authorial surprise. For it's still the case that nothing is pretended unless and until the author pretends it. So even if she uncovers some unexpected upshot for a certain character in a given situation, it wasn't by virtue of some constraint that the

---

[22] I imagine the suppositional author's thinking moved from slight confusion or uncertainty then to surprise, something like: "I'm you [???] from the future [!!!]."

[23] Thanks to my director for making my example more concrete.

upshot was there to be uncovered. The constraint only limits what counts as permissible in the work. So if the author uncovered an unexpected upshot, it wasn't constrained pretense that explains it or generated it; at best constrained pretense would permit her to include it in the work. Because, again, pretense is itself unconstrained.

In short, constrained pretense doesn't explain the sometimes surprising independent agency of characters. Constraint is nongenerative. Constraint just pronounces on the permissibility of elements of the fictional situation. "Yes, the heroine is swayed by the villain's proposal." "No, the second child isn't shot by the first child." And without such agency, authorial surprise remains unexplained by pretense, constrained or otherwise.

I'll note here that in Chapter Five—where I develop my own account of fictionalizing—I show that my theory does a good job explaining this independent agency of fictional entities.

VI. *Conclusion*

I described David Lewis's pretense theory of fictionalizing and motivated it by constructing an argument seemingly implicit to his thinking. Then I both showed the argument wanting and then offered evidence in direct contradiction to his account. Next I need to deal with pretense theory's current main contender before throwing my own account into the ring. On to Chapter Three!

CHAPTER THREE

Against the Make-Belief Account of Fiction-Making[1]

I.   *Introduction*

In the previous chapter I described, motivated, undermined, and attacked David

Lewis's pretense theory of fictionalizing. Here I will do the same for the other main

account of fictionalizing in the literature, Manuel Garcia-Carpintero's (G-C) make-belief

illocutionary account.

In §II I will describe the account and in §III I will recount G-C's motivation for it.

As we'll see, G-C's main motivation is found in attacking Lewis's fictional-truth theory's

reality principle (RP) on which, so G-C seems to think, Lewis's pretense theory depends.

Recall that RP is the view according to which something is fictionally true if and only if

it is true in all the worlds where the fiction is told as known fact. As I did in the last

chapter, G-C makes much of the fact that Lewis's pretense theory rests on a false

assumption of a dilemma between the categories of intentional performance of an action

and intentional pretend performance of that action. Whereas I escaped the horns of this

dilemma by showing that there are facsimiles of actions that aren't pretenses of those

actions, G-C will attempt to both go through the horns as well as to escape them (though

he didn't describe what he was up to in these ways). G-C putatively goes through them

by arguing that an author can simultaneously and intentionally both assert and pretend to

assert her fiction. G-C then attempts to escape the dilemma by giving an alternative

---

[1] Alternate title: "Don't Make-Believe Everything You Read: Against the Make-Belief Account of Fiction-Making"

facsimile action of assertion than pretense, namely presenting content for audiences to make-believe.

G-C doesn't give much in the way of helping his readers understand what make-belief is supposed to be except to twice explicitly treat it as interchangeable with 'imagine'.[2] But without telling us what he means by 'imagine' I am at a loss to understand his use of either term. So I must resort to using perhaps-naïve views of these terms. The perhaps-naïve view of 'imagine' is something like 'picturing mentally' with 'picturing' being a broad term that covers other sense-relevant verbs like 'hearing', 'smelling', etc. I imagine eating an apple when I picture in my head somethings like: the action of me biting into and chewing an apple, the sensations of holding, biting into, and chewing an apple, the flavor of the apple or its smell, or the sound of crunching into an apple.

The perhaps-naïve view of 'make-believe' is something like 'pretending the relevant thing is real or true'. I make-believe that I am sipping a cup of tea when, e.g., I act like the little plastic teacup my niece hands me is filled with tea, hold it up to my lips, tip it back, make a slurping sound, then smack my lips in satisfaction. Note that make-believing to drink tea may or may not involve imagining that the teacup is filled with tea.

Though G-C takes this interchangeability for granted, I will use discrepancies like the one just noted to argue against the conflation of these concepts in my objections below. Of course G-C's senses of these terms might evade my concerns but, having

---

[2] On pp. 204 and 213: "… to put … [audiences] in a position to make-believe (imagine) propositions …"

nothing more to go on from the man himself, these will be my ways of understanding what G-C says.

One might stop to ask how Lewis's fictionalizing account and G-C's account differ given that they both involve pretense, at least on the perhaps-naïve view that make-belief is *pretending is real*. The difference turns on who is doing the pretending and on what is being pretended. On Lewis's view (i) the author is pretending (ii) to assert some sentences. Of course, the audience might also pretend that the uttered sentences are true, but their pretense is not strictly a condition of the speech act. One can pretend to assert by or to oneself, presumably. Further, audiences can believe the pretended assertions without changing what the author is doing in at least some cases (i.e., through no fault of the author).

On G-C's view, it's (i) the audience who's doing the pretending, namely pretending that (ii) the content of what's uttered is real. More accurately, for G-C it's the audience *that the author intends* to be doing the pretending. Of course, the author might also pretend that the uttered sentences are true but as we'll see below, the author's pretense is not strictly a condition of the speech act. That's because authors might also—on G-C's view—intentionally assert what they intend their audiences to pretend is real (and so also intend that audiences believe the sentences are true).

In §IV I will undermine G-C's theory by vindicating Lewis's RP from G-C's charges. Section V is where I will directly attack G-C's view.

II.   *G-C's View*

G-C argues that fictionalizing is a Gricean illocutionary type of speech act, like asserting or predicting, wherein the author's intent does the work. G-C takes it that what

authors of fiction intend is that their audiences make-believe the content of their works. It is for this reason I call G-C's the make-belief (MB) account of fictionalizing.

Speech acting is doing things with language. Speech acts come in three parts. There's the locutionary act—that which is uttered or scribed (e.g. the English sentence "Are you using the salt?" when the salt is clearly out of the speaker's reach). The illocutionary act is the act speakers or authors perform in their speech (asking you to pass me the salt). The perlocutionary act is the actual effect on the hearer or reader (getting you to pass me the salt, you forming the belief that I want salt, you realizing that the salt is closer to you than to me, you thinking about using the salt before passing it to me, etc.).[3]

What makes a Gricean illocutionary act is when "one (a) intend[s] to produce an effect on an audience, and (b) intend[s] that this very intention be recognized by that audience, [and] (c) … intends this effect on the audience to be produced at least in part by their recognition of the speaker's intention."[4]

So, fiction-making on this account is when an author, speaker, or playwright utters some propositions with the intention that the audience make-believes the propositions, the audience recognizes this intention, and the audience make-believes the propositions at least partially because of recognizing this intention.[5] (Of course, G-C's account may need the same sort of revamping that mine and Lewis's might need, namely

---

[3] Green, "Speech Acts."

[4] *Ibid*.

[5] See also Currie, *The Nature of Fiction*, 30–35 and accompanying references.

swapping out 'sentence' for 'proposition' in case fictions aren't propositional. See

Chapter Four and Five.) More formally:

> *U*'s utterance of *s* is fictive if there are *q* and *r* such that *U* utters *s* intending that anyone who has *r* would:

>> a) recognize that *s* has *q*
>> b) recognize that *s* is intended by *U* to have *q*
>> c) recognize that *U* intends them to make-believe some proposition *p*
>> d) make-believe that *p*
>> e) take (b) as at least partially their reason for (c), and
>> f) take (c) as at least partially their reason for (d).

The variables *r* and *q* are intended to pick up, respectively, features characterizing the

intended audience (so that it has whatever is required to understand the speaker's

intentions) and features of the utterance accessible to such an audience, such as its having

a certain visible shape or conventional meaning.[6] For example, *U* might be A. C. Doyle

writing some utterance, *s*, that has *q* for audience members that have *r*, where *r* is

something like *being minimally functional in written English and can generally*

distinguish fiction from nonfiction and *q* is *being constituted by English words the*

conventional meaning of which are 'Sherlock Holmes is a detective'.

      Here's what I call G-C's authorial-intent (AI) account of fictional truth, which

motivates his MB account of fictionalizing:

> A sentence of the form 'In the fiction *F*, *p*' is true if and only if it is part of the communicative intentions of *F*'s creator, as expressed by recognizable features *q* of *F*, to put audiences with intended features *r* in a position to make-believe *p*.[7]

---

[6] Garcia-Carpintero, "Fiction-Making," 204 and, practically verbatim, his footnote 5 replacing '*r*' for '*G*' and '*q*' for '*F*', though I added 'at least partially' to each of conditions (e) and (f) as a grace to G-C as (c) and (d) might be overdetermined.

[7] G-C, "Fiction-Making," 211.

'Communicative intentions' are the intentions that the author seems to have about what she wants her audience to make-believe, given a reasonable interpretation by the audience of F's qs. More precisely, they are the things that the text of the fiction gets the audience to make-believe, thereby determining what is in fact fictionally true (bracketing concerns of explosion due to accidental contradictions and the like). What G-C calls 'ultimate intentions' are things the author in fact intends for her audience to make-believe and so to make fictionally true, seemings aside. Doyle ultimately intended for his fiction that Sherlock Holmes be a detective running around the streets of London and he communicated this intention by stating—in not so few words—that Sherlock Holmes is a detective running around the streets of London. And *huzzah!* audiences make-believe that Sherlock Holmes is a detective running around the streets of London, so what Doyle wanted to be fictionally true is fictionally true.

What about nonexplicit communiques from an author? For example, suppose nowhere in the text of *Pride & Prejudice* does anyone explicitly fall or drop something and that Jane Austen is not explicit that Ms. Bennet is affected by gravity, nor anything gravity-like. Well, there's enough communicated to audiences that the world of *P&P* and ours have so much in common such that that it's putatively recognizable that Austen intends for us to make-believe that Elizabeth is regularly in contact with the ground. So, perhaps it is false that *gravity* affects Elizabeth, but it's true that there's at least a constant conjunction of human bodies and the ground in *P&P*.

However, G-C's AI has an advantage over other authorial-intentional accounts of fictional truth. On AI authors can be wrong about what is true in their fictions given this difference between ultimate and communicative intentions (the implicature being that

other authorial-intentional accounts can't account for authors being wrong).[8] For authors might ultimately intend for their audiences to make-believe something that they fail to successfully communicate to their audiences, thereby failing to get the audience to make-believe the thing. For example, Austen didn't give us enough recognizable features in *P&P* to suggest that she wants us to make-believe that Ms. Elizabeth Bennet is a Jedi. This, despite—let us suppose—her ultimately intending that we make-believe that Bennet is a Jedi.[9] It could be that by, e.g., describing Elizabeth's muddy petticoat Austen tried to communicate this ultimate intention. But since muddy petticoats are generally not recognizable intimations of Jedihood, the intention was not communicated to audiences, hence was not make-believed by audiences, and so isn't fictionally true in *P&P*.

Further, authors might successfully get their audiences to make-believe something (thereby making it true in their fiction) despite lacking the ultimate intention that audiences so make-believe. For example, consider the claim that Ms. Bennet murdered Anne de Bourgh "off screen" but during the course of the narrative. We can take for granted that Austen did *not* ultimately intend for her audiences to make-believe this about her character. But suppose the given descriptions in the story lead typical audience members to make-believe that Ms. Bennet did murder Anne sometime during the course of events that we otherwise know and love. Then it would be true in the story that Lizzy murdered someone despite the lack of ultimate intention for audiences to make-believe this on Austen's part. G-C would say in this case that it is part of Austen's

---

[8] This is a common complaint against authorial-intentional accounts of fictional truth. See Frances Howard-Snyder, "Truth in Fiction."

[9] Bracketing concerns that Austen would have no concept of Jedi, let alone awareness of the word. What? Can't a guy want to intentionally include Jedi in his dissertation?

communicative intention—even if unawares—that audiences make-believe that Bennet murdered Anne based on the things Austen successfully ultimately and otherwise communicatively intended.[10]

III.   Motivate G-C's Views

As stated previously, G-C works to establish his account of fictionalizing by arguing, first, that only his account of fictional truth captures every fictional truth and, second, that his account of fictional truth at least entails his fictionalizing account. In the first subsection here I recount and explain a fictional story G-C offers. He uses this story to make his case against RP's ability to capture every fictional truth but show his own account's ability to do so. The next subsection includes G-C's arguments.

A. A Continuous Park

G-C first recounts a fiction wherein a man reads a novel. This fiction forms the basis of his test case by which he both attacks Lewis's RP and in two ways undermines the motivating dilemma for Lewis's pretense theory that one intends either to perform some action A or to pretend to A given some token behavior.

Here's the main story G-C uses, a fiction called "A Continuous Park" (ACP). ACP opens with a man reading a novel, aka 'the Reader'. The Reader reads in his novel of a scheme undertaken by a woman and her adulterous lover against the woman's husband, aka 'the Husband'. ACP ends with the Reader reading that in the novel the adulterous lover is behind the Husband with knife in hand, clearly about to murder the Husband. The novel's description of the path to the doomed Husband (through a park)

---

[10] G-C, "Fiction-Making," 213f.

and of the Husband's current setting (in a green chair) exactly matches the description of a path to the main story's Reader (through a park) and the Reader's current setting (in a green chair).[11] End of story.

That might not seem like much of a story, so let me unpack it according to G-C's lights. Here are terms to help me do that. I will use 'actual world' as a Lewisian indexical, namely the possible world of the relevant individual(s). 'Real world' refers to the possible world you, dear reader, and I inhabit. The real world is actual to us.[12]

An actual story is a story in a world that purports to be about that self-same world, and—indexed to that world—is one type of nonfiction.[13] By 'about' I mean 'literally describes' and so bracket metaphors, allegories, and other such literary devices that might muddle our present inquiry. For example of an actual story about the real world: "There's a guy named John Rosenbaum who used to live in California, then Washington, now Texas. He's writing his dissertation on the speech-act of fictionalizing. He just wrote an admittedly anticlimactic true story in his dissertation."

Up until G-C (as I'll demonstrate below) it's been generally understood that fictions are taken to be actually false by their authors (bracketing, e.g., facets of a fiction like scientific facts (cf. Jules Verne) or cases like mythology). And of course, as just stated, actual stories are stories that purport to be about and are intended to be true of the actual world. Granted, a fiction might well be true in the world in which the fiction is

---

[11] G-C, "Fiction-Making," 203f.

[12] To be clear, I don't use 'real' in a way to implicate the falsity of Lewis's modal realism (wherein all possible worlds are concrete). I mean, the view *is* false, but nothing presently turns on it so I needn't stake any claims.

[13] Of course, nonnarratives can be nonfiction.

uttered and a nonfiction might well be false in the same. The suppositional A. C. Doyle

Sherlock's accidental biography from the last chapter is an example of a true fiction. A

real-world biography of George Washington Carver that states that he was the inventor of

the peanut is an example of a false nonfiction. Throughout this chapter—except when

otherwise indicated, i.e. in the mouth of G-C—I'll mean by 'fiction' minimally a work

that purports to be false in the actual world. And by 'actual story' or 'true story' I'll mean

a work that purports to be true in the actual world.

A primary fiction is a fiction in an actual world. The hit TV show *Seinfeld* is a

primary fiction to us. A primary fictional world is actual to the entities of the primary

fiction. Kramer is actual relative to *Seinfeld* but fictional—nonactual—relative to the real

world (bracketing concerns that the character Kramer is based off a real person). And if

we bracket any complications that may arise from the fact that the main characters in the

following are also based on real people, Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* (*LLL*) King

Ferdinand and the Lords Berowne, Dumaine, and Longaville are actual relative to the

LLL possible world but fictional relative to us.

A secondary fiction is a fiction *in* a primary fictional world.[14] The movie

Prognosis Negative is a primary fiction in *Seinfeld* and the Seinfeld possible world, but a

secondary fiction to us; aka 'a fictional fiction'. Similarly, the play of the Nine Worthies

in *LLL* is a primary fiction in *LLL* but a secondary fiction to the real world (your and my

actual world).

---

[14] And on, I take it, for tertiary, quaternary, … , n-ary fictions relative to secondary, tertiary, …, n–1-ary fictional worlds.

With these distinctions in place, here's what, according to G-C and suggested by

ACP's very title, ACP is ultimately or principally about:[15]

> *About:* In the fiction ACP, a man reads a novel about what is in fact the scheme of his wife and her lover to kill him, whose denouement is about to happen as he reads about it unsuspectingly.[16]

In short, according to G-C, the Reader is identical to the Husband. To clarify: ACP is a

primary fiction to us. Compare to *Seinfeld.* ACP involves a Reader and a novel. That

fictional novel—the text describing illicit lovers—is at least a primary fiction in ACP and

so at least a secondary fiction to us. So far, this is just like *Prognosis Negative*'s

relationship to us via *Seinfeld*. But it goes further. G-C interprets ACP such that the novel

is *also* a primary fiction to us. For, by G-C's lights, the novel's story is *also* an actual

story to the Reader in ACP. The Reader *of* the novel just is the doomed Husband *in* the

novel. In our terms, as G-C understands it, the novel in ACP is both fiction and

nonfiction in the ACP world; the novel in ACP is not merely a fictional fiction relative to

us. It's a true fiction in the ACP world, making it a fictional true story to us. That is, what

G-C is proposing is that something is—at the same time and in the same way—intended

both as a false account of the primary fictional world and a true account of it. Comparing

again to *Seinfeld*, it's as if *Prognosis Negative* is both a fiction relative to Kramer *and* a

true (actual) story relative to Kramer. And that would make *Prognosis Negative* to us

both a secondary fiction (fictional fiction) *and* a primary fiction (fictional true story,

compare to an autobiography written by Kramer).

---

[15] G-C, "Fiction-Making," 205f and footnote 12.

[16] *Ibid.* 205. He refers to this as proposition (6), but so as not to confuse his numbering with ours, I've renamed it.

Recall these Lewisian points from last chapter. First, transworld identity is false for concrete objects (no such object is numerically identical to any object in any nonactual possible world). Second, if one entity is in fact fictional to another entity, then those entities are in disparate worlds. (The "in fact" is to ward off concerns of *accidentally* true fictions, for obviously in those cases the author, e.g., is in and of the same world as the fictional entity.) So, it seems that for the Lewisian the Husband in the novel—if he's fictional (nonactual) for the Reader of the novel—necessarily isn't the Reader of the novel.

It is this putative difference of conclusion with the Lewisian that G-C makes much of, as shown in the following section.

B. *G-C's Arguments*

G-C states that if a reader misses *About,* she hasn't understood ACP. On top of some textual clues,[17] G-C uses the title of the work to argue that *About* is true: the "continuous" in "A Continuous Park" refers to the continuity of the fictional park leading to the Husband with that of the actual park surrounding ACP's novel's Reader's house.

Using ACP, G-C's reasoning for his make-belief illocutionary theory of fictionalizing—MB—comes in two main parts. First, he offers two arguments (which I label *Possibility* and *Actuality*) to show that RP cannot indirectly generate *About.* (Recall from Chapter Two that an indirect fictional truth is one that is implied by explicit or other indirect fictional truths, bracketing concerns of explosion from contradictory stories. See Walton (1990) for the fully nuanced account.) Without RP, G-C thinks, the motivation

_____

[17] For example, the previously mentioned path through a park and the green chair in which sits a reader / the Reader.

58

for pretense theory is lost. However, losing that motivation doesn't deal with the fact that pretense theory might be divorced from Lewis's reasons for it, hence why I gave an argument directly against pretense theory in the last chapter. The most G-C goes on to do on this front is give an alternative type of facsimile that's not pretense. I do that in Chapter Five. In any case, I unpack G-C's reasoning for this first part in the first following subsection.

The second main part of G-C's reasoning describes his fictional-truth account AI, shows that it generates *About,* and then offers his MB as the best fit for AI. For the sake of argument I will simply grant both that AI generates *About* and that his illocutionary account is the best fit for AI. Given that, I won't recount the particulars of G-C's reasoning on these points, though I offer a summary of his argument in the second following subsection.

1. Against RP. G-C *contends* that *About* is true. He believes that the author ultimately intends it given that the title all but screams it. Further, there are numerous explicit truths putatively implying as much.[18] G-C argues two ways, however, that RP cannot generate *About*. RP is the view according to which something is fictionally true if and only if it is true in all the worlds where the fiction is told as known fact.

First, *About* (and so any story that implies an *About*-counterpart) is necessarily false on RP. For, by RP, a work is a fiction only if its author pretends to assert its contents. So, the text referenced in ACP is a novel (i.e. a primary fiction in ACP and so a secondary fiction to us) only if its author pretends to assert its contents. But pretend

_____

[18] *Ibid.* 205f, 208, footnote 14.

assertion requires that the utterer not intentionally assert what's pretend asserted

according to Lewis. "… [I]f it is really a fiction … then the act of storytelling at [the

actual] world was *not* what it purported to be."[19] Being pretense in ACP, the novel at best

is only seemingly accidentally true in ACP. (Recall that for Lewis Doyle's Sherlock

Holmes is distinct from the suppositional actual Sherlock Holmes.) Indeed, given that

pretend assertion precludes sincere assertion, it's impossible that a work be a true fiction.

So the novel cannot be both a fiction and nonaccidentally true.

But G-C argues that *About* is possibly true, even on Lewis's total view. Suppose,

e.g. that the employee of ACP's Reader learned of the adulterous wife's plot against his

boss. In trying to avoid raising alarms, the employee communicates the plot to the boss

via a novel.[20] That is, the employee pretends to assert that the plot is actually true while

asserting that the plot is actually true.

Note that G-C simply assumes that one can simultaneously pretend to A while

intending to A, a point I questioned in the last chapter. Here G-C uses the assumption to

argue that these disjuncts are not exclusive. In the next subsection I will recount how G-

C's account of fictional truth is meant to further show that Lewis's dilemma is

nonexhaustive, as I argued in the last chapter.

Continuing: Given that the employee pretends to assert that the plot is actually

true while asserting that the plot is actually true, the ACP world is one in which an author

---

[19] Lewis, "Truth in Fiction+," 266, emphasis mine.

[20] G-C gives another variant wherein the employee suffers from paranoid delusions that are accidentally true.

simultaneously asserts and pretends to assert a narrative. So, *About* is possibly true. But

RP entails that *About* is not possibly true. So, RP is false. Call this argument *Possibility*.

G-C concedes that the Lewisian might have the resources to work around

Possibility. I'll offer such a reply below, in fact. So G-C presses his critique of RP

further. The supposedly more devastating objection to RP is what I dub *Actuality*:

> If we [real-world inhabitants] were told ACP as known fact, and accepted it as
> such, no appeal to what we take to be common knowledge … [and] even less to
> what is in fact the case in the actual [real] world, would lead us to infer that the
> actual [real] world is one of the worlds of the novel [here treated as a primary
> fiction] about which we are told.[21]

That is, suppose the narrative of ACP were really true (actual to us), and that an actual

storyteller were to tell it. Then *About* is actually true given that ACP is told here as

known fact. But RP cannot generate *About* actually. For we have no grounds for making

the inference that the Reader read in the novel his own death, given that the novel is a

work of fiction. Till now we've had no reason to think that fictions are actual. So, we

would think it a grand coincidence that a murdered man read of a murder just like his

own just as he was being murdered. With no grounds for inferring it, we couldn't infer

About. So, if RP is true, *About* is ungeneratable, i.e. actually false. But that contradicts

our supposition. So, RP is false. Call this argument *Actuality*.

Two quick issues. First, as my director reminds me, when evaluating

counterfactuals, we try to avoid grand coincidences and other highly improbable events,

and so count worlds with such as more distant. Otherwise, in a quantum world, all

counterfactuals have only trivial truth value. For example, were I to brush my computer

mouse off my desk, it would fall to the ground. But QM says there is a non-zero chance it

---

[21] G-C, "Fiction-Making," 208.

wouldn't. Nonetheless, we want to avoid such a highly improbable event when evaluating a relevant counterfactual, and so count such a world as more distant than the one in which it simply falls. All this to say, would we, in fact, think it a grand coincidence that a murdered man read of a murder just like his own as he was being murdered? Seems more likely that we'd see that as a clue to the man's murder, or that the work was really a warning to the reader that the reader didn't catch in time, or something else entirely. Ultimately I think however we read it we would not see the work as a fiction or as something meant simply as a fiction, regardless if the word "Novel" were stamped on the book's cover.

This might seem to bolster G-C's claim that RP can't generate *About*, for— whether it's a grand coincidence or a faux-fiction—we're not inferring that the story is told as known fact. However, it seems to me like it's undermining the very supposition that G-C rests his case on, that is, that ACP can't *simply* be really true, that there's something already amiss in assuming that a fiction is nonaccidentally truly asserted by one and the same author in one and the same writing. So G-C's complaint doesn't seem to get off the ground.

The second issue I see is that nowhere in RP does it say anything about the fictional-world's audience's ability to infer that the story is told as known fact. It doesn't even suggest that there is a fictional-world audience. All that RP requires is that the story simply is told as known fact in the fictional world. (That does of course raise issues for RP with respect to stories told where "… no one was left to tell the tale!" or similar; but RP isn't my present target.) So, why bother if *we* have no grounds to infer that ACP were told as actual? Again, it doesn't seem like G-C's complaint gets off the ground.

In the next major section I'll undermine this argument from the inside, as it were, taking G-C's supposition as given. The above complaints and the complaints to follow in (A) together give us good reason to think that *Actuality* fails, too.

2. G-C's Fictional Truth. G-C seems to be of the mind that pretense theory is true if and only if RP is true. I think a case might be made for a pretense theory that's fictional-truth-accounts neutral, and so G-C is too quick to throw the fictionalizing-theory baby out with the fictional-truth-theory bathwater. But we're currently assessing G-C's arguments, so let's just assume that he's right about that. So the above arguments are meant to do more than falsify Lewis's pretense-action dilemma by showing that fictionalizing (as pretense) can overlap with intentional assertion. They also putatively lead to the direct contradiction of RP, and so of (Lewis's version of) pretense theory itself.

With RP and pretense out of the way, G-C offers his accounts in their place. He spells out in detail how AI generates *About* and treats his make-belief illocutionary account of fictionalizing as falling right out. As stated previously, I won't recount the minutia. But here I summarize his argument:

1. For any fictional truth, *p,* and any theory of fictional truth *a*, if *a* is true, then *a* can generate *p*.
2. *About* is fictionally true.
3. RP cannot generate *About* and AI can and (assume) these are the only possible viable theories of fictional truth.
4. So, AI is the true theory of fictional truth. (1 – 3)
5. If AI is the true theory of fictional truth, then the make-belief illocutionary theory of fictionalizing is true.
6. So, the MB theory is true. (4, 5)

The argument is valid granting the nondischarged assumption I'm building into line (3). Ultimately, the assumption is false, but we'll take it for granted for G-C's sake.[22]

Let's also limit issues with this first stage of the argument by granting that RP and AI get the same, correct results with every fictional truth other than *About*. This too is putatively false at least because there are counterparts to *About* for stories similar to ACP. That is, there are fictional stories that try to incorporate (indexed to that fictional world) actual and fictional stories similarly to ACP. The Will Ferrell, Emma Thompson, and Dustin Hoffman movie *Stranger Than Fiction* is one lovable example. Its *About* counterpart is something like: In the fiction *Stranger Than Fiction*, a man's life is audibly narrated—and causally determined—by the utterings of an author in his same world as she writes a fiction, unaware of her influence on his life.

Further, (1) seems right, and I won't dispute the part of (3) that AI can—and does—generate *About* … at least for now. Similarly, I'll grant (5) for the sake of argument, though I raise serious concerns for it in (C) below.

Finally, for ease of presentation, I leave the argument as written. But there's a version of this argument wherein (1), (2), and (3) turn on the possibility of *About* rather than its actual truth. (As you might expect, *Actuality* is meant to establish the premises as written, and *Possibility* the alternate version of these premises.)

Even granting all that, I show in the next section that this argument (both versions) fails.

---

[22] See Ross P. Cameron, "How to be a Nominalist and a Fictional Realist," *Art & Abstract Objects*, edited by Christy Mag Uidhir (Oxford University Press, 2012).

Possibility and *Actuality* are meant to establish the first conjunct of (3). In this section I argue that getting clearer on *About* undermines either (2) or (3).

A. Against Actuality

Actuality depends on the truth of *About*. We can grant that it's true that RP fails to generate *About* <u>as G-C understands it</u> (though there's reason even to doubt that, see my two flagged issues above). But G-C has not given the Lewisian independent reason to believe that the direct facts and all the other indirect facts of ACP singularly imply his version of *About*.

> To assist us, let me run *About* again with some clarificatory brackets:
>
> *About$_{RP}$*[23]*:* In the fiction ACP, a man reads a novel [a fiction] about what is in fact [actually] the scheme of his wife and her lover to kill him, whose denouement [fictionally] is about to happen [actually] as he reads about it unsuspectingly.

Of course, if G-C understands it right, here's *About* with his ideal clarificatory brackets:

> *About$_{GC}$:* In the fiction ACP, a man reads a novel [that is both fiction and nonfiction] about what is in fact [simultaneously actually and fictionally] the scheme of his wife and her lover to kill him, whose denouement [fictionally and actually] is about to happen [actually and fictionally] as he reads about it unsuspectingly.

In short, *About* and *About$_{RP}$* are neutral between (i) every primary-fictional object (something in the ACP world) being numerically identical to its corresponding secondary-fictional object (in the novel's world) and (ii) every primary-fictional object having a numerically distinct secondary-fictional counterpart. *About$_{GC}$* permits only (i).

---

[23] 'RP' for—and I'm tipping my hand here—'reality principle'.

So, why can't it be that the storyteller within ACP tells of a park and a chair coincidentally similar to the novel's Reader's, thereby making the Reader distinct from the Husband? Similarly—and in line with G-C's employee amendment—the novel's author might use events that he knows are about to take place simply as inspiration for his fiction while hoping, e.g., that his boss takes it as a warning (see next paragraph). In either case the novel would be about a fictional situation remarkably like the Reader's own, except it wouldn't be about *him* but his counterpart. Compare this to real historical fictions, just written closer to the actual event than typical for the genre.

It seems dubious that the employee pretends to assert that the plot is actually true while asserting that the plot is actually true. The employee seems *at best*, instead, to be communicating indirectly (cf. Kierkegaard[24]), and indirect communication is not (arguably) assertion. Indirect communication is something like presenting something for learners to ponder without being explicit about it and hoping they pick up the point. Indeed, via indirect communication one might even offer incompatible points for her reader to decide which point she wants to believe.[25] So, if the novel in ACP is indirect communication—e.g. a warning—and if indirect communication isn't assertion, then we have a way to undermine G-C's project. This, together with the complaints raised in the last major section of this chapter give us strong reason to doubt that *Actuality* is sound, let alone valid (due to equivocation).

---

[24] Antony Aumann, "Kierkegaard on Indirect Communication, the Crowd, and a Monstrous Illusion," *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Point of View*, edited by Robert L. Perkins (Mercer University Press, 2010) is a helpful read here.

[25] Poul Lübcke, "Kierkegaard and Indirect Communication," *History of European Ideas* 12/1 (1990), 33.

Further, so long as there's no immediate or entailed contradiction, on RP all fictional truths not directly or indirectly generated by a story are undetermined. For example, the texts don't tell us—directly or indirectly—whether Sherlock has genome G1 or quite different genome G2. Suppose neither set has anything about them that entails a contradiction with anything Doyle's works do tell us. So it's undetermined which set Holmes has. So the *Sherlock Holmes* stories describe both G1 and G2 worlds.[26] So, it might be that there's a story to tell in which RP generates, i.e. accounts for, a primary fictional world in which a secondary fiction nonaccidentally describes a numerically distinct actual death, or includes a nonfictional prophecy in the secondary text. In such a case, the relevant conjunct of (3) is true as RP *can* generate $About_{RP}$ version (ii).

In short, nothing in ACP entails $About_{GC}$. Nothing in ACP precludes $About_{RP}$.[27] So, *About*—and with it (2)—is true in those cases that $About_{RP}$ version (ii) is true. But then, too, in such cases G-C's charge against RP is false. For RP can generate any of these variations of *About.* So the relevant conjunct of (3) is false. Not only that, but since $About_{GC}$ only permits the version (i) of things, in cases where RP is true AI is false. So that relevant conjunct of (3) is also false. So, in such cases this version of G-C's argument for MB theory fails.

The fact is, G-C has given no compelling reason to think that ACP's author communicatively intended $About_{GC}$. (He does give us a reason to think his interpretation is *possibly* the correct one. I address this in my reply to *Possibility.*) He might appeal to

---

[26] Similarly, of course, for all noncontradiction-entailing sets G3, G4, …, G*n*.

[27] Even if there were fictional truths precluding any of these interpretations, there is a non-ad-hoc, slightly modified version of RP with resources to accommodate internally inconsistent stories. See F. Howard-Snyder, "Truth in Fiction."

the author's ultimate intent that the story is about a Reader reading a fictional account that accurately describes his numerically identical death. G-C is careful not to rest his case here, however, since this would amount to question begging for his account. But as there is nothing else that might do the work, let's set aside question-begging concerns to see if ultimate authorial intent works.

Ultimate authorial intent fails to establish *About$_{GC}$*. As G-C acknowledges, authors' intentions needn't be right. For example, Jane Austen might have intended for Mrs. Bennet to be a great wit. If that was the case, she failed. Even if Austen added a single explicit claim to the text we have that Mrs. Bennet is a great wit, it would still not be fictionally true that she is a great wit given the way she acts. Best case, the status of Mrs. Bennet's wit is indeterminate (in some worlds she is a great wit in being hyperironic, in others she is a great wit who hides her wit for some reason, and in some worlds she's the dullard literary criticism has so far taken her to be). More realistically, what this claim changes is that instead of having an omniscient narrator, we have an unreliable one. For the words and behavior of Mrs. Bennet just aren't witty.[28]

Yes, authors' intentions do some work. They have, e.g., the final say in word usage, which in turn can shape or delimit interpretations.[29] But let us not give away the farm. Given G-C has not established the truth of *About$_{GC}$*, he has not shown that RP fails to generate a truth.

---

[28] See John W. Rosenbaum, "Poetic License: Learning from Fiction in Light of Imaginative Resistance," *Teorema: International Journal of Philosophy* 35/3 (2016) for more on authorial and narratorial authority.

[29] See Howard-Snyder's "Truth in Fiction" example of 'tinder', 255f.

My director adds: What if there is additional information in the text that makes it clear that *About_GC* is intended? For instance, maybe characters talk about theories of interpretation of texts in such a way as to make clear that the author must have meant *About_GC*? Or what if the brackets in *About_GC* are actually printed in the text?

It seems to me in such cases that G-C's complaint against RP still fails. For it seems once all those things are built into the story explicitly, RP can generate *About_GC*. For then it would be told as known fact in ACP worlds that a novel nonaccidentally describes actual scenarios, whether because then in those worlds magic exists or there are different laws of nature or whatever. Or, if there's some real contradiction here, Lewis's overlapping stories solution might be all he needs (in brief: the text describes two sets of possible worlds, one set where anything that entails the relevant p is false and one set where anything that entails the relevant not-p is false).

So far, G-C has offered no threat against Lewis's account of fictional truth and so hasn't established the motivation for his own theories. If a Lewisian is going to get on board, G-C's case turns on *Possibility* (and the relevant variation of the above argument). This, despite G-C's claim to the contrary.[30] Unfortunately, *Possibility* does not pass muster.

B. Against Possibility

To use Lewis's account of fictionalizing against him, *Possibility* relies on the employee-author supplementation of ACP. For the sake of evaluating G-C's argument I'll

---

[30] G-C, "Fiction-Making," 207. "Let me insist that [*Possibility*] is not the real problem posed by the generation of [*About*] for Lewis's account …. Lewis could maintain the main features of his view … and still appeal to some of the procedures he discusses to deal with conceptually impossible fictions to account for the truth of … [*About*]."

presently treat pretense theory as a viable option despite the work I did in the last chapter to show its unviability.

G-C suggests that one can pretend to assert some proposition *p* while simultaneously asserting that *p*. Given, for Lewis, that pretend assertion is fictionalizing, one can simultaneously assert that *p* and fictionalize that *p* in the same speech act. In such cases, if *p* is actually true, one asserts a nonaccidentally true fiction (unless the asserter was trying to lie via assertion while fictionalizing via pretend assertion, but let's bracket that). Since ACP is a possible world, then—seemingly by Lewis's own fictionalizing lights—true fictions are possible. So, *About* is possibly true.

And again, if RP is true, *About* is impossible; so, RP is false.

So goes G-C's reasoning. But even G-C grants that Lewis has the resources to dodge this objection.[31] Here's a quick and dirty way to do it: There is, presumably, a possible world which is surrounded very closely only by worlds where the "grand coincidence" of §III.B doesn't happen.[32] At such a world *About* is true given RP.

But G-C gives us a particular example, namely the employee supplement to ACP. So let's undermine that directly. Either the employee's work does not describe his own world or, if it does describe it, the work is not a fiction. Either way, ACP offers no challenge to the Lewisian view.

For the first horn, suppose the employee's text is a work of nonfiction. Then the employee's work is not a fiction. For G-C explains that—for Lewis, on RP— "[storytelling in the fictional world] is what [in the actual world] it *falsely* purports to be:

---

[31] G-C, "Fiction-Making," 207.

[32] See page 61.

truth-telling about matters whereof the teller has knowledge."[33] So the author's—the employee's—assertions on this supplemental ACP story are not falsely purported. If anything, they are falsely purported to be falsely purported. So the author does not pretend to assert, as G-C thinks. Rather, he "literaturizes" or dramatizes his assertions. He pretends to pretend to assert.[34]

'To pretend to pretend to assert' is ambiguous. One can pretend to pretend-to-assert or one can pretend-to-pretend to assert. To pretend to pretend-to-assert is to fictionalize *how* one fictionalizes. This might be parody, as in "Look at me, I'm telling a story: *Dur! Dur! Dur!* Once upon a time, the end!" Or it might be to pretend the manner in which one pretends. For example, when asked to demonstrate how I tell stories, say at a drama-teacher job interview, I use different voices for different characters. But I don't really tell stories using voices. But G-C's employee does neither of these. So these options are no help to G-C. So G-C's employee does not pretend to pretend-to-assert.

There are two ways to pretend-to-pretend to assert. First is to write a primary fiction that includes a secondary fiction that describes the author's actual world.[35] Suppose the play created by Armado and company in *LLL* details how a man named Shakespeare wrote a play called *LLL*. This play is a primary fiction to Armado and is both a secondary fiction and actual (nonfiction) to us. Further, our primary fiction is both actual and a secondary fiction to Armado. Armado pretends to assert about our world.

---

[33] G-C, "Fiction-Making," 207, my emphasis.

[34] Thanks to Burke Rea, Alex Hoffman, and Michael Willenborg for helpful discussion on the following points.

[35] I'm sure this has been done but I don't know how to meaningfully narrow down an online search to find an example. Our technical jargon won't cut it least of all because I invented some of it. And variations of "true story in fiction" isn't cutting it.

But Shakespeare pretends-to-pretend to assert about our world. So, ultimately, the author seemingly just asserts with respect to what is actual. So, there's no fictionalizing of the relevant parts of the text. So, this does no work for G-C.

Second, one pretends-to-pretend to assert when one acts as if one is fictionalizing while actually asserting. In this case, the only fiction is that one is telling a fiction. For example, I might respond to my officemate's incessant beating me at board games by sarcastically uttering, "Once upon a time, a Bully named Burke ruined John the Bomb's life by never letting John win at games. Burke should lighten up at the gaming table. The End."[36] The sarcastic utterance looks like a fiction. For, first, losing a few games among friends generally doesn't amount to ruining someone's life. Further, bookending the story (such as it is) with the classic fiction-flaggers "Once upon a time" and "The End" makes it clear that the utterance is meant to look like a fiction. But (i) I'm intending to assert both that Burke wins more games than I do and that Burke should give a newbie gamer a fighting chance and (ii) I'm making it clear that I'm asserting—even though it's under the guise of a fiction. Given those two thing, I'm asserting.

And given, as we've seen, the employee is not fictionalizing *how* he fictionalizes (pretend to pretend-to-assert), he must be fictionalizing *that* he fictionalizes (pretend-to-pretend to assert). So, he asserts. So, the employee's work is not a fiction.

Now for the second horn: Let us momentarily allow that the employee's writing is a fiction. Then it is false that the fictional assertions are also actual assertions. For the Lewisian just posits that the fictionally asserted propositions just happen to look like

---

[36] As it turns out, according to Burke's own records, I win 40% of the games in which we play, including those games with other people. He wins only 30%. So it's more likely I'm the bully.

actually true propositions. According to Lewis, recall, that transworld identity for contingent objects is false. So, in fictionalizing that q 'Sherlock lives in London, England' Doyle seems to assert correctly that p 'London is in England'. In the pretense, London has apartments at 221B Baker Street. But the London you might visit does not. So London$_{fictional}$ and London$_{actual}$ are not identical. So $p_{fictional}$ 'London is in England' is not p_{actual} 'London is in England'. The fictional assertion is not the actual one, it just looks so. So, it's false that the novel is a *true* fiction. So, it's not established that *About* is possible.

G-C might object that, be that as it may, the Lewisian cannot appeal to property discrepancies (as with Baker Street) to establish this point. For on this employee-author supplemental supposition, nothing in the primary world of ACP differs from the things in the secondary world of the novel. That difference is exactly what I'm trying to establish, so I'm begging the question against G-C. Given no property discrepancies between the things in ACP's world and the things in the novel's world, the worlds are identical. So, the novel world just is the ACP world. So, *About* is true in ACP, and so *About* is possibly true for us.

I reply that there is a key property discrepancy between the relevant worlds even as G-C sees it. On RP, the novel is a pretend assertion by its employee-author but in the relevant close world an assertion by its narrator ("told as known fact," but see the next footnote). But if it's pretend assertion, it's not an assertion by the author as we saw with both the 'pretend to pretend to assert' discussion above, and the 'pretense precludes intentional action' discussion in the last chapter. By Leibniz's Law, the novel's author is

distinct from its narrator. But if *About* is possibly true, then the novel's author just is the narrator. So *About* is not possible.[37]

Okay, perhaps I'm being unfair. Perhaps the way to characterize what's going on in G-C's employee supplementation to ACP is the following. The employee *qua* author pretends to tell as known fact what the employee *qua* narrator tells as known fact.[38] And since we're considering the single employee-author from different aspects it's okay that there's property discrepancy from these aspects.

That seems to me like a case of when I have two listeners, one English and one German, and I point to a package and say, "Gift." I'm thereby offering it as a present to the Englishman while warning the German that it's poison. But then, really, there are two separate speech acts that happen coincidentally to be co-located in spacetime, one *qua* English speaker, one *qua* German speaker.

But in the employee case—if I'm right in comparing the two—there are two written works coincidentally co-located on the same pages. And there is little reason to

---

[37] Here's a concern in response to that argument as raised by my director. I just treated as interchangeable 'assertion' and Lewis's phrase "told as known fact." But something's being told as known fact doesn't mean it is asserted as such. For "I could plagiarize from reality when writing a novel, and then I tell things as known fact (in one sense of 'as'). Likewise, if someone writing a novel about Napoleon tells that an army of 10,000 is necessarily outnumbered by an army of 100,000, then they are telling something as a known fact." And if the narrator isn't asserting, then there needn't be property-discrepancy between the employee-author and narrator.

In reply, first, I picked up the interchangeability of Lewis's "told as known fact" and 'assertion' from G-C himself: "I have replaced Lewis's 'telling as known fact' by, simply, 'asserting'" (G-C 207). Maybe he was wrong to conflate the two and I was wrong to adopt it in the last chapter. On the view that *asserting* and *telling as known fact* come apart, then we're simply denying the characterization of Lewis's view as pretend assertion in favor of pretend-telling-as-known-fact theory (Lewis himself uses the phrase "told as known fact," not "assertion"). But then, still by G-C's lights, my case stands. For Lewis's view is still one of the author pretending to do what the narrator is in fact doing. So there's still a discrepancy between the employee-author pretending to tell as known fact while in the relevant close world the narrator tells as known fact.

[38] See Alexander R. Pruss, "Nested Modes, 'Qua' and the Incarnation," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 6/2 (2014) for an application of this move with respect to putative problems with the Incarnation.

think that the fictional meaning is the same as the non-fictional meaning. After all, in my example, the English and the German meanings are different.

In short, if the employee plays the part of narrator, he asserts (or simply tells as known fact). If he asserts / tells (so as to be believed), he does not fictionalize (though he may dramatize). Contrariwise, if the employee plays the part of fictionalizer, he pretends to assert / tell. If he pretends to assert / tell (so as to be make-believed), he fictionalizes nonaccidentally-similar-to-though-numerically-distinct-from actually true propositions.

So, the employee's work may be a novel and it may be a warning, but never at the same time in the same way. But this is not enough to establish the possibility of *About*. So *Possibility* fails against RP. So G-C hasn't established the alternate version of (2). So G-C hasn't established his account of fictionalizing.

Since *Actuality* also fails, RP stands vindicated against this particular criticism. So, too, then, stands the Lewisian account of fictionalizing (from G-C … see previous chapter's knockdown).

C. *Against AI*

Finally, let me address (5) though hitherto and in the following main section I grant it for the sake of argument.

Premise (5) as stated might be too generous, for I think G-C's claim is stronger than what I've stated here. Here again is line (5) as I've presented it above:

> If AI is the true theory of fictional truth, then the MB illocutionary theory of fictionalizing is true.

But the way G-C argues, I believe it should be a biconditional:

> AI is the true theory of fictional truth if and only if the MB illocutionary theory of fictionalizing is true.

In that case, here's my argument against MB theory via an argument against AI. (Section V treats (5) as is.)

Recall in §II the claim 'Elizabeth Bennet is affected by gravity'. Austen is not explicit that Ms. Bennet is affected by gravity, or anything gravity-like. I said above that there's enough in common with the world of *Pride & Prejudice* and ours that it's recognizable that Austen intends for us to make-believe that Elizabeth is regularly in contact with the ground. If that's true, then though it is false that *gravity* affects Elizabeth, it's true that there's at least a constant conjunction of human bodies and the ground in *P&P*.

But I don't think that's right. Look again at AI, paying attention to my emphases:

A sentence of the form 'In the fiction *F*, *p*' is true if *and only if* it is part of the communicative intentions of *F*'s creator, *as expressed by recognizable features q* of *F*, to put audiences with intended features *r* in a position to make-believe *p*.

If AI is true, then almost nothing is fictionally true that readers generally take for granted. For as written AI doesn't account for what are otherwise taken as undetermined truths. AI requires recognizably expressed communication of authorial intention for truth and very little is recognizably communicated. That, plus the 'and only if' part of AI, entails an untenable conclusion: otherwise taken as undetermined truths are simply false.

Consider. It's false that Ms. Bennet is affected by gravity. Fine. Maybe Austen didn't have that narrow intention in mind. But it's also false that her feet are planted on the ground in any scene in which there's no entailment from explicit claims that she's on the ground. *And it's also false* that her feet are *not* on the ground in any scene in which there's no entailment from explicit claims that she's not on the ground.

In G-C's defense, one might note that the genre of a novel is recognizable. That Austen's work is not speculative fiction is a clearly expressed feature. And from that feature is entailed that the laws of nature in the story are the same as those of the actual world. That, together with facts in the story, may well entail that her feet are planted on the ground.

Granted. However, it seems that 'entailment from explicit claims' *still* is not the right way to establish various truths. For make-belief seemingly isn't closed under entailment. Belief isn't, so we've good reason to think make-belief is not, either. If it were, many stories—e.g. most that involve time travel—would be much harder to enjoy for many more people than they currently are. Suspending *dis*belief (with respect to how the fictional world works compared to the actual world) is one thing. Suspending *make*-belief (with respect to how the fictional world works internally) is quite another.[39] Further, involving a logical contradiction would, by explosion, call on the reader to make-believe *every* proposition. That's quite the demand!

Given, plausibly, that make-belief isn't closed under entailment, it seems that the only true claims on AI are those explicitly stated. And that seems like the wrong result for an account of fictional truth. Maybe it is the right result. But without an independent argument for, e.g., Sherlock not having a liver unless we're told he does, I take this as strong evidence against AI. And if (5) should be a biconditional, then this is strong evidence against illocutionary fictionalizing, too.

---

[39] See Brian Weatherson, "Morality, Fiction, and Possibility," *Philosophers' Imprint* 4/3 (2004) or Tamar Gendler, *Intuition, Imagination, and Philosophical Methodology* (OUP, 2010) for details on problems of imaginative resistance. See Rosenbaum, "Poetic License," for a handy solution to those problems.

But perhaps make-belief is closed under some stronger relation than mere entailment, something like relevant entailment or obvious entailment or the like?

A quick survey of the literature shows that the claim that belief is closed under some stronger relation like relevant or obvious entailment is controversial at best.[40] For example, a case might be made that just because one believes the proposition 'That cup is red' it doesn't follow that she believes the proposition 'Something is red' … at least not without taking the time to consciously assess the more general proposition (maybe adding 'in light of her doxastic attitude towards the first'). And, as with closure under entailment, I'm inclined to think that if belief isn't closed under relevant or obvious entailment then neither is make-belief.

But suppose make-belief is so closed. It seems to me that in that case G-C will get more fictional truths than just those explicitly stated. But I imagine he'll still lose at least some that we would otherwise take for granted. For example, that Sherlock Holmes knows that England is a monarchy is not *entailed* by anything that Doyle says. It's a reasonable inference from some things Doyle says (like that episode where Holmes shoots "VR" into the wall), but it is not entailed—and hence neither relevantly nor obviously entailed—by what is said. Similarly, that Holmes is a man of above average intelligence is not entailed by any of the descriptions of Holmes that I can remember. (At most what is entailed is that Watson thinks highly of Holmes' intelligence.) After all, it is

---

[40] See Gilbert Harman, "Field on the Normative Role of Logic," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 109/1 (2009), Bart Streumer, "Reasons and Entailment," *Erkenntnis* 66/3 (2007), Jens Christian Bjerring and Wolfgang Schwarz, "Granularity Problems," *Philosophical Quarterly* 67/266 (2017), Brian Ball and Michael Blome-Tillmann, "Counter Closure and Knowledge despite Falsehood," *Philosophical Quarterly* 64/257 (2014), and Rik Peels, *Responsible Belief: A Theory in Ethics and Epistemology* (OUP, 2016) for some arguments on either side of the controversy.

logically consistent with everything in the stories that Holmes just got insanely lucky in his cases. But we know that's not so!

G-C does include an alternate, possible-worlds version of AI that is meant to let "reasonable audiences" take for granted generally accepted beliefs, such as in gravity.[41] I think this solution might work, given Gricean relevance and that this is a neo-Gricean speech-act account. But I think it leans too heavily on authors' ultimate—rather than communicative—intent, which was the very problem with authorial-intentional accounts G-C's AI was meant to solve.

And in any case, here's a compelling argument against authorial-intentional accounts of truth in fiction generally that I'll raise with the following ubiquitous sort of case. No champion of these accounts—G-C or the philosophers I mention in the Introduction of this dissertation—has addressed this concern directly, and so far as I can tell none of them have the resources to soundly refute it.

Here's a typifying case: Detective stories often involve misdirection. The author intends for readers to think that lone-agent Suspect A is the singular culprit when in fact it's lone-agent Suspect B (or even lone-agent Nonsuspect N).

The problem is that, if what's true in the fiction is whatever the author can get the reader to make-believe, then it seems that both A and B are inconsistently the singular culprit.

G-C and co. might appeal to an all-things-considered (ATC) sort of response. Yes, the author wants the reader to *temporarily* make-believe that A is the singular

---

[41] G-C, "Fiction-Making," 211f.

culprit. But by the end of the fiction the reader is meant to abandon that make-belief for the ultimately intended make-belief that B is the singular culprit.

However, two thoughts spring to my mind that together seem to me to undermine this response.

First, if successful make-belief determines what's true in the fiction, then it seems it is true that A is the singular culprit *and then later* it is no longer true that A is the culprit but B is. That makes for a very strange world, if not an impossible one (I imagine some hyperspace-hypertime shifting might make it possible; I'll leave that for my committee to decide[42]). So it seems like the make-belief ATC response will be hard—again, if not impossible—to justify.

Further, suppose that by the end of the fiction the reader did initially but no longer make-believes that A is the singular culprit but that B is, *and* that it's true that A was never the culprit and B always was. Well, then it seems like there's something else justifying the ATC response than the audience's make-belief. For the all-things-considered response is appealing to something other than what audiences make-believe, something like facts about the fictional world. Authorial intention points readers to a certain world, sure, but then it's the world that determines what's true, not audiences' successful make-belief.

Here are two responses to these thoughts of mine that my director both raised and then solved. First, one might object on G-C's behalf that we might just stipulate that in cases of conflicts of make-belief, the later one always wins. That is, fictional truth is the last thing you were to make-believe.

---

[42] Hud Hudson, *The Fall and Hypertime* (OUP, 2014).

However, as Pruss notes, this runs into problems with narrators who progressively become less reliable because, say, they are slowly going mad. I also think that cases of multiple unreliable narrators create similar problems when, e.g., there's no definitive communicated intention to just make-believe the claims of the later narrator(s) over and above those of the original narrator. (I'm thinking in particular of Iris Murdoch's *The Black Prince* as a shining example.)

Back to Pruss's responses. Second, one might object on G-C's behalf that we might just stipulate that majority rules, so to speak. That is, whatever it is the majority of readers make-believe about the story is what's true of the story. Perhaps, at least in some cases, this can resolve some of the unreliable narrator issues just mentioned.

However, as Pruss self-rebuts, "We could imagine a really, really clever detective fiction where at the end the great detective finds the killer, it seems like everything falls into place, the detective is lauded, the alleged killer confesses and goes to jail. But a very careful reader will see, based on evidence earlier in the text, that in fact the detective did it. If all this evidence were pointed out, it would become obvious that the detective did it. The writer intends one in a thousand readers to get this. But to most it'll just be a straight detective story with the detective being right. I can't think of any such story, but it could exist."

In sum, neither the-last-thing make-believed nor majority make-belief defines truth.

In any case, and just in case (5) as stated is correct (i.e. not as a biconditional), let's just grant that AI is true. In the next section I show that (5) is false by attacking MB theory of fiction directly.

V.   *Falsify G-C's View*

That's it for undermining the arguments for the view. Now I go on the offensive against G-C's account.

First argument: My intuition is that if one believes that *p*, one does not make-believe that *p* (at the same time given the same sense and referent(s)). I believe that I have a hand and so I don't make-believe that I have a hand. However, I might make-believe that my hand has a property I don't believe it to have, e.g. *being on fire*.

If that intuition is correct, then the employee in G-C's supplement to ACP intends something impossible in intending that his employer both believes and make-believes the plot against his life. For illocutionary fictionalizing requires that the author intend for the audience to make-believe. So, if the employee-author intends that his employer believe the plot, the employee does not fictionalize, and vice versa.

So, even if AI is right, the employee's work is not a fiction if he wants to be believed. But that's contrary to the direct facts of ACP: the Reader reads a novel, i.e. a work of fiction. So, not only is *About* not generated, but G-C's account (when conjoined with his employee supplementation) can't even generate ACP's explicit truths.

What's more, if the intuition that one cannot make-believe what one believes is correct, I don't even need the weird ACP story to make my point. All I need is a case—much more common—where a novel tells something that is in fact known by all to be true, such as that humans are bipeds or that $2 + 2 = 4$.

Second argument: Fictionalizing as illocutionary act requires an intent for the audience to make-believe the relevant statements. But this fails in cases where a fiction is written without the intention—let alone the expectation—of having an audience. Given such cases are possible, plausible, and—let's face it—actual, G-C's account fails here.

One might respond[43] that no fictionalizing is done absent some audience member make-believing the content, namely the fictionalizer herself. Given that, there are no fictions without an intended audience. So, my objection fails.

I reply with two general points. Point one. Expecting or foreseeing that there is an audience member of at least one—unavoidable though she may be—does not entail that one intends that one is one's own audience member. I expect that no email goes unread by the NSA (or its bots), but that doesn't mean that I intend that the NSA read all my emails. I likewise expect God to be privy to all my thoughts, but there are some that I in fact (hopelessly) intend God not play audience to. And that's not to mention the thinking I'm doing for which God is an audience even in those cases I'm not occurrently considering God as audience. And those who don't believe that God is audience to their thoughts—e.g. because they believe that God doesn't exist—will still have an unintended yet unavoidable audience. Similarly, though no thought of mine passes without me playing audience doesn't entail that I intend to be an audience to my thoughts. At least, not always. There seems a lack of such intention when daydreaming, e.g., or improvising on the guitar. Rather, I simply intend to think and (fortunately) am present to my thoughts. It is plausible that at least some cases of mental fictionalizing lack the authorial intention of being an audience to that fictionalizing.

But perhaps one must *always intend* to be an audience to her own mental fictionalizing.[44] Perhaps. But nailing down the particulars of intention is beyond the scope of this dissertation, so I'll leave this point here and move to the next general point.

---

[43] As Todd Buras did.

[44] A stance another reviewer took in light of concerns about double effect.

Point two. As I noted above, G-C doesn't tell us what he means by 'make-believe' or 'imagine' except to assume that they are interchangeable.[45] Without his own explication or more in the way of indirect unpacking of his understanding, I have been working with so-called naïve views of these terms. And on naïve views, make-belief and imagining come apart despite G-C's assumption to the contrary. Some things I can imagine without make-believing. For example, I imagine the life of George Washington as I read his biography and believe the events I imagine occurred. Further, some things can be make-believed without being imagined. I make-believe that a two-inch tall version of myself is the NBA all-star in a possible world populated by otherwise actual-world-sized humans. I don't know how to imagine the physics of this, but I can make-believe it. Or I can make-believe that $2 + 2 = 5$ or that a room is truly empty (devoid even of fields).[46] But I can't imagine these things. So, even if a fictionalizer is always an audience to her mental fictionalizing (intended or not), she doesn't necessarily make-believe her fiction. Possibly, plausibly, and perhaps actually there's some fiction the author of which lacks the intention that some audience make-believe its constituent sentences.

My third argument follows on that last point. Suppose I compose a narrative of false utterances that I intend for audiences to imagine rather than make-believe, or compose one utterly—insofar as is possible—of propositions that can at best (given the context) be imagined rather than make-believed. For example, consider the following narrative about an actual person in a nonactual scenario: the actual person—a politician—

---

[45] See footnote 2 of this chapter.

[46] See Rosenbaum, "Poetic License," for ways readers might deal with potential cases of imaginative resistance to these putatively impossible scenarios.

is strongly hated by a certain audience—the opposing political party. And the narrative in question is written for this audience. In the nonactual scenario of this narrative, the politician is presented as having all the good-making features those who hate him think he doesn't and in fact could never have (honesty, generosity, intelligence, e.g.). The audience is such that they can imagine the politician having these features, but they can't even get themselves to make-believe it.

On MB this narrative doesn't count as fiction, and that seems like the wrong result.

The fourth argument appeals to G-C's illocutionary account requiring a complex of intentions. Is it the case that, say, a five-year-old child intends all the things G-C's view requires when she tells what is clearly a fiction?[47] Definitely not under G-C's descriptions, and highly likely there's at least one facet missing. This complex of intentions seems to make creating fictions relatively unattainable for some of the most prolific fictionalizers. Again, that seems like the wrong result.

Granted, this objection is an instance of a general objection raised against Gricean reflective-intentional accounts of speech acts. And I'm not looking to take on the whole Gricean project in this dissertation. But maybe G-C can make a move other Griceans can't given his distinction between ultimate and communicative intentions. Communicative intentions aren't actually intentions. They're what look like the speaker's intentions for audience make-belief given what she communicated. So, if the relevant intentions of MB aren't actually intentions, then there's no relevant complex of intentions that children might fail to hold. So that last problem disappears.

---

[47] Thanks to Alex Pruss for this more succinct example than I had originally in mind.

But then I wonder what makes MB a type of Gricean account if there are no actual intentions to them? Maybe G-C is simply mistaken in calling his a Gricean account. An unfortunate lapse on his part, but no mark against the theory itself.

Suppose so. But then how does MB work? '*U*'s utterance *s* is fictive if and only if … audiences make-believe *s*'s content at least in part because it looks like *U* intends [without ever needing to intend] that audiences so make-believe'? Obviously that's a handwavy way to fill out the account. But I think it gets at the heart of what MB amounts to on this picture, which—I have to say—isn't much. On this reading, it looks to me like an utterance's being fictive is entirely in the hands of the audience, speaker intentions be damned. That's a very strange result. Typically it's the agent who determines what type of actions she's intending.

And, though not absurd, this next case goes along with the previous set and seems to further tell against G-C's illocutionary account.

Dear reader, please make-believe that you have a sandwich on your head.

Whether or not you played along, I just created a fiction by G-C's lights. I offered a sentence for you to make-believe, namely 'you have a sandwich on your head'. I intended for you to make-believe it. I take it that my intention that you make-believe it was communicated to you in a way that you recognized. I also take it that, if you played along, you played along in part because of my communicated intention that you make-believe the sentence. Though I might not know who you are or when you read this, I created a fiction starring you, dear reader, with a sandwich on your head. That's a little strange, I think. But next is where things fall apart.

Finally, unintuitively, that request ('make-believe that a sandwich is on your head') is *itself* fictive. By G-C's lights, where *q* is 'requestory force' and *r* 'being in the audience', my entire utterance *is* fictive. But it doesn't seem that that request really is fictive. Only—at best—should the nested sentence '[reader] has a sandwich on [reader's] head' be. This seems to be a direct counterexample to the MB account of fictionalizing.

VI. *Conclusion*

Together with the previous chapter I've shown that the two most popular and viable accounts of fictionalizing in the literature are rife with problems. Ultimately in this dissertation I will defend an alternative account that, among other things, avoids these problems. In anticipation of that defense, however, I will first analyze the speech act of reporting in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Reporting on Reporting[1]

I. *Introduction*

Almost nothing has been written on the speech act of reporting as such. Nicholas

Rescher (2018) outlines some of the hows and whys of reports and reporting, but focuses

on governmental intelligence reports. While insightful, his concern is mainly

epistemological: determining the reliability of sources, principles to guide handling cases

of conflicting reports, etc. My focus is reporting generally.

Based on passing comments in articles and on my conversations with both

philosophers and nonphilosophers, it seems a popular assumption that reports are (or are

a species of) assertions. For both reports and assertions present propositional content as

descriptions of how things are or seem to be, suggesting these acts are intimately

associated. That reports seem to have an added eyewitness or other sort of testimonial

condition suggests that maybe reports are a species of assertion. In developing my

account of reporting, however, I will show that reporting is distinct from asserting,

despite the fact that in practice the two types of speech acts often overlap in the same

utterance.

So, on top of filling a lacuna in the literature, I will also correct a widespread

categorization error. This might require a reassessment of everything considered about

assertions to date, but that is left for future research. Further, disentangling reports from

---

[1] Alternate title: "Reporters Are Going to Have a Field Day With This! On the Speech Act of
Reporting"

assertions can help us figure out how reporting can go wrong, as with so-called fake news. Insight here could be useful for political science and political philosophy, as well as journalism, activism, and other practices wrought with misinformation.

Finally, this chapter serves as a prelude to the account of fictionalizing I will develop in the next chapter.

In §II I will describe the reporting speech act as such. Section III will argue that reporting is distinct from asserting. Finally, in §IV I will describe both specialty reports as well as various ways reporting can go wrong.

II.   *Reporting, Generally*

I start in the first subsection below with some paradigmatic cases of reporting to see what seems to be entailed by (or constantly conjoined with) the speech act of reporting. Next I give a formalized account of reporting generally, with particular emphasis on the key elements of reporting that distinguish it from assertion.

A. *Informal First Pass*

Here are some paradigmatic cases of reporting. A child reads a story for school and recounts its events to her teacher on paper (or I guess maybe via video conferencing these days). A news anchor reads off the teleprompter some facts or narrative as compiled by her news team to viewers at home (assuming anyone's watching). A military scout writes up a summary of the results of her reconnaissance mission for her superior.

There are clearly differences in the relevant reported-on objects, content of the reports, thoroughness of research, and appropriate expressions of the content for these three example reports, not to mention their broader social importance. The student writes and quietly submits an essay on some fictional goings-on in a book after one or two read-

throughs for an audience that is already familiar with the text, and the assignment is worth only 10% of her English course grade for the year. The anchor reads text researched and compiled by others about national and local goings-on from a teleprompter in front of a camera the import of which will vary for each person constituting the viewership. The soldier includes maps and diagrams in her written summary of the military goings-on of an enemy base the conquering of which will be key to turning the tide in the relevant war. Presently, let's bracket features of these cases that make each a special instance of reporting—aka *specialty reports*—to focus on what they have in common. In doing so I hope to draw out features of reporting generally. I'll come back to specialty reports below.

I would have thought that it goes without saying that reporting is propositional. However, this claim is more controversial than I first thought. In the next chapter I will reproduce and then respond to my director's suspicion against this claim.

In each paradigmatic case, one person or entity conveys some information to an audience of some sort. Elementary students report on books' characters and events to their teachers, Channel 4 Nightly News anchors report on the day's events to anyone tuned into their station, soldiers report directly to some superior the goings-on of the enemy's forces and encampment layout.

However, the information is conveyed differently than, e.g., when writing logic problems on a whiteboard for students to practice on. In the logic-practice case the professor does not typically intend that her students take any expressed propositions seriously, let alone take them as true. Some sentences presented for logic practice might even be meaningless, e.g. "All snicker-snacks are slithy toves."

So for a speech act to count as a report there needs to be some information conveyed as part of its illocution, unlike, e.g., an exclamatory speech act ("Huzzah!") or an institutionalizing ("I now pronounce you husband and wife," which only as a perlocution conveys the information that the two people addressed are now married).

What's more, in each paradigmatic case, the speaker not only conveys, but even endorses the truth of the propositions that constitute the report. The book-report student endorses as true the corresponding proposition when she states—with an implicit 'According to fiction *F*' operator—"One character found the long-lost gem but kept it a secret from the other party members." The news anchor assures her viewers, "The escaped animals were returned to the zoo unharmed." The scout confirms, "There are at least two tanks in the enemy's camp." So reporting is like asserting in that they are both forms of endorsing some proposition(s).

However, these examples look like clear cases of assertion, which suggests that reporting just is—or at least is a species of—asserting. Below I will challenge this suggestion. Whatever comes of that, a lesson we can draw at this point is that reports are *presented as* reports. The scout performs her utterance of "There are at least two tanks in the enemy's camp" in a way that makes it clear that it is a report, that she endorses its content. The logic-problem professor, on the other hand, utters "All snicker-snacks are slithy toves" in a way that makes it clear that it is not a report, that she does not endorse its content (she might even chuckle as she says it, conveying that she knows that it's nonsense). The performative element in cases of reporting (e.g. the scout's presentation of her report *as* a report) is reporting's sincerity condition. More on this condition shortly.

In some cases, the reporter is directly acquainted with the relevant objects about which her report is made. The scout spied the enemy encampment with her own eyes. In some cases, the reporter is not directly acquainted with the relevant objects about which her report is made. The scout spied the tanks located in the enemy encampment through binoculars. But it was the scout's eyes processing the light that bounced directly off the tanks transmitted via the binocular's lenses, so there's a clear causal connection between the scout and the tanks about which she reports. Even more remotely, the scout might have sneaked into the base and gotten the number of the base's tanks from an inventory report—made by an enemy grunt—lying on an officer's desk. Similarly, the news anchor did not see or engage with any of the zoo's animals or assess for herself the animals' wellbeing. But the news anchor's investigative team that wrote up the information conveyed on the anchor's teleprompter spoke both with the zookeeper (who herself confirmed that all animals were accounted for) and with the zoo's vet (who herself inspected and confirmed the animals' wellbeing). The student read the assigned book and imagined the various characters and events, or read an online summary written by someone who read the assigned book and imagined the various characters and events. Now, I hesitate to describe the book-report case as the reporter being *causally* connected to the fictional entities given that they may be abstract objects. It's not clear that we can be causally connected to *abstracta*, but it's clear that the student bears some relevant connection to the fictional entities (whatever sort of object they turn out to be). In all these cases, then, there is some chain between the objects about which the report is made

and the reporter herself. So, for these focal cases at least, sincere reporting seems to require some sort of connectedness between reporter and the reported.[2]

Better: reporting seems to require that the reporter *believe* that there is some sort of connectedness between her and the reported. I'll justify this subtlety in the Segunda example below. And then I'll qualify it.

Before elaborating on connectedness, however, let me make this note about what's being reported on. In some cases reports are about things, e.g. fictional characters, escaped animals, tanks. In other cases, reports are about a lack of things, i.e. absences, e.g. "There were no crimes in Portland last night"[3] or "It is false that unicorns exist." Appropriate connection to concrete objects presumably is at least causal. There's some difficulty about how to understand being connected to non-concrete objects and it's not clear that one can be connected to absences. So, to keep matters simple and without implying ontological commitment to them, let us just say that reports are on or about situations. So, local news reports on the animals-escaping-the-zoo situation, book reports are reports on fictional situations as described in the text, and "It is false that unicorns exist" is (in the right context) a report on the actual-world situation with respect to unicorns.

The (supposed) connectedness between reporter and the reported-on seems to add evidentiary weight to a report that mere assertions lack. Stating, implying, or implicating that one is reporting seems to further implicate that she has some resources to back up her

---

[2] For what it's worth—admittedly not much in analytic philosophy—the etymology of *report* is from the Latin *reportare* 'bring back', from *re-* 'back' + *portare* 'carry', which clearly suggests some connection between the reporter and that which she carries back with her.

[3] Maybe I should hold off on fictional-report examples for the moment? If so, then use this example case: "There were no crimes in Singapore last night."

claim, that some work was done prior to the claiming to investigate, confirm, or otherwise justify that claiming. The reporter in short tacitly or explicitly attests to a relevant connection between her, her utterance, and the situation about which she reports. (I'll justify the connectedness of the utterance itself below.) Compare: It's one thing for the scout to state, "The enemy has tanks at its disposal, statistically speaking" and another to state, "I have in some way confirmed (in this case, with my own eyes) that the enemy has two tanks at its disposal." Reporting seems to carry with it that implicit "I have in some way confirmed ['have evidence for'] p" in a way that mere asserting does not. This implicit evidentiary weight that reports carry seems to be at least partially constitutive of the above-noted sincerity condition.

To be clear, there need not in fact be a relevant connection between the reporter and the reported-on situation. That is, reports are not factive. For, first, the reporter can be mistaken about what she reports on, as in the case where little 7-year-old Obscura mistakenly reports that there's a monster near the foot of her bed when in fact all she sees are clothes piled on a chair. Obscura is *sincere* for there is a relevant—in this case traceable—connection between her and *something* near the foot of her bed, but there is no connection between Obscura and *a monster* for there is no monster. She misreported on what that something is.

Second, the reporter can perform a second-hand report, confident (and so sincere) in a connection between her and the reported-on objects, but fail to report factively in that there are no reported-on objects whatsoever. Consider the case of Segunda, a lazy middle-manager who leans on her reliable underlings to compile market data for her reports to upper management. Only this time an underling totally fabricated the market

94

data without Segunda's knowledge (sabotage!). Segunda is sincere in her reporting—thinking that there's a connection between her report and the market data, mediated by her underling—only this is not the actual market data and the connection dead-ends with her underling.

What about the underling's utterance in the last example? I take it that her utterance is a pretend report, i.e. not actually a report but presented as such. In more detail: the underling writes a document. That document is not a yet report. Segunda takes that document and hands it to upper management, without any changes. That document—which previously was just a pretend report—now becomes a real but inaccurate report by Segunda. Another name for pretend reports is *fake news*, though fake news encompasses more than just pretend reports as I'll discuss in the final main section of this chapter.

There's another, Gettier-esque concern here. Consider again the scout who spies tanks at the enemy encampment. We saw above that it's one thing for the scout to state "The enemy has tanks at its disposal, statistically speaking" and another to state "I have in some way confirmed (in this case, with my own eyes) that the enemy has two tanks at its disposal." The first is an assertion of the likelihood of there being some tanks, the second is a report on particular tanks. The difference-maker, we saw, is the relevant connection between the reporter and the particular tanks in the latter case. There is no relevant connection between the reporter and the historical records that make up the likelihood of there being some tanks in the former case (though there is some connection, which I address in the paragraph after the next).

But suppose the scout has run the numbers, and has come to the conclusion that the reliability of her eyes gives only 99% confidence that there are tanks at the base,

while the statistics gives 99.9% confidence that there are tanks. And so the scout speaks on the basis of the statistics, which are so much more convincing than her own eyes. In this case her utterance would not be a report on the tanks sitting before her and to which she might trace a causal connection, but a report on some statistical information, never mind these very tanks. It looks like, despite the traceable connection between the reporter and the tanks at the base, she fails to report on the tanks at the base.

One might respond by noting that there is a roundabout connection in the statistical-likelihood case. For suppose the reporter thinks statistically as follows: "Someone with such warmongering rhetoric is likely to have tanks." And here is a possible traceable connection: Suppose that the reporter has witnessed the warmongering rhetoric of the enemy. The warmongering rhetoric is caused by a warlike mindset. A warlike mindset causes the production of tanks. There is thus a traceable connection between the reporter and the reported-on objects, although admittedly the causal arrows do not all run in the same direction. However, as the abstract-entity case shows, we should not insist on causal arrows at all.

I reply that this is not a case of reporting for the same reason that someone predicting the weather is not reporting on the weather but rather on her prediction. Yes, there is a connection between the reporter, the report, and the reported-on objects, just not the right sort. More work—which I begin below—needs to be done to detail what exactly constitutes the right sort of connection. But one thing is clear, the very object(s) must serve as the basis of the report in the way that future weather patterns or concurrent but as-yet unobserved tanks do not.

To really pump the intuition on the problem, take it a step further. Suppose despite *seeing* the tanks, the scout decides rather to BS her recon write-up and just so happens to write that there are tanks at the base. There are real tanks, and the scout is really connected to them, but does not utter about tanks on the basis of actual tanks. She engages in BSing. It seems pretty clear that the write-up in this case is not a report despite the appropriate connection between speaker and object.

The lesson here, then, is twofold. First, not just any connection between reporter and reported-on will suffice. Second—to avoid the Gettier-esque scenarios—it's not just the subject who is appropriately connected to the matters being reported on, but the speech act is also appropriately connected. That is, to count as a report, the utterance must be made on the basis of the reported-on situation to which the utterer takes herself to be connected.

We can see that there needn't in fact be an audience for a report to count as successful given the possibility that no one tuned into the nightly news.[4]

In some cases, the audience of the report already knows the contents of the report, as with the teacher and the student book reporter. In many cases at least some nightly-news audience members will already be privy to the news report, and some won't be. More likely than not, the commanding officer(s) will not know the details of a soldier's recon report (hence the order to do reconnaissance). In short, we see there are cases

_____

[4] In future work I plan to take this challenge further and argue against the seeming implication that the reporter even *intend* that the relevant information be conveyed to audiences distinct from the reporter herself. Unfortunately, this argument is beyond the scope of this present work for the following reasons. First, it requires looking at the details of various accounts of assertion to show that *they*—and not reports— have an audience requirement. Second, this would also require I defend the error theory that what heretofore philosophers (e.g. David Owens, "Testimony and Assertion," *Philosophical Studies* 130 (2006)) have taken as cases of asserting in private are actually cases of reporting to oneself.

across the spectrum of new-to-old information for the hearers of those reports. So the information conveyed in a report needn't be news to the recipient for the speech act to count as a report; the reporter needn't intend to get the hearer to believe the content of her report.

In sum, it looks like reporting generally is a form of endorsement[5]—maybe, maybe-not a species of assertion. Paradigmatic cases of reporting involve some connection between the reporter, her report, and the situation about which she reports. That sometimes-causal connection seems to add some evidentiary force to the report. In some cases, it's enough that the reporter take there to be a connection between her and the reported-on; lacking a real connection might make for a bad report, but it remains a report, nonetheless. Relatedly, reports are not factive.

Further, reports convey at least two types of information. First, paradigmatic cases of reports at least convey *that* they are reports. Second, reports convey the propositional content expressed by the utterance, though the reporter needn't intend that the hearer come to believe that information on the basis of the report given that the hearer might already believe the content of the report or that there is not even an audience present.

B. Formal Second Pass

Here is a formalization of the foregoing, at-least necessary conditions of at-least paradigmatic cases of reporting:

> Speaker S reports proposition p via means M only if (i) S utters M, (ii) M expresses p, (iii) S utters M to express p, (iv) S is disposed to believe that S is appropriately connected to p's situation T, (v) S is disposed to believe that uttering

---

[5] See Alexander R. Pruss, "Lies and Dishonest Endorsement," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 84 (2010) for more on endorsement.

M is appropriately connected to *T*, (vi) *S* conveys that (iv) and (v), and (vii) *S* conveys that *p* is true in *T*.

I use 'utters', 'expresses', and 'to express' in the usual ways for speech-act accounts. The 'means of expression' *M* is also used in the typical ways: one can speak *M*, or write, sign, or draw *M*, etc. *M*—the utterance itself, the product of reporting—is the report. The phrasing 'reports on' is used to refer to object(s) or event(s) about which the speaker reports. For example, when a newscaster reports *that* a local official visited sick children she reports *on* a local official, some sick children, or the official-visiting-children event (bracketing such issues as 'are there events,' etc.).

Some more terminology: Agents that report are reporters. Utterances and propositions that can be reported are reportables, relative to a given reporter and at a particular time. The 'can' here includes at least physical ability. For example, I can report on the color of shoes I am wearing for I can physically see them. But I cannot report on the shoe color of the person(s) who in precisely 500 years and 5 seconds will most closely occupy the space relative to the center of this planet that I currently occupy for— as of the time of typing out this sentence—I am physically unconnected to and so incapable of determining their shoe color(s). So, as of the time of typing out this new sentence, my shoe color is reportable by me, i.e. is a reportable; but the future shoe color(s) are not reportables to me.

Conditions (i) and (ii) make this an account of speech. Condition (iii) is what makes it an account of an act (as opposed to simply a behavior; otherwise, all else being satisfied, one can accidentally and unknowingly report things in Morse code when drumming her fingers). If *S* fails to utter *M* or *M* fails to express *p*, then the report fails

either by omitting the utterance altogether or by garbling the message, as it were, respectively.

Conditions (iv) – (vi) are the key positive features (i.e. inclusions) that distinguish reports from other forms of endorsement.

Condition (iv) is the first key inclusion that distinguishes reporting from other forms of endorsement, specifically assertion speech acts. I will address its components—'disposed to believe,' 'appropriately connected,' and 'p's situation T'—piecemeal.

First, by 'p's situation T' I mean—again, without implying any ontological commitment to situations—whatever it is that p is about. For starters, p might be about some entities, so T includes those things that feature in p as linguistic objects—p's referent(s) and predicate(s)—whatever their putative ontological statuses are.

For example, it might be that there are no such things as cars or properties. But the English words *car* and *red* in the English version of the proposition 'My car is red' refer to or are linguistic shorthand for something or some things (below I'll address the ostrich nominalist's response that *red* fails to refer to anything). Perhaps those somethings are a car and a universal, perhaps they are an accidental unity of metal and glass substances and appearing redly, perhaps they are some simples arranged carwise and a trope, etc. Whatever these somethings are, they are p's objects. My *neighbor's* car (or simples arranged carwise) and its color are not p's objects in this case, and neither are the Eiffel Tower or the War of 1812.

The *putative* regards not just the general ontological status of whatever it is the linguistic term quantifies over, but also even the existence of the very thing. Obscura above reported on the monster at the foot of her bed though there was no monster.

Similarly, I might report on "the oasis" I'm crawling towards while in the desert though "the oasis" in question is really just a mirage or a straight-up hallucination.

One might worry about the inability to report on fictional, nonactual, or nonexistent objects given the appropriate-connection condition. As reporting on / as fiction is the subject of the next chapter, I will ask the reader to bracket the fictional or nonactual portion of this worry for the moment. However, to continue discussion on p's situation, p might be about the absence of something(s), i.e. T might specifically exclude something(s) or other, or "refer" to something(s) nonexistent. For example, consider 'There were no crimes in Portland last night.' The proposition is about something—a place called *Portland*—and about the absence of something—crimes. Similarly, 'My car is red'—for the ostrich nominalist—fails to refer to anything with the term *red*. In both these types of cases there is a corresponding situation T that p is about (again, without committing ontologically to situations). So long as the speaker (and her utterance) are relevantly connected to T—whatever the details of that connection are, and so long as the other conditions are satisfied—S reports that p.

As a quick refresher, the scout in the above example (when stating, "The enemy has tanks at its disposal, statistically speaking") might genuinely assert that the enemy encampment has tanks—she believes it's so based on her background knowledge of the enemy, its forces, and its methods, and she wants her commanding officer to believe it, too. However, it doesn't count as a report unless she has some reason to think that both she *and* her uttering what she utters trace back directly to the very tanks she wants her commanding officer to know about—she needs to verify the tanks' existence, e.g., with her own eyes, secure an inventory printout from the enemy's database, or rely on a

subordinate's report that she has reason to think traces back to the very tanks. In short, there needs to be some sort of connection—or believed connection—between *S* and the situation of *S*'s report (in this case of concrete matters of existing objects, a causal connection in particular).

Next, what counts as an appropriate connection between *S* and *p*'s situation when that situation involves objects depends on which objects are in question. By way of illustration, consider these cases:

1. *Underage:* Undergraduate *U* truly asserted to undercover journalists, "I am only 19 but drank at a party on the local university campus last night."
2. *News*: *N* recites the local news on TV from information compiled by the network's investigative team that spoke with *U* earlier that day. Among *N*'s recitations is the case of underage drinking at the university campus last night.
3. *Confident*: *C* knows the statistics on underage drinking at universities. On this basis alone *C* states confidently and truly, "There was underage drinking on the local campus last night."

Assume throughout the following that *U* was the sole underage drinker last night.

U was a participant of the underage-drinking event that the town is abuzz about. As such, *U* is both an object of the relevant proposition uttered to the undercover journalists (the "I") and the cause of another of *p*'s objects (the underage-drinking event). In both cases, *U* is appropriately connected to *p*'s objects. So, *U*'s utterance about underage drinking is a report on the event.

While *N* was not at the party and did not hear about the party directly from anyone from the party, *N*'s utterance about underage drinking is a report. For the causal chain to *N*—from *U*, through the investigative team—is an appropriate connection for concrete matters like cases of underage drinking on university campuses.

C's utterance in *Confident* might count as an <u>assertion</u> about the drinking events of the relevant night, as a <u>report</u> of *C*'s own doxastic attitudes towards those types of

events, and perhaps even as a roundabout <u>report</u> on the base rate for such events. But it's *not* a report on the particular case of underage drinking that makes *C*'s statement true. For *C* is not connected to any particular case of the previous night's underage-drinking events nor is *C*'s utterance. Recall that *C* made her statement solely on the basis of the statistics for underage drinking at universities. So *C* is only connected to the historical events contributing to the prior probability that underage drinking occurred "on the local campus last night." Had *C* attended or witnessed the party, or heard *N*'s or *U*'s report on it, or in some other way been aware of or connected to the particular party, then *C* would have also been appropriately connected to *p*'s objects. Adding that *C*'s utterance was made on the basis of the particular party (to avoid the previously noted Gettier-esque concerns) thereby makes *C*'s utterance a report about last night's underage-drinking party.

Consider this flipside case of *Confident*, an utterance regarding future events:

4. *Weather*: After *N*'s recitation of the local news, co-anchor *W* recites the week's weather forecast as compiled by the station's meteorology team.

W is appropriately connected to some of the relevant propositions' objects, namely the probabilities determined by and received from *W*'s meteorological team. So, first, *W* presumably <u>asserts</u> her predictions about future weather patterns. Further, *W* <u>reports</u> on the probabilities of certain weather patterns obtaining, being appropriately connected to the current weather patterns and historical data about weather-pattern behavior. But, third, *W* <u>fails to report</u> on the future weather patterns *per se*, for, if they exist at all, it's only at some time later than *W*'s utterances and so not in a way *W* is appropriately connected by. (In the final section of this chapter I elaborate on the ways, hows, and whens of reporting going wrong.)

Some lessons to draw on 'appropriate connectedness,' then, include the following.

First, connecting to *p*'s objects that are (putatively) concrete—like people, mid-sized objects (or whatever the linguistic shorthand refers to that seems to imply that there are mid-sized objects), events—requires something like causal connection or direct or mediated acquaintance. Similarly for mental objects: *C* reports on *C*'s own belief about underage drinking the night before, and now that I am mediately acquainted with *C*'s mental state, I can report that *C* holds the belief.

Second, connecting to *p*'s objects that are (putatively) abstract—like concepts or numbers—won't be a direct, causal connection.[1] But there'll be a causal connection somewhere given we have to acquire, discover, or invent the concept(s) somehow. For example, *W*'s predictions about the weather are, strictly, propositions about numbers: the likelihood of seeing certain patterns. But the numbers trace back to the observed instances of weather pattern *x* following weather pattern *y* divided by the number of observed instances of any weather pattern following weather pattern *y*.

However, there is an issue in this neighborhood. Now, it might not be the case that laws of nature are reportable. They might simply be theorized and then confirmed experimentally. But suppose that such laws are reportable. And suppose, for example, that we live in a deterministic world, and it logically follows from the laws I know and the observations I've made that tomorrow some event *E* will happen. My assertion that *E* will happen is not a report. However, it is logically derived from things that I could report. This case seemingly shows then that what I logically derive from reportables is not itself in general reportable. That stands in contrast to the plausible idea that anything I can logically derive from a reportable should itself be reportable, as is the case with mathematical facts.

Of course, some logical consequences of reportables are themselves reportable. If I see *U* drinking, I may report the entailed claim that *someone* was drinking. So sometimes entailed claims are reportable. But not always. It's hard to say which are and which aren't at this point.

To avoid these issues presently, let us just leave appropriate connections to *abstracta* at the level of conceptualization, imagination, or derivation. Let us back off from the plausible claim that we make reports of mathematical fact or logical consequence, and just say that we make reports about something being proved or about something being derived. I will leave resolving this issue for future work.

To wrap up the unpacking of condition (iv), let me address the work being done by '*S* is disposed to believe that [she] is appropriately connected to *p*'s situation.' I am hesitant to rely on dispositions, squirrelly things that they are. But doing so allows for those cases of reporting where the reporter does not have a second-order belief about being connected to the situation about which she reports. For example, a small child can make a report without any second-order belief about the connection between her, her utterance, and anything else. I see a leopard-patterned van and I exclaim to you: "I just saw a van painted like a leopard." I reported. But my thoughts are about the van, not about my speech act. So it seems that neither the actuality of a connection nor the thought that there is a connection is required. Nor is their disjunction required. Suppose there is no van and I am hallucinating. I am still reporting. But in each of these cases the reporter is disposed to the relevant second-order beliefs were I or even the small child asked the right sorts of questions.

Condition (vi)—*S* conveys that there is a relevant connection both from her and from her utterance to *p*'s situation—is the sincerity condition previously noted, the aspect that shows the utterance to be the performance of a report specifically (as opposed to assertion, conjecture, BS, prediction, etc.) There is seemingly no set way to convey that the speech act is a report. One may preface the utterance with the clause 'I report that' or may simply rely on the context to convey the utterance's nature (e.g. by being uttered during a nightly newscast).

As we saw above there needn't in fact be a traceable connection among these elements, but *S* needs to be sincere that there are such connections, wrong as she might be. And more than being sincere about it, she is in fact—perhaps only implicitly—committing to (re)tracing those connections. If *S* fails to convey that *M* is a report then the evidential force that reports have will be lost, negligible as it might be in some cases. For it's one thing as a hearer to hear what seems to be a bald assertion, which may come with an implicit "take it or leave it" element. But an utterance presented as a report putatively has some evidence backing up the utterance and so comes with an implicit "there's *prima facie* motivation to take it" element. Whether anything else is lost in all cases is less clear, but needn't be answered presently.

If *S* fails to retrace those connections when challenged on her report, that is, if *S* fails to follow through on her commitment to the sincerity of her utterance or is simply in principle unable to (re)trace the connection between herself and the reported on, then it seems she is relegating her utterance to bruit (pronounced *brute*). By *bruit* I mean her report-attempt is so much noise; nontraceable, nonconnected, unsubstantiated. Indeed, in some cases even *unsubstantiable*. Compare this to the witness in a trial who tries to

claim, for example, "Clepto sat—quietly and unmoving—in the office with an intent to steal." Despite her sincerity, the witness is not appropriately connected to Clepto's internal states based simply on observing him sitting quietly and unmoving and so is unable to report on Clepto's intentions. What the witness can non-bruitly report is that the witness explicitly inferred an intention to steal from her observing Clepto sitting in the office.

Condition (vii)—that S convey that p is true in T—might be an implicature of (iv) – (vi), but it's worth being explicit. For paradigmatic reports are forms of endorsement, and what the reporter endorses is p in T. And since (vii) is only about conveying p's truth, the report that p can be either accidentally or nonaccidentally false (more on nonaccidentally reporting falsely that p in the final section of this chapter).

My director raises a concern about quantifying over T. There are several ways we might read the scope of the quantifier(s) over T in my formal account. For example, on one reading, we have $\exists T((iv) \text{ and } (v) \text{ and } (vi))$. On another reading, we have $\exists T(iv)$ and $\exists T(v)$ and $\exists T(vi)$. On yet another reading we have $\exists T((iv) \text{ and } (v))$ and $\exists T(vi)$.

While I recognize that this is an issue that will need to be resolved eventually, for present purposes I am happy to leave all Ts under the scope of a single existential quantifier. It might be too strong for the full, true account of reporting. But since I'm currently looking at paradigmatic cases of reporting, this will suffice. For, paradigmatically, one reports on and in response to the same situation in a report.

III.   *Reporting is Distinct from Asserting*

So much for the key inclusions to set reporting apart from assertion. Now I'll sever the tie between reporting and asserting completely. For as it stands, the above

inclusion might just make reporting a species of asserting, as *asserting to Laura* is a type of asserting speech act with a key inclusion that asserting generally lacks, namely *being directed at Laura*.

It seems to me that asserting requires an intended audience distinct from oneself, whereas reporting does not have such a requirement. (The intuition here is something like taking the televised but unwatched news report case to an extreme.) Further, it seems to me that to assert one needs to be *de re* familiar with the propositions she asserts, and cannot get away with being merely *de dicto* familiar as reporting allows. (The seeming here banks—on one hand—on the Segunda / underling case where one reports by passing along another's report without having even read the report, and—on the other hand—on whatever it is that leads many philosophers to think there's a belief norm (or similar) to assertion.) However I will give another, perhaps even more powerful, argument to disambiguate asserting and reporting.

But first a brief interlude to establish the need to disentangle these speech acts and to get clear on what the entangling amounts to.

The people I've talked to about it—philosophers and nonphilosophers alike—initially say that reports are assertions. And I readily admit that reports and assertions often overlap in the same utterance. For example, most statements in everyday conversation about what the speaker did some day are both assertions and reports, e.g.: 'I went to the store', 'I bought a pair of shoes', 'I recycled the box'. All reports, all assertions. Similarly when speaking about one's favorite musician, e.g., one's assertions typically are also reports: 'She has an exceptionally wide vocal range', 'She donates lots

of money to charity', 'Her most recent song has been at the top of the charts for three weeks running', 'She didn't win a Grammy this year'.

This frequent overlap, I take it—together with both assertions and reports being types of endorsement—accounts for the misgiving that reports are assertions.

The claim that reports are assertions, however, is ambiguous between an identity claim between types ('all and only reports are assertions') and a genus-species claim ('all reports are assertions').

As we saw in *Weather*, some assertions aren't reports. Despite asserting that the weather for the week is likely to be a certain way, that forecast wasn't a report on the weather. For *W* was not appropriately connected to her assertion's objects. This is enough to falsify the first identity claim.

As it happens, I also have an example of a report that is not an assertion. This would independently if redundantly falsify the identity claim. But it is necessary to falsify the genus-species claim. In any case, disambiguating what people mean by 'reports are assertions' is moot.

Interlude over. Now I will show that some reports aren't assertions, thereby showing that these speech acts are distinct forms of endorsement:

1. If (a) reports are assertions and (b) fictions are reports, then all fictions are either lies, sincere mistakes, counterexamples, or jokes.
2. All fictions aren't lies, sincere mistakes, counterexamples, or jokes.
3. So, either not all fictions are reports or not all reports are assertions. (1,2)
4. Fictions are reports.
5. So, reports aren't assertions. (3,4)

The target here is that reports are a species of assertion. If I can show that at least some cases of reporting are not assertions, I'll secure the disambiguation of asserting and

reporting (having already shown that some assertions aren't reports with the *Weather* case).

I will leave the defense for the claim that fictions are reports for the following chapter. So, obviously, the success of this argument turns at least on the success of the arguments in the next chapter.

By *fiction* I mean for now 'false sentences uttered for literary ends'. I'll leave 'uttered for literary ends' vague but let it capture the intuitive notion that includes things like much of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* but excludes things like The Constitution of the United States of America and the caught-red-handed culprit's claim that, "It wasn't me!"

As for (1), if all reports are assertions and fictions are reports, then it follows that fictions are assertions. But fictions are—or at least include many—false propositions.[6] These are the categories of false-proposition assertions: lies (intended to be false for deceptive reasons), sincere mistakes (not intended to be false while sincerely asserting), counterexamples (intended to be false for illustrative reasons), and certain kinds of jokes (intended to be false for humorous or insulting reasons).

While fictions can include these things or be uttered for these reasons, (2): that's not what fictions are. What they are, as I said, will be described and argued for in the next chapter. But it's generally accepted that fictions are not lies as they aren't intended—as a whole, propaganda aside—to deceive. Nor are fictions sincere attempts at true assertion mistakenly false. It's not like J. K. Rowling thought she were telling a true story of a

---

[6] Given that fictions describe some nonactual world(s), we can precisify this by saying that fictions are—or include many—false propositions indexed to the actual world.

magical boy but accidentally got some facts wrong. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* was in its way arguing for the U.S. to stay on the gold-based currency standard, yes, but Conan Doyle wasn't trying to disprove some going theory about contemporary detection methods, so it's not the case that fictions are necessarily counterexamples. And while *Gulliver's Travels* was a satirical allegory criticizing political policies of the day, *Dune*—despite dealing heavily with politics—isn't clearly criticizing any actual-world political movement or group and isn't obviously proffered as some sort of joke. Further, that fictions aren't simply a type of false assertion is evidenced by the preceding chapters: David Lewis and Manuel Garcia-Carpintero attempt accounts of fictionalizing just because fictions do not neatly fall under the header *assertions*.

In short, though obviously some fiction is put in the service of lying, counterexampling, or joking, not all fiction is one of these things. Further, though obviously lies, sincerely mistaken assertions, counterexamples, and jokes can be turned into fiction, when falsely asserted they aren't fiction but attempts at deceiving, truth-telling, illustrating, or humorous ribbing respectively.

Lemma (3) validly falls out of both (1) and (2).

Again, I will develop the case for (4) in the next chapter.

Claim (5) validly and—conditional on the truth of (4)—soundly follows from (3) and (4).

Given that—as I've shown—some assertions are not reports and some reports are not assertions, reporting and asserting are distinct speech acts.

IV.   Specialty Reports and Ways Reporting Goes Wrong

In this section I will build on and more fully develop the general account of reporting so far developed. First, I will describe reports in specific contexts, what I previously dubbed *specialty reports*. Second, given that the general account characterizes the paradigmatic or ideal cases of reporting, it's worth looking at non-focal cases, in particular the ways in which reporting can go wrong.

A. Specialty Reports

On top of satisfying the general necessary conditions detailed above, every instance of reporting will be subject to further, special conditions. So, in some sense, every report is a specialty report. Those further requirements typically regard reporting on specific content, the report being expressed in specific ways or to some specific audience (if any), or the report serving some specific function.

A business might want quarterly revenues to design a budget, and be relatively indifferent to whether they're expressed in charts, graphs, or tables. A military might want city plans so that the general can strategize an operation, ideally with satellite layover. Insofar as the proposition p or the means of expression M is irrelevant to or fails to meet these further functions, it is a bad report. For example, a diagram of rabbit anatomy is typically irrelevant for both the business and military examples, though, e.g., it could serve the military-operation function so long as the city is rabbit shaped or the diagram secretly encodes information about the enemy's movements.

B. Reports Going Wrong

Speaking of bad reports, there are several ways in which reporting can go wrong. This section is meant both to illuminate the above analysis of reporting as well as lay

groundwork for future scholarship. Nothing in the foregoing main arguments turns on having these bad-report aspects correctly pinned down.

First, there are some context-specific failings like submitting the report late or sending it to the wrong entity, etc. However, these failings don't make the reports themselves bad and so aren't interesting.

Regarding the reported proposition(s), misreports (also called *false reports*) contain factual errors or make contradictory claims. These errors can be failures of data collection or of expression. An example of a collection error is when one reports that the judge was drinking water though she was in fact drinking vodka when a sip of her glass would tell. An example of an expression error is when one accidentally types a *w* instead of a *t* leading to a bad corporate press release stating (typo underlined), "Employees here do no<u>w</u> use offensive or insulting language in the workplace."

In non-fictional reports, contradictory claims entail some factual error (one of 'the French office has exactly 90 employees' and 'the French office has other than exactly 90 employees' is contrary to fact). But in what sense does a fiction's author's contradictory reports both that the protagonist has brown eyes and, later in the text, that she does not have brown eyes count as a factual error? More on this in the following chapter.

Irrelevant reports fail to report on the appropriate things, in short, are constituted by irrelevant propositions. An example of this is an employee handing a supervisor a shopping list instead of the requested quarter's sales report.

Regarding the means of expressing the proposition(s), failed reports do not adequately express their propositions, as when one's TPS report is printed with red ink on red paper or is written in Swahili for an audience of strictly-English readers. Similarly,

failing to label the parts of charts or graphs or using one sort of chart when another is better suited for the relevant data can garble expression of the intended proposition(s) resulting in failed reports.

The non-adequacy of expressing the relevant propositions for failed reports might look like the expression error of misreports. However, the difference between failed reports and misreports due to expression error is about the content. Failed reports don't express their content in an intelligible way whereas misreports intelligibly express false content (and irrelevant reports express irrelevant content). Of course these mistakes aren't mutually exclusive.

Regarding *S*'s taking her utterance's as being appropriately connected to the objects of her report: as noted above, *S* is engaging in something akin to what BS is for assertion. If *S* is sincere in her connectedness but is unable to (re)trace the connections between her and the reported-on (e.g. because the connection doesn't exist or because she is no longer able to trace a real connection due to a crashed hard drive), then she is relegating her utterance to bruit. It's still a report, of course, but it loses the extra evidentiary force typically carried by reports.

To elaborate, again, reports come with an implicit evidential backing given the presumed connection between reporter and the reported-on object(s) (and the report itself). So to lack, lose, or for there to be the legitimate ability to call into question that connection is to lack, lose, or to call into question the evidential force of the utterance. In cases of sincere mistakes about the existence of or about the retraceability of that connection, the report shifts simply to being bruit, namely an asterisked, unsubstantiated (or even unsubstantiable) report.

What about cases where *S* presents herself as sincerely reporting (i.e. as both she

and her utterance being appropriately connected to *p*'s objects) despite being insincere? *S*

is engaging in fake reporting, i.e. fake news. This is of course *fake news* in its original

sense, not the merely pejorative sense that is so often bandied about as a political

rhetorical device in recent years. The original cases of fake news (under that moniker)

were false news stories put out by some company on social media as a way to generate ad

revenue.[7] Intentional misreports about things to which the speaker is connected and about

utterly fabricated things are both types of fake news as they both flaunt a connection that

doesn't exist.

Continuing with intentional bad reports, I call these *malreports*, whether they're

false, failed, irrelevant, or unsubstantiable reports.[8]

A report can be bad in more than one way. For example, suppose a supervisor of a

paper company requests the phone number for the Scranton branch but her assistant gives

her the office building blueprints with wrong dimensions. The report will be both

irrelevant (blueprints rather than phone number) and false (wrong dimensions). If the

blueprints are illegible due to water damage, then the report also fails. If the assistant did

anything intentionally to make this a bad report, then it is also a malreport.

Of course, a mal-misreport (a report intended to be false) can be accidentally true.

What do we call such a report? Just like accidentally true lies or fictions that accidentally

[7] Mike Wendling "The (almost) complete history of 'fake news'," BBC News, https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-42724320, 22 January 2018.

[8] George Orwell's *1984* includes the term *malreport.* In that story *misprints* and *malreports* are defined as statements made by the press that the government / Big Brother later deems untrue. For what it's worth, however, the term is original to me both in that I thought of it independently of having read *1984* and in that it means something different than *1984*'s use besides.

describe actual events are still called, respectively, *lies* and *fictions* but with an asterisk of sorts, the same can be done in cases such as accidentally true mal-misreports. Similarly for mal-irrelevant reports (accidentally submitting the correct report despite intending on submitting an irrelevant report) and mal-failed reports (accidentally submitting ungarbled expressions of the relevant propositions despite intending on submitting garbled expressions of the same).

Despite the connotation of the prefix *mal-* malreports needn't be malicious (though of course malreporting can be done maliciously). For example, the assistant in the last example might have given the supervisor blueprints rather than a phone number to stall the supervisor from picking up the phone in the brief window during which doing so would trigger a deadly explosion. (To preempt concerns that malice is introduced into the malreporting because other, nondeceptive options to stall were available to the assistant, further suppose that—somehow—delaying the supervisor by any other means would have also gotten the supervisor exploded.)

To distinguish morally neutral malreporting from malicious malreporting, I introduce the term *knave news* for the malicious sort. Though it is true that not all reports are news (as in *previously unknown by the hearer,* see above), (i) *knave news* has a nice ring to it and (ii) I use it to play on the familiarity of the term *fake news*. And *knavishness* is deception, unscrupulosity, or being generally dishonorable, so *knave* nicely captures the maliciousness of these malreports. (Sometimes the original intentions have good ends: e.g., that party *Y* win the election, when in fact party *Y* is better suited to govern. So, while not malicious, there is still deception involved in these cases and so, for convenience while retaining consistency, are classified as knavish.)

I already detailed one type of knave news, namely malicious bruit, aka intentionally insincere reports, aka fake news.

One example of non-fake knave news is of the failed-report variety. An example of this is when a social-media post uses a false or misleading title (think *clickbait*) but fails to link to an actual article because there isn't one. Or when an article title asks a question to suggest an answer that puts the subject in a negative (or positive) light, e.g., "Is Politician *X* Secretly a Cannibal?" The article may very well go on to say 'No.' However, the damage is done just by the title given that most people tend (i) not to read social media articles but for their titles but (ii) fall for the implicature of those titles. What makes these cases of failed-reporting fake news is that they bank on the implicit evidential boost reports have but without presenting other (i.e. actual) evidence or indeed with the speaker knowing full well that she lacks any evidence.

Another example is when showing data on a graph comparing the upshots of contrary policy decisions but skewing the values or graph scales to make it look like the in-fact worse policy leads to better outcomes than the in-fact better policy. All the propositions expressed by the graph are true but presented in a way that garbles the objective message.

Knave news of the irrelevant-report type is exemplified by the classic *whataboutism* maneuver. For example: When asked by Reviewa to give an account of her bad behavior, Distractina shifts focus off herself by reprimanding Reviewa with, "What about [other politician] Politicia? You didn't get on her case when she did the same thing last week? Speaking of the bad things Politicia did, did you hear she also …" Though it might very well have been a true report about Politicia, that Distractina offered that report

rather than the one expected of her, she uttered an irrelevant report. And since Distractina did it to avoid being held accountable for her bad behavior, it is pernicious. So, it's knave news.

Of course, not all, e.g., fake news floating around the internet is *shared* with malicious intent, whatever the original reporters' malicious intentions. While some negativity redounds to the sharers' credit for failing in due diligence to properly investigate reported claims before sharing, they aren't malreports, just bad ones. And given they aren't malreports, they don't count as knave news generally. Compare to cases of sincerely mistaken assertions or asserting without doing one's due diligence—there's failing in these cases of fake news reporting, but not necessarily moral failings (bracketing the view that epistemic norms just are moral norms).

The key thing for a report to count as knave news—of which fake news is a species—then, is that (i) it's a bad report (ii) with a bad upshot. That is, *knave news* is a catch-all term for pernicious bad reports, and typically—but not necessarily—reports of the public variety. For example, Harmo might intentionally report falsely to Victima on matters that concern only the two of them but that leads to some negative upshot for Victima. This is technically an instance of reporting fake news but given it's not in the public eye it's not a paradigmatic example.

V.   Conclusion

In this chapter I gave a general account of at least paradigmatic cases of the speech act of reporting, and I spoke a bit on specific reporting and on how reporting can go wrong. I also distinguished reporting from assertion, the conflating of which is

seemingly a rampant error. In the next chapter I build on this account, showing that

fictionalizing is reporting.

CHAPTER FIVE

Reporting Theory of Fictionalizing

I.   Introduction

In the last chapter I gave an account of paradigmatic cases of reporting. In this

chapter I argue that fictionalizing is just such a paradigmatic case of reporting, albeit on

generally the nonactual.

II.   Fictions are Reports

In this section I show that fictions are paradigmatic reports, whether fictions are

discovered platonic objects or are artificial *abstracta*. This will serve as the justification

for premise (4) of my argument in the previous chapter, thereby confirming the severing

of reporting from asserting. But first I will also address the suspicion raised in that

chapter that reporting is not in general propositional.

A. Is Reporting Propositional?

The account of reporting as detailed in the last chapter takes for granted that

reporting is propositional, i.e. the sentence-type constitutive of the reporting speech act is

propositions. But Alex Pruss raised the following concern, which if correct, shows that

reporting is not in general propositional.[1]

Pruss's concern starts from my claim that fictionalizing is a type of reporting,

which I defend below. And if reporting is propositional then so is fictionalizing.

---

[1] Thanks to Alex for raising the concern, pressing me on it, and helping me think through it so
thoroughly.

However, Pruss is not so sure that statements about fictional characters express propositions for similar reasons he doubts logic class examples like "Mary is taller than some giraffe" express propositions. *Which* Mary is being talked about? That's completely undetermined, hence the string of text does not express a proposition. And if fictional reports aren't propositional, then reports aren't generally propositional. This point is similar to Lewis's as recounted in Chapter Two, namely that fictional names have no determination in the actual world.

Here is a reason to embrace that suspicion, grant that fictions are not propositional, and be content with the surprising and interesting conclusion that reporting generally is not propositional. Suppose I hire a consultant to visit a college campus and talk to students about our product. The consultant pockets the money, goes on vacation, and then makes up a bunch of BS. The BS includes sentences like "Mary, a computer science student taller than a young giraffe, said that the company's backpacks are uncomfortable to wear." I then sign without reading, trusting the consultant, and pass the report on to my boss. Then: (a) very plausibly, what I pass on is a report, but (b) it consists of propositions if and only if fiction consists of propositions. In other words, if this objection works for fiction, it works for other reports.

Claim (a) is true. See the previous chapter for more. Claim (b) might be true but fictions (and so this survey report) still be propositional. We might, e.g., get rid of all the names and natural kind terms by Ramseyfying the book. That is, conjoin all the sentences in the work (e.g., the consultant's survey, the fictional book or series of books). Replace every unquoted name in the resulting giant sentence by a variable, except for names of actual world persons (e.g., Biden). Do the same for every unquoted natural kind term,

again except for actual world natural kinds (e.g., replace "unicorn" with "*y*" but don't replace "dog"). To make quotations work and add contextual data, conjoin formulas like "*x* is a person named 'Mary'" or "*y* is a natural kind called 'unicorn'". Conjoin any other contextual details needed (I am not sure this needs to be done, but it might include things like cultural knowledge about what natural kinds termed "unicorn" are like). Put parentheses around the whole thing, and prefix with existential quantifiers over all variables that got introduced.

Here's an example: "Mary had a little unicorn she got as a gift from Biden" becomes: "$\exists x \exists y$(*x* had a little *y* that she got as a gift from Biden and *x* is a person named 'Mary' and *y* is a natural kind called 'unicorn')". We don't replace "Biden" with a variable because that is clearly intended to refer to an actual-world person.

But suppose this solution doesn't work and it's true that fictions—and reports generally—are not propositional. If this is right then there's some work to be done updating my accounts of fictionalizing and reporting from being about propositions to being about sentences. (Likely similar with the other accounts of fictionalizing.) For one complication this update would raise for my accounts once all references to propositions are changed to referring to sentences is the following. By replacing propositions with sentences one can no longer say things like: "The Russian officer reported the same thing to his superior as his German counterpart did." For of course they didn't report with the same sentence.

Another issue is that unless by "sentences" we mean "sentence tokens", things go wrong. For a sentence-type without context (typically) does not carry enough information to recover the meaning without context.

In short, this is a genuine issue though obviously not to be solved presently. But here are at least some potential solutions:

First, we might replace propositions with equivalence classes of semantically equivalent sentence-token / context pairs, where a context includes the language and dialect as well as the (actual? intended?) audience.[2] This takes care of the co-report issues.

Second, semantic theory needs some broad notion of meaning to make sense of such facts as that "Mary is taller than a giraffe" and "Marie est plus grande qu'une giraffe" have the same meaning even if neither expresses a Russellian or Fregean proposition due to "Mary" lacking meaning. After all, a student who responds to a translation question with the other of the paired sentences gets things right. Whatever kinds of things these "meanings" are, we can just call them "propositions" in some extended sense.

Third, maybe propositions after all are a broader category than is generally thought.

B. *Fictions are paradigmatic reports*

Now I will show that fictions are paradigmatic reports. I will use the terms *typical reports* and *typical reporting* to refer to nonfictional reports and their utterings, respectively, as I compare and contrast the two general paradigmatic ways of reporting. As a reminder, here is a formalization of the at-least necessary conditions of at-least paradigmatic cases of reporting:

---

[2] Plagiarized from Pruss's blog (http://alexanderpruss.blogspot.com/2022/05/dog-whistles.html).

Speaker *S* reports proposition *p* via means *M* only if (i) *S* utters *M*, (ii) *M* expresses *p*, (iii) *S* utters *M* to express *p*, (iv) *S* is disposed to believe that *S* is appropriately connected to *p*'s situation *T*, (v) *S* is disposed to believe that uttering *M* is appropriately connected to *T*, (vi) *S* conveys that (iv) and (v), and (vii) *S* conveys that *p* is true in *T*.

Proper fictions are utterances by some speaker or author *S* uttered to make intelligible some fictional sentences(s)—presumably propositions, but perhaps not, given the discussion above. In any case, that covers the first three conditions.

The situation *T* of *p* in fictional cases is the world, entity(ies), event(s), or absence(s) picked out by the fictional statement(s) uttered by *S* (again, without ontological commitment to situations or events). For example, some very close worlds (or similar) to ours wherein there is a detective named Sherlock Holmes are the situation detailed in some of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's works, and Middle-earth worlds (or similar) are *The Lord of the Rings*'s situation. And with situations we can still account for absences as with nonfictional reporting. For example, suppose in *Pride & Prejudice* that the statement that some loo table did not appear is made true in that world because there are no loo tables in that world. Austen (or we) can't report on an object that doesn't exist *per se* but it is true of the situation described that there was an absence of loo tables.

In short, the key difference between typical reports and fictional reports (i.e. fictions) is that reports are about what the speaker takes to be an actual situation and fictions are about what the speaker doesn't take to be an actual situation (this includes taking the situation to be nonactual or being indifferent to whether the situation is actual *à la* BS). What is nice about this view is that it captures that authors are telling us about the things they "witness" at a world or in their minds. It's pretty simply storytelling not substantively different than other types of storytelling, e.g. telling my wife about the

crazy thing that happened at work today. As such it doesn't require that the storyteller engage in a new way of acting (*contra* Lewis's pretense theory) or trying to get the audience to do something different than when otherwise hearing stories (*contra* G-C's make-belief theory).

Let me elaborate on how fictionalizing as reporting is continuous with other sorts of storytelling. There's storytelling about (understood to be) actual situations, there's storytelling involving embellishments of (understood to be) actual situations, and there is storytelling about (understood to be) nonactual situations. (More on embellishments of actual situations below.) On my reporting theory of fictionalizing, where storytelling about (understood to be) nonactual situations just is reporting on these nonactual situations, the only difference between these types of reporting (aside from perhaps the speaker's goal for reporting) is the content of the report, basically whether the content is actual or not. There's a simplicity in the continuity of these types of storytelling.

Contrast that continuity with the requirement that, on pretense theory, authors engage in something more akin to acting by pretending they are engaging in asserting. Fictionalizing then falls into an utterly distinct class of speech act despite looking almost identical to other forms of storytelling where only the content changes.

On make-belief theory, authors intend that their audiences[3] engage with the fictional storytelling in a way distinct from other storytelling, namely to make-believe the content rather than believe it. Granted, maybe that's not so telling against the view. We do listen to a tale purported to be true very differently from how we listen to a piece of fiction. There are infamous examples of fictions being passed off (for purposes of fame

---

[3] If they even have one, a lack of which make-belief theory seemingly can't permit!

125

or fortune, I suppose) as memoirs. I think these texts would be differently enjoyed if they were known to be fictional. And one watches a mockumentary differently from a documentary.

However, this is a difference that my account can accommodate. For it may well be that reporting on different subject matter—actual vs. non-actual worlds—affects reception. After all, I will receive a report about a family member differently from a report about a stranger. But I wouldn't have to thereby do something substantively different to receive these different sorts of reports.

The elegance or simplicity of this continuity of storytelling isn't especially strong evidence for my theory nor is the lack of it particularly damning against the competitor views. But it's something.

Another sidebar: Given that both are constituted by ps that the reporter takes to be false, how do fictional reports differ from mal-misreports (i.e. intentionally false reports)? Mal-misreports are akin to lies, falsely saying of a world that it is some way or other (more often than not the world in question is the actual one). Fictions are akin to typical reports, truly saying of a nonactual world that it is some way or other (even in the case of unreliable narrators; see below).

Let's return to the conditions of paradigmatic reporting. For S to be appropriately connected to T in the case of fictions is for S to satisfy one of the following. First, as discoverer of T or its inventor, S first discovered or invented T. Second, S is acquainted to T via some causal chain tracing back to T's inventor or discoverer's utterance about T. For example, suppose that Jane Austen is in fact the inventor / discoverer of the fictional situation described in *P&P* and her writing of that situation just is the novel *P&P*. (The

supposing is just because—extremely unlikely as this is—she might not have been the first one to think of *P&P*'s situation.) Suppose further that fictions are platonic objects discovered by authors. Then it is her imaginative discovery of P&P worlds (or similar) that connects Austen to the relevant situation. It is via her writings on that situation that we are causally connected to it as well. Suppose instead that fictions are human artifacts, created by their authors. Then it is Austen's uttering of *P&P* that connects her to her creation; that is as connected as one can be to a fiction. And again it is via her writings on that situation that we are causally connected to it, too.

For *S* to be *disposed to believe* that she is appropriately connected to *T* in the case of fictions is for her either to be disposed to believe that she invented / discovered *T* or that she learned of *T* from someone who (learned from someone who (etc.)) invented / discovered *T*. For example, Jane Austen is the inventor / discoverer of *Pride & Prejudice.* As such Austen invented / discovered P&P worlds and—presumably—was disposed to take herself to be the inventor / discoverer of them by taking herself to be the creator of the fictional narrative. So Austen is disposed to believe (and in fact did believe, though likely not under this description) that she is appropriately connected to *P&P*'s situation. Suppose I read *P&P*, forgot that I read it, but then told the story to a friend thinking I made it up. While it is false that I am the inventor / discoverer of P&P worlds I am still disposed to believe that I am the creator of the narrative and so I am disposed to (and in fact on this supposition do) believe I am appropriately connected to its situation (though, again, I wouldn't have believed so under this description until the writing of this dissertation). Suppose further that someone reminds me that I read *P&P*. I will no longer take myself to be *P&P*'s author—somewhat reasonable creature that I am—but I will still

be disposed to (and in fact do) believe that I am appropriately connected to *P&P*'s situation through having read the work.

For *S* to be disposed to believe that utterance *M* is appropriately connected to *T* in the case of fiction is just for *S* to take herself to be uttering *M* to create, share, or recite the relevant fiction because it's the relevant *T* that *S* means to report on.

With that, conditions (iv) and (v) are in the bag.

Condition (vi) is, again, the sincerity condition of reporting. In the case of fiction *S* conveys that both she and her utterance itself are appropriately connected to fictional situation *T*. In short, *S* is sincere in conveying that she is fictionalizing. Like with typical reporting there is no set way to convey that she is fictionalizing. *S* might leave her conveyance to the fact that her book is published by a fiction publisher and is filed in the fiction section of the library, or she might start her fiction with the classic fiction-flagging phrases "Once upon a time" or "A guy walks into a bar." But like with typical reporting there are consequences to eschewing this condition. In the case of typical reporting one might lose some of the evidentiary force that naturally comes with the connectedness of reports. In the case of fictional reporting one might convey that she is typically reporting or even asserting. She even runs the risk of ruining a joke, though some jokes find their humor in being ambiguous about their fictionality.[4]

Finally, condition (vii) might be an implicature of the previous three conditions but is worth making explicit here as I did with nonfictional reporting generally. An author, by writing about what she takes to be a nonactual situation (though not necessarily under that description) conveys what she takes to be true in that situation. I

---

[4] See lots of narrative-style stand-up comedy acts for examples.

don't think unreliable narrators sully this fact. For whether or not the author intends for the narrator to be unreliable, the author conveys about this situation that it is true that the narrator in it is unreliable.

But what if, e.g., Jane Austen wrote *P&P* exactly as we have it but for the following small difference? She started the narrative off with the phrase "It is false that any of the following occurred." Wouldn't she thereby be denying that *p* is true in *T*?

I think not. Austen would simply be writing about a much larger *T* than she would have were she reporting on the P&P worlds, viz. all the non-P&P worlds. (I of course use "larger" figuratively since the set of P&P worlds and the set of non-P&P worlds are both uncountably infinitely numerous.) Instead of giving readers a detailed report of the worlds to consider, she'd give readers a detailed report of which worlds to exclude.

There is again a question of the scope of the quantifier(s) over *T* as we saw in the last chapter. I will do the same thing here that I did there: I acknowledge that this is an issue that needs sorting, but I will leave that for future work. Presently I'll treat all *T*s as identical for the sake of keeping this inquiry appropriately narrow.

Given that fictions are paradigmatic reports, fictionalizing is a type of paradigmatic reporting. Not only does this justify premise (4) from the previous chapter—thereby securing that argument's conclusion that reporting is distinct from asserting—but it also allows me to put the reporting theory of fictionalizing on the table *contra* the pretense and make-believe theories. In the next section I will argue that reporting theory is the correct one. But before shifting gears, my director raised the following concern for reporting theory.

In light of my view's interesting effect of inverting accuracy conditions of fictional reports, my director asks: Can the author of fiction misreport? Suppose on page 5 the author says that Kelly Kate is blond and on page 155 he talks of her always having had brown hair. One could say that the author is describing an impossible world, but genre considerations may make that an unlikely hypothesis. I think the reporting theory nicely fits with the idea that the author misreported, but there is still the question of whether the author misreported on page 5 or on page 155.

One thing to ask in cases of inconsistencies in fiction is whether the inconsistency redounds to the credit of the author or whether the fiction (intentionally by the author) has an unreliable narrator. Either way, authorial authority and unreliable narrators do raise concerns for truth in fiction. I address this in some detail in Rosenbaum (2016).

However, the concern raised regards inconsistencies made specifically by the author. I think reporting theory's handling of inconsistent authors is similar to its handling of unreliable narrators. On reporting theory unreliable narrators of fictional worlds are as problematic as unreliable reporters in and of the actual world. Suppose there's something reported about a world that is inconsistent with the rules of the world and there's no getting more out of the reporter, e.g. because the fiction contains the total sum of the narrator's report or because the actual reporter clams up. In such cases hearers of the report must figure out for themselves which parts of the report are true and which are not based on what they know of the world, other details of the report, and of the reporter-*narrator* generally. But still having unanswered—even unanswerable— questions shouldn't be surprising in these cases.

Again, reporting theory I think allows for a similar treatment of the fiction as in cases of unreliable narrators. Given what hearers know about the world, other details of the story, and the reporter-*author* generally, hearers will have to work out for themselves which parts of the report are true and which are misreports. And perhaps we lose confidence in tangential claims. As with news reporting, the main claims are less likely to be misreported, but the passing comments might get things wrong.

Briefly, here is how the competing views seemingly would handle this. Lewis says that there are two sets of worlds being described that overlap everywhere but by entailed contradictions of the inconsistencies. One set describes the story where the page 5 claim and all its entailments are true, the other set where the page 155 claim and all its entailments are true. Even divorcing pretense theory from Lewis's modal views, it seems safe to assume that pretended assertions have consistency norms. It follows from this that pretense theory is subject to the same upshot: in cases where there is some inconsistency, there are two sets of worlds being described that overlap everywhere but by entailed contradictions of the inconsistencies.

G-C's account appeals to what the author ultimately communicatively intended. So, if further details in the story support the page 5 claim over the page 155 one, than the page 5 claim is fictionally true. *Vice versa* for the page 155 claim. However, if neither page's claim is clearly "more true," i.e. has more communicated support, than the other, G-C's view entails that they're both true. So the author is describing an impossible world, genre considerations be damned.

III.   Fictionalizing is Reporting

Reporting theory isn't just a contender for the right account of fictionalizing. It is the right view. The first subsection below lists desiderata for an account of fictionalizing. In the second subsection I expound on the desiderata and show that reporting theory checks all the boxes and argue that neither pretense nor make-belief theories do. This will serve as a primer to motivate my theory above the others. In the final subsection, I give a straightforward argument for reporting theory against the others.

A.   Desiderata for an Account of Fictionalizing

Following are at least some of the desiderata one might want for their account of fictionalizing:

  D1. It is the correct one.
  D2. It is neutral with respect to the accounts of truth in fiction (or is a good guide to the correct account of truth in fiction).
  D3. It is neutral with respect to whether fictions are created by authors or are discovered (or is a good guide to the correct view on this matter).
  D4. It allows for the kinds of fiction generally held to exist.
  D5. It must be something that children can do.
  D6. It allows for authors to be surprised by what occurs in their works.
  D7. It gives plausible evaluative criteria for assessing the quality of some fictionalizing.
  D8. It gives the correct evaluative result when assessing the quality of some fictionalizing (at least in obvious cases).

B.   Whether and How the Going Theories Satisfy that Desiderata

The first desideratum for an account of fictionalizing (D1) is that the account is in fact the right one. However, (D1) isn't a good guide to determining which account is the right one, so we can end our consideration of it here. So the scores are tied for the three views at 0.

Given it's an open question which is the correct account of truth in fiction, it would be nice (D2) for the correct account of fictionalizing to be neutral with respect to fictional-truth views *unless* the theory somehow can convince us which is the correct view of fictional truth.

G-C's make-belief theory, unfortunately, does not fare so well here. For G-C, what is fictionally true just is what the author intentionally gets the audience to make-believe via proffering the audience statements to make-believe. Seemingly make-belief fictionalizing theory and authorial-intent fictional truth theory stand and fall together, in which case make-belief theory fails to satisfy the first disjunct of (D2). And the concerns I raised in Chapter Three show that it fails the second disjunct, too, in showing that G-C hasn't gotten the right account of fictional truth.

As we saw in Chapter Two, Lewis's pretense theory is motivated by his views of modality generally and of fictional truth in particular. However, pretend-assertion fictionalizing can presumably be divorced from these views without losing anything substantive. If something is in principle assertible it is seemingly in principle pretend assertible, whatever undergirds that. While I challenge this seemingness below, let this be a mark in favor of pretense theory.

Reporting theory is similar to pretense theory on this score. If something is in principle reportable it is seemingly in principle fictionally reportable, whatever undergirds that. As I'll discuss, reporting theory isn't open to the same seemingness challenge that pretense theory is.

For those keeping score, pretense theory has 1 point, make-belief has 0, reporting has 1.

A similar and related desiderata to the last is (D3), that the account of fictionalizing either be neutral with respect to whether authors create fictions or fictional entities (i.e. abstract artifacts) or discover them (e.g. J. K. Rowling pulling Dumbledore out of Plato's heaven and Voldemort from Plato's hell and tossing them together in the *Harry Potter* series). Until we have the right answer to the invent / discover question in hand or a view of fictionalizing gives us good reason to fall one way or the other, best that the view be neutral between them.

Lewis is not neutral on this question given his views of modal realism. But I believe pretense theory can be divorced from the theory of concrete possible worlds, given pretense theory amounts to authors pretending to assert propositions. Indeed, Searle's view—discussed briefly in the Introduction to this work—doesn't commit him to an answer to this question. So the pretense account of fictionalizing at least is neutral as to whether authors create or discover fictions even if Lewis isn't.

G-C's view might not be so flexible. For according to G-C fictions just are whatever authors intend for their audiences to make-believe with no possible-world consistency restrictions. As such, some fictions don't describe anything that exists and so at least some fictions can't be discovered. So fictions for G-C aren't in general discovered.

The reporting account is consistent with authors creating their fiction even though the fiction might be a preexisting possible world. For just as I tailor which aspects of events I report when telling true stories, authors tailor which aspects of nonactual worlds they report.

Of course, my view has the interesting effect of inverting the accuracy conditions of fictional reports. Where my typical report is accurate insofar as my recounting matches actual situations, an author's report (i.e., the fiction) specifies which situation (i.e., world) is being reported on, whether the author is creating the world or detailing which one she draws readers' attention to. This also is the error theory for thinking that authors create fictional worlds (if they in fact don't): the curating / tailoring process is a creation of the report of some preexisting world in logical space, not the creation of the world itself. On this view, common sense correctly attributes the creative act to authors, it just got wrong what is created.

It looks like the score is now 2 pretense theory, 0 make-belief, and 2 reporting.

Closely related to (D2) and (D3) is (D4), namely the desideratum that the various types of fiction we take to exist are accounted for. What I mean goes beyond accounting for realistic fiction, historical fiction, fantastic fiction, science fiction, etc. Some texts describe impossible scenarios but are still—at least in principle—taken by the general public to be legitimate fiction. By 'at least in principle' I mean to allow for texts that the general public—whatever that is—hasn't in fact made a determination on but which it could in the way that I, a non-Russian speaker, could speak Russian. For example, G-C's "A Continuous Park" as summarized in Chapter Three of this dissertation is arguably impossible but might be characterized by the general public as fiction. Also there is an episode of *Star Trek Voyager* in which the titular starship escapes the clutches of a black hole via a crack in the black hole's event horizon, never mind that event horizons are not

things that can be cracked.[5] As far as I can tell people don't seem to treat that episode as a failed attempt at fiction.

Of course the general public isn't a good judge of philosophical matters, but it would be nice for a view of fictionalizing's capturing of works (or not) to more or less comport with so-called common-sense notions of what is (or isn't) fiction.

Seemingly G-C's view of fictionalizing tracks with general consensus on which texts count as fiction (indeed that was his motivation for his account). Pretense theory *as given* does not, however. Based as it is on Lewis's fictional truth impossible fictions don't exist. Any seeming story that is impossible is in reality one of the following. Either the seeming story is at least two overlapping stories, one in which the relevant *p* (and all it entails) is true and one in which the relevant not-*p* (and all it entails) is true. Or the story is just nonsense, as would be the case with the *Star Trek Voyager* episode previously mentioned. This, despite the fact that most anyone who watches that episode wouldn't think twice about it being legitimate fiction.

One might come to pretense theory's defense by pointing out that, as we saw with (D2), pretense theory isn't necessarily tied to Lewis's account of fictional truth. And people can pretty much pretend whatever they want, so they can presumably pretend to assert whatever content they want. With this in mind pretense theory might very well categorize any given fiction in the common way.

In reply, however, assertion is presumably constrained by some norm of knowledge or belief and therefore by a norm of consistency. Perhaps pretend assertion is

---

[5] Episode "The Phage" as characterized by Physicist Lawrence M. Krauss, *The Physics of Star Trek* (Harper Collins, 1995).

similarly bound. If that's right, then pretense theory is not free to call fiction all that the public does. Belief is constrained by consistency norms, though obviously there's some wiggle room given that most everyone holds some inconsistent beliefs. Perhaps, then, make-belief is similarly constrained by consistency norms. If so then G-C's make-belief theory isn't as free as it at first seemed either, though more free than pretense theory given that consistent worlds is a stricter standard than consistent beliefs.

Presently we're comparing views here to see which satisfies the most desiderata but these complaints are not definitive. As such, we might give pretense theory 0.5 out of 1 and make-belief theory something like 0.9. Obviously these are arbitrary numbers, but they capture the relative seeming definitiveness of the complaints. But how does reporting theory fare?

Very well, actually. As descriptions of nonactual situations but with at most weak consistency constraints, reporting theory satisfies (D4). Why such loose consistency constraints? Just think of typical reports (i.e. non-fictional) by some eyewitness reporter: she reports whatever seems to her to be the case, even if something is amiss. "Look, man, I'm just telling you what I saw … he was way over there and then in *no time flat* was right beside me … sounds impossible but that's how it looked to me!"

This might sound like my view in fact has a heavy toll over and above the other views. For if situations are *worlds* then impossible fictions require impossible worlds.

However, I don't think this concerns stands. For the author is just reporting to her what seems to be the case in the relevant situation. And seemings-consistency is less strict than either world-consistency or even belief-consistency. If in doubt, just see look up Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit.

Potential upshots for reporting theory are that there are more unreliable narrators

running around than we otherwise might have supposed, or texts that otherwise seemed to

be realism fictions are actually speculative fictions, or similar. But at least they still count

as legitimate fictions!

My director notes that the point made just above (the author is just reporting to

her what seems to be the case in the relevant situation) is an important one. However, he

continues, authors vary in this. Some are happy to say something like: "Paige walked into

the room. … She peeled off her mask, and everyone could see it was actually Bob."

Other authors are unwilling to do that. What I say applies to the first kind of author, who

is reporting seemings. But isn't there the other kind of author, to whom my reply doesn't

apply? Or is it narrators whose seemings are reported?

It's important that I don't just mean narrators here, though obviously narratorial

reports at least partially constitute authorial ones. If I change it to narrators, then the other

views are off the hook. For the narrators say what they want, and then authors pretend

assert it or invite their audiences to make-believe it. Any inconsistencies or weirdness

redounds to the narrators. Then the same upshot as my view applies, namely that there

are just more unreliable narrators running around than we first supposed.

However, if I keep the seemings at the author level, then the complaints above

stand. Lucky for me I think seemings can still do the work I want. Consider the

following. It seems to me that I'm typing at my computer right now, but I'm very

confident of that so I'll say so boldly (notably even if you put me in an external-world-

skepticism context). Later on it might seem to me that that's Todd clunking around

outside my office door—and I might say so. But then on gaining defeating evidence I'll say, "Ah, it was in fact Ben."

So why can't it be that the confident authors and the … let's call them "wiggle-room authors" … are both operating on seemings. It's just that the more confident authors are either more skilled in recognizing instances where defeasibility will meaningfully come into play than the wiggle-room authors are, and so do a better job of presenting the fictional situation as such. Or the more confident authors fail at recognizing certain instances of those situations, and so don't realize that they took for granted a seeming that evidences something impossible or nonsensical.

Compare again, first, to the clunking-around case. Were I being sensitive to my epistemic situation and reporting accurately on it I would qualify my original statement about who is outside my office to something like, "That's likely Todd out there clunking around." However, I'm so confident of an external world and my identification of nearby clunkings that I won't bother qualifying my seemings of the same. But perhaps there is no external world and so my confidence in those seemings is utterly misplaced. In that case, I'm confident but failed at truly appreciating my epistemic position. That takes the scores to: 2.5 for pretense, 0.9 for make-belief, and 3 for reporting.

Desideratum (D5) is that the correct account of fictionalizing allows for the various types of fictionalizers we take there to be. Of particular interest are young children whose fictions are as cheap as clay and twice as common. Children pretend all sorts of things, and I see no reason to think that asserting isn't one of them. Similarly, children report on various things they take to be true when rambling to a parent, and I see no reason to think that reporting on things they don't take to be actual is precluded.

However, as noted in Chapter Three, G-C's neo-Gricean account of fictionalizing requires a complex of intentions that small children don't—and likely can't—have.

The running tally: 3.5 points for pretense theory, 0.9 for make-belief theory, and 4 for reporting.

The desideratum (D6) is that the account of fictionalizing allows for authors to be surprised by their works. As noted in Chapter Two against Lewis's view, reporting theory can explain the surprise authors have at some of their characters' behaviors, unlike pretense theory where pretenders determine the scenarios. For with reporting theory authors might be surprised in a way comparable to how I might be while live-Tweeting a close friend's reaction to some situation I've contrived for her. "She's walking up to the door … oh, man, she's going to run screaming when she sees Nathan in that bear costume!" / "She just knocked and I see Nathan coming around the corner …" / "OMG she just punched Nathan right in his bear-face! I did not see that coming!"

G-C's make-belief theory also allows for authorial surprise so far as I can tell. On this view authors presumably can simply tell a story, following it wherever it leads and the characters, whatever they do. So long as authors can get their audiences to make-believe it, it's true in the fiction. In fact, consider cases of stream-of-consciousness styles of narration, where the author starts babbling and lets whatever come out of her mouth come out, unfiltered, for her audience to make-believe. I imagine in these cases you're probably more likely to see the author surprised by what she tells of her characters' goings-on. This might just be because she's rambling without much of any expectation, but that seems to count.

This brings the scores to: 3.5 for pretense, 1.9 for make-belief, and 5 for reporting theory.

Desiderata (D7) and (D8) are also closely related. The first is that the account of fictionalizing allows for critiquing an author's fictionalizing at all and the second is that the account gives accurate critiques. For example, the fictionalizing account gives a plausible standard by which to draw the obvious conclusions that Jane Austen is exceptionally good at fictionalizing and that *Atlas Shrugged*—despite perhaps being an acceptable portrayal of ideology—is a bad piece of literature.

Before getting into the details, I'll preface by saying that the following argument assumes a principle something like that if fictionalizing is φ-ing, then fictionalizing is good to the extent that φ-ing is good.[6] There is a multiplicity of standards that apply to fictionalizing: does it morally improve, does it entertain, does it yield financial profit, is it aesthetically good, etc. Here is an alternate possibility. Fictionalizing is φ-ing, but the term "fictionalizing" makes different standards salient than the term "φ-ing". Compare to this: Water is H_2O. But when we talk of good water and good H_2O, we make salient different standards. Talk of good water makes salient the standards of taste and hydration. Talk of good H_2O makes salient the chemist's standards of purity. These standards are different. And yet water is H_2O.

But here's the crux of my following argument: When X and Y make salient the same standards of evaluation, that is evidence that $X = Y$, and when they make salient different standards, that is evidence against $X = Y$. So, as we'll see, it really is an advantage of the fictionalizing = reporting view that both sides of the equation make the

---

[6] Thanks to my director for help drawing this out.

same standards salient. But it's not—and I don't say it is—fatal to the competing views that they make salient different standards. But the difference in salience is evidence against either other theory being identical with fictionalizing.

Given that a fiction is a kind of report, the quality of a fiction is determined by the quality of the report. And so, as a kind of report, it has two ways of being evaluated: namely as a report generally and also as the kind of report it is. My director gave me this nice analogy: a dagger is a kind of knife. So it has two ways of being evaluated. First, the general criteria of evaluation for knives, second, the special ones for daggers.

As I argue below, on reporting theory, "Did she fictionalize well?" amounts to "Is it a good fiction?" And of course whether it's a good fiction is partly determined by the interestingness of the plot. For the other theories "Did she fictionalize well?" amounts to "Is it a good fiction *and* did she have the appropriate mental states when uttering each sentence?"

In more detail: When we judge a work of fiction we evaluate things like: is it consistent, is it intelligible, does it hold the reader's interest, is it paced well, is the plot interesting, are there plot holes, is it artful, does it make readers x (where x is things like laugh, feel disgust, get educated, feel inspired, get offend, etc.), will it make money, etc. Most of those things are determinable by looking directly at the work itself (e.g. obviously the money question also needs market data).

To determine whether someone reported well we see if they reported accurately, intelligibly, saliently, and artfully (this last not so much for typical reports). But these things are a proper subset of those things we're already evaluating about the work itself.

So on reporting theory our evaluation work (how well did the author fictionalize) is done once we evaluate the quality of the work.

However, pretense and make-belief theories aren't so simple. Yes, they'll need the author to have done well on all the things reporting theory checks (accuracy, intelligibility, salience, artfulness) as well as all the other noted things about the work itself. But then they have the added requirement of checking the author's cognitive state when she uttered each sentence. Did she really pretend to assert / intend for her audience to make-believe each sentence constituting the work? If not (not that we can ever know), she didn't fictionalize well *even if* all the other boxes are checked.

Preface over. Here are the details. My view allows for critiquing authors' fictionalizing better than the other theories allow. Let's hold the story fixed across theories, and so hold fixed things like the plot and its level of interest, as well as the artful qualities of the story like the richness of its descriptions, its delightful turns-of-phrase, its penetrating insights into the human condition, etc. Pretense theory seems to grade authors on how close they get to pretending all and only the actually false claims. That's a strange standard and likely hard to assess. And this gets weird when thinking about the implicit truths of a fiction. Intending make-belief theory seems to grade authors on how much of the story their audiences (if there even is an audience) make-believe. This is a better and more obviously relevant standard than the one pretense theory holds authors to.

But reporting theory does even better. Here, *the story* is what is assessed. What's required for successful reporting is (i) reporting accurately, (ii) reporting intelligibly, (iii) reporting saliently, and—at least with respect to fictional reporting—(iv) reporting artfully. However, let's bracket (iv) to simplify the discussion; we needn't concern

ourselves with art-making or aesthetic qualities of fiction, just that we're looking at fiction-making generally. And, again, we're holding the story fixed and so artful execution won't change when evaluating it from the various fictionalizing perspectives.

The fictional report is the set of particular claims (i.e. the specific sentences that constitute the story) that describes a situation, a sequence of events-plus-objects-or-absences (i.e. the narrative generally). Given the report determines the world, accuracy is built in. Given the report is communicated linguistically, intelligibility is also built in. There are two angles to consider for salience, namely from the audience's perspective and from the author's. Unlike typical reporting generally—where reports are created at the behest and for the purposes of one's boss or commanding officer—the author of a fictional report in most cases creates it for her own purposes, has a story she wants to tell. Given that, she determines what's salient; i.e. salience from this angle is built in. Salience from the audience's angle amounts to being told relevant or interesting information about the situation. I'm compelled to qualify "relevant or interesting information" with "all and only" but that's stronger than needed. In any case, part of grading one's fictionalizing is evaluating the audience-angle salience, which itself partially constitutes the quality of the story (right amount of info in the right order, etc.). So, ultimately, on the reporting theory of fictionalizing, to evaluate one's skill in fictionalizing one just needs to evaluate the quality of the story (salience plus interest-factor, its artful presentation, etc.) And all these things we're holding fixed for all three views under consideration anyway.

The issue with the other views is that they include these evaluative criteria but they don't stop there. Successful fictionalizing for Lewis is describing a presumed nonactual story that audiences might imaginatively engage *and* pretending to assert all

and only the propositions in that story the actual-world truth-values of which the author thinks are false (or maybe just is indifferent to). Recall that G-C drops the 'presumed nonactual' clause given his views of impossible fictions like ACP where fictions might also be actual. Given that, successful fictionalizing for G-C is describing a story that audiences might imaginatively engage *and* communicating the author's intent that audiences make-believe all and only the statements the author actually intends to communicate that audiences make-believe (possibly adding 'and that audiences in fact make-believe all and only those things due to recognizing the author's intent that they do'). Successful fictionalizing on my reporting view is describing a presumed nonactual story that audiences might imaginatively engage.

Said in another way: Assessing a case of fictionalizing on any of the three views requires assessing the quality of the story: is the plot clear, does tension build or dissipate at appropriate times to appropriate degrees, etc. On my view, it seems we can stop there. Were the report of actual events, accuracy would need to be assessed. But in this case, the fiction-as-report determines accuracy (save for the tricky misreporting cases addressed earlier in this chapter).

On the other views it seems the author's mental states also need to be evaluated (and that at a per-sentence level). First, this requirement of evaluating mental states at the per-sentence level seems hard to do. Did Jane Austen *really* pretend when she asserted that the Gardiners live on Gracechurch Street, or did she take herself to be asserting that because she knew some Gardiners on Gracechurch Street? Or did she *really* want her audience to make-believe this claim, or did she intend for her audience to believe it or even to make-believe that it's false? We have clues, but really, how could we ever know?

But without clear-cut answers, we can't assess Austen's ability to fictionalize. And if an account of fictionalizing doesn't allow for a straightforward assessment that Austen was a great fictionalizer, then there's a problem with that account of fictionalizing. That there's a fact of the matter isn't enough. That fact should be accessible to literary critics.

Further, this requirement of assessing authors' per-sentence mental states seems irrelevant. Beyond being confident that the author took the story generally to be nonactual, it seems that we don't need to know anything beyond the story itself to assess how well the author fictionalized.

In short, on my view there's no extra layer of assessment as the other views require. We needn't assess the author's skill in contriving a story AND the author's skill in making that contrivance [artfully] intelligible AND *either* pretending all / only what's false *or* the audience successfully make-believing all / only what the author intends for the audience to make-believe. Reporting theory drops the disjunction.

One might worry that fictionalizing as reporting misses something. For excellence in fictionalizing involves excellence in creating or discovering situations. But reporting is distinct from the creating or discovering. We can imagine the author first creating / discovering, and then reporting. Of course, the two could be simultaneous, but they'd still be distinct.

I think that worry is correct except in it being a worry. For, yes, the creating / discovery part is distinct from the fictionalizing-as-reporting part. But it seems to me that that is true for every account of fictionalizing. So if it's problematic to evaluate the excellence of the creation / discovery portion of fictionalizing (except Lewis's particular brand of pretense theory, which can only discover), then every view is going to face it.

That suggests to me that it's not actually a problem. Further, it seems to me, that evaluating the excellence of the creation / discovery of the fiction can only be done by evaluating the story itself plus those aforementioned artful qualities that communicate / are constitutive of the story (the richness of its descriptions, its delightful turns-of-phrase, its penetrating insights into the human condition, etc.). There's seemingly nothing else by which to evaluate the author's excellence in this matter, for her communicating it via the fiction is the only way for others to know what she created / discovered. And, as noted at the start of this discussion, we're holding all these things fixed for this analysis.

It looks to me, then, that both pretense theory and make-belief theory fail these two desiderata, but reporting theory aces both. This takes the tally to: 3.5 points for pretense theory, 1.9 for make-belief theory, and 7 for reporting.

Bracketing (D1), at a score of 7 out of 7, reporting theory satisfies the desiderata for an account of fictionalizing better than its competitors do, with pretense theory at 3.5 and make-belief theory at 1.9. I take it that that is strong evidence in favor of reporting theory over its competitors.

Before wrapping up this section I have one quick point of interest regarding embellishments to otherwise actual stories. According to pretense theory as proffered by Lewis, once there is one nonactual element to a pretended assertion, the entire assertion refers to a situation at a nonactual world. So when a comedian sets up a bit in her comedy show with an embellishment of her actual experience by saying, "I caught a fish and it was as big as my leg!" she's not actually referring to herself, her leg, or the actual fish she caught but to her counterpart, to her counterpart's leg, and to some counter-

147

proportioned fish. That seems odd when she intended simply to exaggerate the size of her catch.

Even considering pretense theory apart from Lewis's modal views, it seems the entire utterance is a pretend assertion even though it's a conjunction with an embellishment in only one conjunct. That seems like the wrong result given the first conjunct—let us suppose—was intended by the comedian to be asserted. Either that, or the entire proposition is asserted, which then turns the utterance into a lie. That also seems like the wrong result.

Similarly, it seems to me that the comedian wants her audience to *believe* the setup to her bit, but just not to take it so seriously that they, e.g., might accuse her of lying were they to find out the fish was only as big as her foot. So make-belief theory puts the wrong expectations on audiences in having them make-believe some parts of the utterance but believe other parts (particularly strange given that it's not always clear which parts of a comedian's story are the embellishments / misreports).

Reporting theory gives a much more intuitive result in the case of such exaggerations. The speaker is reporting on actual situations with some misreports sprinkled in. This is simpler than pretense theory in that there's no need to switch speech acts *mid-utterance*. And reporting theory doesn't need to impose different expectations on audiences in the middle of a single utterance as make-belief theory seemingly does.

C. *Reporting Theory Takes the Cake*

As promised above, here is the straightforward argument for my view. For *modus ponens*:

1. If fictions are paradigmatic cases of reports and if there are no other viable contenders, then fictionalizing is reporting.
2. Fictions are paradigmatic cases of reports and there are no other viable contenders.
3. So, fictionalizing is reporting.

In this chapter I've already shown the first conjunct of premise (2).

My earlier chapters, together with work done the Introduction, rule out the competitor theories to help secure the rest of the conjunction. Chapters Two and Three directly attack Lewis's pretense theory and Garcia-Carpintero's make-belief theory, respectively. And as noted in the Introduction to this dissertation Lewis's pretense theory and G-C's authorial-intent make-belief theory are the best versions of their respective camps. As such, we have good reason to believe that if they fall short, their camps fall short. Further, in the Introduction I gave reasons to think that the minor camps—St. Augustine's lying theory, Ken Walton's game theory, and the undefended hypothetical theory—are also false.

Obviously there might be some unconsidered theory so the conclusion 'fictionalizing is reporting' might be *drawn* too early by having only ruled out these noted theories. But it's valid that, all else being equal, if there are no other viable contenders then fictionalizing is reporting and we presently have no evidence that there are other viable contenders. Indeed, reporting theory satisfies all the desiderata for a theory of fictionalizing as detailed above, so we have evidence that there is no more viable contender. So we can rest quite confident that the argument is sound.

IV.   Conclusion

In this chapter I've argued that we have strong reason to think that fictionalizing just is reporting, namely on what the author doesn't take to be actual. My argument first

consisted in showing that fictions are paradigmatic reports. Next, I've added to the literature a list of some of the key desiderata for an account of fictionalizing. Finally, I have shown that my reporting theory has all these desirable traits and that the competing theories each lack at least some of these traits. Without viable competitors, reporting stands alone.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

I.   *Introduction*

In this chapter I briefly review my various contributions to the literature,

questions left to answer and gaps left to fill, and possible extensions to or applications of

my various contributions particularly with respect to discussions going on in other parts

of the discipline. I proceed by reviewing my dissertation in order of focus: first, on those

things that came up while dealing with the competitor fictionalizing theories, then those

regarding my analysis of reporting, and finally those from developing and defending my

theory of fictionalizing as reporting.

II.   *Competitors*

First I'll quickly review the above-mentioned things with respect to the few minor

camps in the fictionalizing literature, then what came out in looking at Lewis's pretense

theory, then finally those things from looking at G-C's make-belief theory.

A. *The Minor Camps*

I spend some time in the Introduction addressing the few minor camps in the

fictionalizing arena, namely Ken Walton's, St. Augustine's, and the undefended

hypothetical view. I take it that the work I did there soundly defeats them all, though

future scholarship might involve taking a look to see if something from the hypothetical

view might be salvageable for theories of hypothesizing. Insights gleaned here might add

to discussions in the philosophy of science, of law, or even in logic. Indeed, we might

even glean some insights on the nature of assuming, which might help certain philosophers defending nondoxastic accounts of faith. From what I gather, "What is this assuming you allow to stand in for belief?" is a question some of them regularly face.[1]

Also in the Introduction I spent some time tying together various views within the two major fictionalizing-theory camps. Having taken down the key figures of those camps in my substantive chapters might motivate the other figures to take the time to distinguish their views in an attempt not to go down with their respective ships. Even still, the authorial-intentional accounts of truth in fiction all have to contend with the seemingly devastating objection I raised in the chapter against G-C's view regarding inconsistent make-believed things over the course of a particular work of fiction (recall the 'lone-agent Suspect A or lone-agent B' case).

Alex Pruss also sketched what could be a really cool detective story wherein everything seems to fall into place in the way detective stories normally go but a select-few readers would pick up that the detective was the culprit all along; it'd be fun to see someone make that. I anticipate that that won't be me.

There is a somewhat similar phenomenon to what's going on in that detective story in politics, namely dog whistling: using coded or suggestive language in political messaging to garner support from a particular group without provoking opposition. You could have dog whistles in literature—for instance, one could so describe a villain that only anti-Semitic readers would pick up on the villain being Jewish. A more amusing, but still wicked, case would be a country divided into two ethnic groups, each of which

---

[1] See, e.g., Daniel Howard-Snyder, "Propositional Faith: What It Is and What It Is Not," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 50/4 (2013).

stereotypes the other the same way. Then one could use dog whistles to make the villain of the story seem to each group to be a member of the other group, thereby maximizing sales. Interestingly in the latter case there might not even be a fact of the matter which group the villain is a member of.

B. *Pretense Theory*

David Lewis never made explicit his reasoning for preferring the pretense theory of fiction. In Chapter Two I made that argument explicit.

I showed that his reasoning depends on a false dilemma between using some token behavior to perform some action A or using that behavior to pretend to perform A. While undermining his reasoning I gave a brief account of so-called facsimile actions other than pretended ones. My theory of fictionalizing depends on the fact that reporting is a facsimile to asserting and so one needn't pretend to assert despite performing behaviors that look like asserting.

I also note in the Introduction that proponents of the pretense theory of fictionalizing don't give us any way to distinguish pretense as fictionalizing from pretense as, say, mocking. Obviously mocking is a type of facsimile. For example, Christopher asserts something. Ruth mocks him: "Blah blah blah. Blah blah blah." Ruth is clearly pretending to assert but not fictionalizing. But if pretense theory is going to be proven right proponents will, I think, need to give us a way to distinguish fictionalizing from nonfictionalizing pretenses.

I also show that G-C deals with Lewis's action-or-pretense dilemma in two ways. First, he—without argument—suggests that acting and pretending to act aren't mutually

exclusive, i.e. one can assert and pretend to assert. While I think that's doubtful, whether pretense precludes intentional acting is a question worth exploring.

Relatedly I suggest in my chapter against pretense theory that pretense requires the intent to pretend. My director challenged this general principle noting that lower animals might pretend. In the moment I responded by restricting my consideration to purposeful acting of humans (or other higher animals). Diving deeper into this topic might be worthwhile.

Second, G-C also attempts to show that there's a facsimile to pretending to assert some sentences as true, namely inviting an audience to pretend or make-believe those sentences are true.

All of this highlights another path for future research, namely to explore facsimile actions in general in more detail, as well as facsimiles to assertion in particular. Example questions here include what kind there are, how to tell if something is a facsimile or a species, etc. Answers to the general question here might inform knowledge-how discussions generally and perhaps also skills-relevant philosophies in particular (philosophy of sports, philosophy of theater, etc.). Answers to the assertion-specific question might give us a more robust picture of the types of speech acts there really are, let alone save us from categorization errors like the one I show we've been falling prey to for some time, namely treating reporting as (a type of) asserting.

C. Make-belief Theory

The first major question G-C needs to answer is what he means by the terms 'make-believe' and 'imagine'. Without saying more, we're left to use naïve views of these terms. But you'll recall my decisive objection in §V of Chapter Three to his

conflating these terms understood the naïve way. So, were one inclined to vindicate G-C's view, she might turn her scholarship-eyes towards answering this question on G-C's behalf.

Another point in G-C's argument is undermined if indirect communication (*à la* Kierkegaard) is not in fact assertion. This is a large discussion already underway.

I spent some time analyzing what it is to pretend to pretend to assert. Similar to the general facsimile work referenced above, looking into this might be interesting and informative for other topics in philosophy.

There's a question in the epistemology literature about whether belief is closed under entailment, or something even stronger like relevant or obvious entailment. I raised the question in this dissertation about whether make-belief is similarly closed (or not). I think I gave good reasons to think it is not so closed, but looking closer here could be fun.

You might think that I'm wrong to think that if one believes that *p* then one does not make-believe that *p*. If I'm wrong here then one of my arguments directly against G-C's view fails. Of course, I think there's a sense in which one can simultaneously believe and make-believe a thing. For example, I might believe that I'm sick with a cold but make-believe that I'm sick with pneumonia. But then I'm simultaneously believing and make-believing that I'm sick. I don't think this undermines my intuition in that I'm not simultaneously believing and make-believing that I'm sick *in the same way*. Perhaps that distinction saves my intuition, perhaps not. That's another thing that future research could explore.

Another argument I made directly against G-C's view might be undermined if it is true that one must always intend to be an audience to her own mental fictionalizing.

Spending some time thinking with double-effect theorists here might vindicate my argument or put it out of its misery (hence why I have multiple arguments directly against G-C's view). In any case, more research can be done to settle this matter.

III.   *Paradigmatic Reporting* Per Se

In the Introduction of this work I suggested that reporting—typical nonfictional reporting and fictional reporting—might be the primary information-sharing human speech act, if there's any. I think it'd be worth exploring that idea in light of (i) having severed reporting from asserting and (ii) how prolific fictions are throughout human history and across human cultures.

As noted in the chapter on reporting, except for Nicholas Rescher's book on the epistemology of reporting no philosopher has given it serious attention. And no one has considered reporting in philosophy-of-language discussions prior to now except as (a species of) asserting.

Contributions I made with respect to reporting include that I offered arguments to show that reporting and asserting are distinct speech acts, neither identical nor hierarchically related. I used fictionalizing itself as the ground for severing these acts. However, I also mentioned but did not elaborate on a potential difference between the two speech acts that, if I can establish the difference, will solidify their severing. One putative difference is whether there must be an intended audience distinct from the utterer. I believe that assertion requires a distinct audience but that reporting does not. There's also the *de dicto / de re* issue I raised in Chapter Four. Again, making these arguments is presently out of scope, but will be great material for future work.

I also presented a case for thinking that reporting is not in general propositional. This argument might be able to be extended to other speech acts that heretofore we've taken for granted as propositional.

I give an account of paradigmatic reports and show that fictionalizing is a type of paradigmatic report. In future scholarship I'll push on the boundaries of my account to see if and when we might still call nonparadigmatic cases "reporting".

One aspect that needs more clarity is the relevant-connectedness criterion among the reporter, the report, and the reported-on especially with respect to nonconcrete objects, as well as the scope of the quantifier(s) over the reported on situation(s). Paradigmatic reports are such that one reports on the self-same situation she's connected to, but there's reason to think that multiple situations can be in play in less-than-paradigmatic reporting.

I concluded my chapter on reporting with a sketch of the various ways that reporting can go wrong including giving an account of so-called fake news. Having a clearer picture of fake news can help in philosophical—and perhaps also practical—discussions on misinformation and activism.

IV.   Reporting Theory of Fictionalizing

On top of adding a new contender to the fictionalizing discussion I added a list of desiderata for a good theory of fictionalizing. I also happened to show that my theory checks all those boxes and my competitors' views only check some of them.

In the Introduction I suggest two narrator-related issues that my reporting account of fictionalizing might be able to speak to or resolve. One is the issue of fictional narrators speaking to real-world audiences, aka "cases of breaking the fourth wall." The

other is the issue of stories being told in cases where it is supposed to be fictionally true that no one was left to tell the tale (or even there to begin with). Future research might include giving fully worked-out solutions.

I believe that with the reporting theory of fictionalizing we can at least in broad strokes answer the questions of how, if, or when actual-world meaning is, can, or should be drawn out from what is true in any given fiction. What makes it the case that two former Superman-related actors are referencing those former roles in a non-Superman TV episode, that *The Wizard of Oz* serves as a sort of argument in defense of the real-world United States remaining on the gold standard, or that the Star Wars saga was *not* written as a metaphor for the process of gender transitioning? I think it's the same thing that makes it the case that a reporter highlights certain features of real situations to communicate particular meanings for audience benefit—namely, the creator's intent plus whatever is needed to make that meaning come across, e.g. recognizable intimations of that intent for starters. Also the creator referencing or otherwise using relevant, recognizable connections or similar features among relevant entities, too. (This isn't the time to work out a full list, but that'd be great for future scholarship.) Further, this doesn't preclude someone seeing a similarity or metaphor otherwise or on top of what the utterer intended. But it would preclude saying that these additional metaphors (or whatever) are what the piece of fiction *is about.*

Finally, here's a cool extension to my project. Christopher Love has a paper in progress in which he gives an account of how it is we—at least in some ways—derive pleasure from engaging with (i.e. creating or reading) tragedies. The ancient problem in Love's own words:

The experience of tragic works of art creates a paradox for philosophers. On the one hand, these works feature characters who undergo significant loss, whose very lives fall apart around them. Yet on the other hand, audiences for millennia have derived great pleasure from tragedies, esteeming them higher than most other works. What accounts for this pleasure? Does it point to human morbidity, or might it have a noble source?[2]

A related concern regards the moral permissibility of engaging with tragedies. Here's my setup for that concern: One might think that there's something morally repugnant about enjoying stories in which good people suffer some great evil, let alone being the one to create such works. We'd think her an off sort of person indeed an acquaintance who revels in real-world human tragedy, and we think even less of perpetrators of those tragedies, after all.

In brief, Love's solution is to say that a / the major (albeit not sole) source of pleasure we experience via engaging with tragedies comes from the perception and practice of virtue. Regarding perception Love means watching characters themselves practice various virtues through their suffering, e.g. heroic perseverance or acting mercifully towards those who have wronged them. Watching people act virtuously is pleasing to us (with some exceptions both to instances of "watching" and to "us," of course). As for practicing virtue, tragedies give authors and readers the opportunity to will the good for characters (even while recognizing that they won't attain it), which is sufficient to count as an exercise of charity on a Thomistic view of virtue. (Granted, for Aquinas charity is a supernatural virtue. It requires more than good will. But that's an issue Love deals with.) And exercising charity also is pleasing to us (again with some

---

[2] Christopher Love, "Virtue and the Paradox of Tragedy," (ms), 1.

exceptions to particular instances and to particular people, or particular people regarding particular instances).

It seems that this nice solution to the paradox of tragedies might have trouble getting off the ground if positive / negative emotions are only appropriate with respect to what is *actually* good / bad. But a mere fictional good / bad isn't actually good / bad. So the emotions are misplaced. Being so sad as to cry over the death of Old Yeller is a case of misplaced emotions if there is no real sweet dog really being put down. (Should I have prefaced this sentence with "Spoiler Alert!"?)

But perhaps positive / negative emotions with respect to what happens in other worlds is appropriate. In that case, obviously Lewis has an easy out. And even if worlds aren't concrete, my view might work here, too. For if fictionalizing is reporting then it seems like there's a similar story to tell about our reaction to tragic fiction as there is about our reaction to tragic stories about friends of friends, e.g.

Exploring all this is obviously currently out of scope but could help bolster what looks like a promising solution to this problem about tragedies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, Robert. "Theories of Actuality." *Noûs* 8 (1974).

Alston, William. *Illocutionary Acts and Sentence Meaning*. Cornell University Press, 2000.

Anderson, Charity. "On Providing Evidence." *Episteme* 15/3 (2018).

Aumann, Antony. "Kierkegaard on Indirect Communication, the Crowd, and a Monstrous Illusion." *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Point of View*, edited by Robert L. Perkins, 2010.

Austin, John L. *How to do Things with Words*. Harvard University Press, 1962.

Bach, Kent. "Applying Pragmatics in Epistemology." *Interdisciplinary Core Philosophy, Philosophical Issues*, edited by Ernie Sosa and Enrique Villanueva, 2008.

Bach, Kent and Robert M Harnish. *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*. MIT Press, 1979.

Badura, Christopher & Francesco Berto. "Truth in Fiction, Impossible Worlds, and Belief Revision." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* (2018).

Ball, Brian and Michael Blome-Tillmann. "Counter Closure and Knowledge despite Falsehood." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 64/257 (2014).

Bjerring, Jens Christian and Wolfgang Schwarz. "Granularity Problems." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 67/266 (2017).

Brandom, Robert. "Asserting." *Noûs* 17 (1983).

——. *Making It Explicit*. Harvard University Press, 1994.

Byrne, Alex. "Truth in Fiction: The Story Continued." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 71/1 (1993).

Cameron, Ross P. "How to be a Nominalist and a Fictional Realist." *Art & Abstract Objects*, edited by Christy Mag Uidhir, 2012.

Close, A. J. "Don Quixote and the 'Intentionalist Fallacy'." *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 12 (1972).

Conter, David. "Fictional Names and Narrating Characters." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 69 (1991).

Currie, Gregory. "What is Fiction?" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43. (1985).

——. "Works of Fiction and Illocutionary Acts." *Philosophy and Literature* 10 (1986).

——. *An Ontology of Art*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989.

——. *The Nature of Fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 1990.

DeRose, Keith. "Epistemic Possibilities." *Philosophical Review* 100/4 (1991).

Douven, Igor. "Assertion, Knowledge, and Rational Credibility." *Philosophical Review* 115 (2006).

Dummett, Michael. "Truth." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* ns 59 (1959).

Fine, Kit. "Postscript." *Prior* (1977).

Franke, Michael, Giulio Dulcinati, and Nausicaa Pouscoulous. "Strategies of Deception: Under-Informativity, Uninformativity, and Lies—Misleading With Different Kinds of Implicature." *Topics in Cognitive Science* 12/2 (2020).

Frankfurt, Harry. *On Bullshit*. Princeton University Press, 2005.

Garcia-Carpintero, Manuel. "Fiction-Making as a Gricean Illocutionary Type." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65/2 (2007).

Gendler, Tamar. *Intuition, Imagination, and Philosophical Methodology*. OUP, 2010.

Green, Mitchell. "Speech Acts." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta (2015).

Grice, Paul. *Studies in the Way of Words*. Harvard University Press, 1989.

Hamblin, C. L. "Questions in Montague English." *Foundations of Language* 10 (1973).

Harman, Gilbert. "Field on the Normative Role of Logic." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 109/1 (2009).

Howard-Snyder, Daniel. "Propositional Faith: What It Is and What It Is Not." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 50/4 (2013).

Howard-Snyder, Frances. "Truth in Fiction: The Whole Story." *Realism & Antirealism*, edited by William P. Alston, 2002.

Hudson, Hud. *The Fall and Hypertime*. OUP, 2014.

——. "Reflections on the Metaphysics of Sculpture." *Art and Abstract Objects*, edited by Christy Mag Uidhir, 2013.

Krauss, Lawrence M. *The Physics of Star Trek*. Harper Collins, 1995.

Karttunen, Lauri. "Syntax and Semantics of Questions." *Linguistics and Philosophy* 1 (1977).

Lackey, Jennifer. "Norms of Assertion." *Noûs* 41 (2007).

Lewis, David. "Counterfactual Dependence and Time's Arrow." *Noûs* 13/4 Special Issue on Counterfactuals and Laws (1979).

——. *Counterfactuals*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1973.

——. *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.

——. "Scorekeeping in a Language Game." *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 8 (1979).

——. "Truth in Fiction +." *Philosophical Papers I*, 1983.

Love, Christopher, Maj, USAF. "Virtue and the Paradox of Tragedy." (ms).

Lübcke, Poul. "Kierkegaard and Indirect Communication." *History of European Ideas* 12/1 (1990).

MacFarlane, John. "Epistemic Modals are Assessment Sensitive." *Epistemic Modality*, edited by Andy Egan and Brian Weatherson, 2011.

——. "Future Contingents and Relative Truth." *Philosophical Quarterly* 53(212) (2003).

——. "Making Sense of Relative Truth." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 105, 2005.

Martinich, A. P. "Conversational Maxims and Some Philosophical Problems." *Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (1980, 2001).

——. "A Theory of Fiction." *Philosophy and Literature* 25 (2001).

Nunberg, Geoffrey. "The Non-Uniqueness of Semantic Solutions: Polysemy." *Linguistics and Philosophy* 3 (1979).

Owens, David. "Testimony and Assertion." *Philosophical Studies* 130 (2006).

Pagin, Peter. "Is Assertion Social?" *Journal of Pragmatics* 36. (2004).

Peels, Rik. *Responsible Belief: A Theory in Ethics and Epistemology*. OUP, 2016.

Peirce, C. S. *Belief and Judgement*. Harvard University Press, 1934.

Pelling, Charlie. "Assertion, Telling, and Epistemic Norms." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 92/2 (2014).

Plantinga, Alvin. *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford University Press, 1974.

——. "Actualism and Possible Worlds." *Theoria* 42 (1976).

Pruss, Alexander R. "Lies and Dishonest Endorsement." *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 84 (2010).

——. "Sincerely Asserting What You Do Not Believe." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 90/3 (2012).

——. "Nested Modes, 'Qua' and the Incarnation." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 6/2 (2014).

Rescher, Nicholas. *Espionage, Statecraft, and the Theory of Reporting: A Philosophical Essay on Intelligence Management*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018.

Rosenbaum, John W. "Poetic License: Learning from Fiction in Light of Imaginative Resistance." *Teorema: International Journal of Philosophy* 35/3 (2016).

Schiffer, Stephen. *Meaning*. OUP, 1972.

Searle, John. *Speech Acts*. Cambridge University Press, 1969.

——. "Indirect Speech Acts," in *Speech Acts, Syntax and Semantics* no.3, edited by Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan, 1975.

——. "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse." *New Literary History* 6 (1975).

——. *Expression and Meaning*. Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Stalnaker, Robert. "A Theory of Conditionals." *Studies in Logical Theory*, edited by Nicholas Rescher, 1968.

——. *Context and Content*. OUP, 1999.

——. "Conditional Propositions and Conditional Assertion." *MIT Working Papers in Linguistics* 51: New Work on Modality, edited by B. Nickel, J. Gajewski, V. Hacquard, and S. Yalcin, 2005.

Streumer, Bart. "Reasons and Entailment." *Erkenntnis* 66/3 (2007).

Thomasson, Amie. *Fiction and Metaphysics*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Van Fraasen, Bas. "Belief and the Will." *Journal of Philosophy* 81 (1984).

Walton, Kendall. "How Remote Are Fictional Worlds from the Real World?" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37/1. (1978).

——. *Mimesis and Make-Believe*. Harvard University Press, 1990.

Watson, Gary. "Asserting and Promising." *Philosophical Studies* 117 (2004).

Weatherson, Brian. "Morality, Fiction, and Possibility." *Philosophers' Imprint* 4/3 (2004).

Weiner, Matthew. "Must We Know What We Say?" *Philosophical Review* 114. (2005).

Williams, Bernard. *Truth and Truthfulness*. Princeton University Press, 2002.

Williamson, Timothy. "Knowing and Asserting." *Philosophical Review* 105 (1996).

——. *Knowledge and Its Limits*. OUP, 2000.

Wright, Crispin. *Truth and Objectivity.* Harvard University Press, 1992.

Wollheim, Richard. *Art and Its Objects* 2e. Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Works and Worlds of Art.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980.

Zalta, Edward. *Abstract Objects: An Introduction to Axiomatic Metaphysics.* Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983.