Game Worlds, Fictional Authors and Truth in Fiction

by
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Abstract

My goal in this thesis is to propose a new theory of truth in fiction. In Chapter One, I will examine David Lewis, Gregory Currie and Alex Byrne's theories of truth in fiction. By the end of Chapter Two, I will discuss six conditions a theory of truth in fiction must meet (for example, the theory must account for stories in which there is no intelligent life to tell the tale, and also for truths in authorless fictions.) In Chapter Three, I will explain Kendall Walton's distinction between the "work world" and the "game world" — the fictional world of the story versus the fictional world of the game of make-believe that the reader plays with the story. Finally, I will introduce a new "fictional author," located in a game world, in order to propose a new theory that satisfies the conditions.

Acknowledgments

This essay is dedicated to my hilarious friends in Winnipeg and Tehran, who would likely share many laughs if they met.

<div align="right">A.S.</div>

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Chapter One

In Raymond Carver's short story *Cathedral*, a person who seems to be blind is going to visit the narrator of the story and his wife; however, it is a good question whether it is true in the fiction that the person is actually blind or is just pretending to be blind. In *American Psycho* there is also a question whether it is true in the fiction that the main character is genuinely psychotic or merely delusional. Additionally, in Henry James' novel *The Turn of the Screw*, there is also a good question whether it is true in the fiction that there really exists the ghost of Miss Jessel who has control over the children.

When we engage with a work of fiction, we understand the events, places and characters in the story; in other words, we understand the truths in the fiction. It seems that understanding truth in fiction underlies our understanding of every work of fiction and hence our critical and interpretive practice. The question of truth in fiction, therefore, is an important one. More specifically, the question is this: what are the truths in a work of fiction when we engage with its story and how can we grasp them? This is the question I am going to address in this essay.

It is important here to make a distinction between truth in fiction and what David Davies calls it "truth *through* fiction."[1] By truth in fiction we mean truth in the story or in the fictional world of the story. Truth *through* fiction, on the other hand, is truth about the real world which is communicated to us by fictions. For example, imagine a novelist who wants to convey to the audience of her novel that surfeit of pride is the main cause of much human misfortune.[2] The writer of the story in this example intends to convey her belief about the real world through the story and, therefore, this is a case of truth *through* fiction. However, if the author in question wished to convey that "the painful events that befall the central character C in the story arise because of C's prideful nature," then it would be an example of truth in fiction, because it is about the fictional world of that specific story.[3] It should be noted that in this thesis we only deal with truth in fiction and the discussion of truth *through* fiction would be

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[1] David Davies, "Fictional Truth and Fictional Authors", *British Journal of Aesthetics,* vol 36, no 1*,* (1996), 43.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

beyond the scope of this paper.

To appropriately answer the question of truth in fiction, we have to find an analysis that provides the necessary and sufficient conditions under which a sentence p is true or false according to a particular fiction f. We will call such an analysis the "theory of truth in fiction." Some truths in fiction are explicitly true in the fiction; for example, it is explicitly true in the Sherlock Holmes stories that Holmes lives at 221 B Baker Street, London. Some other truths are implicitly true in the fiction because they are not explicitly mentioned in the text of the story. For example, it is implicitly true in the Sherlock Holmes stories that Holmes lived nearer to Paddington Station than to Waterloo Station. Through a map of London from the late Victorian period (when the stories were written), it can be seen that Baker Street is nearer to Paddington Station than to Waterloo Station. Therefore, it is implicitly true in the Sherlock Holmes stories that Holmes lived nearer to Paddington Station than to Waterloo Station, although it has not been explicitly mentioned in the story. The theory of truth in fiction, thus, has to be applicable to both implicit and explicit fictional truths. In other words, the theory has to give us the necessary and sufficient conditions under which a sentence is either explicitly or implicitly true in the fiction.

In this chapter, we will examine some well-known theories of truth in fiction and discuss their respective problems. We will start by examining David Lewis's theory of truth in fiction and then move to Gregory Currie's and Alex Byrne's. Each of these theories has its own problems, which we shall discuss in detail. The ultimate goal of this thesis is the proposal of a new theory that presents a solution to the problems.

David Lewis's Theory of Truth in Fiction

David Lewis makes use of what philosophers term "possible worlds" in his theory of truth in fiction. Possible worlds are, roughly speaking, possible circumstances or alternative ways that the actual world might have been. In other words, when we want to refer to "some metaphysically possible state of the world" we may call it a possible world.[4] Then Lewis suggests that for any fiction f, we could consider some possible worlds in which the story is told as known fact rather than fiction. Lewis explains these possible worlds as follows:

> The worlds we should consider, I suggest, are 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 has knowledge. Our own world cannot be such a world; for if it is really a fiction that we are dealing with, then the act of storytelling at our world was not what it purported to be [...], any world where the story is told as known fact must be among the worlds where the plot of the story is enacted. Else its enactment could be neither known nor truly told of.[5]

And then Lewis suggests his initial analysis of truth in fiction as follows:

> Analysis 0: A sentence of the form "in the fiction f, φ" is true iff φ is true at every world where f is told as known fact rather than fiction.

Here is an example to understand how the theory works. It is explicitly stated in the Sherlock Holmes stories that Holmes lives at 221 B Baker Street, London. In the possible worlds where the plot of the stories is actually enacted and the stories are told as known fact rather than fiction, it is true that Holmes actually lives at 221 B Baker Street, London.[6] Therefore, according to analysis 0, it is true in the fiction that Holmes lives at 221 B Baker Street.

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[4] This definition of possible worlds is not technical, accurate or complete. Also, possible worlds should be considered to be different from fictional worlds, which I will discuss it in Chapter Three.
[5] David Lewis, "Truth in fiction", *American Philosophical quarterly* (1978), 40
[6] That "London" in the fiction refers to the real world city of London seems to be also an implicit fictional truth in the Sherlock Holmes stories.

Analysis 0, however, cannot cover all kinds of truth in fiction. Remember that there are some fictional truths that are not explicitly stated in the fiction; they are implied jointly from the explicit truths and background knowledge of well-known facts about the actual world. Analysis 0 cannot deal with these implicit truths because in order to be true in fiction, a sentence *p must* be explicitly told as known fact in some possible worlds where the plot of the story is enacted. We know that it is not explicitly stated anywhere in the Sherlock Holmes stories that Baker Street is nearer to Paddington Station than to Waterloo Station. Therefore, among the possible worlds where the plots of the stories are actually enacted, there is no world in which it is explicitly told as known fact that Baker Street is nearer to Paddington Station than to Waterloo Station. According to analysis 0, hence, it is not true in the fiction that Holmes lived nearer to Paddington Station than to Waterloo Station, and this is not a good result for analysis 0.

To include implicit truths, Lewis knew that he had to take the factual background into account and so he suggested his next theory as follows:

> Analysis 1: a sentence of the form "in the fiction *f, φ*" is non-vacuously true iff, some world where *f* is told as known fact and *φ* is true differs less from our actual world, on balance, than does any world where *f* is told as known fact and *φ* is not true. It is vacuously true iff there are no possible worlds where *f* is told as known fact.[7]

The idea behind Analysis 1, in fact, is to maximize similarities between the world of a story and the actual world. To see how Analysis 1 works, consider again the following sentence:

1. Holmes lived nearer to Paddington Station than to Waterloo Station.

Now consider a possible world, W1, in which the Holmes' stories are told as known fact and Sentence 1 is true. Also consider W2, in which the Holmes' stories are told again as known fact and Sentence 1 is false. Note that from the explicit content of the Holmes' stories we know that Holmes lives at 221B Baker Street, London. Through a map of London from the late Victorian period (when the stories were

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[7] Lewis, "Truth in fiction", 42.

written,) it can be seen that Baker Street is *actually* nearer to Paddington Station than to Waterloo Station. Therefore, W1 is closer than W2 to our actual world and so according to Analysis 1, Sentence 1 is true.

Unfortunately, Analysis 1 is problematic too. One difficulty arises when we find some sentences that, although true in fiction as a result of Analysis 1, would not cohere with central truths within the story. Lewis's own example properly shows this problem: In *the Adventure of the Speckled Band*, Sherlock Holmes concluded that the murderer is a snake—a Russell's viper, which climbed up the bell-rope. However, in actuality, Russell's vipers are not constrictors and hence unable to climb ropes. Therefore, according to Analysis 1, in *the Adventure of the Speckled Band*, Holmes bungled his detective task, because, as Lewis explains it, "there are worlds where the Holmes stories are told as known fact, where the snake reached the victim some other way, and where Holmes therefore bungled. Presumably some of these worlds differ less from ours than their rivals where Holmes was right and where Russell's viper is capable of concertina movement up a rope."[8]

In order to solve the problem, Lewis suggests that implicit truths in fiction come jointly from the explicit content of the story and the belief world of the community of origin of the story — rather than the facts about the actual world. Lewis's next analysis, as Kendall Walton puts it, is to "maximize similarities between the world of a story and the real world not as it actually is but as it is or was overtly believed to be in the artist's society."[9] Lewis's final theory of truth in fiction then is as follows:

> Analysis 2: a sentence of the form "in the fiction *f*, *φ*" is non-vacuously true iff, whenever *w* is one of the collective belief worlds of the community of origin of *f*, then some world where *f* is told as known fact and *φ* is true differs less from the world *w*, on balance, than does any world where *f* is told as known fact and *φ* is not true. It is vacuously true iff there are no possible worlds where *f* is told as known fact.[10]

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[8] Lewis, "Truth in fiction", 43.
[9] Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts,* Harvard University Press, 1990., 152.
[10] Lewis, "Truth in fiction", 45.

Carl Matheson and David Davies further expound on David Lewis's final theory of truth in fiction:

> The suggestion is that what is true in a (fictional) story N can be captured by appeal to possible worlds in which things that are explicitly true or implied in the text of N are *actually true* — we may term these the S-worlds for that story. The problem, then, is to pick out a particular group of S-worlds as the ones which determine what else is true in the story. Lewis himself proposes that what is true in N is what is true in those S-worlds for N that most closely resemble the way the members of the intended audience for N believe the actual world to be.[11]

Certain technical terms in Lewis's terminology have to be defined here. Telling things as known fact rather than fiction, as it was mentioned before, is *truth-telling* about matters whereof the teller has knowledge. The collective belief worlds of the community of origin of *f* are "those worlds where the overt beliefs all come true."[12] Lewis also defines a belief *overt* in a community at a time "iff more or less everyone shares it, more or less everyone thinks that more or less everyone else shares it, and so on."[13]

Lewis' final theory does not have any problem with the example of the Russel's viper. The facts about the movements of Russel's vipers were discovered years after the stories of Sherlock Holmes were written. Therefore, Victorian Londoners did not overtly believe that Russel's vipers are unable to climb ropes. Hence, according to analysis 2, it is true in the fiction that the Russel's viper, which had climbed up the rope, was the murderer. Lewis's final theory, however, faces some other problems which I will discuss in the next section.

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[11] David Davies and Carl Matheson, *Contemporary Readings in The Philosophy of Literature: An Analytic Approach*. Broadview Press, 2008, 73.
[12] Lewis, "Truth in fiction", 45.
[13] Ibid.

Objections to David Lewis's Theory of Truth in Fiction

The first problem with Lewis's theory is the well-known problem of unreliable narrators. Remember that according to Lewis, telling as known fact is *truth-telling* about matters whereof the teller has knowledge. Since according to Lewis's theory, it is assumed that the teller says the truth, everything explicitly stated in the text of a given story would be automatically true in the fiction. However, there are some works of fiction in which the story-teller (which could be the narrator of the story,) is unreliable or delusional. In these cases, not everything explicitly stated in the story is true in the fiction; and this is in contrary to Lewis's theory. As an example, I could refer to Charles Kinbote, who is the unreliable narrator in Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Pale Fire.* In the story, Kinbote states that he is the exiled king of Zembla and the target of a murderer, which indicates he is either lying or delusional.

The second problem with Lewis's theory is irrelevant facts.[14] Irrelevant facts are facts that are irrelevant to the whole story and hence not true *in* the fiction, although they are true in the collective belief worlds of the community of origin of a given story. Here is an example: suppose that in the present time I write a realistic novel set in the Middle Ages with the fictional characters of ordinary people of that time. It is true in the collective belief worlds of the community of origin of the story that 'Mr. Barack Hussein Obama is the first African-American President of the United States' = Q. In our example, the world in which my story is told as known fact and Q is true differs less from the collective belief worlds of the community of origin of my novel, than does any world where the story is told as known fact and Q is false. Therefore, according to Lewis's theory, it is true in the story set in the Middle Ages that Mr. Barack Hussein Obama is the first African-American President of the United Sates. However, this is not correct because Q is completely irrelevant to the story set in the Middle Ages.

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[14] See Gregory Currie, "Fictional Truth", *Philosophical Studies,* no 50 (1986)*,* 197.

The third problem with Lewis's theory is impossible fictions. Impossible fictions are stories that contain impossible propositions such as contradictions and inconsistencies. Note that in order to be possible, it seems that possible worlds cannot contain contradictions. Therefore, there will not be any possible world in which an impossible fiction is told as known fact. But according to Lewis's theory, everything will be true in an impossible fiction because "p is vacuously true in fiction f iff there are no possible worlds where f is told as known fact."[15]Lewis himself was aware of this latter problem and suggested a solution for it. He says that an inconsistent fiction can be divided into some consistent fragments and if a proposition p is true in one or more consistent fragments, then p is true in the whole inconsistent fiction.[16]

Gregory Currie, however, offers an example in which Lewis's solution would not work. Imagine a story in which the central character of the story has refuted Gödel's theorem; and suppose that refutation of Gödel's theorem by the main character is the main point of the story and hence essential to its plot. Gödel's theorem is a mathematical truth and since mathematical truths are necessarily true, their denials are necessarily false. Hence there is no possible world in which the denials are true. As Currie argues, there is no consistent fragment in which Gödel's theorem is refuted and therefore it is not true in the fiction that Gödel's theorem is refuted by the main character. But in this scenario, the whole point of the story, which is the refutation of Gödel's theorem, is lost.[17] [18]

The last problem with Lewis's theory that I discuss here is Kendall Walton's objection. Walton believes that there are cases in which it seems evident that certain fictional truths are implied by certain others; however, according to Lewis's theory, they are not true in the fiction. For example:

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[15] Lewis, "Truth in fiction", 45.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Gregory Currie, *The nature of fiction,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 69.
[18] Another example of impossible fictions is Graham Priest's Sylvan Box story in which a box is at the same time both empty and occupied; see Priest, Graham, "Sylvan's Box: a Short Story and Ten Morals", *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*, vol 38 (1997).

Consider Conrad's story *Secret Agent*. At the end of the story, there is the newspaper headline, "Suicide of Lady Passenger from a Cross-Channel Boat," that is supposed to inform the reader of the death of the character Mrs. Verloc. There is no doubt the newspaper headline implies Mrs. Verloc suicide, but why her and not a different passenger? It is doubtful at best that, were a newspaper to carry that headline in those circumstances, it would have been Mrs. Verloc who had jumped (or even that it would have been more likely than not that it was she), and it is no less doubtful that this counterfactual is mutually believed.[19]

Walton's idea is that a possible world in which the story *Secret Agent* is told as known fact and it is Mrs. Verloc who has committed the suicide, is not closer to the collective belief worlds of Conrad's community, than is any world where the story is told as known fact and a different passenger committed the suicide. Therefore, according to Lewis's analysis, it is not true in the fiction that Mrs. Verloc committed the suicide.

To solve some of these problems, Gregory Currie has tried to offer a different theory of truth in fiction. Currie does not invoke possible worlds in his analysis; rather, he appeals to the beliefs of the "fictional author." As Carl Matheson and David Davies explain:

Currie maintains that, in reading fictional narratives, we make believe that we are being informed about the events in the story by a reliable source, the so-called "fictional author" of the story. The fictional author is *not* the actual author, nor, crucially, the narrator internal to the story. The latter may be deceived or deceiving, whereas the fictional author is assumed to be both completely trustworthy and completely knowledgeable about the narrated events. The reader forms an impression of the character and beliefs of the fictional author based on the text of the narrative and assumptions about its story. It is by reference to the beliefs attributable to the fictional author that the reader determines what is true in the story, since the fictional author, as noted, is taken to be a completely reliable source of information about the narrated events.[20]

In the next section, we will examine Gregory Currie's analysis of truth in fiction and discuss its problems.

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[19] Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe,* 162

[20] Davies and Matheson, *Contemporary Readings in The Philosophy of Literature,* 73.

Gregory Currie's Theory of Truth in Fiction

Here is Gregory Currie's account of truth in fiction:

> p is true in fiction f iff it is reasonable for the informed reader to infer that the fictional author
> of f believes that p.[21]

Currie defines the fictional author as follows:

> As readers, our make-believe is that we are reading a narrative written by a reliable, historically
> situated agent (the fictional author) who wants to impart certain information. Historically
> situated as he is, the fictional author speaks to an audience of his own time, and most likely, of
> his own culture. He cannot, of course, tell us everything he knows that is relevant to his story —
> it would take too long and the attempt would dissipate our interest. But he knows that he does
> not need to tell everything. He can rely on a shared background of assumptions, telling us only
> those things that deviate from or supplement that background, or those things that belong to
> background and that he feels a need to emphasize. Because the teller — the fictional author —
> is a fictional construction, he has no private beliefs, no beliefs that could not reasonably be
> inferred from text plus background. His beliefs are not discovered by a reading (a rational and
> informed reading) but constructed by it.[22]

Also Currie defines the informed reader as follows:

> A reader who knows the relevant facts about the community in which the work was written.
> The informed reader, unlike the fictional author, is not a fictional entity. A real reader can be an
> informed reader. [23]

Currie's suggestion is that in order to find truths in fiction, the informed reader must identify the belief-
set of the fictional author, and this belief-set is identical to the truths in fiction. The question for Currie
now is this: how does the informed reader determine the belief-set of the fictional author? Currie's
initial answer is that the informed reader determines the fictional author's beliefs by means of the text
of the story and the knowledge of what people in the community of the actual author tended to believe:

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[21] Currie, *The nature of Fiction,* 80.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid

Although the real author and the fictional author are distinct, it is quite likely that the kind of person the fictional author is will depend in some way or other on the kind of person that the real author is. Thus the fictional author of the Sherlock Holmes story is not Doyle but seems at least to be a member of the same community as Doyle: a late Victorian in general outlook.[...]we need start with no assumption about the fictional author more powerful than the assumption that he belongs to that community.[24]

But Currie admits that this is not always the case, because there are examples in which the fictional author cannot be a member of the real author's community:

A modern author who writes a novel set in the Middle Ages may succeed in placing within the novel a fictional author who has the beliefs that medieval people tended to have. In that case, what will be true in the novel will reflect medieval belief. More likely, his fictional author will display beliefs and attitudes that are distinctively modern. In that case, what is true in the novel will have little to do with the overt beliefs of medieval times.[25]

In historical stories such as the one above, the fictional author does not seem to possess the background beliefs of the author's community. Currie's idea is that in these cases, our source to determine the beliefs of the fictional author is the text itself, which is "the direct evidence we have about the fictional author, the character traits that distinguish him from others, and the idiosyncratic features of his mental life."[26] However, we will see in the next section that Currie's idea faces some serious objections.

[24.] Currie, *The nature of Fiction,* 78.
[25] Ibid
[26] Currie, *The nature of Fiction,* 77.

Objections to Gregory Currie's Theory of Truth in Fiction

One objection to Currie's account is that he is not clear how we should determine the historico-cultural situation of the fictional author. David Davies illustrates this objection by comparing Russell Hoban's novel, *Riddley Walker* with Gabriel Garcia Marquez' novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude.* *Riddley Walker* is a novel "set in a post-nuclear British culture whose inhabitants have "mistakenly" reassembled various recognizable fragments of *our* culture." *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a magic realist novel for which "we presumably do not want to say that the various "supernatural" events narrated in the story have natural explanations *in the story*."[27] Davies concludes that in *Riddley Walker*, we must situate the fictional author in the actual author's community and culture, while in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* we must locate the fictional author within the community and culture of the narrator of the story. However, the problem, as Davies explains, is that "the different decisions concerning the historico-cultural situation of the fictional author in the two cases *cannot* be justified by reference to different properties of the two *texts,* nor by reference to general background information concerning the historico-cultural situation of the real author."[28] Davies' idea is that nothing in the text of these two novels, as opposed to what Currie suggests, would lead our decisions about the situations of the fictional authors.

The next objection to Currie's account concerns the status of the informed reader. The "informed reader," as Currie proposes, seems to be overly idealistic or intellectual.[29] It seems doubtful that readers *must* know the overt beliefs of the actual writer's society in order to be considered as "informed readers." For example, consider children's stories. One might argue that the informed reader of a children's story (a child), does not need to know the overt beliefs of the community of origin of the story. Because, in order for a child to understand a children's story, she does not need to know, and cannot know, what people and adults in the community of origin of the story overtly believed. However,

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[27] Davies, "Fictional Truth and Fictional Authors", 48.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Thanks to Chris Tillman.

one possible reply here is to change the definition of "overt belief" in respect to children. Remember that Lewis defines "overt belief" a belief that more or less everyone shares it, more or less everyone thinks that more or less everyone else shares it, and so on. In regard to children stories, one might change the definition of "overt beliefs" into the beliefs that more or less every child shares, more or less every child thinks that more or less every other child shares, and so on. The informed reader of a children's story hence would be a child who knows *children's overt beliefs* of the community of origin of the story. There are, however, two problems with this reply. The first problem is that it seems to be too demanding to say that child readers need to know the children's overt beliefs of the community of origin of the children stories. The second problem is that if we distinguish between children's stories with child audiences, and adult's stories with adult audiences, then why should we not distinguish between other different types of audiences — for example, literary expert audiences and ordinary audiences — and then define the informed readers based on subcategories of audiences and overt beliefs of subcommunities in the community of origin of fiction. This is a problem especially when one believes that the informed reader of a given story should not be restricted to one specifically intended type. Nonetheless, the central idea is that a reader who has some sort of knowledge of the historico-cultural background of the actual author's society is called the "informed reader," though it seems far from clear what exactly the background knowledge should be.

In addition to the status of the informed reader, Currie's theory of truth in fiction suffers from one more interesting problem, which I call the problem of mindless stories. In the next section, we will look at this problem and will see how Alex Byrne tries to propose an alternative account that copes with it.

The Problem of Mindless Stories

Alex Byrne's objection to Currie's theory concerns the status of the fictional author. Byrne believes that the fictional author in Currie's account has two main features: first, the fictional author is part of the story; in other words, the fictional author is an inhabitant in the very fictional world of the story. Second, the fictional author is a fact-teller who asserts the story as known fact. These two features together imply that every story must be told as known fact by its fictional author within the fictional world of the story. However, the problem here is that Currie's fictional author cannot explain "mindless stories" or "stories with infallible narrators." According to Byrne, mindless stories are ones in which no intelligent life exists, that is, there is no one to tell the tale. The fictional author, thus, cannot be an inhabitant in the fictional world of such stories. Stories with infallible narrators are "the stories in which the impersonal narrator in fiction is evidently infallible, and has a quite astonishing insight into the mental lives of the characters."[30] The problem of this kind of story is that it seems impossible that Currie's fictional author — who is a reliable, historically situated agent and an inhabitant in the fictional world — can come to know so much about the characters' mental states; because in order to do that, Byrne argues, "either the fictional author must have supernatural epistemological powers, or, an incredibly detailed investigation must be taken place by him."[31] But neither is plausible to suppose of the fictional author of, for example, a realistic story with ordinary characters without supernatural powers in a realistic society.

Byrne's objection seems to be quite effective. However, let us see why Byrne thinks that Currie's fictional author possesses the two main features mentioned above, namely, the fictional author is an inhabitant in the very fictional world of the story, and second, the fictional author is a fact-teller

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[30] Ibid, 29.
[31] Ibid.

who asserts the story as known fact. Let us start with the second feature first. One reason to support the claim that Currie's fictional author tells the story as known fact is Currie's explicit statement where he says: "the fictional author (as I shall call him) is that fictional character constructed within our make-believe whom we take to be telling us the story as known fact."[32] Remember that according to David Lewis, "telling as known fact rather than a fiction" is "*truth-telling* about matters whereof the teller has knowledge." Hence it seems safe to say that the fictional author is telling truths about the events and characters in the fictional world of the story of which she has knowledge. Byrne also offers an independent argument to show that Currie's fictional author is telling the story as known fact; here is the argument:

1- According to Currie's theory of truth in fiction, p is true in fiction f iff it is reasonable for the informed reader to infer that the fictional author of f believes that p.

2- It is reasonable for the informed reader to infer that the fictional author of f believes that she, the fictional author, is telling the tale as known fact.

3- If 1 and 2 are true, then it is true in fiction f that f is told as known fact.

4- 1 and 2 are true.

5- Therefore, it is true in f that f is told as known fact.[33]

I think the argument is sound and we could admit that the fictional author is a fact teller.

Consider the first feature now, that is, Currie's fictional author is an inhabitant in the fictional world of the story. One reason to support this claim *might be* again Currie himself when he says "the fictional author does not exist outside the fiction."[34] However, one important question here is why? Why should we assume that Currie's account *requires* that the fictional author must be an inhabitant of the fictional world of the story and cannot be outside of it? I think Currie's account does not imply

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[32] Currie, *The nature of Fiction,* 76.
[33.] Byrne, "Truth in fiction: The story continued", 29.
[34] Currie, *The nature of Fiction,* 77.

anything about the location of the fictional author. But if one assumes that Currie's fictional author must always inhabit the world of the fiction, then the mindless stories will become a serious problem for Currie.

In order to solve some of the problems of Currie's account, Alex Byrne suggests a different theory of truth in fiction, which is not based on the belief-set of the fictional author. Byrne's theory is based on the so-called act of "inviting to make-believe" performed by the "ideal author," who is different from the fictional author. In the next section, I will present Byrne's account of truth in fiction and will discuss David Davies' objections to his account.

Alex Byrne's Theory of Truth in Fiction

Here is Byrne's theory of truth in fiction:

> It is true in fiction f that p iff the informed reader could infer that *the ideal author* is inviting the informed reader to make-believe that p.[35]

Byrne believes that for every text, no matter fictional or non-fictional, two different authors can be distinguished: the actual author and the ideal author. Byrne uses the idea of sentence meaning versus speaker meaning in order to make the distinction. Suppose that the actual author of a given text intended to imply p by an utterance of a certain sentence; however, from the sentence in the context of the text, the informed reader infers that the actual author must have intended to imply q (q might be different or identical to p.) Byrne's suggestion is that we can consider two authors for the sentence: the actual author who intended to imply p, and the *ideal author* who intended to imply q. According to Byrne, "the *ideal* author intends to say precisely what the informed reader thinks the *actual* author intended to say; the informed reader constructs the ideal author."[36]

In order to explain his point, Byrne uses an example of a non-fictional text in which an expert

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[35] Byrne uses the term 'the Reader' for the informed reader. In order to keep the same terminology I use the 'informed reader' in his account. He also uses the term 'the Author' for the ideal author. See Byrne, "Truth in fiction: The story continued",33.

[36] Byrne, "Truth in fiction: The story continued",31.

on poisonous snakes, Oscar, has a "one-way conversation at a distance" about Russell's viper. Oscar's

conversation is indeed his written report of his trip to India, which is as follows:

> We trapped four adult males, which the villagers helped us to bring back to the tents. They had
> the unusual markings of longitudinal reddish brown spots, but the characteristic black and white
> rings were surprisingly dull. The specimens were later taken back by Pan-Am.[37]

Byrne believes that there are some implicit truths in the text which are not explicitly stated; rather, they

are implicit in the text and must be pragmatically inferred. For instance, the implicit truths that:

> "*Oscar's team* trapped four (and *no more* than four) *snakes* (not people or tigers); that the
> *snakes* (not the villagers or the tents) had spots; that the *snakes* were marked with black and
> white bands of less than expected brightness (not that the local jewellery was uninteresting);
> that the *snakes* were *flown* to *the United States* (not that Pan-Am recovered its rightful property,
> or returned the snakes to their original habitat).[38]

Considering these implicit truths and the distinction between sentence meaning and speaker meaning,

Byrne argues that we can distinguish between the actual author and the ideal author of Oscar's text:

> We can distinguish two authors of Oscar's book about Russell's viper. The first is Oscar
> himself, and the second is someone whom we will call 'the ideal author'. The ideal author is an
> abstract entity, a logical construction using pragmatic principles. Oscar may have intended to
> say that the tents had reddish brown spots, or that samples of the local jewellery owned by Pan-
> Am were returned to that airline. If so, then Oscar failed dismally. But the ideal author did not
> intend to say this. The ideal author intends to say precisely what the ideal reader — whom we
> will call 'the [informed] reader' — thinks the actual author intended to say. The [informed]
> reader constructs the ideal author.[39]

Then Byrne explains his main purpose of introducing the ideal author of stories. The idea is that

if a given text is non-fictional, the ideal author of the text *asserts* the propositions to the informed

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[37] Byrne, "Truth in fiction: The story continued",30
[38] Ibid.
[39.] Byrne, "Truth in fiction: The story continued",31.

reader. But if the text is fictional, the ideal author will not assert the propositions, rather, the ideal author 'invites the informed reader to make-believe' them. Byrne's account of truth in fiction, hence, is that "the propositions which the ideal author invites the informed reader to make-believe are exactly what is true in the fiction."[40]

As you see, Byrne's ideal author does not have the two main features that Currie's fictional author supposed to have: the ideal author in Byrne's account is not a fictional character in the story. In other words, the ideal author does not inhabit the fictional world of the story. And, the ideal author is not telling the story as known fact, rather, she is inviting the informed reader to make-believe the story. Therefore, it seems that Byrne's theory does not have any problem with mindless stories in which there is no intelligent life to tell the tale. However, as we will see in the next section, there are some other problems with Byrne's account.

Objections to Byrne's Theory of Truth in Fiction

The first difficulty with Byrne's theory is that Byrne does not explain what exactly the act of "inviting to make-believe" is. As Peter Alward indicates, "it seems to be far from clear by what mechanisms invitations to make-believe would be generated."[41] This would be even a more serious problem when Byrne talks about implicit invitations to make believe:

> Now what the ideal author invites the [informed] reader to make-believe may not be explicitly stated in the text. But just as implicit assertions in non-fiction can be recovered by pragmatic inference, so can implicit invitations to make-believe in fiction.[42]

"Implicit invitations to make-believe" seem to be unclear and ambiguous without any definition in Byrne's account. However, it is possible to make the definition clearer. For example, one might think if S encodes P, then the informed reader is invited to make believe P. If asserting P pragmatically

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[40] Byrne, "Truth in fiction: The story continued",33.
[41] Peter Alward, "That's the Fictional Truth, Ruth". Acta Analytica (2010): 347-363, 356.
[42] Byrne, "truth in fiction: The story continued", 32.

implicates Q, then the reader is implicitly invited to make believe Q.[43]Moreover, it seems to me that by "making an invitation to make-believe," Byrne means something similar to "fictive speech act" that Currie had already suggested in his theory of fictionality.[44] Currie believes that "the writer of fiction engages in an act of speech that is distinctively fictional and distinctively different from the speech acts such as asserting, requesting, questioning, and so forth."[45] Currie terms it "the fictive illocutionary act" and he defines it as follows: " U's utterance of S is fictive if and only if U utters S intending that the audience will

(1) Recognize that S means P; recognize that S is intended by U to mean P;

(2) Recognize that U intends them (the audience) to make believe that P;

(3) Make believe that P;

   And further intending that

(4) (2) will be a reason for (3)"[46]

Currie thinks that in a work of fiction, the actual author fictively asserts the story to the audience, and Byrne, with the same image in mind, thinks that the *ideal* author invites the audience to make-believe the story. I think that both Currie and Byrne share the same idea that authors of fictions engage in an act of speech (the act of inviting to make-believe, or the act of fictively asserting) that is distinctively different from the regular speech acts such as asserting, requesting, questioning, and so forth.

 However, this common idea is a good target for John Searle to raise an interesting objection to both Byrne and Currie. In the next section, I will explain John Searle's objection and we will see that, according to Searle, there cannot possibly be such thing as "fictive speech act of inviting to make-believe."

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[43] Thanks to Chris Tillman.
[44] A theory of fictionality is a theory that distinguishes fiction from non-fiction.
[45] Gregory Currie, "Works of fiction and Illocutionary acts," *Philosophy and Literature*, no. 10 (1986), 304.
[46] Currie, *The Nature of Fiction*, 31.

John Searle's Objection to The Fictive Speech Act of Inviting to Make-Believe

John Searle claims that there cannot possibly be such a unique different speech act called "fictively asserting" or "inviting to make-believe." Searle suggests the following argument for his claim:

> In general the illocutionary act (or acts) performed in the utterance of the sentence is a function of the meaning of the sentence. We know, for example, that an utterance of the sentence "John can run the mile" is a performance of one kind of illocutionary act, and that an utterance of the sentence "can John run the mile?" is a performance of another kind of illocutionary act, because we know that the indicative sentence form means something different from the interrogative sentence form. But now if the sentences in a work of fiction were used to perform some completely different speech acts from those determined by their literal meaning, they would have to have some other meaning."[47]

According to Searle, if one claims that the actual or the ideal author of a fiction performs the unique speech act of 'fictively asserting" or "inviting to make-believe" (which is supposed to be completely different from regular speech acts such as asserting, requesting and so on), then one is committed to the false view that words have different meanings in works of fiction! Let us look at Searle's argument more closely to see what exactly his point is. Consider these two sentences: "snow is white" and "you will leave now." We know that any *regular* utterance of the sentence "snow is white" in *ordinary usage* of English language is the performance of the speech act of assertion. In other words, there is no usual context in ordinary usage of English language in which the sentence "snow is white" would be, for example, the speech act of questioning or ordering. However, an utterance of the sentence "you will leave now" in ordinary usage of English language could be either the performance of the speech act of issuing an order for you to leave now, or the speech act of making an assertion that you will leave now, depending on the context of the utterance. The question is what differences between the two sentences

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[47] John Searle,"The logical status of Fictional Discourse", *New Literary History,* vol. 6, no. 2 (1975), 32.

make the former to be associated with one speech act, and the latter to be associated with two speech acts? John Searle believes that there is some linguistic feature in the literal meaning and form of the sentence "you will leave now" that makes the sentence capable of being associated with the two different speech acts in two different contexts. The literal meaning and form of the sentence "snow is white," however, does not have that linguistic feature and so its utterance cannot be the performances of two different speech acts. We cannot exactly explain what that feature is, but the linguistics or pragmatics might be able to tell us. Then Searle seems to generalize this idea to all sentences in language. Searle seems to believe that for any possible speech act associated with any sentence, there must be a linguistic feature in the literal meaning and form of the sentence that determines the performance of precisely that speech act.[48] Now consider a novelist and a journalist who both write in their distinct works of fiction and non-fiction that "it was a dark and stormy night."[49] The idea is that neither in the novelist's work of fiction nor the journalist's report, is there linguistic feature in the literal meaning and form of the sentence "it was a dark and stormy night" that would possibly associate the sentence with the speech act of *inviting to make-believe that it was a dark and stormy night* (this is similar to the case of "snow is white" that there was no linguistic feature in the literal meaning and form of the sentence that would possibly associate it with the speech acts of questioning or ordering.) Therefore, if one claims that in the novelist's work of fiction, the sentence "it was a dark and stormy night" is used to perform a speech act completely different from that determined by its literal meaning, one is committed to the false view that the sentence "it was a dark and stormy night" has different literal meaning and form in the novelist's work.

Some people have tried to deny Searle's argument. Gregory Currie, for example, maintains that if the speech act (or acts) performed in the utterance of a sentence is a function of the literal meaning of

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[48] To see more about John Searle's argument look at John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language,* Cambridge University Press (1969): 19 and also Sarah Hoffman, "Fiction as Action", <u>Philosophia</u> 31 (3-4) (2004), 519.

[49] I have borrowed this example from Sarah Hoffman, "Fiction as Action", <u>Philosophia</u> 31 (3-4) (2004).

the sentence, token sentences with the same meaning must be used to perform the same speech acts, which is of course not true.[50] For example, the sentence "you will leave now" can be used to perform two different speech acts, namely asserting that you will leave now and issuing a request for you to leave now, whilst the sentence has the same literal meaning on both occasions of use. Currie's argument, in other words, is that if the sentence "it was a dark and stormy night" has the same speech act in both fictional and non-fictional contexts, then, similarly, the sentence "you will leave now" must also have the same speech act in both contexts of asserting and ordering (because the meaning of either sentence does not change in different contexts). However, "you will leave now" has two different speech acts in two different contexts of asserting and ordering. Therefore, "it was a dark and stormy night" could also have two different speech acts in two different contexts of fictional and non-fictional discourse.

I think it is true that "it was a dark and stormy night" and "you will leave now" both have the same literal meaning in different contexts; however, the point is that there is a difference between the two sentences. The difference is the very linguistic feature in the literal meaning and the form of the two sentences that John Searle mentions in his argument. There is a linguistic feature in the literal meaning and form of the sentence "you will leave now" that associates the sentence with two different speech acts of asserting or ordering in two different contexts. But, there is no such linguistic feature in the literal meaning or form of the sentence "it was a dark and stormy night" that could associate the sentence with two different speech acts of asserting and inviting to make-believe in two different contexts.

One might, however, deny my reply. One might argue that when the sentence "it was a dark and stormy night" occurs in a fictional context, the sentence will gain a linguistic feature that would associate it with the speech act of inviting to make-believe. One might claim that given the rules of fiction-making (and receiving) when we make fictions *everyone* realizes that fictions are framed by

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[50] Currie, *The nature of fiction,* 14.

invitations to make-believe. When a fiction starts by the sentence "It was a dark and stormy night," the sentence is to be read as "please make believe that it was a dark and stormy night" with an attendant request to make believe the other sentences. In other words, the fictionality indicator is implicit but can be made explicit.

There are serious objections to John Searle's argument. For example, Searle's argument is mostly based on "meaning" of sentences, but he never specifies what "meaning" means in his account. Also, Searle says that there must be a "linguistic feature" in the sentences that determines the speech acts. But again he does not specify what exactly that "linguistic feature" is and he asks the linguistics to explain it for him. Moreover, if Searle could claim that there is a mysterious linguistic feature in the "meaning" of sentences that determines their speech acts, Byrne and Currie could similarly claim that there is a mysterious linguistic feature in the "meaning" of sentences that determines the speech act of inviting to make-believe.

Let me go back now to Byrne's theory of truth in fiction and explain some other problems that his theory faces. One objection to Byrne's theory is that it lets a proposition to be true in the fiction even if the actual author has the specific intention for the informed reader not to make believe it. Suppose that the informed reader of a given story infers that the ideal author is inviting her to make believe that p. Now one question here is whether there could be any circumstances under which the informed reader would decline the invitation and hence p would not be true in the story? According to Byrne's theory, the answer is No, because his theory states that "the propositions which the ideal author invites the informed reader to make-believe are exactly what is true in the fiction."[51] However, I think, there could be such circumstances. The example that I have in mind is when the informed reader infers that the ideal author is inviting her to make believe that p, but at the same time knows that the *actual author* believed that p should not be true in the story. Here is an example: suppose that the informed reader of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories claims that in virtue of many things in the story about Holmes' personal

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[51] Byrne, "truth in fiction, the story continued", 33.

life, it is plausible to infer that the ideal author is inviting the informed reader to make-believe that

Holmes is gay. However, imagine that Conan Doyle revealed in an interview at his time that he

intended to depict Holmes as a misogynist straight man with some sexist views, because he believed

that this feature should be essential to the characteristics of his fictional detective. However, suppose

that Doyle simply failed to show his intention in the text of the stories simply because of his poor

writing. In this rare scenario, I think, it is too strong to say that it is true in the fiction that Holmes is

gay. Although the ideal author invites the informed reader to make believe that Holmes is gay, the

actual author intends the informed reader not to make believe it. So it seems that there could be

situations, in which the informed reader recognises the invitation from the ideal author to make believe

that *p*, but the informed reader would decline the invitation and hence p will not be true in the story.

The last objection to Byrne's theory concerns the necessity of ideal author. One might think that,

basically, there is no need for the "ideal author" in the theory of truth in fiction, because the "actual

author" does everything that the ideal author is supposed to do. In the next section, I will examine this

view and the possible reply to it.

David Davies's Objection to Alex Byrne's Theory of Truth in Fiction

Some people might believe that every intention and action that is attributed or ascribed to the

ideal author can simply be attributed or ascribed to the actual author as well, and therefore there is no

need for Byrne's ideal author. David Davies, for example, believes that "the device of 'the ideal author'

is an unnecessary complication in Byrne's analysis" and whatever the ideal author does could also be

done by the actual author.[52] Davies believes that the ideal author in Byrne's account can be simply

replaced with the actual author, and therefore Byrne's account is in fact the following account:

(**Byrne***) It is true in fiction *f* that *p* iff the informed reader could infer that the *actual* author is

inviting the informed reader to make-believe that *p*.[53]

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[52] Davies,"Fictional truth and fictional authors", 49.
[53] Ibid

Note that in (Byrne*), the ideal author has been omitted from Byrne's original theory and replaced with the actual author:

> Byrne's proposal is formulated in terms of technical devices that he labels [the informed] reader and the ideal author. While I cannot argue this point here, I believe that the device of the ideal author is an unnecessary complication in Byrne's analysis, and that his proposal is in fact co-extensive with the proposal discussed in the text [i.e. Byrne*] and thus vulnerable to the sort of counter-example developed below.[54]

Then Davies suggests a counter-example for (Byrne*) as follows:

> We can envision situations in which the informed reader would (i) infer that the actual author intends her to make believe that *p*, yet also (ii) hold that the text uttered by the actual author is insufficient to realize this intention. In such cases, a proposition *p* may satisfy the proposal analysis, offered as a sufficient condition for being true in a fiction, yet not be true in the fiction in question.[55]

To illustrate his point, Davies offers an example: suppose that having read the story S, the informed reader would reasonably infer that the actual author intends to invite the informed reader to make believe that "the painful events that befall the central character C in the story S arise because of C's prideful nature. However, in virtue of other things explicitly stated in the text T of the story, the informed reader takes such an explanation of C's conduct to be psychologically implausible."[56] Davies believes that this example shows that (Byrne*) does not offer the sufficient conditions for fictional truths.

One possible reply to Davies's objection is that in his example, although the informed reader infers that the actual author of S *intends* to invite her to make believe p, at the same time the informed reader also infers that the actual author simply failed to make this invitation in the story. In other words, it

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[54] Davies,"Fictional truth and fictional authors", footnote 13, 54.
[55] Davies, "Fictional truth and fictional authors", 49.
[56] Ibid.

seems that Davies has ignored the fact that in Byrne*, the necessary and sufficient condition is an inference by the informed reader to the actual author's *action* of inviting to make believe, not an inference to the *intention* of the actual author to do so. Having an intention to do something is different from actually doing it. This reply, however, seems to be problematic, because it seems to me that when the informed reader infers that the actual author intended to invite her to make believe that p, the informed reader could also infer that the actual author is actually inviting her to make believe that p. Moreover, I do not believe that the ideal author in Byrne's theory is an unnecessary complication. We should note that, according to Byrne's proposal, different stories written by one person have their own distinct ideal authors who are different from the actual author. If the reader of a story knows from other works by the same writer that the actual author intends to say p, it does not entail that the reader infers that the ideal author of the given story must intend to say p too. The idea is that sometimes the actual author says something, while the fictional author says something completely different. Byrne himself has mentioned this point:

> What is the point of introducing the concepts of the ideal author and the informed reader? Well, the intuitive idea is that the ideal author provides the standard by which the actual author's success in communication can be judged. If the actual author succeeds perfectly, then he is perfectly represented by the ideal author. He fails in proportion to the difference between himself and the ideal author.[57]

Byrne's idea is that the informed reader can judge the actual author's success in communication. In other words, it could be possible that the informed reader would infer that the actual author intended to say something, but she simply failed to actually say it. In this case, the informed reader's judgment is that what the actual author intended to say is different from what the ideal author is saying. Similarly, it is possible that the informed reader infers that the actual author is inviting her to make believe something, but the ideal author is not inviting her to make-believe it.

[57.] Byrne, "truth in fiction: the story continued", 32.

Since Byrne wanted to solve the problem of mindless stories, he switched from the fictional author to the ideal author. Note that the fictional author *asserts* the story as known fact within a fictional world, but the ideal author *invites* the audience to make-believe the story. I think the fictional author has this advantage that her act of asserting is much clearer that the ideal author's act of "inviting to make-believe." Asserting is a very common regular speech act, but the fictive speech act of inviting to make-believe is just hard to define. Therefore, I will switch back to the fictional author in the rest of this essay. However, the problem of the fictional author, as discussed earlier, is that since it is supposed to be inside the fictional world of the story, the fictional author cannot comply with mindless stories. My strategy in this paper, thus, is to locate the fictional author with her speech act of assertion in a fictional world different from the world of the story. I will present my version of the fictional author in Chapter Three, but before that there is one big question that I still have to answer: The question is why we cannot just appeal to the intention or the action of the actual author, rather than the fictional author in the theory of truth in fiction. There could be different answers to this question, but one of them, which I think opens an interesting discussion, is that there might be authorless fictions. In other words, there might be stories without any actual author. If a theory of truth in fiction is based on only the intention or the action of the actual author, then the theory cannot account for truths in authorless fictions. But are there any authorless fictions? In order to answer this question, it seems that first we need to study the nature of fiction and then talk about the existence of authorless fictions. In the next chapter, we will see that Kendall Walton proposes a theory of fictionality that allows the existence of authorless fictions.

Before starting our discussion about authorless fictions, let us review some of the main conditions that we found in this chapter for a theory of truth in fiction. According to what we have said so far:

1- The theory of truth in fiction must comply with impossible fictions that contain inconsistency and contradictions;

2- The theory of truth in fiction should not let irrelevant facts to be true in the fiction;

3- The theory of truth in fiction must comply with mindless stories in which there is no intelligent life to tell the tale;

4- According to the theory of truth in fiction, a proposition cannot be true in the fiction if the actual author of the story has the specific intention for the reader not to make believe it.

In the next chapter, we will find some other conditions that will be added to this list. Finally, in Chapter Three, I will try to propose a new theory of truth in fiction that meets all of the conditions.

Chapter Two

We ended the previous chapter with the question of why a theory of truth in fiction cannot be based on the intention or action of the actual author rather than the fictional author. As it was mentioned in the end of Chapter One, one possible answer is that there might be authorless fictions. Thus, our task in this section is to come up with an example of an authorless fiction. One possible example could be a "massively collaborative fiction with no central oversight."[58] We can find this in the book *One Thousand and One Nights*, a collection of folk Middle-Eastern, West-Asian and South-Asian stories that were gathered over many centuries. The tales trace their roots back to ancient and medieval Arabic, Persian, Indian and Egyptian folklore and literature. The Persian stories in the book are ancient verbal tales for which no specific author has been identified. However, one might disagree that *One Thousand and One Nights* could be considered an authorless fiction. One might argue that historians or literary experts might eventually be able to identify the actual author(s) of those stories. Or one could argue that multi-authored works are still authored. The question, therefore, is if there are any other kinds of authorless stories.

Kendall Walton believes that there is at least one kind of authorless story, which he terms "natural fictions."[59] As an example Walton says "consider a naturally occurring inscription of some assertive sentences, cracks in a rock which by pure coincidence spell out a story 'once upon a time, there were three bears ...'"[60] Walton believes that this is an example of an authorless story.

To understand why Walton thinks the cracks in the rock are a work of fiction, first we need to look at his definition of "fiction". In the next section, I will present Kendall Walton's theory of fictionality, and then we will see why he thinks that the rock-face is an example of an authorless story.

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[58] Thanks to Chris Tillman.
[59] Walton, *Mimesis as Make-believe,* 86.
[60] Ibid.

Kendall Walton's Definition of Fiction

According to Walton's view, fiction is not limited to something verbal or written that is made of words of a language. According to Walton, a doll, a truck toy, a snow fort, paintings, pictures, sculptures, movies and novels are all works of fiction, as per his definition of fiction:

"To be fiction is to possess the function of serving as a prop in games of make-believe."[61]

Let us see what the terms *props*, *function* and *games of make-believe* mean in Walton's theory of fictionality:

Props: In Walton's view, *props* are "the objects that contribute to collective imaginative activities by assisting in the coordination of imaginations."[62] As he explains:

> A snow fort is a prop because it induces or prompts the audience to imagine that there is a real fort with turrets and a moat. A doll is a prop in a child's game because it induces the child to imagine that there is a blonde baby girl. The painting *La Grande Jatte,* the pattern of paint splotches on the surface of the canvas, is a prop that prompts the viewer to imagine that a couple is strolling in a park. And finally, the string of words in *Gulliver's Travels* is a prop because it induces the reader to imagine that there is a society of six-inch-tall people who go to war over how eggs are to be broken.[63]

Games of Make-Believe: According to Walton, games of make-believe are "one species of imaginative activity in which imagination happens by means of props in addition to a certain convention, understanding or agreement" that he calls *a principle of generation*.[64] For instance, if two people play a game of make-believe in which all stumps in a bush are bears, the explicit stipulation, "Let's say that stumps are bears," is the principle of generation. However, Walton says that "not all principles are established thus. Some, including most involving works of art, are never explicitly

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[61] Walton, *Mimesis as Mimesis-Believe*, 102.
[62] Ibid, 20.
[63] Ibid, 38.
[64] Ibid, 38.

agreed on or even formulated, and imaginers may be unaware of them, at least in the sense of being unable to spell them out."[65]

Function: Walton's idea is that there are many objects that might accidentally make us imagine something; however, it is not their *function* to serve as a prop for the imagination. A tree or a rock, for instance, might sometimes make some people imagine certain things, but it is not one of the functions of the tree or the rock to serve as a prop in games of make-believe. Rather, to say that an object possesses the function of serving as a prop is to say that the object "has the job of prescribing the same imaginings to everyone."[66] For instance, a sufficiently bear-like stump possesses the function of serving as a prop in a game of make-believe because "it will prompt all observers to imagine a bear and give each reason to think that others are similarly prompted."[67] Walton's idea is that when something possesses the function of serving as a prop in games of make-believe, it obviously is "a boon to collective imaginative activities."[68] A toy truck or a well-executed snowman or a sufficiently bear-like stump in a bush possess the function of serving as props in games of make-believe, because:

> [They prompt or induce all who see them to] imagine approximately the same things — a truck or a man of certain sort or a bear. Moreover, it is probably obvious to each participant that the others will imagine approximately the same thing that he does. Each can reasonably assume that the snowman will induce others, as it does him, to imagine a man of a certain sort. The prompter coordinates the imaginings of the participants and also gives them grounds to expect such coordination — both without disruptive discussion.[69]

We can now understand better what Walton means by his theory of fictionality:

> To be fiction is to possess the function of serving as a prop in games of make-believe.

The most important idea behind Walton's theory of fictionality, I think, is that the concept of fiction

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid, 92.
[67] Ibid, 23.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Walton, *Mimesis as Mimesis-Believe*, 23.

attaches to objects rather than the action or intention of the actual creator of the fiction:

> The institution of fiction centers not on the activity of fiction makers but on objects — works of fiction or natural objects — and their role in appreciators' activities, objects whose function is to serve as props in games of make-believe. Fiction making is merely the activity of constructing such props.[70]

This is why Walton believes that there are authorless fictions. Let us now go back to the example of the rock-face. A naturally occurring inscription of cracks in a rock spelling out "once upon a time there were three bears..." is a fiction in Walton's view, because it possesses the function of serving as a prop in the game of make-believe in which "there are three bears…". According to Walton's view, the rock-face is a fiction because it prompts or induces all who see it to imagine approximately the same things (that there were three bears...) and moreover, it is probably obvious to each participant that the others will imagine approximately the same thing.

There are, however, several possible objections to Walton's view on authorless fictions. In the next section, I will present Gregory Currie's objection.

Gregory Currie's Rejection of Authorless Stories

Gregory Currie denies Walton's example of the rock-face. Currie disagrees that the inscription of the cracks in the rock *is* fiction:

> We may treat the shapes on the face of the rock *as if they were fiction*; we can respond to them as we would to a fictional work. But this is not enough to make something fiction. If it were, the Bible would undoubtedly be a work of fiction, since many people read and enjoy Bible stories *as* fiction. What makes the Bible not fiction is exactly the absence of the right kind of fictive illocutionary intention on the part of its authors. Just about anything can be read as fiction, but not everything is fiction.[71]

Currie's idea is that just because we can treat something as fiction does not mean it is one. I think

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[70.] Ibid,88.
[71] Gregory Currie, "Works of fiction and Illocutionary acts," *Philosophy and literature* 10(1986): 306.

Walton agrees with Currie in this regard too. Walton does not say that if some people *treat* an object as a fiction, it becomes one; however, he says the treatment makes the object into a prop, not into a fiction. The point is that being a prop is not sufficient for being a fiction. According to Walton, in order to be a fiction, the object has to *possess the function* of serving as a prop in games of make-believe. The Bible does not have the function of serving as a prop, even though some people treat it as one for their games of make-believe. Walton mentions an example to illustrate this point: compare a sufficiently bear-like stump in a bush with a second stump that does not look like a bear at all. The first stump, the sufficiently bear-like stump, has the function of serving as a prop, because everyone who sees it would be prompted and induced to imagine a bear and everyone would believe that everyone else who sees it would also imagine a bear. This stump possesses the function of serving as a prop. This stump is a fiction regardless if it has been treated as a fiction or not. The second stump, on the other hand, is not a fiction at all because it does not have the function of serving as a prop. Now suppose that Katherine and Courtney are walking in the bush and they start a game of make-believe. They say, "Let's say every stump we see in this bush is a bear." In this scenario, the second stump (which does not look like a bear) would be a prop in their game of make-believe, but still it is not a fiction even for them: being a prop is not sufficient for being a fiction. Similarly, the Bible or a history book could also be read or treated as fiction by some people, but since they do not have the function of serving as a prop in games of make-believe, they are not fiction.

Here one might ask: in the face of disagreement when some people treat an object as fiction and some as non-fiction, how do we decide whether it is fiction or non-fiction? Walton's reply is that when the object has the function of serving as a prop, then regardless of the number of people who treat it as fiction or non-fiction, it is a work of fiction. And if the object does not have the function of serving as a prop, it is not fiction even if many people treat it as such. This answer, however, is not very persuasive because it leads to another question: what is it for an object to *possess* the function of serving as a prop in games of make-believe? It seems that Walton has to determine in what sense or senses a particular

work has the function of serving as a prop in games of make-believe, and in what sense or senses it does not. Unfortunately, he does not have a clear answer for the question except his confession that the notion of function is vague:

> Function is society relative, so is fiction. The ancient Greek myths may have been nonfiction for the Greeks but fiction for us. Perhaps nonfiction for adults is sometimes fiction for children. The fuzziness of the distinction derives partly from uncertainties about what to take as the relevant social group […] Function is a matter of degree even when it is relativized to societies, and so is fictionality. It may be *more or less* the function of a given work, for a given society, to serve as a prop in games of make-believe. But there are differences of degree along several other relevant dimensions.[72]

Walton's theory of fictionality, hence, suffers from the problem of vagueness. This might be one of the reasons that some people reject the existence of authorless fictions. Our main goal in this essay, however, is to propose an appropriate theory of truth in fiction. I think such a theory needs to account for the *possibility* of authorless fictions. Thus, my strategy is to adopt Walton's theory of fictionality and assume the possibility of authorless fictions. Whether or not they exist, our theory of truth in fiction would work. Therefore, in this essay, I will not build the theory of truth in fiction directly based on the actual author's intentions or actions, because of this *possibility* of authorless fictions: when a fiction does not have an actual author, there will not be any intention or action of the actual author either.

In the debate of authorless fictions, Currie believes that there is one more argument that shows the rock-face example is not a fiction: if the rock-face is a fiction, then written fictional works must be treated as "disembodied texts;" however, "they must be identified as the products of an utterer with certain kinds of intentions and beliefs."[73] Currie explains his point as follows:

When we read a work of fiction we construct the story not merely on the basis of what is said in the

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[72] Walton, *Mimesis as Mimesis-Believe*, 91- 92
[73] Currie, "Works of fiction and Illocutionary acts", 307.

text, but by assuming a tacit background of facts into which the fiction is slotted. There are many things that are true in fiction that are not said in fiction [...] we make-believe that the story is told to us as assertion by someone who shares the common beliefs of the society in which the work is written. We then use the text and the background of common belief to work out what this person believes [...] fictional works cannot be treated as disembodied texts; they must be identified as the products of an utterer with certain kinds of intentions and beliefs.[74]

I agree with Currie that we make-believe that stories are told to us as assertions by someone. But, I do not think this would be a problem for the rock-face example. We could still make-believe that the authorless story is told to us by its *fictional author*. An authorless fiction does not necessarily have to be treated, as Currie says, "disembodied texts." Though an authorless fiction does not have an actual author, it still, I believe, possesses a fictional author who asserts the story to us as known fact.

I think Currie's main motivation to deny authorless fictions is that according to his theory of fictionality, what distinguishes fiction from non-fiction is the intention of the actual author. According to Currie, if a given text is written with an intention for the audience to make-believe it, then it is fiction, and if the same text is written with a different intention — for example the intention that audience believe rather than make-believe it — then it is non-fiction. Rejecting the possibility of authorless fiction, therefore, is vital for Currie's theory of fictionality. In other words, if Currie accepts the authorless fictions, then he has already contradicted his own theory of fictionality for distinguishing fiction from non-fiction (because according to his theory, the creator's fictive intention is necessary for every work of fiction). I can see how the intention of the actual writer sounds like a very good candidate for many people to distinguish fiction from non-fiction; however, I do not see why we have to pay the cost of denying natural authorless fictions in order to keep this candidate. Kendall Walton has offered a new definition of fictionality according to which we do not need the intention of creator and therefore there are authorless fictions that possess the function of serving as props in the games of

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[74] Ibid

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make-believe. Currie rejects the authorless fictions mostly on the ground of his own assumption of authorial intention. In other words, Currie's only argument to deny authorless fictions is that since there is no intention behind authorless fictions, therefore, there is no fiction. However, I think, if he wants to deny the authorless fictions, Currie has to provide a better objection which is not only on the basis of intention. But Currie never provides such on objection.[75] On the other hand, I agree that Walton's definition of fiction is not adequate either. The concept of fiction in his theory is closely connected to the concept of function, but *function* is left without a good explanation. Since Walton does not present the criteria of *function*, the definition of *fiction* seems to be ad hoc. In this paper, I am looking for a theory of truth in fiction and so, in the next chapter, I will explore how Waltonian theory of fictionality might be extended to provide a new theory of truth in fiction based on a novel characterization of the fictional author. By adopting Walton's view on fiction, I think we could add two more conditions of the theory of truth in fiction to our previous list. These conditions are:

- The theory of truth in fiction must account for truths in non-literary works of fiction such as paintings and sculptures as well as literary ones.

- There might be authorless fictions and the theory of truth in fiction must account for the truths in the authorless fictions.

Our final list of conditions that the theory of truth in fiction must meet is now complete. Here is the final list:

1- The theory of truth in fiction must comply with impossible fictions that contain inconsistency and contradictions.

2- The theory of truth in fiction should not let irrelevant facts to be true in the fiction.

3- The theory of truth in fiction must comply with mindless stories in which there is no intelligent life to tell the tale.

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[75] However, we could consider some different objections. For example, one might argue that fictionality requires representationality. Representationality requires intention. (Thanks to Chris Tillman)

4- According to the theory of truth in fiction, a proposition cannot be true in fiction if the actual author of the story has the specific intention for the reader not to make believe it.

5- The theory of truth in fiction must account for truths in non-literary works of fiction such as paintings and sculptures as well as literary ones.

6- There might be authorless fictions and the theory of truth in fiction must account for the truths in the authorless fictions.

In the next chapter, I will try to propose a new theory of truth in fiction that meets all of the above conditions. To build the theory, I will introduce a new version of the fictional author, who is outside the world of the story in a different fictional world. In order to explain the fictional world that contains the fictional author, I will make use of Kendall Walton's distinction between "work worlds" and "game worlds." We will see that the new version of the fictional author could help us to overcome both problems of mindless stories and authorless stories.

Chapter Three

Our goal in this chapter is to propose a new theory of truth in fiction that satisfies the conditions we came up with in the previous chapters. I will make use of a different version of the "fictional author" in the new theory. The fictional author I will introduce in this chapter does not inhabit the fictional world of the story; the fictional author would be located within a "game world," which is different from the "work world" of the story. "Game worlds" and "work worlds" are two different kinds of "fictional worlds" that Kendal Walton has distinguished.[76] In what follows, I will explain the distinction between the "work worlds" and the "game worlds," and then will explain the specific game world which contains the fictional author. Finally, I will propose the new theory of truth in fiction based on the speech act of assertion performed by the fictional author within the game world.

As mentioned above, a game world is one kind of fictional world. Thus, it seems that before talking about game worlds, we need to know what we mean by "fictional worlds."

Fictional Worlds

One possible definition for "fictional world" is "a particular class or cluster of propositions that are true in the fiction."[77] In other words, all the truths together in a given work of fiction constitute the fictional world of the story. "Possible worlds" are also defined sometimes as sets of propositions. However, we should note that although the definition makes them very similar to each other, fictional worlds are *not* possible worlds.

At least two differences can be found between fictional worlds and possible worlds: "fictional worlds are *sometimes* impossible and *usually* incomplete, whereas possible worlds (as normally construed) are necessarily both possible and complete."[78] To say that fictional worlds might be impossible means that fictional worlds could contain contradictions or inconsistency. Graham Priest's

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[76] Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*
[77] Ibid.*,* 64
[78] Ibid.

Sylvan Box story — in which a box is at the same time both empty and occupied — or Gregory Currie's example of a story in which a mathematical truth is denied, are two examples of stories with impossible fictional worlds. Possible worlds, however, cannot contain contradictions, because if they do, they will not be possible worlds.

To say that possible worlds are complete means that "the class of propositions constituting any given possible world includes either *p* or *~p* for any proposition *p* (or every proposition not about particulars absent from that world)."[79] Fictional worlds, on the other hand, *sometimes* (not always) are incomplete. For example, the Sherlock Holmes stories neither say nor imply anything about the occupation of Holmes's great grandfather. It seems that it is neither true nor false in the Holmes stories that, for instance, Holmes' great-grandfather was a baker. The fictional world of the story, therefore, seems to be *indeterminate* or *incomplete* in this respect. In the painting *La Grand Jatte*, it is neither true nor false in the fictional world of the painting that the couple in the foreground is married, and so the fictional world is incomplete.[80]

We should note that fictional worlds could be defined as complete worlds. David Lewis, for instance, associate a number of worlds with a fiction, usually the nearest worlds to the real world — or the belief world of the author's community — in which what is stated explicitly in the fiction are true, and all of these worlds are complete. For the purposes of this thesis we do not need to deeply study details of the metaphysical problems with fictional worlds and possible worlds. However, it is important to know that since fictional worlds are different from possible worlds, the metaphysical and logical rules of possible worlds are not necessarily applied to fictional worlds. In other worlds, fictional worlds might occasionally violate the rules of possible worlds.

Having briefly discussed fictional worlds, we can now move on to the two different kinds of fictional worlds: "game worlds" and "work worlds."

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[79] Walton, Mimesis as Make-Believe, 66.
[80] Ibid.

Work Worlds vs. Game Worlds

According to Walton, a "work world" is the fictional world of an artwork itself regardless of the audiences and the games of make-believe that they play with the work. For example, consider the painting *La Grande Jatte*. It is fictionally true in the work world of the painting itself that a couple is strolling in a park and that there are sailboats on a lake. These propositions are true in the fictional world of the work regardless of how people engage with the painting or what kind of imaginative game they play with it. On the other hand, when appreciators play games of make-believe with works of fiction, there will also be another kind of fictional world, which we call the "game world":

> People can play any sort of make-believe game they wish with a given work. For example we could arbitrary decide to adopt the view that because of the patterns of paint sported by *La Grande Jatte*, we are to imagine a pair of hippopotamuses wallowing in a mud hole rather than a couple strolling in a park. This would make the former proposition fictional in our game and the latter not. But it would not change the world of the painting. It would not then be *La Grande Jatte*−fictional that hippos are wallowing in a mud hole, not even if all viewers of the painting should for some reason choose to play games in which this is fictional. And it would still be *La Grande Jatte*−fictional that a couple is strolling in a park.[81]

Walton's idea is that the fictional world of a given work and the game worlds that different appreciators play with the same work, may share many fictional truths; however, there are some propositions fictionally true in the game worlds that are not fictionally true in the work world, and, therefore, they are two different kinds of fictional worlds. For example, if Richard is looking at *La Grande Jatte*, there is a game world in which "it is true that Richard is seeing a couple strolling in a park. But this is not fictional in the painting. Richard is not among the characters in the painting he is looking at. So the two worlds are distinct."[82]

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[81]Ibid, 59.
[82] Ibid.

One important and interesting feature of the game worlds, according to Walton, is that the reader of a story is also a fictional character in the game world and co-exists with other fictional characters in her game world. In fact, Walton believes that the reader of a story is simultaneously both actual and fictional:

> It *can* be fictional that a real person such as Henry saves a heroine, or destroys a villain, or congratulates a hero. For real people can "exist in fictional worlds", that is, it can be true of Henry, or of any actual person, that fictionally he exists [...] when readers and spectators become fictional they do not of course cease to be actual. If a reader or spectator is such that fictionally he exists, it is also literally the case that he exists. So our standpoint is a dual one. We, as it were, see Tom Sawyer *both* from inside his world and from outside of it. And we do so simultaneously. The reader is such that, fictionally, he knows that Tom attended his own funeral, and he is such that fictionally he worries about Tom and Becky in the cave. At the same time the reader knows that no such persons as Tom and Becky ever existed. [83]

Walton uses his idea that "reader is a fictional character" to propose a solution for the problem of "audience's psychological reactions toward fictional entities." As we know, audiences of stories have different feelings, such as fear, pity, admiration, envy, or worry towards fictional entities. However, the question is: how do people have feelings towards fictional characters when they know perfectly well that they do not exist and are merely fictional? Walton's reply is that readers play games of make-believe with stories. These games generate different fictional worlds (game worlds) in which the readers are fictional characters who co-exist with other fictional characters of the story, and hence can have feelings toward them:

> We, as readers and spectators of representational works, *do* "share worlds" with Tom sawyer, Willy Loman, and other characters. But the shared worlds are fictional ones, not the real one. [84]

I think Walton is right when he says that the reader of a story becomes a fictional character in her

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[83] Walton, "How Remote are Fictional Worlds from the Real World", 20-21
[84] Ibid., 21

game of make-believe, but I do not think he is right when he says that other fictional characters of the given story are also within the reader's game world. I could mention two objections to Walton's claim: first, I do not think that *all* readers *always* must imagine themselves with other fictional characters of the story in one world. Note that Walton believes that readers could pity Anna Karenina or admire Tom Sawyer because they imagine themselves as fictional characters who share the world with Anna and Tom. However, it seems to me that while reading the novels, I could still pity Anna Karenina or admire Tom Sawyer even without imagining myself with them in one fictional world. It seems to me that Walton's claim that *all* readers share a fictional world with *all* of the story characters is too strong without a good justification. My second objection is that even if we assume that all readers always imagine themselves with the story characters in one fictional world, the characters that they imagine/create in their game of make-believe are not always identical to the fictional characters in the work of story. For example consider *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Mark Twain imagined and created a fictional character named Tom Sawyer in 1876 in the US. When a reader in 2016 reads the story in Iran and plays a game of make-believe with it, the reader also imagines a fictional character named "Tom Sawyer". However, it is possible that Tom Sawyer that the reader imagines is not identical to Tom Sawyer in the work, and therefore, the reader's emotion would be toward a different fictional character. One possible reply, however, to this objection is that the fictional character that the reader imagines in her game of make-believe is in fact the same fictional character who has different properties. In other words, it is possible that the same fictional character in the work world has gained different properties in the game world, but still it is the same one. Therefore, the reader's emotion would be still toward the same fictional character.

Nevertheless, I think it is safe to admit that all of the fictional characters of a story, in the first place, belong to the "work world" of the story, and the reader, as a fictional character, belongs to the "game world." Now the question is who else could be in the reader's game world when she engages with a story. Walton seems to believe that all of the fictional characters who are in the work world are also

within the game world. But I think, when the informed reader plays a game of make-believe with a story in which she becomes a fictional entity, there will be only one more fictional character in the reader's game world that co-exists with the reader and he or she, I suggest, is the "fictional author." My reason for this is that the fictional author, as it was discussed in Chapter One, is a fictional character constructed by the reader who is *asserting* the story *as known fact* to the reader. My proposal, hence, is that we should distinguish two fictional worlds in respect to a given story: the work world of the story with all of the story's characters, and the reader's game world that contains only the (fictional) reader and the fictional author.

I think my proposal could also provide a solution to the problem of psychological reactions toward fictional characters. Note that the central problem with the reader's emotions toward fictional characters is the reader's lack of "belief" to the existence of the fictional characters and events. According to my proposal, when the reader plays a game of make-believe with the story, she becomes a fictional character in the game world along with the fictional author. The fictional author then asserts the story as known fact to the (fictional) reader, and the (fictional) reader *believes* what the fictional author *asserts* to her about the characters and events of the *work world* of the story. The fictional reader, hence, could have emotions toward the fictional characters of the story because she believes that they exist.[85]

One might wonder whether I could apply the same model to films as well, because it seems that in the case of films, there is no fictional author who literally asserts the fictional truths with her words to the audience. In reply to this concern, let us first look at Walton's model for films. Walton's idea is that when you watch a movie, say *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, you become a fictional character who co-exists with Mr. Spock and the captain and other crew in the ship within your world of make-believe. As it was explained above, Walton's claim that the fictional audience and the *Star Trek*

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[85] One might object that it is metaphysically impossible for an agent within a world to assert some facts about another world in which she does not inhabit. However, one should note that, as it was discussed in the beginning of this chapter, fictional worlds are not possible worlds and therefore do not follow the rules of possible worlds.

characters all exist together in one fictional world seems to be metaphysically controversial. Moreover, Walton's claim seems to be intuitively controversial too, because when I watch *Star Trek* and engage with the film, I never imagine myself inside the ship with the captain and Mr. Spock traveling in space. Some people may in fact imagine themselves with the film characters in their games of make-believe, but I assume this is not common between all viewers of the film. What I imagine in my game of make-believe, however, is that I am somehow watching through the screen a real world in which a real ship with some real crew are actually traveling in space (in that world), and I, as a fictional character in my game world, *believe* what has been shown to me. I agree that the fictional author in the case of film is not literally asserting with her words to me that the ship and the crew are traveling in space (but in the novelization of *Star Trek II: Wrath of Khan*, she does so.) However, it seems to me that, in the case of film, there is still a fictional author who is presenting some real recorded pictures of what is going on in the ship in that world. Therefore, my thought is that, in the case of films, the fictional author's illocutionary act of assertion is understood through the pictures that depict the "known facts" of the work world of the story.

Here we should consider some specific questions about the fictional world occupied by the fictional author and the (fictional) reader. Suppose that W1 is the fictional world of a story (the work world) and W2 is the game world that contains the fictional author and the (fictional) reader. One question is: what is true in W2? I do not suppose that the answer of the question should be very complicated. Well, I think it is true in W2 that there are only two fictional entities: the (fictional) reader and the fictional author. I also think that it is true in W2 that the (fictional) reader *believes* everything that the fictional author *asserts* to her. I think these are the only truths in W2. Another question is how the fictional author in W2 knows about what happens in W1. How has she/he gained the epistemological power toward W1? For this question, we should note that the fictional author is a fictional character constructed by the informed reader. Therefore, the question of how the fictional author knows anything about the story, seems to be the question of how the informed reader knows

anything about the story; and the question of how the fictional author has gained his/her epistemological power toward the story, seems to be in fact the question that how the informed reader has gained his/her epistemological power toward the story. And I think the answer to the both questions is this: the pragmatics of natural language. There are already set facts about when certain strings of words imply other words. And there are already set facts about which strings of words are implicated by other words. And facts about which strings figure into evidential support for which other strings. In other words, the study of pragmatics of natural languages would give the informed reader, and consequently the fictional author, the necessary epistemological power toward the story. Have I obviated/eliminated the need for a fictional author when I say pragmatics of natural language gives us the epistemological power toward truth in fiction? I do not think so, because I believe that the sentences in a work of fiction are used to perform the speech act of assertion, and therefore the question is who could be the asserter? The assertions in the text of a story must have been made by an agent who is either the actual author or the ideal author or the fictional author. Obviously, the actual author does not assert fictional truths because she neither believes that fictional truths are actually true, nor intends the audience to believe that they are actually true. In other words, the actual author does not meet the necessary conditions for performing the speech act of assertion. The ideal author, on the other hand, is not a candidate for being the asserter either. As it was discussed in Chapter One, the ideal author theorists, such as Alex Byrne, believe that the ideal author does not assert; rather, she makes invitations for make-believe. Therefore, it seems to me that the best candidate for being the asserter of truths in fiction as known fact is the fictional author and the pragmatics theory, therefore, seems to collapse to the fictional author theory.

We should note that some people might disagree with me about "assertion". Some people might believe that the pragmatic theory of truth in fiction is not based on assertion at all; it is based on inviting to make-believe or fictive assertions. These people would face the problems with the status and definition of the fictive act of inviting to make-believe, which was discussed in chapter one. Some

other people might believe that the pragmatic theory is neither based on assertion nor inviting to make-believe; it is based on the meaning of sentences. For these people, p is true in fiction f iff p is the "meaning" of sentence S in the text of the story. These people would face the problem of unreliable narrator, because in a story with unreliable narrator, the meanings of some sentences are not true in the story. However, one might think that the evidential relations between the sentences in a work of fiction should indicate what things are not to be trusted.

I think my proposal of the fictional author in the game world could also prepare some solutions for both problems of authorless stories and mindless stories. In terms of authorless stories, one cannot appeal to the action or intention of the actual author in the theory of truth in fiction, can appeal to the fictional author's act of assertion in the theory. In terms of mindless stories, recall from chapter one that if the fictional author is an inhabitant in the fictional world of the story, then the theory of truth in fiction cannot account for 'mindless stories' in which there is no intelligent life to tell the tale. My solution for this problem is that given the distinction between work worlds and game worlds, it could be said that in a mindless story, the work world is empty from any intelligent life; however, the game world still contains the fictional author who asserts the mindless story as known fact. One might wonder if there could be a story in which all worlds are mindless such that there is no intelligent life in any world whatsoever.[86] And if there could be such story, then the next question is how there would be any fictional author in any fictional world at all? I think we could definitely have such story and nothing would prevent us from making a fiction in which every world is mindless without any intelligent life. However, I do not think it follows from such story that audiences cannot play a game with this story in which the fictional author asserts to them that every world, including their game world, is mindless.

I assume we are now prepared to propose a new theory of truth in fiction based on our new fictional author. In the next section, I will present my theory and will examine how it would fulfill the list of the

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[86] Thanks to Chris Tillman.

conditions that we found at the end of the previous chapters.

A New Theory of Truth in Fiction

Here is my suggestion for a theory of truth in fiction:

p is true in fiction *f*, if and only if:

a) It is reasonable for the informed reader to infer that the fictional author of *f* explicitly or implicitly asserts that *p*; and

b) It is reasonable for the informed reader to infer that the actual author of *f* does not have the intention for the informed reader not to make believe that *p*.[87]

This theory declares that everything that is true in fiction is implicitly or explicitly asserted by the fictional author; however, not everything that is asserted by the fictional author is true in the fiction because it cannot be clearly opposed to the intentions of the actual writer. The first condition relates truth in fiction to the fictional author's speech act of assertion, which is the same regular speech act of assertion as the one we all perform every day in our life. The idea behind the second condition is that what is true in a fiction cannot be clearly opposed to the intention of the actual writer; however, it can be something that the actual author is unaware of. One question here is that what I exactly mean by the term "reasonably infer" in my theory. Infer from what? I have imitated Currie and Byrne's theories of truth in fiction from chapter one in using the term "reasonably infer." Remember that according to Currie and Byrne, an inference must reasonably be made from the text plus background, and "background" could be the socio-historical knowledge of the actual author's community. I also think that other works by the same actual author, including fictions and non-fiction, might be taken into

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[87] Note that the second condition could have been written differently. It could have been: "It is reasonable for the informed reader to infer that the actual writer of *f* does not have the intention for the informed reader **to make believe that ~p**" (instead of "*not to make believe that p*"). My thought here is that there are impossible fictions which contain contradictions such that p and ~p are both true in the fiction. Therefore, in the impossible fictions, the actual writer might have had the intention for the informed reader to make believe that ~*p* as well as *p*.

account here. Moreover, basically, assertions are inferred according to the rules of pragmatics of natural language and should be studied in pragmatics, which is beyond the scope of this essay.

Let me now elaborate the theory with some examples. Suppose that the fictional author of story *f* explicitly or implicitly asserts that *p*. Three possible scenarios, I think, can be considered: the fictional author asserts that p and a) the actual writer intends the informed reader to make believe that *p*, b) the actual writer intends the informed reader not to make believe that *p*, c) the actual writer is unaware of *p* and has no specific intention for the informed reader either to make believe or not make believe that *p*. Let us look at each case closely:

First, the fictional author asserts that *p* and the actual writer intends the informed reader to make believe it. For example, the fictional author of the Holmes stories (explicitly) asserts that Holmes lives at 221 B Baker Street. It is also reasonable to infer from the text that Conan Doyle also intended the informed reader to make believe it. So according to the theory, it is true in the fiction that Holmes lives at 221 B Baker Street.

Second: the fictional author asserts that *p* and the actual writer is unaware of *p* and has no specific intentions for the informed reader to either make believe or not make believe it. This might happen when, for example, the text of a story implies something that goes beyond the intention of the actual writer. For instance, suppose that the informed reader of the *Holmes* stories reasonably infers that Sherlock Holmes is homosexual. The informed reader claims that in virtue of many things in the story about Holmes' personal life, it is reasonable to infer that the fictional author is asserting to the reader that Holmes is gay.[88] Also, suppose that there is no evidence that Conan Doyle had ever *actually* considered Holmes' sexual orientations. In this scenario, according to the theory, it is true in the Holmes stories that Sherlock Holmes is gay because:

   a) It is reasonable for the informed reader to infer that the fictional author implicitly asserts that

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[88] This might look more interesting when one considers the heteronormativity over some works of literature.

Holmes is homosexual;

b) It is reasonable for the informed reader to infer that the actual writer of the Holmes stories, i.e. Conan Doyle, did not have an intention for the informed reader not to make believe that Holmes is homosexual.

Third: the fictional author asserts that *p*, but the actual writer intends the informed reader not to make believe it. In this case, the intention of the actual author might be identified through her other works, including fiction and nonfiction. For instance, imagine again that the informed reader of the Holmes stories reasonably infers that the fictional author is asserting to her that Holmes is gay. However, imagine that Conan Doyle revealed in an interview at his time that he intended to depict Holmes as a misogynist straight man with some sexist views, because he believed that this feature should be essential to the characteristics of his fictional detective. However, suppose that Doyle simply failed to show his intention in the text of the stories because of his poor writing. In this rare scenario, according to the theory, it is not true in the Holmes stories that Sherlock Holmes is homosexual, because the second condition of the theory is not fulfilled: although the fictional author is asserting that Holmes is gay, the actual writer has the specific intention for the informed reader not to make believe it.

Let us go back now to the end of previous chapters and look at the list of the conditions that a theory of truth in fiction should meet. Here is the list again:

1- The theory of truth in fiction must comply with impossible fictions that contain inconsistency and contradictions.

2- The theory of truth in fiction should not let irrelevant facts to be true in the fiction.

3- The theory of truth in fiction must comply with mindless stories in which there is no intelligent life to tell the tale.

4- According to the theory of truth in fiction, a proposition cannot be true in fiction when the actual author of the story has the specific intention for the reader not to make believe it.

5- The theory of truth in fiction must account for truths in non-literary works of fiction such as

paintings and sculptures as well as literary ones.

6- There might be authorless fictions and the theory of truth in fiction must account for the truths in the authorless fictions.

I think the theory of truth in fiction that has been suggested in this thesis more or less meets all of these conditions. The theory complies with impossible fictions because the fictional author is able to assert contradictions and inconsistencies. Irrelevant facts are not true in the fiction because there will not be any reasonable inference to any irrelevant assertion. The theory overcomes the problem of mindless stories in which no one tells the tale, because the fictional author does not inhabit the work world of the story. According to the second condition of the theory, a proposition p is not true in the fiction when the actual author has the specific intention that p should not be true in the fiction. The theory is not based on a new different fictive speech act of inviting to make-believe; it is based on the regular speech act of assertion. The theory accounts for truths in non-literary works of fiction such as paintings and sculptures, because a non-literary fiction could also have a fictional author located in the game world that audiences play with it. And finally, the theory accounts for truths in authorless fictions, because the theory is based on the fictional author, rather than the actual author.

There will definitely be several objections to the theory, and some of them I assume are very serious objections. In the final section of this essay, I will talk about some of the objections that come to my mind.

Objections to the Theory

For a theory of truth in fiction, one might doubt that there really *is* a need for this much complication with a real commitment to a mysterious entity called 'fictional author' in our ontology. One might think that in order to grasp fictional truths, all we need is the knowledge of pragmatics of natural language.

I think if we accept Walton's view that every literary and non-literary work of fiction has two

separate fictional worlds — the work world and the game world — then it seems to me that our ontology of fiction is already complicated. When I propose the idea that the game world of a fiction is a world in which the fictional author asserts the fictional truths as known fact, I do not think my proposal adds more complication to the view. I think it explains the concept of the "game worlds." On the other hand, I completely agree that pragmatics of natural languages might be enough for us to grasp truths in fiction. But I think my theory complies with pragmatics too. Note that my theory is mostly based on the speech act of *assertion*, and we know that assertions have been extensively analyzed in pragmatics. The first condition of the theory states that *p* is true in fiction if it has been explicitly or implicitly asserted by the fictional author. The point is that the fictional author does not affect the nature of the speech act of assertion. The fictional author's assertion is not a mysterious speech act that cannot be understood through the rules of pragmatics.

Another objection is that since I did not analyze the rules of assertions and inferences, I have not fully provided an understanding of truth in fiction. To reply to this objection, I think the rules of assertions have to be discussed somewhere else in the study of pragmatics of natural language where different speech acts and contexts and direct and indirect meanings are studied. They do not necessarily need to be taken into account in the theory of truth in fiction. I believe that there could be a border between the position of the theory of truth in fiction in one hand, and the study of pragmatics of natural language in the other hand.

Another serious objection is that there are other theories which are simpler and thus better than the theory that I suggested. For example, we could have a simpler theory without the "fictional author" which is based on what sentences "encode" and "evidentially support" to be true in the fiction. This is a strong objection to my theory that may in fact put my account in an indefensible position. I think what I have done in this thesis is to provide a version of the "fictional author theory" that to some extent differs from Gregory Currie's "fictional author theory" and also solves some of his problems. However, the objection that the "fictional author theories" are basically wrong theories is still a valid objection to

both me and Currie. At the end, I hope that my contribution will enable us to further the conversation on this important topic.

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