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Book Symposium on Woods' *Truth In Fiction*

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Contents

ARTICLES

Book Symposium on Woods' *Truth in Fiction* Editorial Remarks

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John Woods attracted notice in the 1970s for having advanced the idea that literary discourse carries properties of a sort that count against its profitable analysis in any of the usual accounts of reference, truth and inference. Woods pointed out that one of fiction's peculiarities is its "bet-sensitivity". If Smith and Jones have a £5 wager about where Sherlock Holmes lived in the 1880s, Smith loses if he bets on Cheyne Walk. Jones loses if he bets on Dover Street. But if Smith chooses Baker Street, he is £5 pounds richer, leaving Jones proportionally depleted. For those things to be so, it cannot be true that Smith and Jones achieved no reference to Holmes, in the absence of which the disagreement at hand could not have occurred. Later, Woods would say that we can neither write nor read stories in a present-king-of-France state of mind. The trouble is that, while "Holmes lived in Baker Street" wins the bet, its negation wins the reality stakes. A condition on winning the bet is that Holmes lived there. A condition on the world being as in actually it is that no such being ever lived there.

Woods tried to sort this out in his pioneering book of 1974, *The Logic of Fiction.* He wrote a purpose-built quantified modal semantics for fiction in which the inconsistency-problem was solved by a deep-structure ambiguity in "Holmes lived in Baker Street". The purported ambiguity corresponded to the intuition that the sentence is true in the Doyle stories and not true in reality. A notable feature of this account is that it called upon no lexical ambiguities to solve the inconsistency problem.

Apart from some technical difficulties with the formal apparatus, Woods later came to distrust his 1974 solution. This motivated the book under review here. *Truth in Fiction* abandons its author's former attachment to formal semantics, in favour of what he calls a naturalized logic for inference. Woods' most recent expression of that position is developed in *Errors of Reasoning: Naturalizing the Logic of Inference* (2013). At its core is the idea that, in all essentials, knowledge and inference are biological phenomena, causally induced by information-producing mechanisms that

are in good working order, and operating, case by case, in the way nature has built them to. Soon after, Woods put this "causal-response" logico-epistemics to the test in *Is Legal Reasoning Irrational? An Introduction to the Epistemology of Law* (2015/2018). *Truth in Fiction*, which is subtitled *Rethinking its Logic*, is a second test-case. In each of these works, this intention was made known to its readers. The contributions that appear below are some indication of how well that message has been understood and how well Woods is presently thought to have fulfilled it.

Truth in Fiction: Rethinking its Logic.
A Précis

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1 Data for theory

In writing this book I had two related objectives in mind. I wanted to write a book that told the truth about truth in fiction. And I wanted a book about best practice; that is, about what it takes to get to the truth about truth in fiction in a way that has the best chance of being right about it. In response to this latter objective, I proposed to begin with what we already know of fictional creatures and their doings. More specifically, I wanted to begin with what is known of our readerly and writerly *engagements* with stories. I should say at the beginning that I approach this task as a fallibilist in what I take to be its only interesting sense. I take it as given that of the many things we think we know at a time there are some which we don't actually know then.[1] So, needless to say, there is a nontrivial chance that I'll be wrong in some of what I say I know here.

My data for theory fall into two categories. The categories are mainly an expository aid. I don't exclude the likelihood that they represent differences in degree, rather than metaphysically deep divisions of kind. The first is the category of *hard fact*. By "hard", I mean unarguable. Included in this grouping is the fact that story-making and listening is universal across cultures and times. Stories are as old as their makers' languages have been capable of narrative speech.[2] Another hard fact is that fiction is universally engaging. People like stories. Stories delight, excite, enrage and sometimes make us cry. Sometimes they bore us to the point of abandonment. Later, when stories could be written and read, these same features remained intact. On the writerly side, it is a hard fact that stories are created by their authors. It was Doyle who caused the Holmes stories to be. They were made to

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[1]There are exceptions, of course. One is the claim I just made in specifying fallibilism.

[2]That story-telling is co-terminus with information-conveying speech suggests an adaptive advantage, but this is not yet a hard fact.

be by the scratchings of his pen. It is, then, a hard fact that literary engagement is causally impactful. Considerations of causal impact are important for my account. I will say more about this a bit later on.

In their second grouping, my data for theory are *default facts*. A default fact is not strictly unarguable, but it remains in play until disputed for rightful cause. An overarching consideration is the cost of giving up on it. An overarching consideration is the cost of giving up on it. The default facts that matter here are the lived realities of our engagements with fiction. They include our experiencing ourselves as referring to the objects and events of stories, as ascribing properties to them and knowing various things about them to be true. When Doyle's readers experienced themselves as knowing what's true of Sherlock — for example, that he abided in Baker Street in the 1880s — they recognized concurrently that it is not true that he actually lived there or anywhere else. Some of what they experienced themselves as knowing was known by inference; for example, that flat number B at 221 Baker Street had a floor. Of course, they also experienced themselves as knowing that these inferred truths aren't actually true. When Doyle was penning the sentences that made the Holmes stories, he experienced himself as making those sentences true, albeit without making them true of reality. In making them true, Doyle also experienced himself as making the objects and events *of which* they are true. These views wholly comport with the experienced realities of Doyle's readers then and now. Although they experienced themselves as knowing the truth about Sherlock and knowing simultaneously that none of it's true, it caused them no cognitive dissonance, and none to us either. This is a datum of the first importance for me. It is fiction's most significant *logico-semantic* characteristic. In a next to dead-heat is what I take to be fiction's most peculiar psycho-epistemic characteristic. Readers have intense and physically manifested emotions about things that they know never happened. This, too, needs explaining.

It is a hard fact that, in every time and place, readers of fiction experience themselves in these ways. It is a hard fact that readers and writers experience themselves as knowing that the sentences of stories are systematically inconsistent with subsets of sentences true in the world. Let's call this the *untroubling inconsistency* problem. Two further hard facts bear on this in important ways. One is that readers have a device for maintaining their cognitive balance in the face of this systematic inconsistency. Every reader and every writer has it at its disposal these distinction between what's true in the story and what's true in the world. It is also a hard fact that there is to date no theory of English meaning in empirical linguistics that supports the thesis that the in-the-story/in-the-world distinction is a marker for ambiguity. So ambiguity does not solve the untroubling inconsistency problem. A related problem is posed by fiction's most peculiar psycho-epistemic problems. How knowing that it

never happened, is it possible that readers are outraged by Bill Sykes' cruel slaughter of Nancy in *Oliver Twist*? We could call this the *Yes, but* problem. In what follows, I'll turn first to untroubling inconsistency and then switch to Yes, but.

If, as I think, one of the first duties of a logic of fiction is to solve the untroubling inconsistency problem, it is only natural to wonder how secure my data are. It is well to keep in mind that readers, writers and theorists of fiction are fallible. When they assert something to be a hard fact, there are conditions under which they will be wrong. How secure, then, are my assertions of hard fact? In part, they are secured by the sheer weight of the burden of any proof to show them false. In part, they are secured by the high likelihood that big-box scepticism would be the cost of meeting the burden. By scepticism of the big-box kind, I mean the attribution of inapparent error about a matter of universal import to our entire species, and doing so in the absence of evidence of a more generalized species-wide epistemic disorder.[3] In the present case, if everyone who experiencing himself as referring to Sherlock, making attributions to him, inferring things about him and knowing things about him were actually *misexperiencing* themselves, it would fall to him who says so to explain what it is about *fiction* that causes us all to fall off our cognitive perches.

A large part of the security of my default facts ensues from the hard fact that everyone everywhere and at all times experience themselves in the ways reflected in these data. Here, too, the cost of dismissing such massive regularities is very high. Doubters must provide the defeasing conditions without resort to big-box scepticism. Failing that, they too are in the big-box bog.

2   How to proceed

Assuming now that my data for theory are operationally secure, that is, fit for theoretical gratification, in what ways is gratification to be achieved? First and foremost, it is done by the theory's respecting them. There are two variations of the respect-for-data rule. One is that the theory should take its data at *face value*. The other is that the theory must not disoblige the data save for proper cause. If the theory outright overrides a datum, it must meet a burden of proof whose weight is proportional to the datum's overall importance for theory. On the other hand, if the theory distorts a datum for reasons of simplification or ease of exposition, the theory's reconstrual of its datum must stand in some tight and recognizable approximation to the real thing. Decidedly impermissible is what Gerd Gigerenzer calls "data-bending". A theory bends its data by selecting or rewriting them ten-

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[3]"Big-box" is a play on words, as in the shopping malls of Edmonton and Minneapolis. They are commercial centres condemned by some to be absurdly over-large.

dentiously so as to favour the theory's preconceived and preferred outcomes.[4] A corollary of this maxim — and the second variation of the respect-for-data rule — is that when we employ common words to formulate our theories, it is a violation of the respect-for-data rule to change their meaning without notice, and without an explanation of why. To help keep track of these requirements I'll label them simply as the face-value rule and the normal-meaning rule. An equally material aspect of the theoretical gratification of the data is that the theory's duty to provide a coherent and plausible account of what would be the case were these data to be true.

If everything I've said so far were said in the company of some neurotypical readers and writers — *minus* those who have philosophical preconceptions[5] about fiction — there would be little resistance, if any at all. What this suggests is that someone with the relevant philosophical preconceptions of the present day would be likely to kick back and, in so doing, ignore or downplay the history of the world-wide facts of readerly and writerly life in the time that stories became writable. This is an interesting and methodologically vital comeuppance, and pressing occasion to pledge our own allegiance one way or another. To which, then, should we give priority? To the data or the preconceptions? In *Truth in Fiction*, I have doffed my cap to the empirical facts. To the best of my knowledge other than the one presently under review here there is no semantics whose data for theory are as expansive as those on offer here, or which satisfies all the specifications of the respect for data rule. Many of the going semantic rivals — pretendism, Meinongianism, free-logic theories, to name just three — are annexes of more general theories built for different or more general purposes, whose data for theory lack the specificity of my own. This gives us a further way in which to follow the respect-for-data rule. The best way to fulfill this duty is to build a *purpose-built* theory for those data developed as much as possible from scratch.[6] A friendly admonition: If one's theory of data

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[4]It is no secret that when empirical data are readied for productive contact with an abstract theory, the data will have to be "massaged". When done with appropriate care, the distortions of data are virtuous. When done tendentiously, the data are bent. (So are the people who bend them.) This not an issue that arises here, or anyhow not for me. If my semantics for fiction were a formal one on the model of Tarski, for example, it would be up to its neck in data-bending. Details about virtuous distortion can be found in John Woods and Alirio Rosales, "Virtuous distortion in model-based science", in Lorenzo Magnani, Walter Carnielli, and Claudio Pizzi, editors, *Model-Based Reasoning in Science and Technology, Abduction and Computational Discovery*, pages 3–30, Berlin: Springer 2011.

[5]I don't intend anything nefarious by the word "preconception". We have philosophical preconceptions about something when, after sober reflection, we've already arrived at a considered opinion about it. A common way of having a philosophical preconception of something is for it to be embodied in the agent's background theories. In an opposite meaning, a preconceived belief is a belief that hasn't been subjected to critical oversight. My intended meaning is the first one.

[6]I don't, of course, intend to diminish the vital importance of background common knowledge.

such as these starts getting technically complex and alien to our everyday fictional practices, there is some nontrivial likelihood of the theory's having strayed from the respect-for-data-rule. If the theorist's efforts to solve the theory's problems require *ingenious* measures, he should stop and reconsider his position. Let's call this the *not-too-smart* rule.

In philosophical circles, a semantics for a subject-matter is a theory of reference, truth and inference. The standard version of this has been a staple of philosophy since the 1940s. When I speak of the logic of fiction, I mean the semantics of it, and by semantics I too mean a theory of reference, truth and inference. But if I'm to respect the purpose-built and from-scratch rules, it behooves me, at a minimum, to think hard before using the standard semantics as my guide in the semantics of fiction. Indeed, as a little reflection makes clear, giving standard semantics its head here would entail a wholesale defection from the respect-for-data rule. The burden of showing this will be borne in section 3.

The question that now presses is what it would take to make a theory that gave the motivating data full and measured shrift. Among other things, it would require a theory of knowledge that gives these data a decent shot at being true. It would also require the theorist to disarm contrary philosophical preconceptions. Let's play the epistemological card now, and return to the semantics issue afterwards.

I've been saying that a theory should respect the empirically discernible data of relevance to its subject matter. Our readerly and writerly engagements with fiction are forms of cognitive behaviour, some of whose features are also empirically discernible. If one's task were to construct a theory of human knowing, these perceived regularities would be among the data for it. By a large margin, the dominant approach to epistemology is one or other version of the JTB model, according to which one knows that S just in case S is true, one believes it, and one has a justification for believing it. There is one datum for theory which this biconditional utterly ignores.

- The human capacity for knowing things vastly overreaches its capacity to justify things.

There is cost to this disrespect. It entails some fair approximation to big-box scepticism. In a celebrated effort to erase this embarrassment without having to shelve the J-condition, Alvin Goldman breaks the normal-meaning rule. He rewrites the J-condition as saying that one's belief that S is justified when the belief-making devices that produced one's belief were in good working order, operating here in the normal way, and free of negative externalities.[7] How ironic! But for his viola-

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But I do counsel caution about background theories. Caution, not exclusion.

[7]Alvin I. Goldman, "A causal theory of knowing", *The Journal of Philosophy*, 64 (1968), 357-372.

tion of the normal-meaning rule, Goldman's casualization move would have erased the respect-for-data cost of the JTB model on its face-value reading. In *Errors of Reasoning: Naturalizing the Logic of Inference*, I wanted to retain the benefits of casualization without incurring the cost of normal-meaning violation.[8] I did this by dropping the *J*-condition as a general condition on knowledge, and causalizing the belief condition directly. Accordingly, as a first and incomplete pass, we get the causal-response (CR) characterization of knowing that *S*:

> A subject *X* knows that *S* if, in processing information *I*, *X*'s belief-forming devices are triggered to produce the belief that *S*, the devices are in good working order and operating here in the normal way on good information, and undeterred by negative externalities. (95–98)

Inference can be causalized along these same lines. Here is a simplified sketch.

> A subject *X* draws S^* as a consequence of $S_1, \ldots, S_n$ when his circumstances are such that his belief that $S_1, \ldots, S_n$ causally suffices for his belief that S^* and his belief-forming devices are in good working order and operating here as they should.
>
> A subject *X* knowingly draws S^* as a consequence of the S_i if, when asked what led him to believe that S^*, *X* would be disposed to cite the S_i.[9]

Information is good when it is accurate, up-to-date and well-filtered. It is well-filtered when information-flow is causally regulated in ways that happen to fulfill Harman's Clutter Avoidance Rule: *One should not clutter up one's mind with trivialities.*[10] Thus, the anti-clutter mechanisms filter out information that's irrelevant to the matter at hand or too much for the processors to handle. They regulate the distinction between deductive and demonstrative closures (see below) and regulates our causal openness to believe what we've been told on the mere telling of it, and so on. In the main, the filtration devices operate automatically and subconsciously.

This is not the place to further excavate the CR-model or mount a stout defence of it, beyond noting that it solves the problem that Goldman wanted to solve but couldn't. The CR-model also nicely fits the data on offer in section 1. In particular, it fits well-known data about reading. When one reads a text, one processes the

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[8] John Woods, *Errors of Reasoning: Naturalizing the Logic of Inference*, volume 45 of Studies in Logic, London: College Publications, 2013; reprinted with corrections in 2014.

[9] These two CR-schemata make a fair first stab at conscious knowing and inferring. Tacit and implicit knowing and inferring is considerably more complex a matter and I will pursue it no further here.

[10] Gilbert Harman, *Change in View: Principles of Reasoning*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986.

information encoded in its pages, and is induced to respond to it in some or other way. When we read "Holmes waved our strange visitor into a chair", our information-processing devices causally induce the belief that Holmes waved some strange visitor into a chair. With the proviso that our belief-making devices haven't broken down or been tampered with, we are thereby caused to know that Holmes waved his strange visitor into a chair. The point to note is that all knowledge is causally produced, both the knowledge that Doyle wrote the Holmes stories, and the knowledge that the strange visitor was waved by Holmes into a chair.[11]

Information-processing is also affect-producing. One of the peculiarities of fiction is that the epistemic causal pathways pull in opposite directions. Each epistemic outcome prompts affectual responses of different kinds and opposed intensities. This is our Yes, but-problem. I will come back to this after I've had my say about the untroubling inconsistency problem, to whose solution the accommodation of the Yes, but problem is, I think, centrally linked. But first we must consider the semantic options.

3   The standard model for semantics

Today's predominant semantic theories of literary fiction — pretendistm, negative free-logic, anti-realism, for example — are variations on the theme of standard semantics. In all its known forms, the following semantic assumptions are subscribed to:

I *The something law*: Everything whatever is something or other.[12]

II *The existence law*: Reference and quantification are existentially loaded.[13]

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[11]This not by any means to ignore that the large class of cases in which the triggers of belief simply won't fire in the absence of justificatory considerations. But neither should we ignore the prospect that Fermat, for example, did firmly believe his last theorem to be true. Although he claimed to have a proof of it (and almost certainly did not), the fact remains that he would have believed it before he thought he had a proof if it, irrespective whether he had it or not. Fermat was a brilliant mathematician, well-versed in the emerging intricacies of number theory. He believed his theorem. The theorem is true. And when he believed it, there is no reason to think that his belief-making equipment was disordered or that the information available to him about number theory at the time was inaccurate or out-of-date. By CR-lights, Fermat actually did know his last theorem to be true, in the absence of its proof.

[12]Schopenhauer, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, 1813. Quine, "On what there is", 1948.

[13]Cf. Russell: "If [numbers] are to be anything at all, they must be intrinsically something". *The Principles of Mathematics*, 1903; p. 242.

III *The truth law*: No truth-evaluable[14] sentence that discomplies with Laws I and/or II can be true.[15]

A corollary to these three is the fiction law:

IV *The fiction law*: There is nothing to which the sentences of fiction refer and nothing of which they are true.

IV has a corollary of its own:

- The sentences of fiction fail to refer, fail to ascribe, and cannot be true or false. For, if true, they refer to something existent and, if false, there is something they are false of, hence something that exists.

My view of these Laws is that they are a stone-eyed killer for fiction. If true, Lawful loyalists are hoist on their own pétard. For, if true, the Laws strip the texts of stories of their semantic dignity, alethic evaluability and reader-engaging expressibility. On this perilous reading, "The man with the twisted lip" couldn't possibly tell a story, and wouldn't have had readers. This is not a setback peculiar to fiction. The trouble the Laws cause literary fiction do like damage to every domain of discourse to which they are fettered. If the first three Laws are given domain over natural language, then it can't be true that the havoc they wreak is reserved for fiction. It extends to all thought and speech. It greatly widens the scope of big-box scepticism, to such extent as to deny the doctrine all chance of its own expressibility. They have no rightful purchase in natural language semantics: The first three were adopted by Tarski's first-order model theory and others like it. They do all right there and should stay there.[16]

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[14]"Evaluable" is a term of art in this context. It means that the sentence in question meets the syntactico-semantic conditions to be or to give expression to the *bearer* of a truth-value. It does not mean what it usually means, namely susceptible to truth-value *assessment*.

[15]Tarski, "The concept of truth in formalized languages", in his *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics*, 2nd edition, John Corcoran, editor, pages 152-278, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983. A translation by J. H. Woodger of "Wahrheitsbegriff in den formalisierten Sprache", *Studia Philosophica*, 1 (1935), 261-405.

[16]Notable pretendists of varying stripes include Searle, Kripke, Walton, Kroon, García-Carpintero, and Armour-Garb and Woodbridge. An influential free-logic theorist is Sainsbury. See John Searle, "The logical status of fictional discourse", *New Literary History* 6 (1975), 319-332, Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990, Saul A. Kripke, *Reference and Existence: The John Locke Lectures*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013; a reprint with emandations of six lectures given at Oxford University between October 30th and December 4th, 1973. Fred Kroon, "Was Meinong only pretending?", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 52 (1992), 499-526; Manuel García-Carpintero, "Fiction-making

In abandoning the laws, I subscribe to another empirically discernible fact about readerly literary engagement. Readers experience themselves as standing in real relations to beings that are impalpable to them. They know that Sherlock resided in Baker Street in the 1880s and that his pipes did too. They know, as well, that while Sherlock could, and almost certainly did, have tea with Dr. Watson, he could not have tea with us or we with him.[17] Philosophers of non-extensional stripe have an approving word for this.

- Objects to which we bear real but impalpable relations are *intentional* objects: objects of thought, objects of reference and objects of truth-evaluable ascription.

If the Laws had legs here, all this would be nonsense. Since they don't have legs here, the last thing that intentional objects are — especially those that are impalpable to us — is nonsense.

The best-known semantics for intentional objects ensues from Meinong. Meinongians conform to the something law (Law I), but rightly send the other two packing and with them the fourth. Why wouldn't a philosopher of my semantic inclinations seek safe harbour in Meinongianism?[18] There are four main reasons not to go there.

- Its ontology of objects is radically surplus to need.

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as a Gricean illocutionary type", *Journal of Aesthetics and art Criticisms*, 65 (2007), 203-216; Bradley Armour-Garb and James A. Woodbridge, *Pretense and Pathology: Fictionalism and its Applications*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015; and R. M. Sainsbury, *Fiction and Fictionalism*, Melton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2010. For a comprehensive overview of theories of literary fiction and a detailed anti-realist consideration of Sherlock, and his like, see Robert Howell, "Literary fictions, real and unreal", John Woods, editor, *Fictions and Models: New Essays*, with a Foreword by Nancy Cartwright, pages 27-107, Munich: Philosophia, 2010. To some extent, all theories on this list disoblige the face-value rule, even those who subscribe to the respect-for-data rule. This raises the question of data-distortion. Are non-face-value readings virtuous, or are they bending? Linked to these considerations is fidelity, or otherwise, to the normal-meaning rule.

[17]This marks another point of departure from Goldman's causal epistemology. Goldman's is a causal *contact* theory. The knowledge that we have of something arises from causal contact with it. On the CR-model, Sherlock's impalpability to us precludes our causal contact with him or anyone else in his own causal-contact chain. What we have causal contact with is the text to whose encoded *information* our cognitive devices respond.

[18] Notable Meinongians are Findlay, Parsons, Jacquette and Berto, among others. J. N. Findlay, *Meinong's Theory of Objects and Values*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963; Terence Parsons, *Nonexistent Objects*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980; Dale Jacquette, *Meinongian Logic: The Semantics of Existence and Nonexistence*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996; and Francesco Berto, *Existence as a Real Property: The Ontology of Meinongianism*, Berlin: Springer, 2013. Meinongians of fiction run foul of the respect-for-data rule.

- Sherlock's constitution and presence *precede* Doyle's scribblings, thus denying him the role of auctorial creator, and greatly complicating his IP rights.

- In the stories, Sherlock is not an ontically incomplete man.

- The theory isn't purpose-built for fiction.

4

In the space that remains, I'll simply ring the changes of the main substantive claims of *Truth in Fiction*.

- *The world-inheritance property*: Except where authors otherwise provide, stories inherit the world. What's true of the world in the 1880s is true of the world of Doyle's stories.[19]

- *The meaning-inheritance property*: Except for auctorial intervention, world-inheritance preserves meaning.

- *The inference-inheritance property*: Aside from the author's contrary provisions, the conventions regulating good inference in the world also regulate good inference in and about the story.

World-inheritance requires the recognition of truths of fictions that aren't of Doyle's making yet are part of his stories ("Victoria Station lies south and west of Baker Street"), and sentences that depend to some extent on Doyle's own provisions ("Holmes had at least one lung"). These latter are *hinge-sentences*, and the inconsistency thesis is that the hinge-sentences of fiction are systematically inconsistent with the world. When I speak of hinged fiction, I mean that part of the story that depends for its truth at least in part on the sentences penned by the author.[20]

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[19]Strongly resisted by David Lewis, 'Truth in fiction", in *Philosophical Papers 1*, pages 261-280, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983; originally published in 1978.

[20]We have here a distinction between what's true in the story and what the author makes true in it. The former flow from the world-inheritance property. The latter depend on the world only to the extent that Doyle's truth-makings are themselves brought about by conditions in the real world. A further distinction is needed for sentences true in the story and sentences that are not, notwithstanding that they are true in the world of the story ("London lies some thousands of kilometers to the east of Medicine Hat") In another category are cross-fiction sentences such as "Sherlock was certainly smarter than Daffy the Duck". Also demanding attention, but not here, is the world fact that Agatha Christie thought Holmes the cleverest detective ever.

- *The ontic completeness property*: Sherlock is every bit as ontically complete an entity as you or I are. He had a mum and a dad, a blood type, and occasion and wherewithal to visit the Gents at Victoria Station.

And, as mentioned above,

- *The non-ambiguity property*: There is nothing in the present-day empirical linguistics of meaning in English to support the idea that the distinction between true-in-the story and untrue-in-the world is an ambiguity-marker. Ambiguity does not solve the untroubling inconsistency puzzle.

5   Solutions

I have two solutions on offer for the untroubling-inconsistency puzzle. I'll start with my less preferred one, and then move on to the one I like better. Then I'll explain the preference. Suppose that the systemic inconsistencies of hinged fiction were genuine contradictions. Then it would be provable (to my satisfaction) that from a contradiction everything expressible in the language in which the contradiction arose in the first place — in this case English — has a validly implied concurrent negation.[21] There is much ado in logical theory about whether the proof is valid. Those who think that it isn't make impressive efforts to show why not. Still, no one on either side of this disagreement thinks that (deductive) *inference* is actually closed under consequence.[22] The signature move of paraconsistent theorists is to take the constraints on deductive inference and impose them on the consequence relation itself. My view of this move is that it commits a category-mistake. It is the mistake of confusing consequence-*having*, which is a two place logico-semantic relation over statements, with consequence-*drawing*, which is a three-place logico-epistemic relation over statements and agents, whose third relatum is an inference-drawing person. Suppose, then, that the disputed proof held fast. Then, for any inferred claim from a contradictory theory, it would have a validly implied negation. Look now at the Newton-Leibniz calculus in its original formulation. Its contradictory provisions for infinitesmals left the new mechanics in the wash of thoroughgoing inconsistency. It

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[21]The proof is a natural-language variation of the Lewis & Langford proof for modal propositional languages. To keep things simple, it suffices to note that the omni-implication claim (known as the *ex falso quodlibet* thesis) is immediate from the standard definition of logical consequence: S^* is a logical consequence of $S_1, \ldots, S_n$ if and only if there is no respect in which it is in any sense possible for the S_i to be true and S^* not.

[22]In other contexts — rational decision theory and Bayesian epistemology, for example - it is said that belief is indeed closed under consequence. Fortunately, these excesses needn't concern us here.

did so irrespective of whomever might have known it. It didn't matter. The revolution in physics prevailed. Go now to the set theory taught by Frege prior to 1902. The theory was stricken by contradiction before Frege knew it. But he would have known that, from a contradiction everything whatever follows. It didn't matter. Frege conveyed a lot of essential knowledge about sets to his students. The moral to draw from these examples is clear. The *deductive* closure of a theory is one thing. The *demonstrative* closure of a theory is another. It is a proper subset of its deductive closure. The reason why is that while statements are closed under consequence, theoremhood is not. "One is a natural number" is an axiom (hence) a theorem, of Dedekind-Peano arithmetic. "One is a natural number or Nice is nice in November" is a deductive consequence of that axiom, but not a theorem of number theory. This, then, is the *doesn't-matter* solution. Absolute inconsistency doesn't matter for inference.[23] Before leaving this point, it should be noted that the distinction between a theory's deductive closure and its demonstrative is administered by filtration-like regulators. The same is true for the distinction between what's true in the world of a story and what's true in the story. Let's also note that what the doesn't-matter solution is the solution of choice for author-intended contradictions internal to the story, such as ithen in Ray Bradbury's "A sound of thunder." Keith's being elected American president in 2055 and his concurrent not being elected president.

My second and preferred solution is prompted by Aristotle's definition of the Law of Non-Contradiction:

- It is impossible that the same thing belong and not belong to the same thing at the same time *and in the same respect*. (*Met.* 1005b 19-20; emphasis mine).

The apparent trouble with the sentence, "Holmes waved our strange visitor into a chair", is that it is concurrently and unambiguously true and not, hence a contradictory sentence. The appearance is false. "Holmes waved our strange visitor into a chair" is true in respect of the story and not true in respect of the world.[24] It is an inconsistency, right enough, but it does not violate the Law of Non-Contradiction. This is brought to pass by the existence of two truth-makers operating *concurrently*.

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[23]No number theorist who has ever drawn breath has regarded "One is a natural number or Nice is nice in November" as a theorem of arithmetic never mind that, if he'd thought about it, he'd have seen that this very sentence is a logical consequence of the one-is-a-number axiom, hence in the axiom's deductive closure. That the sentence fails to make the grade as a theorem of arithmetic shows that it fails to be the axiom's demonstrative closure. How does the working mathematician sort out which is which? He doesn't. His filtration devices do it for him.

[24]The idea that the world is itself a truth-maker is an expository convenience. It stands in for the more accurate notion that the truths about matters in the world are made so by world-based factors. For example, the sentence "Charlie's nose was smashed last night" was made true by a crosscheck while playing hockey.

One (Doyle) makes the sentence true, and the other (the world) makes its negation true. This tells us something interesting about *respects*:

- Respects are truth-makers.

In *Truth in Fiction*, I speak of sites. In a way, talk of sites is a misnomer, falsely suggesting that truth-sites, like camp-sites, are places for things to repose in. In my usage, a truth-site is not the outcome of some episode of truth-making. It is the truth-maker itself. Accordingly, when a sentence is true *in situ* a story of Doyle's, the whole meaning of that is that it is Doyle who made it true.

It is not at all usual for there to be classes of sentences for which there exist two concurrent truth-makers that distribute truth-values inconsistently. Occasionally, however, there are clear exceptions. Think here of the criminal law. Legal truths are sometimes real-world falsehoods. Consider, for example, "Not guilty", which by social policy is very oftener true in law than in real-world fact. (What counts more in law is that the legal fact of *guilt* coincide with the actual fact of guilt.)

The neurotypical reader has no express command of the technical niceties. But it is his implicit sense of them that explains his utter lack of cognitive dissonance when knowing that what he knows of Sherlock isn't true in reality. This explains why, when faced with these wall-to-wall inconsistencies, no one since time immemorial has ever freaked out.

There is reason to think that the no-contradiction solution is to be preferred over the doesn't-matter solution. I said at the beginning that a data-respecting logic of fiction will have to account for two closely related facts. One is that everyone who engages with fiction knows that fiction's hinged sentences are concurrently true and untrue, yet aren't in the least cognitively perturbed by knowing it. It is equally well-known that it is the story-world distinction that immunizes engagers from cognitive dissonance. The question is *why*? If the distinction isn't an ambiguity-marker, from whence does it derive its powers of cognitive pacification? My answer is that the doesn't-matter solution is less responsive to that question than the no-contradiction solution. It accords better with the engager's intuition that although true and false together, the hinged sentences of fiction aren't really contradictions after all.

I'll close now with a try at the Yes, but problem. It arises from the above-noted fact that notwithstanding our knowledge that, as described and attributed in *Oliver Twist*, no such murder actually occurred, our affect-making devices kick in. Our hearts race, pulses quicken, and some of us wet our cheeks with tears of heartbreak and outrage. Whatever the details, it is clear that the causal powers of knowing otherwise can't reign in the causal powers of affect; and the causal powers of affect can't annul the causal powers of knowing otherwise. What explains this *relative* dominance of outrage over knowing better? Part of it is that there are two

concurrent knowledge-producing truth-makers in progress here. The other part has to do with impalpability. One truth-maker makes it known that it never happened. The other makes it known that it did. There could be no such thing as fiction if the causal force of either of these truth-makers wholly erased the causal force of the other. Likewise, if story-reading produced responses that couldn't engage our sympathies, it's likely that stories would long since have ceased to be a permanent fixture of human life. If the sympathies stirred by stories were also denied the usual physiological effects of world-induced grief, a well-established regularity between affect and causal effect would be breached. It is true, and important, that beyond the recounting of it, Nancy's murder carries scant consequences for us. Although we stand in real intentional relations to that crime, its impalpability with respect to us denies it the causal imprint that it had in the wretched part of London in which she was struck down. The duration of our grief is shorter and less intense. The true difference between the grief over Nancy and the grief over the murder of one's own wife is the comparative smallness of the former's causal impact on real-world events on what happens next, so to speak.

Into the Woods with Woods:
Exploring Truths in and about Fiction

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John Woods published *The Logic of Fiction* in 1974, the first book that I know of in English to discuss the peculiar combination of logico-metaphysical issues that works of fiction raise. He has continued his investigations in many later publications. In 2018 he published *Truth in Fiction*, in which he proposes a very different approach. I reviewed *The Logic of Fiction* in 1977,[1] have followed Woods' work on fiction since then, and am happy to continue, in this present setting, our long engagement.

Fiction poses familiar conundrums about reference to and quantification over apparently nonexistent things. Woods' approach in *The Logic of Fiction* was resolutely formal. He used devices from many formal systems in an attempt to understand the semantics of sentences in and about fiction and the inferences supported by such sentences. In *Truth in Fiction*, Woods rejects such attempts. The focus "of foundational interest for a logic of fiction" should instead be on "how the people who read it and the people who write it engage with it" (217).[2] A good account must respect the empirical data about how readers and writers carry out this engagement (chapter 2, especially 23–35). We should not shoehorn the phenomena of fiction into any of the current formal systems.

Woods sees a number of problems in attempts to apply existing formal semantical systems to understanding sentences about fictional objects such as Sherlock Holmes.[3] Many of these problems are specific to the particular formal systems being considered. But Woods takes a crucial, general set of difficulties to derive from Tarski-style model-theoretic semantics.

[1] *JAAC* vol. 34 (1976), 354-55; see also [5].

[2] Otherwise unspecified references are to *Truth in Fiction*.

[3] Here and below I follow Woods in focusing on fictional objects that have no existence outside the stories that describe them. I also restrict attention to realistic fictions within whose worlds the usual logical and semantic laws hold. This restriction could be dropped, but there is no space here to handle the resulting complications. See also footnote 24 below.

These difficulties are generated for views that accept various of four "Basic Laws of Being, Existence, and Truth" (2-3 and later). Woods accepts *Law I*, the *something law* ("everything whatever is something or other").[4] But he rejects three further laws. They run contrary to the empirical data about our engagement with fiction, and adherence to them is the main reason why current logics of fiction fail.[5] Thus *Law II*, the *existence law* ("reference and quantification are existentially loaded") is violated by the fact that we take sentences about fictional objects to refer to such objects even while we grant that those objects don't really exist. We also take such sentences to be true, and that fact undermines *Law III*, the *truth law* ("no statement disobliging the something and existence laws can be true"). This same fact plus the fact that we take such sentences to refer to genuine entities such as Holmes then violates *Law IV*, the *fiction law* that Woods attributes to pretense theories of fiction such as Kendall Walton's ("sentences of fiction fail to refer and cannot be true or false").

In addition to these clashes of Laws II-IV with the empirical data, Woods also notes conflicts with respect to the ways that various formal semantics treat inference and inconsistency in fiction.[6] The details again often depend on which formal systems are in play. However, and in general, readers certainly don't take, as truths of the story, all the recondite logical truths that occur within the deductive closure of the sentences in the story. Readers also do not infer, as true in the story, the explosion of claims that follow from a fictional inconsistency given the theorem of various formal systems that from an inconsistency, everything follows. And this last point is true whether we focus on the sort of inconsistency that Woods sees in readers' taking the sentences of fiction to be both true (in the story) and false (in reality) or we focus on the sort of inconsistency in which an inconsistent sentence or set of such occurs within the story itself.

Woods' discussion suggests that these discrepancies between the empirical data and formal attempts to understand the logic of fiction arise in one way or another

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[4]Woods expanded on Law I at the Vancouver April 2019 American Philosophical Association (APA) session on *Truth in Fiction*: "There exists nothing at all that is nothing in particular". Law I seems right, as applied to actual and metaphysically possible entities and to characters in realistic fictions (in contrast to characters in, say, a metaphysical fantasy that are things-but no-things-in-particular). So, except for brief comments below, I won't consider this law further. My exposition of Laws II-IV is my own, not directly Woods'; but I don't believe I'm misrepresenting him here.

[5]Elsewhere, Woods suggests other general reasons for this failure. There isn't space to examine these further reasons; I agree with or am sympathetic to many of them.

[6]Woods also takes the acceptance of II-IV to support radical ("big-box") skepticism (given II-IV, a huge amount of what we say would be saturated with error) and also to render fiction unengagable by readers (would ordinary readers care about sentences that lack truth values, and so on?). These are telling points. I can't pursue them further here, however.

for every formal system that has been applied to representing fiction. Woods also argues that current non-formal approaches yield similar discrepancies, often deriving from their acceptance of Laws II-IV. Thus attempts to understand Holmes and the sentences about Holmes in terms of Meinongian, hypothetical, or possible-object theories fail. So do current abstract-artifact accounts of fictional objects.

Woods has some sympathy for Walton's influential pretense (or, as Woods has it, "pretendist") account. He believes that that account comes closest to his own in respecting the empirical data and explaining how fiction can engage readers and affect them emotionally. But Walton accepts Laws I-IV.[7] And Woods follows other critics of Walton in arguing that it is an empirical fact that readers and writers simply don't engage in the activities of make-believe that Walton attributes to them.[8]

The upshot is that Woods rejects all current approaches to fiction. He proposes instead what is in effect a two-part approach of his own: (I) First, he suggests a semantico-metaphysical framework in which writers and readers stand in real but "impalpable" relations to those nonexistent objects and events, such as Holmes and his pipe smoking, that are described by the fiction. (Although Woods doesn't emphasize this point in his Précis for the present symposium, according to *Truth in Fiction* such fictional things are indeed nonexistent as well as impalpable; see e.g. 30, 46-47, 102, 107, 109, 152 ff.) This framework incorporates Woods' notion of the 'sites' at which the truth and falsity of our claims about fiction are evaluated. (In his Précis, Woods stresses instead of sites the related, Aristotelian notion of the different 'respects' in which a thing may or may not have a feature. I will comment below on sites and respects, without trying to offer a full discussion of either.) (II) Second, Woods supports the development of a naturalized logic of fiction that focuses on how we human beings actually reason rather than on the formal-logic relation of implication.

Using (I), Woods suggests a treatment of reference and truth in fiction. I'll return to details of this treatment shortly. But I note immediately that, through his notion of sites in (I) (or of 'respects'), he deals with the sort of inconsistency that

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[7]Note, however, that Walton will argue that, given his account of participatory games of make-believe and other devices, his theory is not subject to the problems about skepticism and unengageability that Woods takes to follow from an acceptance of II-IV. I think that Walton is right here. Woods' strongest objection to Walton is not about I-IV but turns on Woods' observation that, given the empirical evidence, we don't engage in the activities of make-believe that Walton attributes to us. Here, too, Walton has a reply (see, e.g., [14, Chapter 1]). However, I think that Woods and other critics are right to press this objection. I don't think that the notion of make-believe captures exactly what we are doing when we use sentences in and about fiction. Here note the assumption-based view that I suggest below.

[8]Woods also rejects Brad Armour-Garb and James Woodbridge's pretense-based account [1] of the semantic paradoxes.

derives from the fact that, for readers, sentences such as "Holmes solved the case of the speckled band" are both true and not true. Woods holds that such sentences are, consistently, true at the Holmes-story-site (or true "in situ the Holmes stories") while they are not true in situ the actual world (87). Using (II), Woods then proposes to complete his treatment of fictional inconsistency. Through the capacities that he envisages as belonging to naturalized logic (for instance, the capacity to filter out irrelevant implications), he hopes to capture the fictional truths that readers actually take to be implied by the sentences in the text.[9] Those truths will be just those truths that, given naturalized logic, human readers will properly take to follow from the sentences of the story. Naturalized logic will prevent the explosion of deductive consequences that standard formal logic takes to follow from the occurrence of an inconsistent sentence in a fiction.

To the extent that sites function, for Woods's theory, as something like the fictional worlds at which other theorists take the sentences of fictions to hold true, I'm sympathetic to Woods' idea of using sites (or respects) to solve the inconsistency problem just noted. I'm also sympathetic to his desire to have a naturalized logic that will do the work that he suggests. One might raise various questions about his view of such a logic, but in the remainder of these comments I will focus on the more developed and less programmatic part of his work, the semantico-metaphysical framework in (I).

Spelled out in more detail, Woods' view in (I) is that writers and readers stand in real relations to an actual-world thing, the text. They also stand in real relations to the fictional objects and events described in the story that the text conveys (29). These objects and events, although genuine objects of reference, predication, and of various of our cognitive and affective acts, don't exist in the actual world. They are, as noted above, nonexistent things. We can't sense or otherwise causally interact directly with them; they are "impalpable" (29). The relations that we stand in to these objects arise out of the relations that we stand in to the texts.

In the usual case of fictional entities such as Holmes, these objects are, for Woods, ontically complete, not incomplete; concrete, not abstract; and they are not hypothetical or Meinongian-style entities, nor are they possibilia in possible worlds (Ch. 8, 153 ff.). They are made by the author through the author's writing and making true the sentences of the story (166).

The author's creation, in this way, of the fictional object involves the author's making true the descriptions of that object that occur in the sentences that the author writes. In writing these sentences, the author "transmutes a nonfact into a

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[9]The fictional truths expressed by the sentences of the story plus the fictional truths that those sentences imply will then constitute the totality of what is true according to the story or true in the story, given also the applicability of Woods' p. 81 world-inheritance thesis.

fact" (86). The author does so by "re-siting" that fact (which is specified by what the description says about the object) in a *site* (ibid.). The author's truth-making is thus "site-placement" (ibid.). The site *is* the story, Woods says at one point (ibid.). It is the converse domain of all the real but impalpable relations in which we stand to the fictional objects and events. As indicated in Woods' use of sites to resolve the apparent inconsistency in the sentence "Holmes lives at 221B Baker Street" (true in situ the story; not true in situ the actual world), sites are sites of *truth* (191).[10] For a claim to be true is for there to be some site in which that claim is true.[11] Moreover, the sites in which story-claims about fictional objects are true are themselves created by the author (86, 141).[12]

As appears from the above passages of his book, Woods' description of sites gives them a kind of reality, although he doesn't say explicitly whether or not they are existent entities. His descriptions, in his book, of sites seem in fact to pull in different directions here. Thus the presence, in story sites, of facts involving nonexistent objects might make it best to treat sites as nonexistent, as might the fact that fictional sentences are true in the story sites but not true in the actual world. But if stories *are* sites (86) and if stories are, for Woods, existent things, then story sites should be existent things.

In his Précis, and in his Vancouver APA presentation of his book, Woods stresses the Aristotelian notion of a 'respect', a notion which, in the book, he describes as an adumbration of his own site notion (130). According to the Précis, a site or respect is not the outcome of Doyle's fictional-truth-making (Doyle's acts of producing the name "Holmes" and the fiction's sentences about the character, Holmes). Rather, a site is itself the truth-maker for the sentences, in the fiction, about Holmes. The claim that such a sentence is true 'in situ' the story thus means simply that it is Doyle who (through such authorial activities) made that sentence true (Précis, §5). In Vancouver, Woods suggested further that sites or respects are nominal entities, manners of speaking, that distribute truth values over the sentences of the fiction.[13]

There are puzzles here that I hope Woods can resolve. For example, it would seem that, on the one hand, sites or respects have a kind of actual-world existence as dependent entities that arise out of, but that are ontologically distinct from, Holmes' actual-world authorial activities. Such an actual-world existence of sites would fit

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[10]Also Précis, p. 116: "Respects are sentential truth-makers".

[11]Again: a "site is created by different but concurrent truth-making conditions operating on a given sentence" (88). As noted above, Woods also speaks of claims as being true in situ (or at) the actual world (87, etc.). I believe that he would understand all ascriptions of truth values to be evaluated at some site or other, but he doesn't say this explicitly, as far as I recall.

[12]Sites also are "made by the world, [as e.g.] where the sentences made true by the author are made false" (141). I focus on those sites that are created by authors writing fiction.

[13]These last points are based on my Vancouver notes and a recent e-mail from Woods.

Woods' apparent willingness to quantify over sites, as well as his identification of sites with truth-makers that in the end amount to Holmes' actual-world authorial activities. On the other hand, as nominal entities, sites or respects would seem really to have no actual-world existence at all; talking of them is just a manner of speaking. Woods' claim, noted above, that sites *are* stories (86) fits the dependent-entity view but may clash with the nominal-entity suggestion. (As noted above, don't stories actually exist, and aren't they distinct from the authorial acts that create them?) About this and related matters in Woods' discussion, I remain perplexed.

Woods indicates that his introduction of sites is a hypothesis that isn't fully developed (130, 217-18, etc.), and perhaps this hypothesis really will have a fruitful theoretical payoff in the end. *Truth in Fiction* is in many respects an exploratory work, and I won't dwell further on the site puzzles here. Nevertheless, issues inevitably arise about Woods' project in (I) that go beyond just such puzzles, and these issues should be indicated here. (A) Some concern the details of Woods' framework or raise questions already familiar from earlier discussions of fiction. (B) Others seem to me more novel.

(A) As regards details or familiar issues — and as I'm sure that Woods is well-aware — one can ask, for example, how the author's actual-world causal activities can generate the presence of a nonexistent fictional object. Woods suggests an answer (97 ff.), and in the interests of space I won't pursue this concern further.

However, I will note that Woods emphasizes (80ff; Précis, §3) that, on his theory, Holmes is not an ontically indeterminate or incomplete entity. Given that the sentences of the stories never specify any number n such that, according to the stories, Holmes has n hairs on his head, it might seem that, for Woods, the Holmes-object must be, ontically, a gappy thing having hairs but no particular number of hairs on its head. But no, says Woods, more is true in the story than the sentences of the story explicitly say. Except for contrary indications by the author, "fictional works inherit the world" (81); what is true in the story is what is true in the actual world. However, it is true in the actual world that, for each human being, there is some number n that is the exact number of hairs on that human being's head. Applying this truth to the human being Holmes (not indicated by Conan Doyle to be hirsutely indeterminate), we correctly infer that there is some n such that n exactly numbers the hairs on Holmes' head. Thus Holmes is not ontically incomplete.

This defense of Holmes' completeness is attractive. But there is still a concern. Take Holmes again. Given the sentences in the novel and the actual-world facts that the Holmes' stories inherit, it is true, according to the story, *that there is* some number n or other such that Holmes has n hairs on his head.[14] Yet the sentences in

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[14] Note that this property is specified *de dicto* with respect to the number of hairs on Holmes'

the novel and the actual-world facts do not imply that there is any particular number n (say, 100,000) such that, of that particular number n, it is true, according to the story, that Holmes has that particular number n of hairs on his head.[15] However, any actual person is such that there is such a particular number n of hairs on that person's head.

In this respect, Woods' Holmes object is ontically incomplete and gappy. We reach a similar result about the site or respect in which, for Woods, the Holmes' stories are true.[16] So sites also look to be incomplete. Woods' theory thus seems closer to Meinongian theories, which accept incomplete entities, than Woods holds in *Truth in Fiction*. Of course, and as Woods stresses, his theory differs from Meinong's own views in various significant ways. But the Meinongian resemblance in this crucial matter of ontic incompleteness is strong, and it is heightened by Woods' view, which also parallels Meinong's, that fictional objects have no actual-world existence.

Although I think that it is unconvincing to do so, one might perhaps dispute the details of my hirsute-head example. (Perhaps what counts as a single hair is a somewhat vague matter, and so on.) But there are many, many other cases that one can give to make the same point about ontic incompleteness. For instance, a story may not specify, one way or another, the exact age, in years, of a character whom it describes simply as being "in late middle age". Or (Richard Hanley's example in Vancouver) Doyle never indicates Holmes' blood type. Other attempts to defuse the present point about ontic incompleteness appear to me equally unconvincing. (See also the Appendix below.) So Woods' view of fictional objects does seem closer to

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head and what is true according to the story. Holmes also has such *de dicto*-specified properties as *being an x such that, according to the story, for each number n, either x has n hairs on x's head or it is not the case that x has n hairs on x's head*. But, again, it isn't the case that Holmes has any *de re*-specified property of the sort noted shortly below.

[15]Put semiformally, not only (A) is it a fact about any actual-world human being h that, in the actual world, it is the case that h has the property of *being an x such that* $(\exists n)$ *(n = the number of hairs on x's head)*. But. also, (B) it is a fact about any such human being h that $(\exists n)$ [in the actual world, it is the case that h has the property of *being an x such that (n = the number of hairs on x's head)*]. In (A), the property in question is specified *de dicto* with respect to n and the (extensional) "in the actual world, it is the case that" operator. In (B), the property is specified *de re* with respect to n and that operator. Given Woods' views, an (A)-style, *de dicto*-specified fact does hold with respect to the number n of hairs on Holmes' head and the (intensional) "according to the story, it is the case that" operator. However, no (B)-style, *de re*-specified fact holds with respect to the number n of hairs on Holmes' head and that operator. There simply isn't any particular number n such that the story says, *de re of n*, that *that* number n is the number of hairs on Holmes' head.

[16]It is not the case that there is any particular number n that is such that it is a fact, in that site, that Holmes has the property of *being an x such that x has n hairs on x's head*. But if Brown is our actual, next-door neighbor, then there is some particular number n such that it is a fact, in the actual world, that Brown has the property of *being an x such that x has n hairs on x's head*.

Meinongianism, in crucial respects, than Woods allows.

Some readers may not find this such a bad result. A refreshing aspect of Woods' book is his willingness to rethink the issues about fiction from the ground up, dropping Laws II-IV and seeing where the empirical data then lead. And if all other theories of the logic of fiction that Woods considers have problems — and I agree that none of these theories escapes criticism — then perhaps returning to a kind of Meinongianism is not out of order, although this is not a direction in which I myself would go.

(B) However, in concluding these comments, I will raise a different, and I hope more novel, issue about Woods' views. I think that we can defend non-Meinongian accounts that accept Basic Laws I-IV while also respecting Woods' empirical data. If this is right, then we don't need to rebuild the theory of fiction from the foundations but, instead, to revamp the structures that we already have in place. As noted earlier, Basic Law I is in fact not at issue here, for both Woods and I agree that it is correct.[17] So my focus below will be on showing that Laws II-IV can be maintained while respecting Woods' empirical data.

In earlier essays, I defended a form of fictional realism ([5], and elsewhere). But in recent years I've become convinced, through Anthony Everett's work and my own reflections, that such realism leads to intolerable metaphysical problems (for example, actual-world, ontically indeterminate and even inconsistent fictional objects, and so on).[18] There are also various problems with pretense accounts. In place of such views, I've proposed an assumption-based theory that takes our ordinary claims about fictional objects to be made within the scope of an assumption that we adopt nonconsciously and that governs our ordinary talk about such objects.[19] That is the assumption that fictional names have existent designata and that the story's claims about those designata are true.

Assumption-based accounts of fiction, or related theories that take us, in our claims about fictional objects, to presuppose the existence of those objects, have been developed by a number of authors, notably Robert Stalnaker (the ultimate originator of such views) and Mark Sainsbury.[20] I won't try to rehearse such theories

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[17]See footnote 4 above.

[18]For details, and for my own assumption-based, irrealist approach to fictional objects, see Howell [6, 7, 8]. For Everett, see [2, 3].

[19]I use 'nonconscious' to avoid any depth-psychological implications of 'unconscious'. As suggested below, theoretical reflection on the implications of what we say about fictional objects indicates that we do make such assumptions.

[20]Stalnaker [12, 13], Sainsbury [9, 10, 11]. Everett [2, 3] also says things akin to some of the views that I develop. In recent years, Stephen Yablo (e.g., [18]) has come to present in presuppositional or assumption terms the fictionalism which he originally developed using Waltonian ideas of make-believe.

in detail here, including my own. But I will urge the following line of thought on Woods and others who believe that Basic Laws II-IV cannot be reconciled with the empirical data about our engagement with fiction.

Consider such facts as that (i) we unhesitatingly talk in object-language mode of Sherlock Holmes, Anna Karenina, and so on, as if they were genuinely existent objects on all fours with Winston Churchill, Angela Merkel, and Napoleon Bonaparte. (ii) We take ourselves to know object-language-expressed truths about these entities, including truths that compare such entities with each other and with actual-world entities ("Karenina's social status exceeds Bovary's"; "Holmes lacks Napoleon's drive for world domination", etc.). (iii) We have object-language-expressed affective relations to these entities (we are "horrified at Anna' fate," and so on). Moreover, (iv) while we use object-language expressions in these ways to describe fictional objects and our relations to them, we are also prepared to shift gears and to agree (still in the object language, note!) that Holmes and Karenina don't really exist and that our claims about them are not true claims about actual-world entities. (v) As Woods stresses, we aren't perturbed by any apparent inconsistency involved in this shift.

How to explain our extraordinary behavior here, of accepting a nonexistent entity like Holmes in object-language references and then disavowing that entity almost in the same breath?[21] Woods offers one explanation, in terms of nonexistent fictional objects and sites. Here is the outline of another, the assumption-based approach that I mentioned above.

The idea of this approach is that our ordinary claims about fictional objects — for example, "Holmes is a detective" — are, just as Woods' empirical data say, literally true when made in the way that we standardly make them. This point holds even though the singular terms in such claims lack actual-world referents. Similarly, and even given that lack of reference, these claims, made in the way that we standardly make them, also have the same literal meanings and logical structures as have the corresponding claims whose singular terms do have actual-world referents (as, for example, in "Holmes [our neighbor] is a detective"). These claims do have not special meanings and logical structures that belong only to claims about fiction.[22]

Instead of this idea of special meanings, my approach holds that our ordinary claims about fictional objects are made under a nonconscious assumption. That is the assumption roughly to the effect that there exists a world, and there exist objects, such that (a) those objects occur in that world, (b) the fictional singular

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[21]Walton uses "disavow" in his ingenious make-believe account of singular negative existentials [14, Chapter 11]. I don't accept that account, but the word is apt.

[22]Nor, as pretense theorists sometimes suggest, is the fact that these claims have their standard meanings and logical structures merely something that we make-believe to be the case.

terms in these claims denote those objects as those objects occur in that world, and (c) the sentences of the fiction are true at that world (the "world of the story"). This assumption is initially made, nonconsciously, by the author as he or she composes the fiction. Through a process of historical transmission, this assumption comes to be shared by the readers of the story and the users of the fictional singular terms that the author introduces. We, those readers and users, accept this assumption as part of our nonconscious processing of the sentences (their syntax and semantics) as we read the story or hear the singular terms bandied about. Our object-language conscious thoughts and our verbal claims about the fictional objects described by the story ("Holmes is a detective", and so on) are then produced under, and governed by, this shared, nonconscious assumption.

Produced in the actual world under this assumption, these claims have their usual literal meanings, and they function as literal assertions about the relevant fictional objects.[23] Moreover, operating under that nonconscious assumption, we experience these claims as being literally true about the relevant objects, and we understand the claims as such. Of course at some point we usually come to realize that the claims are not true with respect to the actual world and that the fictional names involved have no actual-world referents. But even when we realize these things, as ordinary speakers we continue to operate under the assumptions and to speak in an object-language way. We say such things as "Holmes doesn't really exist". We don't normally engage in semantic ascent (a very sophisticated practice) and say that "the linguistic term 'Holmes' here lacks actual-world reference".

Basic Laws II-IV now hold both outside the scope of our nonconscious assumption, in the actual world, and within the scope of that assumption.[24] But this fact does not have the dire implications that Woods' discussion suggests. *Within* the scope of our nonconscious assumption, our fictional claims are true and involve reference to objects. These claims are true and involve such reference, within that scope, in the same sense in which the corresponding claims using nonempty singular terms may be true and involve such reference ("Holmes [our neighbor] is a detective," etc.). Thus the holding of Laws II and III within the scope of our nonconscious assumption does not undermine our treatment, within that scope, of our fictional

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[23]Analogously, and as I stress in my essays, a claim asserted under an assumption in a conditional proof does not take on some new, nonliteral meaning. It remains a genuine, literal assertion even while it functions as such only under the assumption in question.

[24]Recall the footnote 3 restriction of our discussion to realistic fictions and also footnote 4 on Law I. Laws II-IV (and also Law I) may be suspended in the worlds of fantasy or other fictions that violate this restriction, but such fictions are not our concern here. Moreover, just because such laws are suspended in such worlds, the clashes that Woods sees of Laws II-IV with our claims about fictional objects will not in fact arise as long as those claims are made, as they standardly will be, under the relevant nonconscious assumptions concerning the nonrealistic fictions.

claims as being true about existing objects to which those claims refer.

Law IV itself holds with respect to the evaluation of these claims at the actual world (there are no successful Holmes references there!), and Law IV implies that, at the actual world, these claims lack truth values. But, *within* the scope of the relevant nonconscious assumption, these claims do in fact involve successful references to the objects assumed. So our claims about Holmes, as they occur within the scope of the assumption, have truth values even while Law IV holds within that scope.

Given the above points, when our claim that "Holmes [the fictional object] is a detective" is evaluated at the actual world, where Laws II-IV again hold *outside* the scope of the relevant nonconscious assumption, that claim involves a nondenoting singular term and so is not true (in fact, and given Law IV, it lacks any truth value, as I've just noted). But a crucial point of the present, assumption-based account is that our standard use of these fictional claims occurs *only under* the sort of nonconscious assumption in question. We standardly make such object-language claims just under such nonconscious assumptions. Moreover, in standardly making such claims, we do not form any intention that they should be evaluated at the actual world outside the scope of any such assumptions. Yet, as just noted, *under* the assumption, the semantic evaluation of our claim that "Holmes [the fictional object] is a detective" is exactly what is suggested by Woods' empirical data. Those data are not contravened by the fact that our fictional claims, evaluated at the actual world outside the scope of the assumption, lack truth values. Because the assumption is nonconscious, we don't ordinarily experience ourselves as making it, and so we experience our claims about fictional objects simply as being made about a genuine group of existing things.[25] We then make all the sorts of object-language claims that, in agreement with Woods, I have noted above. So, using the present assumption-based approach, we arrive at (and we do not contravene) Woods' data. Yet we do so without having to accept impalpable, incomplete, nonexistent objects and similar things.

As I argue elsewhere, within the scope of our nonconscious assumptions we also have affective relations to the fictional objects that are introduced via the assumptions. When we come to realize that the actual world is not entirely as the story depicts, we then make true singular negative existential claims such as "Holmes does not exist." In doing so, we continue to speak, in the object language, from inside the scope of the relevant assumption. So speaking, we in effect pick out the assumed Holmes object. Then, moving to the actual world, we note that that object doesn't

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[25]It is worth stressing that we don't experience those claims as 'being true only under the assumption'. Our experience, as speakers, and our conscious view of the claims, is simply that they are true. That is the face value of the data, here, and it is respected by the nonconscious-assumption view as much as it is respected by Woods' view.

occur in that world.[26]

I develop the above approach in three recent essays ([6, 7, 8] — a brief outline is in [8, §1]). If it is on the right track, we can combine traditional, plausible ideas from formal semantics — namely, Laws II-IV (and also Law I) — with the empirical data, on which Woods so rightly insists, about our engagement with fiction. If we add to this view an account of our inferences about fiction — and here Woods' naturalized logic suggests itself as a live option — then we will, I think, arrive at a treatment of fiction that respects all the phenomena that need to be respected.

My proposal of this assumption-based approach amounts to a philosophically informed empirical hypothesis about what account best explains data of the sorts noted in points (i) to (v) above. As I see them, other contemporary approaches to our claims about fiction, including Woods' own, also amount to such hypotheses. My account then is to be preferred to the extent that (as I believe it does) it explains the relevant data better than do the other approaches, including Woods'.[27]

I should note, finally, that my assumption-based view bears certain structural resemblances to Woods' approach. For example, Woods takes Holmes to be an author-created nonexistent thing, whereas I hold that there actually is no such entity as Holmes, only the Holmes-object introduced by the relevant nonconscious assumption. But the details have parallels in Woods' views, for I hold further that it is through the nonconscious assumption initially made by the author that Holmes (within the scope of that assumption) is first introduced as an object of discourse.[28] Or, again, where Woods takes authors to create sites, I take the author to introduce 'the world of the [relevant] fiction' by, roughly, initiating the nonconscious assumption that there exists a world at which all the sentences of the fiction hold true. So in certain perhaps unexpected respects, my views and Woods' have structural similarities. Given these similarities, I appreciate the attractions, for example, of Woods' idea of a site, although I part company with his development of that idea.

In conclusion: even given such parallels, I doubt that Woods will abandon impalpable fictional objects for my nonconscious assumptions, although I recommend apostasy. But it has been a pleasure to engage with him these many years in the project of understanding fiction. Woods' *The Logic of Fiction* was first in its field, and he has made sustained and important contributions to this subject ever since, now culminating in *Truth in Fiction*. I'm gratified to have had the chance to com-

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[26]See Howell [6, pp. 87–89] and [7, footnote 67]. For an account of the author's "creation" of fictional objects, see [8, footnote 17].

[27]It should also be possible to test my kind of assumption-based account psychologically — for example, by devising predictions about the time taken for processing various sentences, given the hypothesis that nonconscious assumptionism is true about fictional-object claims.

[28]See Howell, [8, footnote 17].

ment on Woods' new ideas on this occasion.

Appendix: Fictional Incompleteness

Perhaps a few more remarks about such incompleteness are in order, given the lively comments on this topic by Woods and others at and after the Vancouver symposium.[29] For the reasons given above, I take Holmes, on Woods' account, to be ontically incomplete in a Meinong-like way. As I've stressed, nothing here turns on the hirsute-head example. Rather, and as I suggest below, (i) the incompleteness in this case arises out of the fact that fictions are written in language using general predicates (or, as I note below, other linguistic devices) whose application to objects leaves open various points about those objects. As I also note, (ii) the Holmes case is one particular example of how fictional incompleteness arises, given the goals of fiction and the fact that human beings are limited in the number of truths and object features that they can grasp linguistically.

I will discuss these matters briefly, beginning with points in (ii). In general, fictional incompleteness exists in any set of circumstances in which, for some fiction F, there is a claim p such that it is not the case that, according to F, p is the case; and it also is not the case that, according to F, p is not the case. We thus have fictional incompleteness in those examples in which, for instance, excluded middle holds within the world of fiction F, but F nevertheless does not settle whether, in the world of F, p is the case or $\sim p$ is the case. And there also are many other such examples. For instance, and to abbreviate in an obvious way, we have cases in which, while p logically or mathematically entails q and $F(p)$, nevertheless, given the fiction, it is not the case that $F(q)$ — and yet, also, it is not the case that $F(\sim q)$.[30]

Such examples reflect, in part, the fact that a primary goal of our usual human fictions is to describe, in interesting ways, significant characters and courses of action.

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[29]What follows is not a full-scale discussion of fictional incompleteness but only an outline of some basic features of this phenomenon. I ignore many complications — for example, about fictional incompleteness, intentional phenomena, and related topics. I also ignore, throughout, various use-mention niceties. Note that analogues of the points that I make about incompleteness in linguistic fiction can be constructed for other sorts of representational systems — for example, pictorial, musical, and gestural such systems.

[30]An example of this last case would be the following: in the actual world, claim c holds and entails the truth of Fermat's last theorem, and Andrew Wiles uses c to prove that theorem. However, according to a mathematical story M, while c holds, that theorem is in fact undecidable, and the main character of M tries fruitlessly to prove the theorem using c. As an example of excluded middle holding even while a fiction does not settle whether, in the world of the fiction, p is or is not the case, consider the familiar observation that the Holmes stories do not determine whether or not there is a mole on Holmes' back.

A fiction achieves this goal by delivering information about such matters in a way that captures the audience's attention. However, in order to do so, the descriptions given by the fiction do not need to try to incorporate all the conceivable (fictional) truths that the author might introduce about these matters, and the descriptions will in fact prevent the fiction from achieving its aims if they include unappealingly many such truths (for instance, irrelevant points about the molecular structure of the characters' eyelashes).[31] So, given their goals and means of reaching them, the usual fictions are incomplete in the ways just indicated.

Moreover, the usual fictions *must* be incomplete in these ways.[32] After all, and roughly, through no humanly comprehensible set of sentences can we specify, *de re* and individually, all the features that, in the usual situations, an object may have and *all* the general truths that may hold about a world. (There will be many more such features and truths than we can grasp, *de re* and individually — in fact, infinities of them.) Given such facts, what is true according to the story, as determined by the author's linguistic descriptions of a world, will always leave many claims about that world open. And many of those claims will remain open even when, in the actual world, and for logical or factual reasons, such claims are settled in one way or the other and Woods-style world-inheritance principles operate. These open claims can of course concern fictional objects (as, for instance, in the example of the presence, or not, of a mole on Holmes' back). And then, for the reasons indicated below, we will get a kind of Meinongian incompleteness in those objects if we treat those objects as genuine, real entities.

The example of the number of hairs on Holmes' head is a special case of the fact that, given its goals, a fiction need not spell out every truth that might hold about its characters and course of action. To explain such examples further, observe that, for many predicates P that we use to describe objects, the following roughly stated determinacy principle holds true in the actual world:

(DP) (x)[if x has P, then $(\exists y)(x$ has P in way $y)$], for various ways y.

(DP) is meant to cover the determinable-determinate relation, the general-specific relation, and so on, that holds between being P, simpliciter, and being P in some

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[31]Related points apply to our actual-world descriptions of objects. Cf. Grice's conversational maxims and competing accounts of such phenomena.

[32]One can imagine complete stories. Thus a finite set of properties S might be such that, according to story C, S contains exactly the properties that exist (i.e., that exist in C's world). Moreover, C has just one character d; and, for each property p in S, either it is specified that $C(d$ *has p*) or it is specified that $C(\sim d$ *has p*). Finally, the only truths in the world of C besides the initial above claim about S are the truths about what particular S-properties d does and doesn't have. But C is a nonrealistic, contralogical fiction (e.g., d lacks the disjunction of any property in S with any actual-world property that is not in S). And such fictions aren't our concern here.

specific way.[33] To illustrate (DP), if x has a weight, then there is some y such that y is x's exact weight; if x has a color, then there is some specific color y such that x has y; if x is a Platonic solid, then there is a y such that y is a tetrahedron or y is an octahedron or . . . , and x has shape y. And so on.

I take it that everyone agrees that something like (DP) holds in the actual world for many predicates. Presumably everyone also agrees that, in general — and given the sorts of goals of fiction noted above — authors ascribe many such (DP)-obeying predicates to their objects without also specifying the ways in which those objects have those predicates. They do not specify those ways because there is no need to do so, given the fiction that they are writing, and doing so would be distracting or ludicrous. Moreover, in many applications of (DP)-obeying predicates, there aren't any world-inheritance principles that the story takes over and employs to spell out these ways in detail. (Thus, in our society, there is no specific set of colors that by social custom usually belongs to multicolored umbrellas. So a story may describe its main character as carrying a multicolored umbrella without specifying, implying, or inheriting any world fact about the exact colors belonging to that umbrella.) To the extent that these ways are not specified in the story, the application of a (DP)-obeying predicate in the story thus creates the kind of incompleteness, in the descriptions given by the fiction, that is noted above.

Given these points, an important difference between actual-world objects and fictional objects now emerges in the (DP) cases, if we take fictional objects to be genuine, real entities in the way that Woods does. Consider an actual-world object o that satisfies a (DP)-obeying predicate P. Then there is a specific way y such that in the actual world o has P in way y. But now take a fictional object f that the story says has such a P. Then (unless the story says or implies something to the contrary about the way in which f has P, or unless a world-inheritance principle now operates), it is not the case that there is any specific way y such that, in the story, f has P in way y. So if fictional objects such as f are treated as genuine, real entities in Woods' way, fictional objects turn out to be ontically incomplete in a Meinongian manner that doesn't also belong to actual-world objects.

One can make similar points about other linguistic mechanisms that function somewhat similarly to (DP)-obeying predicates in how they describe objects in the actual world and in stories. (For example, a story might say that "the town of Goosefeathers lies over there behind Mount Treble" without there being any exact distance, such that, in the story, Goosefeathers lies that distance behind Treble.) Of course the relevant linguistic devices, predicational and otherwise, are also used in

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[33]Implications of the (DP) sort may hold in the actual world for logical, metaphysical, nomic, or merely brute-fact reasons. I won't try here to sort out all the possible ways y that may be at issue or their interrelations.

141

history books, newspapers, and other representations that talk about actual-world objects. But, to the extent that such devices are governed by (DP)-like principles in the actual world, the actual world guarantees that those actual-world objects are ontically complete even when the linguistic representations do not spell out all the specific features that those objects must have, given their characterizations by means of the devices. In contrast, there is nothing but the fictional text (plus world-inheritance principles, plus facts of literary-historical context) to make the objects of fiction, treated as genuine, real entities, ontically complete. And, in general, such objects, as so treated, are not ontically complete.[34]

Points like these last ones carry over to the cases described earlier, in which the fiction describes an object without specifying every truth that might hold about its characters and course of action. Thus nothing about the Holmes texts, their context, and their world-inheritance determines whether or not Holmes has a mole on his back. So, unlike Cleopatra — the state of whose back, while now unknown, is forever fixed by actual-world factors — Holmes, treated as a genuine, real thing, is in this respect ontically incomplete.

Note finally that the above discussion does not imply that, for example, ontic incompleteness exists in the actual world given merely the fact that there is no specific number n such that, generically, human beings have n hairs on their heads. To ignore various complications about generic statements, this fact says simply that (a) $\sim (\exists n)(x)$ (x is human $\rightarrow x$ has n hairs on x's head), while of course it also is true that (b) $(x)[x$ is human $\rightarrow (\exists n)$ (x has n hairs on x's head)]. Claims (a) and (b) introduce no genuine, real objects into the actual world that have hairs but no specific number of hairs on their heads. Of course we could try to provide such an object: for example, The Generically Hairy Being, a single entity g that is such that (c) g has hairs on its head but (d) $\sim (\exists n)$ (g has n hairs on g's head). We would then have actual-world, ontic incompleteness as regards g. But there is no need to introduce any such metaphysical curiosities here, and all we individual, actual human beings would remain hairwise ontically complete even were we to conjure up g or something similar.

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[34]I don't here argue that all actual-world objects are ontically complete in every respect. although I happen to accept that position. All that I argue is the claim that there are indeed many predicates and other linguistic devices that obey (DP)-like principles in the actual world; but these devices are such that stories apply those predicates (and so on) to objects without in any fashion specifying the particular ways in which those objects have those predicates. That claim then implies that, in Holmes-style (DP) cases, fictional objects — treated as genuine, real things, as in *Truth in Fiction* — are incomplete in a Meinongian fashion. That claim is compatible with the possibility (which I doubt) that while actual-world objects are indeed ontically complete as regards their (DP)-obeying characterizations, in other respects such objects are ontically incomplete. As indicated below, similar points can of course be made about fictional objects in other cases of incompleteness.

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Speaking of Fiction

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1 Introduction

Truth in Fiction begins with an introduction to views about fiction and the status of the sentences that make up fictional tales. Rejecting the more conservative view of 'truth' adopted by Walton, who endorses Wood's "Basic Laws of Being," including Woods's *fiction law*: "Sentences of fiction fail to refer and cannot be true or false" [17, p. 2], Woods defends an approach that relativizes truth to different "situs" or sites. These sites resemble possible worlds in modal logic, in the sense of being 'places' at which the declarative sentences of fictional stories are said to be true. On Woods's account, fictional sites arise from the creative fiat of authors and (in general) do not satisfy maximal consistent sets of sentences. One special site is the actual world, at which the events of history and the truths of the sciences hold. The events of history include acts of inscription or utterance performed by story-tellers, while other sites are constituted by the story-tellings of their authors.

Woods's concerns, however, extend well beyond the logic of fiction: *Truth in Fiction* ends with a broad and ambitious challenge to philosophical method, arising from Wood's perspective on fiction's "systemic and untroubling" (here I would add *utterly familiar*) inconsistency [17, p. 188].

2 "Truth" in fiction?

My principal disagreement with Woods is methodological: I reject his appeal to "truth in fiction." But this is not because I want to set the word "truth" on a pedestal, restricting its application to correct descriptive claims about the world and other subject-matters. My worry is methodological: I think that the invocation of truth misdirects our attention, focusing on sentences and a mysterious (possibly paradoxical) property they are said to have. As I see it, the most interesting facts about fiction are rooted in how we *use* language to create and share fictional works.

Nevertheless, I agree with much of what Woods has to say; on my view, Woods's account of what is 'true in' fictional stories could be more perspicuously expressed as an account of how we interpret and reason about fictional texts, and story-telling in general. A practical study of how fictions are produced and understood by their readers/ listeners, and how this practice compares and contrasts with the practice of reporting and reasoning about the world, must focus on both the similarities and differences of these distinct but closely related uses of language. In particular, as an account of how we reason when answering questions about a fictional tale, Woods's views are grounded in common sense ways of reading fiction, but his appeal to "truth" adds little to the story.

This response may be partly due to a bias of mine, which I'm happy to confess: as a preservationist in logic, I take truth to be an *over burdened* concept. Woods's invocation of 'truth' in his account of fiction creates a provocative air of paradox. But it also misdirects our attention: invoking truth in the context of telling fictional tales diverts our attention from the actual practices of telling and listening, writing and reading fiction. Worse, it obscures the very close connections between fiction as a practice and the practices of reporting, understanding and accepting reports about how things are in the world.

Focusing on truth leads to other problems as well. In particular, fictional 'truth' presents us with both gluts and gaps: authors sometimes make mistakes (for example, Conan-Doyle and Watson's wound from a "Jezai bullet," which is said to have struck Watson's shoulder in "A study in Scarlet," but his leg in "The Sign of Four"). And some authors deliberately play with the effects of paradox (for a vivid example, see the writings of Daniil Kharms, collected in *Today, I wrote nothing*" [9]). In the first case, we treat inconsistencies in ways that parallel the treatment of reports that are inconsistent with each other or even internally; in the second, we are driven to more radical efforts at interpretation.

I have argued elsewhere [4, 5] that our best accounts of the world itself are often inconsistent. But unlike some advocates of inconsistency tolerance [15], I see inconsistency as a problem to be managed and, when possible, resolved. Defenders of true contradictions remain a minority, and the examples they cite generally focus on persistent paradoxes such as the liar, rather than unresolved conceptual conflicts in science, for example, in the early calculus or in old quantum theory, or on non-existent addresses, such as 221(b) Baker St., London in the late 19th century. My aim has always been to manage inconsistency, not to build a radical metaphysics out of it.

The challenge of inconsistency and whether, when and how to tolerate it arises in all these cases. When we reason about fictional tales, we do it in ways that parallel efforts at reasoning with inconsistent stories about the world that are nevertheless

intended to inform us of something true such as Bohr's account of the hydrogen atom and the Dirac function [5, 2]. But there are important differences between the two cases. One is that writers and readers of fiction are prepared to set aside commitments to claims they take to be true about the world, taking the author's word (sometimes leavened by doubts about the author's/narrator's reliability) as their guide to the story. On this point, Woods's appeal to separate 'sites,' together with his claim that, in broad, fictional tales "inherit" the world, matches up well with the intuitive responses of readers of fiction.

Apart from differences imposed by the author's stipulative authority, such as the existence of a brilliant detective named "Sherlock Holmes," and more extreme (and puzzling) stipulations such as time travel, we generally fill gaps in fictional tales in the same way we go about filling gaps in stories purporting to describe the public world. For example, while we have no better evidence for the specific number of hairs on the heads of most actual people on a given date than we have for the specific number of hairs on Sherlock's head on a given date, we accept that there is some such number for Sherlock, just as there is for those actual people. In a fictional context that doesn't explicitly suspend that assumption, we are inclined to impose it on the characters (at least the mammalian ones).

This leads us to one objection to Woods's approach: In discussion following the presentations in Vancouver, Dr. Robert Howell pointed out that in the actual world, there is something that *grounds* the truth that (assuming a precise standard for what counts as a hair),

Hairs: $(\forall S, t)[(\text{person}(S) \text{ and } \text{time}(t)] \rightarrow \exists(n)(\text{There are } n \text{ hairs on } S\text{'s head at } t)$

The claim that some number n makes Hairs true for Sherlock at a given moment in some Holmes story seems false: nothing said in the story tells us what that n is, and there is nothing beyond the story (apart from general information about humans and vague descriptions of Holmes) that would determine the value of n, even in principle. But here is one logical way to fry this fish: in a supervaluational semantics[16],

Exist: $(\exists(n)(\text{there are } n \text{ hairs on Sherlock's head at time } t \text{ in story } s)$

is true so long as that every maximal consistent extension (*MCE*) of the sentences we agree to be true of Sherlock at some time in a story includes a sentence specifying a unique value for the number of hairs on Sherlock's head at time t in story s. Some such extensions will specify different numbers, so a supervaluation over these extensions makes all sentences of the form Hairs false, but *Exist* is true in every *MCE*, and so true on the supervaluation. This captures something we feel intuitively confident of regarding Sherlock, but it does so without requiring us to extend our

commitments about him beyond what we can reasonably infer from the story and relevant background commitments.

The epistemic standards that apply in reasoning about fiction differ from those of everyday common sense knowledge about our world. The world offers rich opportunities for justifying and cross-checking assertions against a wide range of evidence. Indeed, the world often surprises us by turning out to contain unexpected evidence settling questions we never expected to settle.[1] But the evidence we can apply in reasoning about fictional texts is exhausted by the paper trail together with what Woods calls 'world inheritance.' While it is sometimes possible to extend the text by drawing on evidence about the author's work and intentions regarding the story, we quickly find ourselves in difficult and disputable territory: gaps become unavoidable.

The supervaluational approach allows us to respect what we know about numbers of hairs on the heads of people, including both fictional and actual people: while Woods's fictional sites are indeterminate in ways that contrast with our metaphysical expectations of the world, it allows our treatment of fiction to agree with our everyday expectations. We accept the greater determinacy of the actual world, along with the availability of a wider range of methods of inquiry regarding the world. But even investigations of the world have their limitations, as emphasized by Michael Dummett's objections to excluded middle [7]; in the end, it seems to me that this difference is more a matter of degree than kind.

3   Tolerating Inconsistency

Woods declares that to deny the inconsistency of fiction is *shallow* [17, p. 188]. Having handed truth in fiction over to a combination of the author's stipulative authority and our interpretive efforts, accepting inconsistencies seems intuitively right. However, this step provides little insight into what's going on in the practice of fiction, and, more narrowly, into why and how no serious problem arises from such inconsistencies. Woods notes that his vocabulary of 'sites' and 'respects' has yet to be widely discussed, challenged or fully developed [17, p. 189]. I think a response to

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[1]For a recent, spectacular example see Douglas Preston, "The Day the Dinosaurs Died,", in *The New Yorker*: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/04/08/the-day-the-dinosaurs-died. Preston's story reports spectacularly well-preserved fossil finds that appear to record very detailed events, including the production of tiny craters by tektites falling on mud, which occurred within one or two hours of the Chicxulub impact, together with feathers up to 15 inches long, presumably belonging to dinosaurs, and wonderfully preserved fossils of fish, a mammal in a burrow, and more. If the account the article presents of the find holds up, we will be able to say with confidence that dinosaurs survived up the time of the impact, a claim that has been in dispute for years and seemed extremely difficult to settle, given the apparent limits of the evidence that was available until this find.

the puzzle of inconsistency is one of the more interesting problems Woods raises and addresses here, and I expect that a good response to it will parallel common-sense responses to inconsistency, both in everyday contexts and in the sciences.

The methodological tack Woods has adopted begins with the experience of writers and readers, who have little to no trouble, logical or practical, managing to produce and to understand fictional works. Both experience themselves as knowing a lot about the characters and events that fictional stories relate, a point that fits nicely with Woods's 'no problem' approach to inconsistencies in fictional works. Inconsistencies in fiction are difficult to resolve, but similar challenges arise in everyday efforts to say what is true of the world, when we have to resolve a conflict between two sources of evidence, or work our way through a confusion.

4   Work in Progress

Focusing on the phenomena of fictional writing and reading rather than imposing a theoretical perspective on logic and reasoning which is already in hand, Woods acknowledges the call "for mature theoretical accommodation," adding that it "won't be achieved at first gulp," that it "might not be achievable at all," and emphasizing the "lived literary experience of ... readers and writers" of fiction [17, p. 189].

This leaves Woods's search for a serious theoretical account in an early stage of development. But in rejecting Walton's "pretendism," Woods adds that it too is at a very early stage of development, as is the related approach of Armour-Garb and Woodbridge's "redirecting" of the semantic readings given to sentences in a fictional work, which in their account arises from the recognition that the "standard reading" of sentences belonging to a work of fiction is somehow infelicitous. Woods objects that their posit of semantic redirection does not preserve a simple, common-sense result that Woods's proposed 'sites' capture: readers of fiction clearly understand that what they read is "true in the stories and false in the world." [17, p. 189].

The word 'true' and its parallels in other languages have been a source of trouble from the beginnings of philosophy: the liar paradox in particular remains a stumbling block (or an important starting point) for talk of "truth". Woods's defense of his approach to fiction begins with the fact that it fits with the common-sense distinction between "what's true in a story" and "what's true in the world" (as Sellars put it, what is true *tout court*). While acknowledging the "theoretical immaturity" of this position, Woods argues that it's more promising than the alternatives now on the table.

At this point Woods takes up a discussion of Ray Bradbury's famous story, "A Sound of Thunder," in which a time-traveller breaks a 'no interference' rule by

stepping off the set path and unintentionally killing a butterfly during a visit to the Cretaceous; the story ends with the traveller and the rest of the party returning to the 'present' only to find themselves in a future troublingly different from the future they had left behind. Woods notes that the inconsistency of this story combined with ex falso trivializes the maximal consistency-preserving extension of the story. But it does not trivialize the story itself, not even in a 'one-timeline' model (of course this problem is trivially easy to avoid in a multiple-timeline model of the story's content). Woods remarks that it's simply *not true* in the story that up is down, right is left or the sky is orange.

This response is surely right: authors' authority over their stories makes declarative sentences of the story written in the author's voice (absent indicators of unreliability) part of the content of the story. But it's absurd to claim that Bradbury has told us a trivial story in which every sentence of English is true. But unlike the case of Watson's wound, the inconsistency of Bradbury's story is essential to it. What are we to make of 'truth in fiction' if stories like this can be told?

Here I suggest we adopt a *minimalist* account of truth. The prosentential view of truth holds that to say 'S is true,' where S is a name or pronoun referring to some sentence, is simply to assert or endorse S [8]. This approach sets aside metaphysical puzzles that can otherwise arise from the use of 'true'. In particular, it makes the liar paradox a pragmatic trick, rather than a semantic puzzle: 'This sentence is not true' becomes both an assertion and a denial; it is self-defeating as a speech-act because it asserts and denies itself in one breath, but it is *not paradoxical*: there is no *truth property* it both has and lacks.

5   Reflections on the Origins of Fiction

I am a *preservationist*. That is to say, I think of consequence relations in general as relations which preserve some property (or properties) of the premises we reason with (conventionally from 'left to right'; more substantively, from premises to conclusions). Any such consequence relation will be reflexive (R), monotonic (M) and transitive (T): R holds because we begin by assuming each premise has the property to be preserved, M because each consequence of a proper subset of the premises must have the property whenever all premises do, and T holds (that is, in Gentzen's terms, we have the rule *Cut*) because when $\Gamma, p \vdash \Delta$ and $\Gamma \vdash p, \Delta$, then some sentence in Δ must have the property whenever all the sentences in Γ do.

More narrowly, preservationism provides a simple (though somewhat open-ended) suggestion for how to reason about the contents of fictional texts: there are properties of such texts worth preserving, and authors and readers reason about

the texts in ways that preserve those properties. The upshot is that the consequences of a set S belong to the intersection of the maximal extensions of S which *preserve* those properties.

While this alone doesn't provide much concrete guidance, non-triviality is an important (and preservable) property, and more helpful preservable properties include *measures of inconsistency* [3, 11]. Having identified *maximal acceptable extensions* of some text, i.e. extensions which preserve some chosen property or combination of properties, we find the consequences of the text in the intersection of these acceptable extensions.[2] Thus preservationists do not appeal to preservation of truth when reasoning about fiction. I suspect that Woods is actually with us on this point, and that Woods's 'true in the story' is not a kind of *truth* at all. Instead, I interpret it as *picking out the conclusions* that Woods's common sense approach to interpreting fictional texts endorses. From this perspective, the important questions that arise from it are not puzzles about truth at all. Instead, they concern *how we reason*; good answers to them should point us towards a general account of how we *should* reason when thinking about the contents of fictional stories.

Reading fiction well requires attention to, and reflection on, the practice we engage in when interpreting fictional texts. In general we can *extend* and *modify* their contents, adding to, and sometimes even changing what is explicitly said in them. Such extensions are arrived at by reasoning in familiar ways about what a fictional text tells us regarding characters, circumstances and events. So we can reach trivial conclusions such as:

Exist: $(\exists n)$ (n is the number of hairs on Sherlock's head at time t in story s)

But we can also reach much more interesting conclusions: for example, that in the early acts of *Henry the Fifth part one*, Hal is carefully planning his path to power and glory.

Like other reports, fictional texts are best understood as including errors, and sometimes even deliberate misstatements: the author's stipulative authority is subject to examination and correction by readers, and some narrative voices are unreliable. This requires a critical perspective, including reflection on what preservable properties we appeal to in our interpretations, and what justifies our relying on them. In cases where we suspect the narrator is untrustworthy for one reason or another, the process will include an effort to consider and evaluate modifications of

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[2]The preservable property first proposed by Schotch and Jennings was a measure of inconsistency called 'level,' equal to the minimum number of cells in a consistent covering of the premises, i.e. a covering no member of which is inconsistent. But there are other interesting candidates as well[11].

the *story as told*.[3]

Broadly speaking, I think the results of this perspective agree with Woods's treatment of his examples. For example, Woods points out that it's reasonable to conclude that in Conan Doyle's stories, Holmes had a spine — and that London was still 6987 kilometers from Medicine Hat. Woods's account of these conclusions appeals to the principle that fictional texts 'inherit the world.' My suggestion is that, absent reasons to think otherwise, fictional texts are *interpreted and reasoned with* in the same ways we reason with reports about the world, including the importation of other already-known facts when they do not conflict with the report we're dealing with.

So long as a fictional text doesn't directly conflict with our knowledge of the world, we reason from it just as we would reason from a reliable report; this underwrites Wood's principle of world inheritance. When a fiction does conflict with our knowledge of the world we overwrite conflicting 'real-world' information while preserving the rest. And even in fantasy stories explicitly set in 'other worlds,' the *descriptive vocabulary* of the everyday world is preserved, including the material inferences [13] we make in reasoning with familiar predicates.

On the preservationist approach, we would limit the *acceptable extensions* of the Holmes stories to extensions compatible with reliable everyday claims: the persons, city of London and world Conan-Doyle describes are very like the persons, London and earth we are familiar with; the stories' departures from reality are confined to the specifics of the Holmes narratives as written by Conan Doyle, and so don't require re-evaluation of compatible general truths about London or the world at large.

Further, in light of how we deal with apparently erroneous reports about the real world, it's reasonable to suppose that Watson's wound is not a 'travelling wound' which somehow migrated between Watson's shoulder and his leg, but instead was always in one of these places and never in the other, and that Conan-Doyle's text is simply mistaken about this. (If the location(s) of the wound were important to the narratives in which it is mentioned, we might be forced to accept the inconsistency of its being in each place specified in *each* of the stories where it is mentioned, or to hypothesize that there were in fact two wounds despite Conan-Doyle's failure to mention this.)

This and other reflections on interpretive challenges raised by what appear to be authorial oversights show that authorial authority over the events and things they describe in their fictional narratives is fallible in ways that are comparable to, and treated in ways that parallel, reasoning about the fallibility of witnesses who report

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[3]For example, consider the children's story, "The Man Who Saved the Mooon"

actual events. This is a complex kind of thinking: there can be tensions and complex interactions between judgements based on different sources of evidence, and in very difficult cases the best response may involve inconsistency tolerant reasoning.

A final observation here is that the approach we take to Watson's wound depends on the kind of story being told: if medically-focused science fiction had been a theme in the stories and the wound had figured more prominently in them, we would surely take the 'travelling wound' hypothesis more seriously. Conflicts with common-sense background assumptions, and even outright logical contradictions, are not always authorial errors or misdirection. However, the more such conflicts arise, the more difficult it becomes to carry out 'gap-filling' with confidence, and (equivalently) the wider the range of what we regard as acceptable extensions of the work. In extreme cases, we may not be able to make much more of the narratives than the sentences they are made of.

6   Pilate's Question

On a broader note, we should examine the role and significance of truth in our various uses of language carefully. Philosophers and logicians have focused on ideas about truth and accounts of truth-preserving inference. But language has a long and complex history of uses, not all of which have much to do with truth. Matter-of-fact reports and reasoning about them are clearly important, but many other uses have arisen, including story-telling. It seems likely these uses have evolved alongside each other; from a purely descriptive point of view, we can say truly that humans make noises and inscriptions which play important roles in their social interactions.

In correspondence, Woods recently proposed an approach to avoiding logical explosion drawing on a distinction between *consequence having*, *consequence spitting*, and *consequence drawing*. His suggestion is that we can recognize that certain accepted premises *A1, A2, . . .* have *B* as a consequence, correctly accept the corresponding conditional, i.e. that if *A1, A2,. . . ,*, then *B*, but balk at the last step, i.e. refuse to infer B. Woods's argument for this distinction is that actual practice shows this to be the case. For example, Newton and other early practitioners of the calculus were well aware that their methods for differentiation involved dividing by 0, but their methods nevertheless produced non-trivial, intuitively and empirically successful results. History shows that mathematicians continued to work with these methods for a long while, without invoking a paraconsistent logic. Similarly, Neils Bohr's model of the atom relied on Coulomb attraction between the electron and the nucleus to hold the atom together, but ignored the radiation a classical orbiting electron would emit.[5] The result, combined with a (rather strange) restriction on

the orbits and energies an electron could have, was the first successful account of atomic spectra.

But these examples raise a critical question that Woods's distinction between consequence having, spitting and drawing doesn't address: was the practice involved in these cases entirely *ad hoc*, that is, did mathematicians and scientists simply pick conclusions they liked, and reject those they didn't? It seems not: the historical cases above display a shared, systematic practice. 'Allez en avant et la foi vous viendra,' wrote D'Alembert, words Woods might endorse. But the mathematicians engaged in the old calculus also reliably agreed on which results and methods of calculation were acceptable; for example, when differentiating they applied algebraic methods to ensure no 0-valued denominators would result before setting the value of what *had been* the denominator to 0. Similarly, Bohr excluded electrodynamics from his description of the hydrogen atom, despite relying on electrodynamics to characterize the radiation emitted (absorbed) when an electron moves from a higher to lower energy allowed states (lower to higher), and this subtle practice of the old quantum theory in general was refined and extended with help from Erhenfest and others.

In general, when we find a *shared practice of reasoning*, it's worth exploring how it works. Logicians have good reason to ask how reasoning in contexts where inconsistent premises are relied on can be systematically constrained to avoid trivialization. These constraints may not add up to a new and better logic — they may be more local and pragmatic than systematic. They might even turn out to be arbitrary or ad hoc (perhaps this applies to paradoxical religious doctrines). In that case, they would surely merit suspicion, and perhaps outright rejection. But in the other cases, the methods used are systematic and productive enough to deserve serious investigation.

A general approach is to treat the consequences of a set of sentences S as the *intersection of the acceptable extensions of* S. Here the key question is, what are the acceptable extensions? In classical logic (as in many others) the 'acceptable' extensions of a set of sentences S are the sets S' such that $S \subseteq S'$ and $S' \nvdash \bot$, and the logical closure of S is the intersection of the maximal consistent extensions of S. More generally, given a valued property that some inconsistent / unsatisfiable sets have, there can be patterns of reasoning which preserve that property, thereby providing a motivated, systematic way of blocking the trivializing consequence-drawings which classical logic, along with other inconsistency-intolerant logics, would impose on us.

Setting aside these logical maneuvers, I propose an alternative, anthropological line of inquiry into fiction, beginning with its historical/evolutionary background, and based on an investigation of the origins of our capacity and interest in produc-

ing and understanding fictional stories. This approach sets aside concerns about the semantics of fiction, including ways of reconciling what is 'true' in works of fiction with the truths of the single, consistent, shared world those who are not dialetheists believe in. I believe we should move beyond logical worries to adopt a naturalistic perspective, seeking historical, anthropological and practical insights into our capacity to produce, understand and enjoy fiction.

7   Evolutionary Reflections On the Fictional Use of Language

> I went way back and asked the old
> Ones, deep in the graves, the youngest dead,
> How language began and who had the cred-
> it of it, Gods, men, devils, elves,
> And this is the answer I was given:
> "We got together one day," they said,
> And talked it over amongst ourselves.

> "Origin," Howard Nemerov.

Language is a rich, extremely complex social adaptation, with many different uses. One very important use is its role as a means for communicating how things stand in the world. Here truth plays an important role: this use of language relies on reliable connections between noises and inscriptions, on one hand, and how things stand in the world. But beyond pure matter-of-fact usage, facts about things that *might* happen are also often reflected in animal behaviour, both as a consequence of evolution by natural selection, which favours swift responses to indications of possible threats and opportunities, and as a consequence of individual learning processes (themselves products of selection) which enable individual animals to adjust their behavioural patterns in response to their own history of experiences and circumstances. Thus, mice are generally much more cautious than cats, because in most circumstances they are at much greater risk of becoming prey.

We tend to think of the 'mights' involved in such cases as expressing (in some sense) real possibilities and thus, even when not realized, perhaps more 'real' than mere or pure fictions. Further, to have evolutionary and learning implications, they must sometimes be real. This could be taken to mark a line separating them from 'mere' or 'pure' fiction — but I believe it's more slippery slope than line. Stories have similar effects on us, even when they portray events we know to be fictional:

for example, it's harder (at least for many people) to walk fearlessly into a dark room after watching a horror movie (especially one in which danger lurks in the darkness).

8   The Importance of Fiction

Human language is a social adaptation that enables us to share rich, detailed information about many topics, to plan and coordinate activities, and to tell stories, true or false. Closely connected to these observations is an obvious fact: any language that would allow us to express, share and discuss decision making under uncertainty must allow us to consider (in the sense of reasoning with, when making choices) sentences that may or may not be true, some of which will turn out not to be true. Modalities including 'possibility' along with subjunctive conditionals provide sophisticated ways to make such reasoning explicit, as in:

TIGER

There might be a tiger in those bushes. If there were a tiger in those bushes, climbing a tree right now would be safer than continuing my walk. I won't walk any further right now — I'll climb a tree instead.

In using explicit expressions of practical reasoning like this, speakers indicate that the concerns giving rise to a choice are not only about something the subject takes to be true: someone thinking along these lines is not asserting 'there is a tiger in the bushes' and deciding to climb a tree. Instead, they are considering a possibility — one that bears on what they prefer to do or not to do.

How to interpret less sophisticated speech, or similar behaviour in non-linguistic animals, is often an open question. Erich Auerbach pointed out [1, p. 7] that the use of subjunctives (along with other aspects of grammar) in Latin fell into irregularity and confusion following the collapse of the Roman Empire. But despite this linguistic confusion, I doubt that basic practical reasoning collapsed following the loss of these clear and explicit grammatical lines. The point is simple: even sophisticated language users are often unclear about the kind of reasoning they are doing and the status of the considerations they take into account when making choices. Nevertheless, concerns we think of as 'mere possibilities' play a role in shaping our decisions, even when we don't know how to express them *as* mere possibilities.

Despite the central role of truth conditions in logical thought, and the careful grammatical and interpretive work needed to separate the meanings of declaratives like "there is a tiger in those bushes" from "there might be a tiger in those bushes"

and the purely hypothetical (but still troublingly suggestive) "suppose there were a tiger in those bushes," using a simpler language that doesn't make such distinctions explicit can accomplish at a practical level much of what more careful and sophisticated speakers do by using different sentences to express the differences explicitly. But being able to imagine, talk and reason about possibilities is closely related to being able to imagine and consider outright fictions. Having the capacity to do one enables one to do the other, and I think that the sloppiness of actual usage is an indicator of how slippery the slope is.

This perspective focuses on a broader view of language, its use and the properties of sentences that we respond to in practical and theoretical reasoning. Downplaying 'truth' as a semantic property of declarative sentences, it aims instead at a naturalistic approach to language, beginning with the obvious observation that we make noises and inscriptions. The causal effects of these noises and inscriptions in a community of language users then becomes the focus of inquiry. Beginning with the effects of linguistic acts on human behaviour (including further linguistic acts) provides a broad, naturalistic perspective that encompasses the use of language in fiction.

An evolutionary parallel appears in Gould and Lewontin's biological appropriation of the architectural word, "spandrel." "Spandrel" originally referred to the roughly triangular spaces which arise where two arches adjoin. The existence of such spaces follows from the shapes and relative positions of the two arches, but these spaces were immediately put to use as surfaces where decorative painting and sculpture could be placed. Similarly, an evolutionary "spandrel" is a characteristic which arises from structures independently selected for, such that further modifications of them can contribute to survival and/or reproductive success.

Gould and Lewontin's account of their biological spandrels begins with the observation that the emergence of new biological traits often creates opportunities for further changes contributing to survival and reproduction. Once a trait has emerged, natural selection acts to develop and modify it in ways that respond to those opportunities.

This point provides part of the answer to a skeptical argument against evolution by natural selection. The argument asked (for example) how proto-feathers, half-wings or incomplete eyes could be selected for before they actually gave their possessors the ability to fly or to see. But the answer is straightforward: there are other benefits that feathery precursors to flight feathers and more basic light-detection systems can provide to their possessors. So long there is a monotonically fitness-improving path from simple beneficial traits to richer, more complex ones that are also beneficial (sometimes in entirely novel ways), the complexity of the final result does not rule out natural selection as an account of its origins.

157

St. George Jackson Mivart appealed to the presumed uselessness of 'incipient stages of useful structures' as an objection to the theory of evolution by natural selection [10]. But language itself is a counter-example to this anti-evolutionary argument: much of the complex grammar and vocabulary sophisticated speakers deploy to distinguish 'mights' and 'would-bes' from mere declaratives can be dispensed with, in favour of simpler usage: assuming a language that distinguishes the expression of assertions from questions, simply asking "Tiger?" can raise the thought of tigers, with effects including sensory scans of the local environment, and rapid tree-climbing. Recalling our naughty young monkey, we can also anticipate the possibility of using a "Tiger!" utterance to ensure exclusive access to a favoured food type one has stumbled on. In a more sophisticated linguistic context, stories can be told (like much every day conversation) as a means of entertainment and social engagement. Drawing on the 'spandrel' theme of emerging new uses of language, we can provide similar just-so stories accounting for the use of language in story-telling.

The principal claim here is simply that are plausible evolutionary paths leading to the fictional use of language. In outline, we can learn to make noises that sound very similar to reports of events and descriptions of things, but, in this new practice the noises are not presented or understood as reports or descriptions. Today, we can even make vivid, moving, three dimensional images that look as if physically impossible things, such as surviving 200 G accelerations during action scenes, are happening. And these noises, inscriptions and images have important impacts in the real world, even once a cultural distinction between novels, movies and the 'real world' has been established. As advertisers and politicians have long understood, stories don't need to be true, or even believed, to affect people's beliefs, attitudes and choices.

The details of this historical tale remain obscure (fossils of language in use are hard to find). But this perspective leads to a straightforward model of the emergence of fiction as a practice. More narrowly, it provides a straightforward account of Woods's world inheritance principle: the language used in fictional story telling closely parallels the language used in reports about the world.

In the case of actual reports, we have a basic commitment to extend our account of the world by adding the content of the reports we receive, though this commitment is not carried out blindly: some reports are mistaken or misleading, and conflicts are sorted out in a process that appeals to the credibility of the sources,[4] the probability of mistakes, etc. In the case of fiction, the force of the inheritance principle varies;

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[4]One of my favourite lines from Chico Marx is his crack, "(w)ho ya gonna believe, me or your own eyes?" in *Duck Soup*.

Conan-Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories are set in the familiar world of the time. As a result, and apart from facts directly conflicting with the narrative of the stories such as the non-existence of 221 Baker St. and a brilliant detective named "Sherlock Holmes," it's reasonable to interpret the stories as implicitly including many facts about the world of that time, including the distance between London and Medicine Hat. The practice involved reflects how we cope with conflicts between actual reports about the world, with the main difference being that we stipulate that the pseudo-reports of the fictional text have priority, in the story, and rely on facts about the world compatible with those stipulations only to fill the story out.

Apart from deliberately paradoxical stories, we try to sort out inconsistencies and conflicts in the story as told in ways that parallel the familiar practice of sorting out conflicts, disagreements and inconsistencies in the information we have about the world. Last, but philosophically far from least, when it comes to deliberate paradox, we can take what happens 'in the story' at face value while recognizing that such stories generally aim to have certain effects on the audience, ranging from amusement over absurdities, as in "One bright day in the middle of the night, two dead boys got up to fight- back to back they faced each other, drew their knives and shot each other," to the puzzlement of the Liar paradox.

Existence, reference and truth are not needed for 'meaning' here: inferential semantics along with pragmatics are enough to ground a shared linguistic practice. From language used as a tool for sharing information about our world arise other possible uses, including lying and (more innocently) story-telling. This is what we should expect from the evolution of any system that enables individuals and societies to share information about their world. 'Untrue' descriptions become possible, and can come to be valued in many ways, as means of deception, as ways building shared, invented group histories, or, simply and more innocently, as ways of entertaining each other.

Material inference [14] allows for the inferential extension of the stipulated 'truths' of fiction, making many things not explicitly written down nevertheless 'true in the story.' In turn, being 'true in the story' comes down to saying that they follow from the text. It also allows for considerable uncertainty over what inferences are correct when we approach complex, confusing and deliberately paradoxical texts, such as the writings of Daniil Kharms [9].[5]

In closing, the attractions of fictionalism in mathematics come to mind. Suppose that stipulated inferential structures constitute pure mathematics; on such an account, the natural numbers are simply defined as a sequence beginning with 0 —

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[5]The provocative title of a recently published collection of Kharm's work is *Today, I wrote nothing.*

whatever that is — in which every member n has a 'successor' distinct from itself and all members up to n.

On this approach, the usefulness of mathematics is no mystery at all: patterns of inference that we notice and take an interest in are often patterns that actually have reliable instances in the natural world. Such inferential systems can be abstracted and generalized in the form of 'pure' (i.e. *purely stipulative*) mathematics — a later development that emerged from earlier practices such as counting, measuring and reliably calculating geometrical relations amongst objects in the world. In the history of Euclidean geometry, we also find efforts to prove the fifth axiom from the first four, motivated by concerns about the complexity and apparent/intuitive *uncertainty* of the fifth. Still more abstract mathematics builds stipulated systems of definitions and axioms that aren't (or aren't yet) rooted in any practice we apply to the world.

The successful application of such inferential structures requires only that some include terms and rules of inference we can reliably apply to our world, for example, in counting two collections of objects and then using subtraction to determine the difference between their numbers, or, in a richer scientific context, enabling us to determine the number of atoms in a mole [12, p. 31].

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Inheriting the World

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1 Fiction and flotation

"Fiction," says John Woods, "is somewhat like flotation. When objects subject to gravitational pull don't fall down, competing causal powers are in play".[1] One of the ways in which we might say that fiction is like flotation concerns its relationship to the real world: the real world exerts a certain gravitational pull over stories, ensuring that what is true in it is true in them as well — unless an author's competing causal power is in play. In other words, what is true in a story is what is true in the world, unless the author says otherwise. This idea is neatly captured by Woods's world-inheritance thesis and its corollary, the storyworld epistemic-access thesis:

> *The world-inheritance thesis*: Except for contrary indications in the stories, fictional works inherit the world. Save for those auctorially sourced exclusions, the world of the story is the actual world. Everything true in the actual world at the time of the story is true in the world of the story, except for adjustments required by the author's own creative interventions.[2]

> *The storyworld epistemic-access thesis*: Except where otherwise provided by the author, what readers know of the world of the stories — Doyle's storyworld, we could say — is what they know or could come to know about their own world at the times in which those stories were set.[3]

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[1]Woods [8, p. 140]. Note that Woods actually uses this analogy to explain the asymmetry of our beliefs about fiction — that fictions aren't real, but that they nevertheless relate true claims about the story. Nevertheless, this imagery aptly describes the world-inheritance thesis, too.

[2]Woods [8, p. 81]. The world-inheritance thesis is prefigured by Woods's 'fill' conditions from [7, pp. 63–5].

[3]Woods [8, p. 81].

So everything that is true in the real world is also true in the stories, apart from those ways in which the author has stipulated that the storyworld deviates from the real.[4]

World-inheritance enables readers to fill out unspecified elements of stories by mobilizing their real-world knowledge. Consider, for instance, Howard Pyle's Robin Hood, who, if he is right-handed, must aim significantly to the left of his target in order to overcome the arrow's dynamic bend and ensure a bull's eye (this is known as the archer's paradox). Although we are never told so much about medieval archery, we can be certain that ordinary physical laws hold in the story and affect its characters and their actions. The assumption is a safe one — indeed, it *must* be true — even if not explicitly sanctioned by the text, since it is implied by other facts which *are* explicitly stated in it.

I want to focus my attention here on two related questions about world- inheritance: (1) the role that auctorial say-so plays in setting the parameters of world-inheritance, and (2) what the introduction of inconsistent stories and outright contradictions can tell us about the limits of auctorial say-so and world-inheritance.

2 Auctorial say-so

My first question concerns the limits of auctorial say-so: what are they? What does an author have to do to make something true in her story?

At a first pass, we might say that an author must write truths into her story. J.K. Rowling may have always thought of Albus Dumbledore as gay, and she may well endorse readings according to which Hermione is Black, but thinking and endorsing are not quite the right ways of making fictionally true. Authors make things true in their stories by writing them in, or by ensuring that they're implied by other fictional facts. They make things true in their stories by telling stories in which these things are true. And sometimes they leave the storyworld facts somewhat under-determined, thereby allowing different readers to fill them in differently.

This is just how our practice of story-telling is organized; it could, in principle, have been organized any of an infinite number of other ways. We can imagine a (distant!) possible world, for example, where stories are constructed solely by rolling dice and consulting the appropriately numbered entry in the Book of Sentences; in this diceworld, auctorial say-so extends as far as determining the number of dice to roll, and how many faces each die will have, but no further. Or we can imagine a world in which stories are determined by the author's intentions at every moment

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[4]Although it is worth noting that not everything true in a story is part of that story. Consequence-having preserves truth, but not necessarily truth-in-a-story; see Woods [8, pp. 14–15].

when the author is consulted about them; in this whimsical world, story-content shifts with the author's flights of fancy or follows the contours of her memory. But these are not our world. Ours is a world in which story-telling is a communicative act bound by certain constraints, including institutional constraints set by the publishing industry. These make it so that Rowling cannot revisit the question of Dumbledore's sexuality or Hermione's race without first creating a new story in which to relate them to us.[5]

The lesson here is just that auctorial intent is not sufficient for story-truth; the author must also take appropriate steps to encode her intended truth into her story, e.g. by explicitly writing it in. But it is also worth observing that authors may be wrong about which things they have, in fact, encoded into their stories. It is well-known, for example, that Conan Doyle believed in faeries; suppose that he also believed of his fellow Victorians and Edwardians that they, too, believed in faeries. And so, let us suppose that he intended for there to be faeries in the Holmes stories, too, even though he never went to the trouble of actually writing them in. Would Holmes's London thereby be chock full of faeries?

Certainly not. There are three ways in which an author can make some proposition P true in her stories: she can either (1) explicitly state P in her story, (2) explicitly state certain facts which imply the truth of P, or (3) she can rely on world-inheritance to supply P. Each of these decisions is entirely up to our author, but that is as far as say-so goes. Authors set the parameters for world-inheritance; no more, and no less. The rest is up to the world, and to readers.

It is worth asking, however, just how far we should take the storyworld epistemic-access thesis to modify world-inheritance: is Robin Hood's world one in which the laws of gravity apply but are unexplained, or is it a world in which Aristotle's theory of return to "natural place" obtains? Is it a world in which women are oppressed and subject to systemic discrimination, or is it a world in which it is true that they are inferior to men along all relevant dimensions? In other words, how much of the storyworld gets filled in by the way the world is actually organized, versus the ways in which readers (ideally-situated or otherwise) *believe* it is organized (either at the time of the story's reading, setting, or writing)?[6]

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[5]As perhaps she did, in Dumbledore's case, with the introduction of Grindelwald. But it is worth noting the difference between clues which make an interpretation plausible and facts from which its truth necessarily follows.

[6]Stacie Friend has recently tackled this particular problem, arguing that the background encoded into the story is the world as it is, rather than as the author or intended audience believed it to be [2, p. 37].

3   Inheriting inconsistently

I said, above, that authors set the parameters for world-inheritance. In fact, say-so does not even go quite that far. For suppose our author errs, as Conan Doyle did when he described Watson as having been wounded in the shoulder, rather than in the leg, as in previous stories. In these cases, it is clear to everyone that the author has erred, and that we are not meant to encode the error into our compendium of storyworld truths. Indeed, as Woods observes, readers mostly don't pay much attention to such inconsistencies — in fact, they often go entirely unnoticed.[7] Watson's wound is in one place or the other, not both, but which place exactly is epistemically unavailable to us. We might hazard a reliable guess based on the frequency of its mention in one place or another, along with other storyworld facts which might help to imply it (such as Watson's hirpling along). Woods calls these "fussbudget" inconsistencies, because all but the fussiest philosophers of fiction recognize that the inconsistency results from an inadvertent slip, and should not be encoded into our reflective reading of the story. If the fussbudget insists, then we need only mobilize Woods's notion of sites to explain the slip in an entirely intuitive manner: Watson has a shoulder wound *in situ A Study in Scarlet* (1887), a leg wound *in situ The Sign of the Four* (1890), and has some indeterminate wound "in one of his limbs" *in situ The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor* (1892) and *The Cardboard Box* (1893);[8] *in situ* the Holmes canon as a whole, however, we simply cannot say.

So much for auctorial slips; slippery say-so does not make propositions true quite as readily as deliberate say-so. But what, then, should we make of *deliberate* inconsistencies, as when Ray Bradbury tells us, in *A Sound of Thunder*, that Keith was and was not elected President of the United States in 2055? This is no mere fussbudgetry: the proposition that Keith was elected President in 2055 and was not elected President in 2055 is internal to the story, and deliberately so. Nor will an appeal to sites help us here, since the proposition is true and false at one and the same site, namely, Bradbury's *A Sound of Thunder*.

Here, Woods invokes his *no-bother thesis*: the inconsistency is irremovable and absolute, and that is just something that sometimes happens in fiction. We all know and accept it, and we do not lose any sleep over it, even under threat from *ex falso quod libet*. This is because we know that the contradictory proposition, K, is not true *in situ* the real world — and, even if it were, belief is not closed under logical consequence, thus saving us from cognitive collapse.[9] The result, he argues, is that

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[7]Woods [8, p. 94, fn 4].

[8]Note that Watson sustains a second wound — most definitely in his thigh! — in *The Adventure of the Three Garridebs* (1924).

[9]Woods, [8, p. 16].

"The full story inherits the world, but it doesn't inherit any world-proposition that isn't a world-truth."[10] So *A Sound of Thunder* does not inherit every proposition and its negation, as it would if it were a story true *in situ* the world. What is more, for Woods these observations are reinforced by the fact that our lectoral habit is to take such contradictions at face value, without so much as blinking. Indeed, the contradiction does not impede readers' ability to understand the story, or to see how it fits into the story itself. Nor do readers thereby conclude that, *in situ* the story, the Prime Minister of Canada is a Martian, or that an archaeopteryx launched a nuclear warhead into space.

4 Lectoral experience

For my part, I am not convinced that this is quite how lectoral experience suggests we handle Keith, or deliberate inconsistencies more generally. Allow me to explain.

A Sound of Thunder is a story about time travel, and about an apparent paradox generated by altering the world's history. Happily, there exists an entirely commonplace way of making such stories sensible, upon reflection, and it is widely distributed among readers and filmgoers, as any perusal of internet fora dedicated to such stories forcefully attests.[11] It is an elegant, powerful, and simple strategy which we all intuitively deploy: instead of talking about time travel *simpliciter*, we talk instead of travel in and between time*lines*. In other words, the folk strategy for parsing the paradoxes of time travel *is to appeal to Woods's 'sites'*: the true proposition finds itself indexed to one timeline, and the false to another. And, *poof!* The inconsistency disappears. So we shouldn't worry too much about Keith's story, which turns out to be rather more like a fussbudget inconsistency than at first glance. Call it 'persnickety' instead, to mark the fact that Bradbury was being cheeky rather than sloppy.

But there are other, more worrying kinds of stories. These are stories in which the contradiction is (1) internal to the story, (2) deliberately implanted, and (3) not site-specific. I have in mind stories like Graham Priest's *Sylvan's Box*, according to which Priest inherits a box which is empty and contains a small figurine; another might be Italo Calvino's allegorical fantasy, *The Nonexistent Knight*, whose titular character, Agilulf, does not exist and yet clearly undertakes actions which imply his existence.[12] There is no obvious recourse to sites here, since *in situ* the story,

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[10]Woods, [8, p. 192].

[11]Consider, for example, the detailed explanations of the events in the film *Primer* (2004) offered by Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primer_(film). and by Bharat Krishna Swaminathan https://www.thisisbarry.com/film/primer-2004-movie-plot-ending-explained/.

[12]Indeed, Agilulf 'exists' by will power alone — until the purity of his cause is undermined and

Priest's box is empty and contains a figurine, just as *in situ* the story Agilulf exists and does not exist.

Woods's prescribed treatment for *A Sound of Thunder* leaves us with the result that these two new stories are contradictory, but not explosive; the relevant proposition and its negation is true in each, but that is as far as the contradiction goes. The list of facts about Sylvan's Box will include all of the story's explicit claims, including that the box is empty and not, along with everything those facts imply and everything which it inherits from the world. But it does not inherit every proposition and its negation, because these are not constituent truths of the world.

I am not so sure that this is how we *do* understand these stories, let alone how we *should* understand them. In fact, I think that straightforward evidence about lectoral experience tells against this interpretation: it is not obvious that we accept the contradictions in these stories at face value.

It is useful, here, to distinguish between two different kinds of reading: reading *occurrently*, and reading *reflectively*. Occurrent reading is the sort of reading we undertake when we speed through a page-turner: it is the kind of reading we perform when we're wrapped up in the story, and primarily interested in getting through it. Reflective reading, however, is the kind of reading we undertake when we read with an eye to understanding the internal relations of one part of the story to another; it is book-club or classroom-style reading, the sort of reading we do when we dust off the 'to read' pile on our hard drive or office desk.

Evidence from the psychology of text-processing indicates that during the occurrent act of reading, we tend not to notice inconsistencies unless they occur very close together, such as one or two sentences apart; and even when we do notice these inconsistencies, we tend to simply ignore them and read on.[13] Thus, we're not too bothered by the precise location of Watson's wound, or even whether Keith is POTUS. The point, rather, is just to absorb a darn good yarn. Things are different in the reflective mood, however. When we read with an eye to the text's internal relations, we are trying to determine exactly what is going on in the story, which literary devices are being mobilized and how, etc. That kind of mentation requires us to step outside our lived experience of the text, and reflect on it critically. It is here that world-inheritance becomes absolutely crucial for basic story comprehension; and one of the things which is true of the real world and which we bring with us into the storyworld is the knowledge that we cannot have both P and $\neg P$ at the same time, and in the same respect.

So: the law of non-contradiction comes into stories by way of world-inheritance.

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he loses the will to exist, at which point he promptly (and actually) disappears.

[13]See, e.g., [4] and [3, p. 183].

So far, so good — I've not yet claimed anything especially controversial. And remember, world-inheritance provides that we should accept what is true of the world as being true of the storyworld, *unless the author indicates otherwise*. It might seem, therefore, that all is well: Priest and Calvino have told us that their stories are not bound by the law of non-contradiction, and so they are not.

5 Why bother

The problem is that, upon reflection, readers do not actually believe that this is the case. Instead, in the reflective mood, we treat inconsistency in general and contradiction in particular as problems to be solved, as indications that something has gone wrong with either the story, or our understanding of it. In the reflective mood, we most assuredly *do not* accept that Watson is wounded in the shoulder and the leg but not both, that Keith is and is not POTUS, that Priest's box is empty and not, or that Agilulf does and does not exist. It is precisely because we do *not* believe these things, upon reflection, that we are at pains to explain them away by appeal to sites, or by invoking the no-bother solution. And this is just as true of *Truth in Fiction: Rethinking its Logic* as it is of the ordinary, neurotypical reader. Indeed, the internet is chock full of puzzled readers who wonder how Agilulf could exist before he was a (nonexistent) knight, since he seems to have earned his knighthood (and, thus, his nonexistent existence) by saving Sofronia.

Outright contradictions are jarring, and invite us to marshal our explanatory hypotheses. If, as Woods argues, texts implicate their readers in energy-to-information transitions,[14] then contradictions throw a wrench into the works by reducing processing fluency. We know that increased scrutiny inhibits text integration, and that belief is a condition on understanding a text;[15] outright contradictions are explicit invitations to disbelieve and scrutinize. This has led many logicians and philosophers to conclude that at least some inconsistent stories are, in fact, contradictory. Some, like Priest, have concluded that this indicates that the logic of fiction is paraconsistent;[16] a very few, led by Christian Folde and Nathan Wildman, have concluded that the logic of fiction is explosive.[17] But these are philosophers' answers to a fairly common occurrence; they represent strategies derived from antecedent philosophical commitments, rather than from data about lived lectoral experience.

Woods's methodological commitments are rightly reversed, taking lectoral expe-

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[14]Woods [8, p. 58].

[15]Woods [8, pp. 145–6].

[16]Priest [5].

[17]Wildman and Folde [6]; see also Estrada-González [1].

rience as giving us the basic data to be explained. The psychology of reasoning shows us that ordinary folk are not particularly convinced that disjunction-introduction supplies a valid inference rule, especially when compared to other valid one-premise inferences, such as *modus ponens* or *tollens*.[18] That much is plain to see in any introductory logic classroom, and if those classrooms are reliable guides to folk intuitions about inference, then very much the same is also true of *ex falso quod libet*. Indeed, an explosive story by definition could not reward any genuine literary interest we might take in its content, thus inviting the kind of big-box skepticism Woods is at pains to avoid. The psychology of text processing likewise shows us that occurrent readers are relatively insensitive to contradictions (and causal relationships too, for that matter).[19] The question before us is just what it is that ordinary readers do when they encounter such hard-shelled contradictions — first occurrently, and then reflectively. Woods's money is on the no-bother thesis; but for my part, I suspect that the no-bother solution applies better to occurent than to reflective readings.

My only qualm, then, is that we do actually seem to bother quite a bit, even if we eventually decide to throw up our hands and move along quietly.

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Sherlock is Law Abiding

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A deliciously implicit conceit of *Truth in Fiction* is that Sherlock Holmes is not law abiding [1]. In recent years, the pleadings for the defense have had it that Holmes does not fall entirely within the jurisdiction of the laws. John Woods mounts a far more radical defense. He urges his readers to refuse to convict, thereby nullifying the laws. To make the case, he deploys a theoretical concept, the concept of truth *in situ*. The concept suggests another, cake-and-eat-it, defense of Holmes. On this defense, the laws retain their authority and their full jurisdiction over Holmes, but the chap is innocent. Sherlock is law abiding.

The laws upon which Holmes stands indicted are three:

I. the something law: everything whatever is something or other

II. the existence law: reference and quantification are existentially loaded

III. the truth law: no truth-evaluable sentence that discomplies with the something law or the existence law can be true.

We read that Holmes mustered the Baker Street irregulars. Since Holmes does not exist, the existence law pronounces that the sentence cannot refer to him. Since the sentence cannot refer to him, the truth law pronounces that the sentence cannot be true. Generalizing from Holmes and *The Sign of the Four* to all fictions and their creatures, the corollary is a fourth law:

IV. the fiction law: there is nothing to which the sentences of fiction refer and nothing of which they are true.

If the fact of the case is that there is no Holmes, the laws dictate our reasoning from that fact.

Those whom Woods calls "pretendists" stipulate to the fact of the case and accept the authority of the laws. The sentence about Holmes and the Baker Street irregulars cannot be true. Yet the sentence is not in the same boat as any run of the mill sentence that is false by reference failure. Sentences known to be false by

reference failure leave us emotionally untouched and cognitively disengaged. We award them a big shrug. By contrast, knowing that there is no Holmes, and that the bit about the irregulars cannot be true, we nevertheless find ourselves very much turned on emotionally and cognitively. We care. We want to know more. We turn the pages. Attuned to these data, pretendists propose that the jurisdiction of the four laws is only partial and that fictions and their creatures also answer to another authority. In Kendall Walton's version of the proposal, fictions function as props in regulated games of make-believe [2]. In these games, we are prescribed to imagine that there is a Holmes and that he called in the Baker Street irregulars. Our so imagining is thought to explain our emotional and cognitive engagement.

Woods shares the pretendists' deep respect for reader responses, but he doubts that regulated acts of imagining or make-believe adequately explain the contours of readerly life. He also shares the pretendists' aversion to joining the Meinongians in contesting the fact of the case, that there is no Sherlock Holmes. So, he defies the laws. The fiction law must go. With it goes the truth law and the existence law. The something law is harmless and may tarry.

Philosophers have been wary of this kind of move for several reasons. Some have nothing to do with fiction in particular: they concern the laws' general plausibility or methodological power across the board. For the record, Woods is not sympathetic, but set that aside. Holmes's defiance of the laws raises a more acute problem. The fact of the case is that there is no Holmes, but the truth is that Holmes summoned the irregulars. Indeed, "Holmes" refers to Holmes. Inconsistencies loom. And inconsistencies trouble us. Woods therefore endeavors to remove our troubles. One remedy, a strong dose of paraconsistent logic, is not the preferred cure. The better cure is to embrace an idea that Woods finds in Aristotle, the idea of truth in a respect, or truth *in situ* [3].

Truth is one thing and "true" is not ambiguous; but, all the same, truth-makers vary. Take these inconsistent sentences:

> W. Holmes is a fictional character.
> S. Holmes mustered the Baker Street irregulars.

(W) is made true by the extra-story world, while (S) is made true by Doyle's act of telling the story. We may say that (S) is true in situ the story, meaning by that just that Doyle's story telling makes it true. The payoff is, first, that readers implicitly grasp the relation between the truth of (S) and its truth *in situ* the story. The idea is empirically plausible: readers are aware of — constantly reminded of — the source of sentences like (S). Second, our sensitivity to the relation between the truth of (S) and its truth *in situ* the story inoculates thinkers against making inferences where the inconsistency between (S) and (W) threatens to wreak havoc.

172

So concludes the case for nullifying the laws. Turn now to cake-and-eat-it. The claim will not be that cake-and-eat-it dominates nullification. As noted, Woods is unsympathetic to the laws, quite apart from Holmes's predicament. The claim is only that Woods should welcome cake-and-eat-it as a contender, especially in so far as it leverages and clarifies the theoretical concept of truth *in situ.*

The concept is just the same as one that comes to life in other philosophical contexts, notably the debate about predicates of personal taste [4]. When it comes to matters of taste, faultless disagreements abound. For example:

Dom: Durian tastes heavenly.
John: By Jove, it does not!

Neither party to the exchange is at fault. Each has ample and vivid evidence for their take on durian. Moreover, the exchange is not pointless, for they know that they share useful information [5]. So the exchange is faultless, but it is also a disagreement. Dom's view on the topic is at odds with John's. The question is how to understand such cases of faultless disagreement. "Contextualists" maintain that what Dom asserts is the proposition that durian tastes heavenly-to-Dom and John asserts the proposition is that durian does not taste heavenly-to-John. On this view, John does not deny the very proposition that Dom asserts. The propositions are consistent. The task is then to recover a sense in which the exchange is a genuine disagreement. By contrast, "truth relativists" contend that Dom asserts the proposition that durian tastes heavenly and John denies the very same proposition. Yet their disagreement is faultless because Dom speaks truly and so does John. Needless to say, truth is one thing; "true" is not ambiguous.

Why not think that Dom's assertion is true *in situ* Dom and John's is true *in situ* John? The thought is perfectly natural. A fact about Dom — his having his taste — makes what he says true, and a fact about John — his having a different taste — makes true what he says. Relativists about predicates of personal taste do not use the "*in situ*" phrase. They say that in exchanges like these, a sentence is true in a context of assessment set by a personal taste parameter. What Dom says is true in the context of assessment set by Dom's personal taste and what John says is true in the context of assessment set by John's personal taste, but one asserts and the other denies the very same content.

Truth relativists have worked out the details, but their semantic tools have not been applied to fiction [6]. Why not try out a truth relativist approach to fiction, seeing if it puts meat on the bones of the concept of truth *in situ*? After all, truth relativism seems to deliver just what Woods wants. Return to (W) and (S). (W) is true if and only if (W) is true in a context of assessment where the extra-story world sets a truth-maker parameter. By the same token, (S) is true if and only if

173

(S) is true in a context if assessment where a story sets a truth-maker parameter. In addition, (S) is true in the same sense of "true" as is (W). Watch out, though! The meaning of (S) is not given either by the proposition ⌜in the story, Holmes summons the irregulars⌝ or by the proposition ⌜it is true in the story that Holmes summons the irregulars⌝. The meaning of (S) is given quite simply by the proposition ⌜Holmes summons the irregulars⌝.

Truth is one thing, but every truth has a truth-maker, and there are different truth-makers. "Holmes summoned the irregulars" is true *in situ* something (*The Sign of the Four*) and "Doyle made Holmes up" is also true in situ something (the extra-story world). In other words, Woods should green light a new law:

> the location, location, location law: no sentence is true unless it is true in situ some context of assessment.

Again, the LLL law does not identify truth with truth *in situ*. It merely acknowledges that every truth is made true by something. There is the cake; now we can eat it too. The fact of the case is that there is no Sherlock Holmes. The proposition that there is no Sherlock Holmes is plainly true *in situ* the extra-story world. Woods concedes the something law. The existence and truth laws are consistent with the LLL law. One may hold both that no truth-evaluable sentence that discomplies with the something law or the existence law can be true, and that no sentence can be true unless it is true *in situ* some context of assessment. The truth law and LLL law together imply that "Holmes" refers in (S). Presumably, "Holmes" refers to Holmes *in situ The Sign of the Four*.

More importantly, the conjunction of the three cardinal laws with the LLL law no longer implies the fiction law, namely that,

> there is nothing to which the sentences of fiction refer and nothing of which they are true.

What would imply the fiction law, given the conjunction? The answer is, instructively, throwing in

> the one site hypothesis: there is exactly one context of assessment, the extra-story world.

The problem is not with any of the three cardinal laws; the problem is with the hypothesis. Woods denies the one site hypothesis anyway, in company with anyone driven by cake-and-eat-it proclivities. Even better, denying the hypothesis is reasonable as long as we have the LLL law. The appeal of the hypothesis was that we want to understand the "world" and we must guard against a bunch of made up

stuff interfering with that empirical project as we run our inferences. A recognition of how darn good we are at keeping our locations straight means we need not fear much interference from fiction as we run our inferences. It also explains why we are not foolish to be so interested in truths in fiction. The impulse to explore is not spent at the boundaries of the extra-story world.

Reading Woods, I found myself appreciating how apt it is, when thinking about the problems of fiction, to craft viable new positions. The remarks above are offered in the same spirit as animates *Truth in Fiction*. Eventually we must narrow down the options. Part of me hopes that is no time soon.

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Referential Indeterminacy in Fiction

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Abstract

In this paper I'll develop a criticism of Woods' *Truth in Fiction*, concerning the book's epistemicist treatment of issues of referential indeterminacy raised by the account of truth and reference in it. The criticism is meant as a challenge for the author to elaborate on the view of reference and the account of indeterminacy advanced in the book. I'll proceed by outlining a contrasting view on those issues that I take to be otherwise close to those in the book, in that it validates the data that it wants to honor, as summarized in the précis, in very similar terms to those favored in the book.

1 Introduction

In this paper I'll elaborate on a criticism of Woods' *Truth in Fiction* ('TiF') that I succinctly presented in my NDPR 2018 review, https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/truth-in-fiction-rethinking-its-logic/. The criticism concerns the book's epistemicist treatment of issues of referential indeterminacy raised by the account of truth and reference in it (not rehearsed in the précis above). I don't have a knock-down argument against the views I'll question. I'll just proceed in the way I think best in philosophy in general, i.e., abductively: I'll present a view on those issues that I take to be close to those in TiF in that it validates the data that the book wants to honor, summarized in the précis, in very similar terms to those favored in the book, and I'll explain why it is preferable. The view in question, which I'll call *Fictional Contextualist Realism* ('FCR'), like Woods' rejects the "Fiction Law", IV in the *précis*. I myself don't endorse FCR. I am what Woods calls a *pretendist* about

fiction and a fictionalist about fictional objects and apparent reference to them,[1] and I thereby endorse the Fiction Law. But as I have explained elsewhere,[2] FCR is a very convenient fiction in the path to getting hold of the right view on these matters, only to kick off the ladder once that is achieved. I'll present FCR in the next section, and then I'll move to present the indeterminacy objection.

2 Fictional Realist Contextualism

I'll start by circumscribing our topic. Let us assume that an assertion is what is done by default by means of declarative sentences: "[i]n natural language, the default use of declarative sentences is to make assertions" [69, p. 258].[3] It is a feature of assertions that we evaluate them as correct or otherwise depending on whether they are *true*. Let us thus consider three sorts of *prima facie* assertoric uses made with declaratives in discourses involving fictions:

1. When Gregor Samsa woke, he found himself transformed into a gigantic vermin.

2. According to *Metamorphosis*, when Gregor Samsa woke, he found himself transformed into a gigantic vermin.

3. Gregor Samsa is a fictional character.

Consider first an utterance of (1) by Kafka, as part of the longer utterance by him of the full discourse which, with a measure of idealization, we can think constitutes the act of putting forward his *Metamorphosis* for us to enjoy. I'll assume Woods' *précis logico-semantic* "default data" in characterizing these fictional uses of declaratives, which I will call *textual*:[4] even when, taken literally as assertions, they contradict what we believe, we don't find any tension in accepting them and we wouldn't find it plausible to criticize Kafka on this regard.[5]

The other two types differ in that they fail to have this feature. There is, firstly, the use of sentences such as (1) to report on what goes on in a fiction, that is, the character of the *fictional world* it presents, its *plot*. I will call these plot-reporting

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[1]García-Carpintero [19, 20] offer recent presentations of the versions of these views that I subscribe. I'll also borrow from the latter.

[2] Cf. García-Carpintero [16, 20, 21].

[3]Cf. García-Carpintero [22] for elaboration and defense.

[4]I borrow this and the other two related labels from Bonomi [3].

[5]My own pretendist take on this adopts instead Currie's [9] view that such acts are speech acts proper, with specific force and contents (*fiction-making*, as he calls them), cf. García-Carpintero [19]; but, as indicated, for most of the paper I'll put that aside.

uses *paratextual*; according to Lewis [32] and others, they are simply elliptic for intuitively equivalent ascriptions of propositional content like (2), which on such grounds I'll also count as paratextual. Readers of *Metamorphosis* would count (1) in such a use as straightforwardly, actually true, as they would (2), and reject the results of substituting 'rat' for 'vermin' in them. Finally, I will call the uses of sentences such as (3) *metatextual*; they also intuitively are truth-evaluable vis-à-vis actuality but not content-reporting, in that they are not (obviously) equivalent to explicit content ascriptions like (2).

Having made the distinction of our three kinds of fictional discourse, I will henceforth set aside the last two in order to focus on textual uses, which I take to be what TiF is mostly about — the two pieces of default data (*logico-semantic* and *psycho-epistemic*) that the précis highlights as explanatory goals concern them. In order to explain them, Woods thinks that we need to treat textual uses as assertoric, as putting forward true claims.[6] As indicated above, this is a view that has been advanced before. Thus, Ludlow [33], Manning [34], Martinich and Stroll [36] and Orlando [39] hold related views. But I want to focus here on the contextualist views defended by Predelli [42], Recanati [45, pp. 213–226], Reimer [47] and Voltolini [64].

The context in which 'The battle happened here.' is uttered might require us to evaluate the assertion not with respect to the place where the utterance occurs but another, contextually provided location. This notoriously applies in "answering machine" cases, in free indirect speech and other cases. On the authors' views, the context of textual uses of (1) similarly leads us to evaluate their truth not at the actual world, but at a counterfactual or imaginary one, "the" world of the fiction — actually, a plurality thereof if this is theoretically explicated by means of standard possible worlds ideology.[7] Predelli [42] only considers examples involving real names, but he extends the view to cases involving fictional names, arguing that they refer to *ficta* — actual abstract created existents [43].[8] Which entities are these?

Kripke [29, based on talks originally delivered in 1973] argues that a proper account of metatextual uses requires interpreting names such as 'Gregor Samsa' in them as referring to fictional entities. Van Inwagen [63] provides an influential Quinean argument for such realism about fictional entities. For both Kripke and van

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[6]Woods might cite in support empirical evidence from Piccinini and Scott [41].

[7]To insist once more, I don't think it is a good idea to count textual uses as assertions, to be evaluated as literally true or untrue, except that not at the actual world but at "the" world of the fiction (see Urmson [62], Walton [66, pp. 41–2], Everett [12]). I find it more accurate the "pragmatic" view that they are simply not assertions, but alternative acts to be evaluated with respect to norms other than truth vis-à-vis the character of "the" fictional world they represent.

[8]Reimer [47] disclaims ontological commitments for her view, arguing that fictional utterances have truth-conditions but not propositional contents; Martinich and Stroll [36] suggest a similar view. My (minimalist) view of contents doesn't allow for that distinction.

Inwagen, such *ficta* are abstract existent entities of various sorts, Platonic *abstracta* like Wolterstorff's [71] or Currie's [9] roles, or rather created artefacts, as in Salmon [50], Thomasson [58, 59] or Schiffer [52].[9] Such realists think of fictional characters as having an ontological status analogous to that of the fictional works in which they occur (Thomasson [58, p. 143]; Walters [65]), and I'll assume something similar.[10] Fictional works result from the communicative acts of fiction-makers; they are social constructs, abstract created artefacts with norm-regulated functions.[11] They have a complex structure, grounded on the vehicles that express them; they are in part composed of singular representations (more on this below, ¶3). It is these singular representations what I'll take fictional characters to be: on the proposal, terms like 'Gregor Samsa' in textual uses of (1) have as semantic value a singular representation associated with that name, which is a constituent of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. (1) makes a true assertion about it, even if in some sense it is also about its (non-existent, in this case) referent.[12]

There is a well-known wrinkle in this proposal. While the entities that realists posit may well instantiate the properties predicated of them in metatextual uses like (3), this is not so clear for the two other uses. Such entities are not easily taken to be the sort of thing capable of waking or going to sleep, for these capacities appear to require having causal powers that abstract objects, created or Platonic, appear to lack. We will deal with this in a standard way, by distinguishing two types of predication, *having* and *holding*. The subject-predicate combination in (1) does not mean that the semantic value assigned to the subject-term truly instantiates (*has*) the property expressed by the predicate, but merely that the former *represents*

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[9]Kroon and Voltolini [31] offer helpful discussion and further references.

[10]To be clear about the extent of my fictionalism about the fictional characters I'll take FCR to assume, let me say that I share a point Everett [12, p. 143] makes: "I do not mean to deny that in some cases the entities invoked by certain fictional realists, who then go on to identify these entities with fictional characters, genuinely exist. My complaint is simply that, in these cases, the relevant entities are not fictional characters; the identification made is wrong"; cf. also Brock [4, pp. 352–3]. I don't have ontological qualms about Thomasson's fictional characters, but I don't think we need to take referential expressions in textual discourse to refer to them to understand how they work. As I'll indicate below (fn. 17), like Thomasson [61, p. 262] I am not much disturbed by Brock [4] main criticism of created fictional characters. Everett and Schroeder's [13] alternative proposal that they are spatially discontinuous concrete "ideas for fictional characters" is insightful. I cannot go here into the reasons why I think the social construct account is more apt, nor address the intuitions that they (*ibid.*, 284-5) marshal against it.

[11]There is no difference in these respects with other communicative acts; they also generate (when they don't misfire) social constructs of that kind, cf. García-Carpintero [23].

[12]For reasons I have provided elsewhere (García-Carpintero [24], if we think of textual uses of declaratives as assertions as suggested so far, we should take both expressions like 'Pierre Bezhukov' in *War and Peace* which don't pick out any actual person, and those like 'Napoleon' in there which do, as equally having representations as semantic values.

something to which the latter is ascribed in its encompassing fiction (*holds*). This helps with a point that Everett [12, pp. 163–178] emphasizes, that there are many mixed cases such as (4) below:

4. At the start of *Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa — an emotional *alter ego* created by Kafka for that novel — finds himself transformed into a gigantic vermin.

Following Everett and Schroeder [13, pp. 286–8]; Walters [65] and Recanati [46], we explain such mixed cases in that they involve a form of independently well-attested metonymy-induced, "regular" polysemy, as when we straightforwardly apply 'lion' and 'ferocious' to a lion-representation that literally, primarily is not a lion, like a sculpture of one; for we also naturally find similarly mixed cases there. Thus, a sculptor can say this of one of her creations:

5. That lion is the best sculpture I've made this month; it is as ferocious as the one we saw yesterday at the zoo.

FCR similarly takes the inserted metatextual claim in (4) to involve straightforward, *having* predication, while the one in the main clause is rather of the *holding* variety: we are just saying of the relevant Samsa-representation that it represents someone to which, in the work, the predicate applies — the way the statue is metonymically said in (5) *to represent* a ferocious lion.

I take the outlined FCR view to be close to Woods'. In his preferred "Aristotelian" way of accounting for the *logico-semantic* datum, truth is relativized to "respects", which I take to be truth-making situations playing the theoretical roles of possible worlds. This is what FCR suggests: taken as a standard assertion, (1) is about the actual world and would be untrue, but taken with respect to *Metamorphosis* fictional world, it is true. Woods doesn't elaborate at length on how his view accounts for the *psycho-epistemic* datum, but, as I have argued elsewhere (García-Carpintero [25]), FCR also helps here. The "intense and physically manifested emotions about things that they know never happened" the datum concerns are an aspect of what psychologists call "transportation" to or "immersion" into the fictional world of a story. Some writers (e.g. Stock [54]) have suggested that the imaginings prompted by fictions have the "direction of fit" of beliefs; I have pointed out (*op. cit.*, see also Chasid [8] for a related view) that this is straightforwardly so assuming FCR — for such imaginings would then just be beliefs about the fictional world — and that it affords a good explanation of immersion, hence of Woods' datum. Needless to say, I don't take this explanatory fact as ultimately favoring realism; as I explain in the referenced work, a pretendist stance of the kind I hold affords an at the very least equally good explanation.

3 Indeterminacy Worries about Fictional Reference

I move now to present my objection to TiF. It relates to one of the main reasons I have to prefer irrealist views to proposals like the just outlined FCR. Realist views raise well-known indeterminacy concerns, echoing Quine's [44, p. 23] indictment of one of its versions: "the possible fat man in that doorway; and, again, the possible bald man in that doorway [. . .] [a]re they the same possible man, or two possible men? How do we decide? How many possible men are there in that doorway? Are there more possible thin ones than fat ones? How many of them are alike?" Everett [11], [12, Ch 8] and Kroon [30] provide good elaborations; Bueno and Zalta [6, pp. 761–4] acknowledge this as a main concern. In what remains I'll explain how the problem arises for FCR, how it may be addressed by it (and even better by the fictionalist final mutation that I support), and why it challenges Woods' alternative epistemicists suggestions.

FCR offers a theoretically coherent semantic account of textual discourse; although I haven't gone into it here, it can be implemented in the best developed current formal proposals. For such semantics to be vindicated, FCR needs an adequate metasemantics (García-Carpintero [22]). The one I recommend (García-Carpintero [26]) gives a central role to Williamson's [69, p. 246] default, "flat-out" assertions, assuming with him that they are constituted by an epistemic, truth-entailing norm, and the knowledge-based Principle of Charity that Williamson [70, p. 264] promotes on that assumption. Roughly, the metasemantics has it that semantic value is to be assigned to lexical items in a way that properly explains, along teleological lines, how such a factive epistemic norm has come to be in force for them in our communities. This involves actual cases in which speakers obeyed the norm, and hence put forward knowledgeable, true claims. I'll stick to my assumed fiction by granting that FCR can be vindicated along these lines: utterers of textual discourse like (1) obey truth-involving norms on assertion, putting their audiences in a position to acquire knowledge, because the context with respect to which they should be evaluated is to be shifted to a fictional world.

How would this validate the semantics outlined for 'Gregor Samsa' in a textual use of (1), on which its semantic value is the very associated singular representation found in the work? In my work on reference, I have been promoting a version of a view that it is by now standard in current semantics (cf. García-Carpintero [26, and references there]). On this view, referential expressions like indexicals and proper names carry *presuppositions of acquaintance*, or *familiarity*. This is to be cashed out by assuming that contexts include discourse referents, which we may think of as shareable singular representations that may well not pick out anything.[13]

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[13]Instead of characterizing the singular representations FCR takes fictional characters to be in

For proper names, the relevant discourse referents are crucially defined by naming practices (distinct ones for the 'David' that picks out Lewis and the one that picks out Hume); typically already existing ones, but in some cases created with the very discourse including the name. For indexicals, they might be constituted by perceptual information, or information present in previous discourse to which the expression in anaphorically linked.

FCR (and the fictionalist view that uses it as a convenient presentational device that I endorse) holds that all this carries over to textual discourse. The singular representations that FCR takes to be the semantic value of referential expressions are thus to be individuated by such discourse referents.[14] There a long tradition that associates some descriptions with entities of the kind we are positing, *roles* (see Rothschild [49] and Glavaničová [27]) like the *president of the USA* or *the mayor*, and explains the intuitive difference between descriptions with rigid and non-rigid readings in such terms (the latter intuitively define roles). For purposes of formal modeling, roles can be understood as Carnapian individual concepts picking out their occupiers relative to worlds, to the extent that we think of them as merely partial functions (cf. Stokke [55]). If we model the fictional world by means of standard possible worlds, the role that we are taking as the semantic value of 'Gregor Samsa' will pick out different individuals in different such worlds.

The 'Samsa' example would be quite adequate to explain how the indeterminacy worry arises for the brand of fictional realism that I am assuming,[15] but I'll present it with a more dramatic illustration. The great Honduran writer Augusto Monterroso produced excellent micro-stories; one of his most celebrated, *The Dinosaur*, consists of just one sentence:

6. When he awoke, the dinosaur was still there.

What exactly is the shape of the semantic value that FCR ascribes to 'he'? Which

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terms of *discourse referents* we could invoke *mental files*, insofar as we think of them as public and normatively characterized; cf. Orlando [39], Terrone [57]. What about expressions of plural reference, like 'the Hobbits', or 'the Dwarves' (Kroon [30])? I assume these could be handled in a related way, given an adequate semantic account for them; cf. Moltmann [38] for discussion of how such an account should look like.

[14]This semantic proposal for referential expressions in textual discourse, which FCR extends to paratextual discourse, is rather close to Frege's view that referential expressions shift their semantic values in intentional contexts to what in extensional contexts are their senses. If all paratextual uses of referential expressions occur (implicitly or explicitly) in intensional contexts, as on Lewis' [32] view, the parallel is immediate. Textual uses would also straightforwardly fit the bill if they were also elliptical for some operator-involving analogue of (2), as Devitt [10, p. 172] defends, cf. Orlando [39] for a related recent proposal. This is objectionable, however, as Bertolet [2] and Predelli [42] pointed out; FCR gets essentially the same result without positing implicit operators.

[15]Just consider the debate between Nabokov and a critic that Friend [14] rehearses.

features define the relevant role, determining its denotata in the worlds constituting the fictional world? Answers will depend on the proper metasemantics for textual discourse: perhaps it is Monterroso's intentions that we should take into consideration, or those among them that competent readers can discern in the work, or what our current conventional interpretative practices would settle on. But whatever the proper choice is, it is manifest that there is room for a lot of indeterminacy here. Actually, we should start arguing about the assumption that the awaking character is male, induced by the translation I got from Wikipedia, which is at least explicitly absent in the Spanish original (*Cuando despertó, el dinosaurio todavía estaba allí*). There is much more room for indeterminacy in addition: what is the spatiotemporal location for the objects the discourse referent picks out in the worlds constituting the fictional world? Earth when dinosaurs roamed it? Mexico when Monterroso lived there, 'the dinosaur' being metaphorical for the PRI, as some suggest? And so on and so forth.

Note that — as Everett [11, 12] emphasizes — on the realist assumptions we are granting the indeterminacy at stake here appears to affect objects themselves, and not just the linguistic expressions signifying them: it is the semantic value we have ascribed to 'he' in (6) itself that appears to be indeterminate, with respect to whether or not is to be individuated by properties like those we mentioned. Now, as the discussion of Everett's arguments has made clear, we should be very careful in moving from indeterminacy in the contours of the fictional world, to indeterminacy in the fictional characters themselves — in our case, the semantic values we are ascribing to referential expressions in textual uses.[16] Nonetheless, I think the previous considerations show that fictional characters — roles — themselves are indeterminate.

The outlined FCR proposal to individuate fictional characters in fact provides a principled reason to go along with a suggestion made by Schnieder and von Solodkoff [53] in response to Everett, considered by Thomasson [60, p 142], which has been questioned as arbitrary (Caplan and Muller [7]). Everett [11, 12] uses the principle that (roughly) indeterminate identity in the story entails indeterminate identity in the character themselves. Schnieder and von Solodkoff reject it. They argue that, although in the world of the *Frackworld* story that Everett [11] makes up it may be indeterminate whether Frick and Frack are identical, the characters themselves are different and hence the principle is false. To the extent that the relevant discourse referents are different, the FCR proposal presented here provides a principled reason for this.[17] The proposal also validates Thomasson's [60, p. 135] rejection of

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[16] Cf. Thomasson [60, pp. 132–243] for a good discussion.

[17] Kroon [30, pp. 165–6] suggests an alternative, which, like the one here, may have the effect that

another principle of Everett's: it may be determinate that a fictional character (say, Tolstaya's *Slynx*) exist, while it is indeterminate whether there is something it picks out in the work's fictional world.

The ontic vagueness thus espoused by FCR, however, is not an isolated issue affecting fictional contents, as I have shown in a critical discussion of a notorious argument by Schiffer against supervaluationism based on related concerns (García-Carpintero [17, 21]). It arises for any ascription of contents expressed by means of referentially indeterminate expressions like 'there' ('it was there that Alex danced') or 'Kilimanjaro': to the extent that 'there' is meant to refer to precise locations, there is a plurality of candidate referents for the adverb in the relevant utterance; the same applies to 'Kilimanjaro', if it is meant to pick out precise quark-constituted mountains — just consider a quark in a candidate boundary for the mountain, and the two aggregates including and excluding it. Now, what about the contribution of the same expressions when we use them to report on what was said in the relevant occasions (Schiffer [51])?

Barnes and Williams [1] make a good case that supervaluationist techniques can be used to articulate an intelligible version of the notion of vagueness *in the world*, or vague objects, and I (García-Carpintero [17, 21]) have recommended that option to deal with Schiffer's arguments.[18] Similarly, it is (on the version of FCR on offer) the role assigned to 'he' in (6) itself that can be precisified in different ways, so that it always picks out in the world of the fiction a referent for which (6) is true. Needless to say, any worries that my tactical espousal of FCR and the ontic vagueness that comes with it might create would ultimately dissipate if we could establish my true view that these entities — abstract created roles — that we are ascribing to referential expressions in textual discourse are nothing but fictions

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Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are two different characters, even though they determinately represent the same person in the fictional world — the ordered pair <*Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde*> *has* non-identity, even though it *holds* identity. This is a result he welcomes, and I follow suit — although my view allows also that the *prima facie* two discourse referents, and hence the two roles/fictional characters should be merged (to put it in mental files ideology), and are thus in fact one. Brock's [4] main argument against creationism raises related concerns. The argument depends on an assumption that I don't share, that creation is a causal process. Rather, on my view creation is constitutive — it should be conceptualized along the lines of the relation between apt declarations, like 'you are out' uttered by a referee, and their institutional products. Nonetheless, Brock raises genuine problems the form of creationism I am fictionally endorsing here, related to the ones I myself voiced (García-Carpintero [16, pp. 150–1]). A proper response requires to go into the nature of fictional works, which I cannot do here.

[18]García-Carpintero [18] defends it for indeterminacies about future contingents. Of course, it may well be that a more traditional form of supervaluationism as modeling semantic indecision can also handle issues of referential indeterminacy (cf. Merlo [37], Rohrs [48], Sud [56]). That would not affect my challenge to Woods, quite the contrary.

themselves.[19]

This concludes my exposition of FCR, a view that I have argued can get the explanatory credits that Woods' claims for his own. It was meant to set in relief a convenient abductive contrast for the criticism I am finally in a position to make. In response to indeterminacy worries like those just rehearsed, Woods contends that fictional entities like Sherlock Holmes are fully determinate objects. He relies on a variety of the "Reality Principle" that Lewis [32] and Walton [66] take authors and readers to assume for specifying "the site" of the story. Woods' version (80-1) looks to me closer to Friend's [15, p. 29] *Reality Assumption* that "everything that is (really) true is also fictionally the case, unless excluded by the work".

I take this to be a non-starter. Woods claims that our deficit when it comes to determining "how many strands of hair Sherlock had at 9:30 a.m. on February 14th, 1887" is exactly of the same nature as when it comes to the application of the same property to Gladstone at the same time, or France's head of state at 9:30 a.m. on February 14th, 2018: a merely epistemic matter, as opposed to an ontological one (80, 118). It doesn't take any worrying form of verificationism to dismiss Williamson's [68] epistemicism about vagueness; this can be done on the basis of the metasemantics I barely outlined above. I don't think that Williamson's suggestions about how linguistic use might fix the ontically fully determinate extension of 'sort of slightly bald' may withstand metasemantic scrutiny (cf. Weatherson [67], Heck [28]). I'll leave it at that here, but this worry glaringly magnifies when we confront Woods' application to realism about the fictional characters mentioned in textual discourse.

Since, on Woods' view, Doyle's decisions are the primary truth-makers for claims about Sherlock, how could the world come to the rescue to determine one way or another the facts about Sherlock's hirsuteness? We are entitled to surmise that Doyle never considered Williamson's line, but, even if he did, that wouldn't help. The problem lies not with the vagueness of any particular term, but with how the world might fix the number of Sherlock's strands of hair at a given time, in the absence of any indications from Doyle's intentions on the matter, from our interpretative practices, or from any feature that any plausible metasemantics I am aware of has canvassed.[20]

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[19]Thomasson [60, pp. 142–3] also suggests that ontic vagueness is unproblematic in this case given her "easy ontology" perspective — which might give further reason to think, as I have suggested (García-Carpintero [20]), that perhaps the differences between it and the Yablonian fictionalism I subscribe are not that substantive (Everett [12, p. 48, fn 12]; Zalta [72]). See also Paganini [40] for a related view.

[20] The concern had in fact been anticipated by Lewis [32, p. 270]: "Is the world of Sherlock Holmes a world where Holmes has an even or an odd number of hairs on his head at the moment when he first meets Watson? What is Inspector Lestrade's blood type? It is absurd to suppose that

I cannot thus see how Woods might have a plausible answer to this concern. In any case, I leave the question as a challenge for him; it is also meant as an invitation to elaborate on his ontological views about fictional characters, in addition to his metasemantics for textual discourse including apparent reference to them.

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these questions about the world of Sherlock Holmes have answers."

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Replies to Essays

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Reply to Robert Howell

Robert Howell takes a metaphysically dim view of fiction. It is not something he's prepared to be a realist about.[1] "Irrealism" is Howell's word for what more customarily is known as anti-realism. I share his dissatisfaction with the latter word, carrying as it now does, disgusting intimations of the ANTIFA sort. My own preferred name for the doctrine is "unrealism", whose blandness may be excused by its complete phonetic separation from "surrealism", to which I think Howell's word skates too closely for complete comfort. Putting the names aside, there is in the doctrine a rather striking difficulty. It is the same difficulty that afflicts all big-box scepticisms about what there is, what can be said, and what can be known. The problem lies in the concurrent ease with which the doctrine can be believed and the rude impediments it imposes on saying what it is. On the face of it anyhow, whenever an irrealist says that Sherlock isn't real, what he says is untrue by his own lights. Indeed, by those same lights, nothing at all was even stated. We saw this in the case of the infamous "The present king of France is bald", made so by the impossibility of identifying that of whom it was being said. It takes only a quiet moment to see the fault-line in this way of thinking. We can't say *of* something that it's not actually real or doesn't actually exist unless in saying so it is an object of reference. And what we say can't be true unless the reference is to something that

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[1]For forty-three years Bob Howell and I have been agreeing and disagreeing in print and personal correspondence about the right semantics for fiction. In the years that remain, it is not likely that matters not yet settled between us will have dissipated entirely. Howell showed me wrong in his *JAAC* review of *The Logic of Fiction*, by proving that, when faced with an author-intended internal contradiction in a story, my possible world semantics couldn't block the story's narration of every sentence whatever. This was contrary to what I wanted to be the case (and still do), namely, that even if *ex falso* is true, not every consequence of a fictional contradiction would be part of the story. Richard Routley independently proved the same bad result. For details, see my "Animadversions and open questions: Reference, inference and truth in fiction", *Poetics*, 11 (1982), 553-562.

doesn't exist. The order of being is one thing, and the order of thinking and saying another. In the mother tongues of humanity, a nourishing coalescence has long since emerged. We are able to discern the differing conditions thanks to which "Sherlock was ten feet tall" is false and "The present king of France is bald" is neither true nor false. The first is a referential success and an alethic failure. The second never got out of the reference gate in the first place.

It should be easy to see that an abundant and intellectually nourishing irrealism can't be got if yoked to semantic conditions on its formulation that we modelled on what calls the shots for the present king of France (in 1905). If one wanted to be an irrealist about fiction, the last thing one would do is to sign-up for what in these pages we've been calling the Basic Laws of Fiction. Unless one escapes the grip of II — the existence law — one denies oneself the very object of one's irrealism, and unless one also escapes III — the truth law — one denies one's irrealist claims all chance of being true. Believe it or not, there are even worst fixes the Law-abiding irrealist can be in. If, as in the case of Howell's own about fiction, one denies oneself the escape hatch of semantic ascent or some other contrivance of reference-evading referential pretence, one is faced with the challenges posed by having to take one's own theoretical assumptions at semantic face-value. Moreover, if one suppresses the pernicious instinct to discern a meaning-difference in "true", depending on the sentence's sphere of application, one must face the further fact that the very sense in which sentences are true in the story is the same sense in which they are not true in the world. Whereupon, of course, there's a genuine inconsistency problem for the theorist to solve. Still greater bother awaits any decision to hold one's irrealism to respect the empirical discernibilities of the worldwide facts of readerly and writerly engagement with stories, in the long arc since human speech has been capable of making them up and passing them on. A good part of what is interesting about Howell's fictional irrealism is its ready acceptance of all these challenges. Also interesting is the adroitness with which he seeks to turn them to theoretical advantage.

Howell's present contribution can be approached in three largely separate ways. In one, he asks for a clarification of what I mean by truth-sites. In another, he seek to prove me wrong about the completeness of fictional beings. In the third lies the way in which he seeks to disarm the encumbrances entailed by a Law-abiding, semantic ascent-free, non-ambiguating and data respecting irrealist semantics of fiction. In this reply, I'll begin by saying my piece about the first two points in contention. In what remains, I'll say why I think Howell can't sell his semantics under the terms he himself has imposed upon it.

Let's begin with the idea of reading a story with understanding.[2] When a reader satisfies this description, he understands that what he reads is true in the story and not true in the world. The distinction is intuitive for all readers of any text they know to be a story, but it is not one whose truth conditions are routinely explored by theorists. It might repay us to take a crack at what they are, starting with sentences in the form "p is true in 'A study in scarlet' but not true in the world." We proceed by cases:

Case One: p is true in "A study in scarlet" just in case it occurs in the full story of Doyle's text of that title. A sentence occurs in the full story of an author's text just in case it is an author-hinged sentence, that is, one whose truth depends, at least in part, on the truth of the sentences penned by the author. But why would sentences that met these conditions qualify as true? They would be true because they are, or depend on, sentences penned by the author, the very *penning* of which *makes* them true. When the author makes the sentence, the sentence thereby made is thereby made true. Penned sentences are true just so. The hinged others are made true by the author in implicit collaboration with what his story inherits from the world.

We can therefore say, for short, that p is true in "A study in scarlet" just in case it is made true by the full story, where this is intended to mean precisely what we've set out in Case One just now.

Case Two: p is untrue in the world if and only if is true in "A study in scarlet", and there is no story-unrelated fact that makes it true. If there is a story-unrelated fact that verifies p's negation, p is thereby made false. Please note that p retains its trans-case identity from One to Two.

Here, too, we can abbreviate. A fictional sentence is untrue in the world when it is made so by the world, where these means what we've just set out in Case Two.

At the heart of the distinction are *truth-makers*. With scant exceptions (indeed fiction might be the only one), true sentences have only one truth-maker and that

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[2]Howell asks whether I think that stories are existent things. I think that, like Gödel's proof, the square root of 2, and Beethoven's Ninth, they are objects of reference, attribution and true statement-making, but are also impalpable with respect to us. Like stories, they too, have palpable instantiations. Beethoven's Ninth has performances, and Gödel's proof and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* have copies. Still, our ways of speaking are loose here. When I doubt the representation theorem for primitive recursive functions, you can open a text and be perfectly right in saying that it is right there in the lines on which your finger rests. The same holds for "Holmes waved our strange visitor into a chair." It's right there for all to see on page 12. We can shoot it with our cellphone.

truth-maker is the world. Fictional sentences stand out by having two of them operating concurrently and in a meaning-preserving way. If p is the sentence, "Holmes waved our strange visitor into a chair", it is made true by its occurrence on page 12 of the full story of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*[3] and made untrue by the particular disposition of story-unrelated facts.

A last word on the world. Wittgenstein is famous for having remarked that "[t]he world is everything that is the case...The world is the totality of facts, not of things."[4] While I am partial to this view, there is neither the need nor the space to ligate its merits here. It will be enough to note that when we say that some p is made true by the world, this can only mean that it is made true by some or other of the world's facts. The world itself is not a thing. It may be the totality of facts, but it is not even the set of them.[5] It is not eligible to be a relatum of the making-true relation. Readers might ask for some elucidation of the link between story-unrelated fact and what that fact makes true. What is it, for example, about the fact that $2 + 2 = 4$ that makes "$2 + 2 = 4$" a true sentence? Whatever the answer might be, it doesn't fall to me to provide it. It suffices that the question, if answerable, is answered by the right theory of truth for natural languages. It is not a condition of my relying upon it here that it be laid out chapter-and-verse and defended in *Truth in Fiction* (TIF). For I inherit the facts of the right theory under provisions of the world-inheritance convention. To bring the sites matter to a conclusion, I must say that the account I've given here improves on the account in the book. I thank Howell and my other critics for having pressed me to do better. I leave it to them to judge its present merits.

We move now to whether Sherlock had a mum and dad and the occasion or wherewithal to visit the Gents at Victoria Station. A longstanding difference between Howell and me is centred on the ontic determinacy of fiction, a matter on which Howell is a steadfast indeterminist. It bears on this that in matters of fiction Howell is also a steadfast irrealist whose view, as touched on in his footnote 4, allows that

> "Law I seems right, as applied to actual and metaphysically possible entities (as against the characters that, as they exist within fiction, are things but no-things-in-particular.")

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[3] A. Conan Doyle, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, London: George Newnes, 1902. Republished in London by Penguin in 1981; page reference to the 1981 edition.

[4] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus*, ¶¶1 and 1.1, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922. I regard the *Tractatus* to be the greatest metaphysical poem of the 20th century. For that reason I favour the Ogden/Ramsey translation, which best catches the music of Wittgenstein's German.

[5] Patrick Grim, "There is no set of all truths", *Analysis*, (1984), 206-208.

Well, there we have it in a small footnote. Because Holmes is something but no thing in particular, he can hardly be a being like Howell or me. For that to be so, there must be some principled difference between us and Sherlock that makes it the case that we two are things of wall-to-wall particularity and he is a thing of none at all. Howell seems to think that a consequence of this view, or perhaps a ground that establishes it, is that, unlike himself and me and the reader, Sherlock is absolutely riddled with ontic incompleteness — not in the world, where he has no presence at all, but in the stories written by Doyle. It is possible, of course, that in various respects the world itself is indeterminate. If, as I myself am inclined to think, that is so, then those indeterminacies flow to the story unless the author otherwise provides.[6]

In the case of a story set in the 1880s, the story will inherit everything that was the case in the 1880s, including everything true of 1880s's London. Not all of those truths make it to the full story. "Baker Street lies to the north-east of Cheyne Walk" is not in the full story. But "Holmes' rooms lie to the north-east of Cheyne Walk" assuredly is. The former sentence is true of the world of the story, but not in it. The latter inferentially exploits that fact in a way that actually does situate it in the full story. The critical point is that, in reading the story, the readers who were not made aware of that part of the story greatly outnumber the fewer who were.[7] The moral is that what a story tells you is a partial function of how much you know of the world of the story. For related reasons, moreover, no story can tell its readers all that's true in it. This is indeterminacy, no doubt. But is an indeterminacy occasioned by unavoidable ignorance, not by the facts of the story. Howell is right to say that the n in question is not implied by Doyle's own sentences or the consequences thereof by immediate inference. But it would be wrong to say that it is not implied by the sentences of the full story, those produced under the world-inheritance convention interacting with the immediate consequences of Doyle's own. It seems to me that Howell has not quite caught the semantic impact of world-inheritance.[8] If the hairwise cardinality problem has a solution in the world, it is

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[6] See, for example, Carl Hewitt, "Indeterminacy in computation", Social Science Research Network (SSRN), online.

[7] Some years ago I walked from a great-uncle's sometime house in Cheyne Walk to the then present 221 Baker Street. It was a brisk workout.

[8] Howell might also have been misled by his own F-operator, the according-to-the story operator. "According-to-the-story" sometimes means "made so by the story". Sometimes it means "as the story testifies". The distinction is clear in French: *à cause de v. "selon"*. It is this latter sense that won't do for fiction. The facts of Holmes' life aren't those that Doyle has *testified* to. Some are those he made true. Others are those that hinge on what he made true. In its *selon* sense, Howell is right. That Holmes had precisely n hairs is something that Doyle never testified to. In its *à cause de* sense, Howell is mistaken. The trouble is that the *selon* sense lacks truth-making force. It is the

solved by the story, unless the author wants it not to be.

It is perfectly possible, of course, that the indeterminacy thesis achieves a more persuasive lift-off in Howell's own positive account, the unconscious-assumption theory UA. Before inspecting its details, we should be mindful of the challenges that the theory must negotiate. It must reconcile itself to the havoc imposed by the Basic Laws, especially II and III. It must avoid the evasions of semantic ascent. It must avoid false ambiguities. And it must not slight or distort the empirical data. It must not do the *sort* of thing that pretendism tries to do but cannot manage to bring off. Howell himself is not a pretendist, but I will suggest that, in encumbering himself with those noxious Laws, he, like they, is driven in the end to feint his compliance with the respect-for-data rule. Howell sets out his UA objective in these words:

> "My proposal of this assumption-based approach amounts to a philosophically informed empirical hypothesis about what account best explains data of the sort on which Woods and I are largely agreed. As I see them, other contemporary approaches to our claims about fiction, including Woods's own, also amount to such hypotheses. My account them is to be preferred to the extent that (as I believe it does) it explains the relevant data better than do the other approaches, including Woods'."

Accordingly, we see UA as abductively structured rival of my own abductively structured account in TIF. As it happens, however, the matter between us is not settled by which account abductively betters the other. I will suggest that UA collapses under its own weight before the question of abductive betterness can arise. Consider now this close paraphrase of another passage.[9]

> "...my approach holds that our ordinary claims about fictional objects are made under a nonconscious assumption. That is the assumption roughly to the effect that there is a world [w] (1), and there are objects such that those objects occur in the world (2), the singular fictional terms in these claims denote those objects as those objects occur in the world (3) and the sentences of the fiction are true at that world [w] (4)."

He continues:

> "Moreover, *within* the scope of our nonconscious assumption, Basic Laws I-III hold ... [and] Law IV is false with respect to fictional claims as they occur within the scope of the assumption." [10]

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wrong reading for fiction.

[9]For referential ease, I've inserted numbers after each of the passage's claims and omitted Howell's own letter numberings of some of them. The words of the text are entirely his.

[10]See below Dominic Lopes' contribution and my reply to it.

In this theory there are two assumptions of central importance. One is an assumption of Howell's own. The other is an assumption that Howell's assumption imputes to the readers of fiction. To keep them separate, I'll refer the assumption Howell imputes to himself as literary theorist as $\mathcal{H}$ (for theoretical hypothesis), and to the assumption he imputes to himself as reader (and to all the rest of us too), as $\mathcal{A}$ (for assumption). Thus $\mathcal{A}$ is the subject of $\mathcal{H}$. In Howell's hands, $\mathcal{A}$ is made by us *unconsciously*. For want of space, the workings of $\mathcal{A}$ aren't worked out here chapter and verse.[11] But Howell, even so, has covered all the essential parts of his account with an impressive thoroughness.[12] It is clear that the Basic Laws of Fiction are taken for true in UA. It is perhaps not so clear how they fare under the assumption $\mathcal{A}$ that $\mathcal{H}$ imputes to all us readers. It is easy to see that, if imputed to us as taking hold consciously, all but the first of the Laws would be rejected out of hand. Readers everywhere and at all readerly times experience themselves as knowing them to be false. Howell's position is that under $\mathcal{A}$, the unconsciously held assumption, all we readers take the first three Laws to be true. If we read the wording of the unconscious assumption, we see that what we are hypothesized as doing unconsciously we already do consciously. That is to say, we take ourselves as knowing that there are objects and events to which we make reference in fictional contexts and about which we make true statements. Note, however, that this does *not* amount to unconscious subscription to the Laws II and III. If the laws are true, then unconscious readerly referential and ascriptive success implies that the objects of fiction are existent objects and the statements we make of them are world-true. These are *Howell's* implications;, which deny him the irrealist comforts of telling us what he is saying when he tells us that Sherlock can't be referred to if he doesn't exist. It would also be interesting to know how the unconscious claim could have been advanced without a jot or tittle of independent evidence to support it.

$\mathcal{A}$ is sensitive to consideration of scope, with respect to which the *dicto-de dicto* distinction bears admissible application. This, in turn, introduces quantifiers both within and without $\mathcal{A}$'s scope. These considerations suffice to make UA a quantified modal system regulated by a possible worlds semantics for fiction.[13] Consider now the world w , the world of claim (1). Within the $\mathcal{A}$'s scope, we have, for example,

$$\mathcal{A}\exists x(x = w) \tag{1}$$

I read Howell as affirming (1). This is troublesome. (1) is false to the facts of lived

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[11]Greater detail can be found in Howell (2010, 2011, 2015). Similarities can be found in Everett (2005, 2013), all listed in Howell's bibliography here.

[12]Further remarks on this matter can be found in my reply below to Bryson Brown.

[13]As was my position in *The Logic of Fiction*, although differently structured than the one provided by Howell.

readerly experience. When we learn that Holmes waved our strange visitor into a chair, we do not consciously assume the presence of the world of the story. If we do it unconsciously, the only support we can give it is that putting it so is necessitated by theoretical considerations that best explain the data, including those to the effect that we do not assume it consciously. From which we would have it that UA implies that our readerly grasp of stories is surfeited with false consciousness. What is more, in UA quantifiers carry their classical meanings. This, in turn, is big-box scepticism on a scale that outrages the duty to avoid it, save for conclusive cause to admit it. No such cause is to be found in UA. We also have it from Howell:

> "Of course, at some point we usually come to realize that those claims are not true with respect to the actual world and that the fictional names involved have no actual-world referents." (5)

As stated, I reject (5). It is, as a matter of empirically discernible fact, *not* true that we (or most of us) are suddenly seized of the fact that claims (1), (2), (3) and (4) are not true in actuality. We knew this at the point at which we were reading with understanding the author's fictional text. My own finding, then, is that UA fails fatally at the starting-gate. So there is no need to go into its further details, notwithstanding the skill with which they've been worked up. Besides, there is no space for it.

It is now time to stop, albeit as Howellians might well think, nonconclusively. I remarked a bit earlier that Howell is in the same kind of fix that data-respecting pretendists of all stripes find themselves in. Despite ingenious efforts of evasion, they've not been able to reconcile the empirically discernable data of lived literary life to the semantic demands favoured by the semantic establishment and yet discomplied with by humanity at large, not just with respect to reference, truth and inference in fiction, but with respect to them in their full generality.

Reply to Bryson Brown

It is not hard to miss the inferentialist perspective in Bryson Brown's interesting and engaging critique. In one form or another, inferentialism has been up and running from the turn of the century before this one. In logical settings, it is a principal rival of truth-based semantics for formal languages. The idea that truth is extra baggage in philosophy, and an impediment to clear thinking about language use and inferential practices, has had a long history in logic and the philosophy of mathematics. It is interesting to see its recent gathering of steam in the philosophy of fiction. Peter Alward gave it an open-minded innings in his 2012 book *Empty Revelations: An Essay on Talk About and Attitudes Toward Fiction*, where among other things, the four Basic Laws are given free rein. Alward's fidelity to them puts him in an awkward position. One can only wonder how his theoretical claim, "It is impossible to refer to Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street", gets to be true (or assent-worthy) if it's impossible for Alward to say so referringly. Against this, Alward sides with the disquotationalist rejection of truth as a substantive metaphysical reality. For him, the truth about "true" and "refer to" is revealed in the normative regularities of our day-to-day linguistic practice. Alward has Brandom in mind here, another stone-eyed disquotationalist. This is problematic. The trouble is that Alward's referentially awkward sentence is underivable from any empirically vouched-for regulatory regime for English speech. The invitation to assert the impossibility of referring to the nonexistent hasn't been taken up by the speech community at large. The proposition that there is no referentialist difference of kind among the terms "Sherlock", "the present king of France", "planet Vulcan", Zeus", "the largest even integer" has no takers in worldwide linguistic practice. The Basic Laws of Fiction are also licensed in a Brandomian semantics, and produce the problem encountered by Alward. Perhaps inferentialism might do better with Brown. Brown is not quite so forthcoming about this, but he's disinclined to take the Basic Laws issue as conclusive one way or another. Still, if his account were amenable to the likes of Alward's beleaguered theoretical claim, a Brandomian semantics couldn't get Brown out of the fix that Alward is in.

In any case, Brown's take on fiction could hardly be more distant from my own. Brown makes it clear at the start that he rejects the *methodology* that I take to be essential for semantic success in the philosophy of fiction. All the same, there are several matters on which the two of us are at one. The difference between us lies in our respective ways of accounting for them.

In matters of fiction, Brown stresses the importance of how our language is used. I think this too, but that's not all there is to it. Even more basic is how we *respond* to stories when we read them. What *happens* to us when we do? All readers know

the answers; they come trippingly off the tongue. When we read stories, we start knowing things, and keep on wanting to know more. We draw inferences and may, or may not, be stirred, excited. We might be saddened, outraged or delighted by the story's goings-on. None of this requires a speaking role for the reader. A Trappist monk could go to his grave without speaking a word about what's he's read. (I stand mute on whether he'd be permitted to read "A study in scarlet.") The point for now is that story-reading is not an inherently language-*using* practice. In fact, it rarely is. Neither is an inherently *interpretative* practice, although sometimes it is in certain genres — whodunnits, scifis, morality tales, experimental moderns, metacriticals, philosophical trouble-makers, and so on. Of course, if we wanted to chat with a friend about what we've been reading, language-use is the only way to go. It is as natural as showers in April to take it as given that when we speak to a friend about a story, the referents of our speech will be one and the same with the objects of the thoughts we were caused to have when we read it. When we explain to a child that what happened to Little Miss Muffet isn't really true and is so only in the rhyme, that's as effortless a reflection as we could honestly wish for of what we knew when reading it. Were we to heed the respect-for-data principle, we'd be bound to preserve these universal facts of linguistic behaviour in our theories of them, without conclusively good reasons to do otherwise. But if there were such reasons, it could not be taken as obliterating the fact that, when readers talk about stories, they are not *themselves* sceptics about truth. Human language *sans* "true" and "truth" is crippled speech. So, again, on the face of it, I doubt that Brown's proposed suppression of truth-talk passes muster.

Brown and I agree on the pervasiveness of inconsistency in fiction, indeed its utter obviousness. We part ways about what's to be done about it. In a way, "What's to be done about it?" is the wrong question. In the cognitive economies of everyday life, inconsistency takes care of itself, and does so in ways that vary with circumstance and context. Most agree that Frege's Basic Law V implies the contradiction that wrecked it.[14] No one thinks that the inconsistency wrought by fictional truths in relation to the world is an inconsistency implied by the story or by the world. In that case, it takes two to tango, and nobody is put off by it except philosophers who, methodologically speaking, actually don't count for me. Brown likens the story-world inconsistencies to the way chunk-and-permeate logicians view intertheoretic inconsistencies, and we find here some really interesting ideas about how incompatible theories can make music together.[15] I must say, however, the

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[14]Frege himself remained equivocal about whether Russell's proof actually did show the Law to be false. See my "What did Frege take Russell to have proved?" *Synthese* (2019) DOI 10.1007/s11229-019-02324-4.

[15]Bryson Brown and Graham Priest, "Chunk and permeate", *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, 33

mechanics of chunk and permeate, valuable as they are for productive scientific yield from incompatible but cooperating theories, bear no relation to the story-world relation. For one thing, strong representation theorems are a necessity for chunking and permeating. There is no such necessity in the semantics of fiction.[16]

I regard the chunk-and-permeate approach as an important advance in the logic of science. If the story-world relational realities could be faithfully modelled on the chunk-and-permeate relational realities, the logic of fiction would have formally powerful theory at its back. It would inherit a grown-upness that far outpaces the tentativeness and provisionality of *Truth in Fiction*. But, alas, it doesn't meet the conditions laid out in my conditional's antecedent. Inconsistencies internal to a story — think here of "Sylvan's box" — are another matter. There is nothing within to chunk and permeate. In each context, however, Brown's view is that inconsistency can't be allowed its classical head. We can't have it — and won't allow it — that a sentence that's unambiguously true and false together implies each and every sentence of the language.

In all the years that I've been writing about inconsistency, I have never doubted that when inconsistency strikes, the one thing that people never do is even think about inferring every sentence whatever from it. Having also been a life-long subscriber to *ex falso*, it could not escape me that the truth conditions on implication cannot serve when reformulated as rules of inference. They are simply the wrong rules for truth-preserving consequence-drawing. Gilbert Harman blew the definitive whistle on this in 1970, eleven years after the early stirrings of relevant implication at Yale and, later, Pittsburgh.[17] Things rarely get clearer than this in philosophy:

- *Deductive inference is paraconsistent.*

What is more, inference's paraconsistency is implicit in the inferential behaviour of humanity at large. And, leaving inconsistency briefly to one side, something else is also evident.

- Belief is not closed under deductive consequence. One of the reasons why is that, if it were, the number of statements in one's belief-box would be no fewer in number than ω.

(2004), 379-388.

[16]There is a nice one in Dorian Nicholson and Bryson Brown, "Representation of forcing", in Peter Schotch, Bryson Brown and Raymond Jennings, editors, *On Preserving: Essays on Preservationism and Paraconsistent Logic*, pages 145-173, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009. The reasons that formal representability proofs aren't required for the semantics of fiction are laid out in TIF's chapter 10, "Models and formal representations".

[17]Gilbert Harman, "Induction: A discussion of the relevance of the theory of knowledge to the theory of induction", in Marshall Swain, editor, *Induction, Acceptance and Rational Belief*, pages 83-99, Dordrecht: Reidel, 1970.

And yet another thing:

- In drawing their inferences from sets of premisses, humans favour those that preserve the premisses' subject-matter.

Consider a case. The proposition that $2 + 2 = 4$ follows from the axioms of Peano arithmetic. They also imply that $2 + 2 = 4$ or Nice is nice in November. The first proposition states a truth of number theory, an arithmetic truth. The alternation does no such thing.[18] There is no truth of arithmetic that it states. It is noteworthy that for each of these bulleted points, we can find a paraconsistent logician intent on blocking the *implications* which strike him awkwardly, using devices which the rest of humanity implicitly uses for the regulation of *inference*. In the first instance, the paraconsistentist will deny to implication any feature — e.g. or-introduction — enabling its transfinite output. In the second instance, implications will be blockaded if the subject-matter between premisses and conclusions is severed, and therewith a relevance condition is placed on the implication relation. I myself heartily approve of such measures, but I approve of them only when they are applied where they belong. So the gap between the classical and paraconsistent logician is actually small. Both agree that paraconsistency rules inferentially, but can't agree on whether it calls the shots in other domains.[19]

Here is a possibility that hadn't occurred to me before. It turns on economic considerations. We agree on inference's paraconsistency. We agree that if the truth conditions on implication were licensed as inference rules, the paraconsistent peace would be shattered. There is a cheap way of averting this disaster. *Cancel the license* and get on with the serious business of regulating inference. Of course, we *could* do it another way, in fact two of them. We could cancel implication's truth conditions and write up some new ones in ways that brings implication to paraconsistent heel. Or we could leave the implication relation as it is and simply stop doing business with it, and set about inventing a new relation more to our liking. If we cancelled implication's truth conditions, we'd open ourselves to the challenge of providing a non-question-begging justification of the authority to do so. If we simply took our implicational custom elsewhere and build a relation we liked better, we'd find ourselves paddling in the waters of logical pluralism and the reedier puddles of theory-relativity, which is where much of today's paraconsistent logic can indeed be found. Comparing the costs, I can't see why we wouldn't let implication be and abandon the expensive idea that its own truth conditions are authoritative for inference. Let paraconsistentists relativize truth and related matters as they

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[18] As Aristotle would say, it brings in "terms from the outside."

[19] Brown is a leading figure in the preservationist branch of paraconsistent logic. One of its virtues is that it tries to be as classical as an occasional inconsistency here and there allows.

will. The last thing that *Truth in Fiction* would ever do is relativize its own truth predicate. That two concurrent truth-makers make hinged sentences true and their negations also true is a peculiar (and possibly unique) fact about fiction. What is predicated in the first instance is the one and only truth property. The one negated in the second is the very same thing.

Come back now to disquotationalism. In behavioural terms, there is simply no hope for languages such as ours if stripped clean of the idioms of truth and falsity. True or false, there are people who are disinclined to think that this actually matters for the theories that have caught their philosophical attention. This is where disquotationalism might seek some hopeful purchase. It would give them occasion to take on the standard definition of consequence:

1. S^* is a deductive consequence of propositions $S_1, \ldots, S_n$ just in case there is no respect in which it is in any sense possible that the S_i are true and S^* not.[20]

Given their anti-truth leanings, a disquotationalist could try to save what is salvageable in it by re-parsing it somewhat along these lines.

2. S^* is a deductive consequence of the S_i just in case when the S_i are acceptable in communal linguistic practice, so too is S^*.

It is easy to see the paraconsistentist appeal in this manoeuvre. In the standard account, whether this implies that or does not has nothing to do with communally established routines of acceptance and rejection. This is not to deny the general conventions of ordinary speech which derive their regulatory efficacy from their successes in finding solutions for co-ordination problems, albeit for the most part tacitly and implicitly achieved. But those that give meaning to our language, and make it a fit instrument of communication, don't pronounce on definition (2) We know that the working vocabulary of any literate person has the means to say that from this fact this other fact follows of necessity from it.[21] People in general also have an intuitive (and correct) grasp of what it would take for any kind of implication statement to fail. It would fail if its consequent were false and its antecedent true. The same holds for validity — true premises and false conclusions constitute invalidity. If the conventions that regulate the use of "follows of necessity from" *were* to

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[20] In formalized settings, we have it relativistically that Ψ is a consequence of $\Phi_1, \ldots, \Phi_n$ in an interpretation I iff every model in I in which the Φ_i holds, Ψ also holds. Non-relativistically, Ψ is a consequence of the Φ_i iff every model for the Φ_i is a model for in all interpretations I. We might note that interpretations are just set-theoretic structures of the theorist's fancy.

[21] Aristotle calls the relation of following of following of necessity from *anagkaion* or necessitation. It is an unalyzed primitive in his logic. One of the reasons why is that he thought that the average literate Greek already had acquired an accurate understanding of necessitation.

pronounce on any of the going definitions of implication, of the two on offer here, the nod would go to (1).

What Brown proposes is inferentialism for inference, disquotationism for truth, and paraconsistentism for implication. It's a nice try, but I'm bound to think it doesn't pass the respect-for-data test.

Let's turn now to one of those problems that simply refuses to go away. It is, by my lights, the utterly misbegotten pseudo-problem on fiction's ontic indeterminacies. Brown, like Howell, García-Carpintero, and many others, takes it to be a matter of material importance whether or not it is a story-made fact that, for some specific non-negative cardinal number, the strands of hair on Sherlock's head sum exactly to it. My answer is that such a number exists — is a matter of fact in the story — precisely to the extent that like numbers number the strands of Brown's, Howell's and your obedient servant's at the hair-sites of our respective heads. If we have hairwise indeterminacy here, we have the same indeterminacy for Holmes, Watson and Lestrade, thanks to the world inheritance principle. No account, historical or fictional, will tell all that's true of their subjects, the indeterminacies whereof are epistemic and usually of little material importance. The world-inheritance principle is better called a convention. It solves a text-world coordination problem that enables the construction of the whole story. No sentence of the full story escapes its attachment to Doyle as a condition of its truth. But a goodly part of the heavy lifting in the full story's construction is provided by the world whose truths, by a towering majority, Doyle had no hand in creating. In the matter of full-story creation authors are but co-creators. This turns out to matter for the indeterminacy question. Much of what's true in the whole story, Doyle himself wouldn't be able to tell us. He wouldn't be able to because he couldn't know everything that's true there. In this regard, Doyle and his readers are in the same boat. His, like theirs, is a perfectly ordinary cognitive incapacity, carrying not one iota of ontic significance.

Bas van Fraassen's supervaluational semantics is another very nice piece of mathematical technology for the perceived needs of theories of reference and truth. It may be (though I doubt it) that the indeterminacy problem can be settled there. My own inclination is to salute the technical virtuosity and scant its importance for what matters in fiction.

I'll close with what, for me, is the most engaging part of Brown's paper, on a matter of what I take to be of the first importance for a naturalized epistemology — an epistemology that provides essential services with our knowledge of fiction, law, science and mathematics. For much of my own philosophical life, I've fallen into a habit of thinking things up, and distributing them to the *collegiam* as promissory notes, in the hope that others might join in for their eventual redemption. The version of it that I favour is a causal-response adaptation of the causal reliabilists

approach *minus* the justification condition, which I disavow as a necessary condition on all knowledge. The CR model is given a large role in *Errors of Reasoning: Naturalizing the Logic of Inference*, in both editions of Is *Legal Reasoning Irrational? An Introduction to the Epistemology of Law*, and of course also in TIF. It has the same role in work I'm currently doing in the epistemology of mathematics. But, like most of the ideas I've thought up, the causal-response is still a largely promissory note.[22] Brown's reflections in the section entitled "The importance of fiction" concerning the biological origins of language strike right at the heart of where I'm headed. Among the findings, I would expect to see some further elucidation of the plain fact that we are by nature knowledge-demanding beings and have found it to be adaptively advantageous to have the impulse to communicate accurately. Brown's suggestion that the earliness of stories is tied to our capacity for subjunctive reflection in problem-solving, and risk-avoidance strikes me as spot-on. This is nourishing food for thought, and I much look forward to further helpings.

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[22]Although it is strongly endorsed by the Eco-Cognitive School of Lorenzo Magnani and associates. See, for example, his "Naturalizing logic and errors of reasoning vindicated: Logic reapproaches cognitive science," *Journal of Applied Logic*, 13, (2015), 13-36, and "The urgent need of a naturalized logic", in G. Dodig-Crmkovic and M. J. Schroeder, editors, *Contemporary Natural Philosophy and Philosophies*, a special guest-edited number of *Philosophies*, volume 3 (2018), p. 44.

Reply to Michel-Antoine Xingesse

Michel Xhingesse is right to say that the world-inheritance principle raises some important questions. One is whether it is an author-created principle or rather an author-invoked one. Or possibly just an author-understood one. As remarked in my reply to Bryson Brown, it is a literary *convention* for the regulation of readerly and writerly literary intercourse. So, not author-created, not invoked, but understood in that way that people read stories with understanding and authors write them to be so read.

Another question is how and to what extent the world-inheritance condition bears on the individuation of the full story that arises from an author's text. In framing this question, it might be helpful to put the literary case briefly aside, and take note of a further distinction between how the world is and how its inhabitants take it to be. In this we see a rather striking difference between the comparatively low levels of world-invariance at a given time and the much higher levels of concurrent world-*experiencing* invariance. Pretty much the whole of humanity sees the dog as four-legged, which is the way in which the world also has it. In other cases, the split is wider, sometimes chasmic. Imagine that I've just finished a highly regarded account of France's revolutionary la Terreur. It isn't at all likely that my 2019 grasp of how France was between September 5, 1793 and July 29, 1794 much approximates to that of Edmund Burke, three and four years after the 1790 publication of his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, and still less to that of Robespierre and Saint-Just, whose greatest philosophical influence was Rousseau (notably his *Émile* of 1762). We inhabitants of the world are subject to limitations of which the world is free. Beings like us are cognitively limited. The world is different. Whatever its own limitations, they aren't those of the cognitively bound or the ratiocinatively insecure.

Even apart from the author's provisions otherwise, we might doubt that the world is the sole determinant of how it plays out in the story. It may strike us that the full story is mediated by its readers' multivarious and often incompatible takes on the world. If that were so, no story could be subject to uniquely identifying conditions. The full story of any text would thrum to the pace and high variability of its reader's grasp of the world over time. For my simple tastes, this is too big-box a sceptical accommodation. I think instead that we must have it that full stories are as fixed as the world itself is fixed and the auctorially-wrought exceptions are clear. It may be that, in some respects, the world is indeterminate. Perhaps the world is not wholly determinate with respect to all facts of the Terror. Perhaps it is not determinate with respect to the cardinality of all strands of hair on the scalp of a well-haired human head. Be that as it may, the indeterminacies respectively at hand

migrate to *A Tale of Two Cities* and to the Sherlock canon. In the world-to-story migration, the world alone calls all the shots not called or hinged by the author. In the story-understanding relation, the variabilities and limitations of readerly world-awareness take genuine hold.

We should take pains with this. The phrase "one's take on the story" is sometimes ambiguous as between knowing the facts of the story, or appreciating its larger significance or its author's intended message. In the world-inheritance context, I am concerned with the former and not with the latter. If, as I believe to be so, one of Dickens' objectives in *A Christmas Carol* was to discredit Mill's utilitarianism concerning how the poor of England were to be reared and cared for, and to show to advantage the fruits of the charity commanded by Jesus, that would be one thing, but not by any means the whole thing. Perhaps this is a silly take on the story. Perhaps it's close to spot-on. It doesn't matter for the point at hand. Save for Dickens' own hand in the story's hinged sentences, the facts of his storyworld are precisely those of the world itself in 1843. They are also the facts that remain so to this day.[23] It is not hard to see where my inclinations lie. They lie in a realist understanding of literary facts, and they distance themselves from subjective idealist playlists. Like many of philosophy's dualisms that have been found to be untenable — e.g. the analytic synthetic distinction according to Morton White — I myself find them unhelpful occasions for multiplying confusion rather than lifting it. One of the least helpful dualism is that between realism and antirealism. J. L. Austin was on to something when he pointed out that the adjective "real" is a substantive-hungry term. But not even this is as helpful as we might like. What, for example, would be the difference between a man and a fictional man on the reality score? Perhaps a better go at it is to reserve the real for what there is, that is the values of the bound variables of quantification. This, of course, is Quine's answer — and in essence our something law. In so far as it's left untrifled with by anxious metaphysicians, it is the right answer, providing ample accommodation to Doyle and Holmes alike. Such differences as assuredly separate them can be left to the further devices of the lexicon to formulate and regulate. Quine's own after-the-fact trifling is a case in point. In his wholly unnecessary subscription to Law II,[24] the existence law, he managed to

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[23]I'm not sure that I understand Stacie Friend on this point. Xinghesse has her saying that "the background encoded, into the story, is the world as (*qua* informed *contemporary* readers) take it to be, rather than as the author or intended audience took it to be." If "contemporary" here means "present-day", I disagree with Friend. She could be right about how present-day readers understand the story. I think she is mistaken if she has the facts of the story in mind. They are not set by present-day readers. They are not set by past readers either.

[24]Sets are necessary for mathematics and mathematics is necessary for natural science. If, as Quine believes, only the natural sciences merit the ontological commitments of quantification, it contravenes Quine's purposes in quantifying over the unnatural, as in the case of sets, to impose

lead whole legions of analytic philosophers into the chaotic rupture of theory-making and the lived facts of human referential life. So, as far as it goes, a tenable realism would have it that to be a real object is to be an object of quantification, and to tell the real truth about it is to tell it at its face-value.

Xhingesse's puzzlement about the scope of an author's truth-making powers is also well-justified. As with all my critics to date, he's troubled by literature's occasional story-bound inconsistencies and by what I claim to be its systematic external ones. Concerning the first, we'd be well to note the hard limitations on an author's making true the sentences that result in an interesting story — I mean literarily engaging ones — and the relative ease with which he makes true the sentences that frame a thoroughly rotten story. Graham Priest's "Sylvan's box", springs immediately to mind. On the score of literary engagingness it bears comparison with Djaitch da Bloo's story "The end", which I now recount in full.[25]

"The end"
A story by Djaitch da Bloo

"Something happened, and some fact obtained. The fact is that nothing whatever does or ever could happen."

The end.[26]

"Sylvan's box" is a story that makes a philosophical point. The point is that the author of a story can make contradictions true in them. It is really two points at once. One is confirmation of the dialethic conviction that true contradiction is an intelligible idea. The other is confirmation of the paraconsistentist conviction that contradictions aren't explosive. These two points exhaust the story's interest, ensuring it a null non-philosophical readership. Only the first point is matter of auctorial power. The second point has to do with whether storyhood is closed under deductive consequence. The truth of the matter, even putting contradiction to one side, is that it is not. "Holmes waved our strange visitor into a chair" is true in the story. But "Holmes waved our strange visitor into a chair or Nice is nice in November" is not, notwithstanding that it lies in the deductive closure of its first disjunct.

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on his "what there is"-prescription of the absurdity that there are no sets unless they are objects of existence in the way that atoms and molecules are.

[25]"Sylvan" is the adopted surname of Richard Routley. It derives from "Sylvanus", the name of the Roman god of woods. Perhaps the day will come when someone twigs to the story of "Djaitch da Bloo."

[26]©The Berczy Group, with permission

Xhingesse expresses misgivings about the folk-worthiness of the or-introduction rule as a rule of inference, citing Wildman and Folde. There is some confusion here. Or-introduction is indeed a one-premiss rule, but *modus ponens* and *modus tollens* are not. Of greater consequence, it is flatly mistaken to cite any of these rules as rules of *inference*. What they are are devices for consequence-*spotting*. (Think here of *reductio* proofs) Spotted consequences are in the deductive closures of their premisses. But, as we've already seen, storyhood is not closed under consequence. So whether or not Priest's contradiction explodes in the story is not settled by what follows from it as a matter of logic. In all contexts which bear on explosion, the use of or-introduction can be avoided. In *ex falso's* proof in chapter 9 of *Truth in Fiction*, there is no need to call on it. Here's a quick sketch. We begin with the assumption that for some S, S and not-S is true. Consider now the and-elimination rule. It follows from an assumed conjunctive truths "S and S^*" that any set of propositions containing that proposition and either not-S or not-S^* is an inconsistent set of propositions. So we have it that the assumed conjunctive truth logically implies its conjunct S. With S now implied, consider the principle that if S is implied by an assumed truth then it is also implied that any set of propositions containing S has at least one true member. Specify this set as $D = \{S, Z\}$ for any value of Z. Come back now to the contradictory proposition assumed to be true. We have already detached its first conjunct. Now we detach the second. The assumed contradiction implies "not-S". Now bring set D back into play. D is a set containing at least one true member. And the implication of "not-S" tells us that it is not S that is D's true member. So it has to be Z. But wait! Don't we also have it implied that S? Yes, but it's not relevant to the present question, which is whether the sentence "At least one of S and Z is true, but not-S" *implies* Z? It is no good to say that "S"s prior occurrence denies "not" its negational power at this stage of the proof. If "not" has full negational potency in line one of the proof, it retains it all the way down. If it is not retained in the purported implication of Z, then proof's opening line isn't a contradiction, and we can all go for a beer.

Of course, the proof is a conditional one. If each line excepting the first is implied by prior lines, it follows that a contradiction implies any sentence whatever. The proof testifies to the enormous implicational power of contradictions, which is precisely where its interest lies. Concerning the inference relation it tells us little beyond the obvious fact that people draw inferences from contradictory premisses only inadvertently. And when that is so, no one who has ever drawn breath on this blessed earth has ever drawn ω consequences as conclusions.

Very well, then. If the "Sylvan's box" contradiction is true in the story, every sentence whatever follows from it. But that's neither here nor there. Those sentences lie in the story's deductive closure, but absent further Priestly authority, scarcely

any of that vast plenitude makes it into the story. Priest is a dab-hand at Routley-star formal semantics. But he has an inadequate understanding of how what follows from what in a story.

A Sound of Thunder is an excellent example of a time-travel puzzle whose apparent inconsistency is undone by the introduction of timelines. I owe his improved understanding of Bradbury's classic to Xhingesse. (However, Xhingesse confuses Bradbury's timelines with my sites. I'll come back to this a bit later.) In another part of his critique, Xhingesse advances an interesting idea that the problem of the inadvertent inconsistencies about the placement of Watson's war wound. Of course, it cannot be said that Doyle made it true that Watson had just one war-wound and that it was sustained in the shoulder and sustained in the leg. Xhingesse suggests that following accommodations Watson's shoulder wound is true *in situ A Study in Scarlet* (1887) and Watson's leg wound is true *in situ The Sign of Four* (1890), *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor* (1892) and *The Cardboard Box* (1893). However, says Xhingesse, "*in situ* the Holmes canon as a whole ... we simply cannot say." Yes, we can't. But are we to say that there is no fact of the matter here? I would say "No". There is a fact of the matter whose specification Doyle managed to gibble up. However, the problem is not *quite* the dismissible one I had taken it to be. Hats off to Xhingesse.

It bears on this that Doyle *corrected* the apparent contradiction of Holmes' dying and not dying at Reichenbach Falls. Here a mistake was made, and it was Doyle who made it the case that it was made. He made it the case after the fact. But the mistake was *Watson's*. Holmes faked his death at Reichenbach Falls and went into deep concealment from Moriarty's lieutenants in the years immediately following, only to emerge in *The Adventures of the Empty House* with the words "Well, then, about that chasm. I had no serious difficulty in getting out of it, for the very simple reason that I was never in it ...! No, Watson, I was never in it." All readers at the time knew what had happened. Doyle had wanted rid of Holmes, so that he could rise to loftier literary heights. HisÄpro fans would have none of it, nor would *The Strand Magazine*. So Holmes re-appeared. He came back from where he was. He did not come back from the dead.

It is important not to confuse my remarks about the cognitively undisturbing systematic inconsistencies between stories and the world with my briefer treatment of how author-intended inconsistencies internal to a story are responded to. In the first instance, every reader knows that what I call the hinged sentences of a story are both true and not true together but not in all the same respects. "True" and "not true" are one another's negations, something few readers are disposed to deny. Readers also know that the sting of contradiction is removed *in situ* qualification. A theorist might think that the qualifications kill the fact that "true" and "not true"

are each other's negations. This is simply too much theoretical interference for an honest theory to bear. Are "true" and "not true" to be denied a life of their own just because on rare occasions there are two different truth-makers at work on the hinged sentences of fiction? I entirely agree that readers don't take these inconsistencies at the face-value of contradiction. There is a reason for this. They are inconsistencies that *aren't* contradictions. Readers, who know nothing of these technicalities, have remarkably good instincts.

Coming back to the *bona fide* contradictions internal to some stories, I think that Xhingesse is right to say that it is not always or perhaps frequently the case that readers take the embedded contradictions at face-value. There is a reason for this. Sometimes it is unclear as to whether the passage in question embodies a contradiction (No, in *A Sound of Thunder*; yes, in "Sylvan's box"; who the heck knows, in *The Non-Existent Knight*.) The little I have to say about such cases is that if readers spot what they take to be as honest-to-goodness contradiction, they don't adjust their inferences to its explosive yield. Some of these cases bear on Xhingesse's worry that I overlook what he calls the occurrent-reflective readerly distinction. It is a valuable observation. Some stories are built for reflective reading, allegorical fantasies for example. Whodunits are tailored for readers with problem-solving tastes. Here is my take. By massively far, readers read for relaxation and distraction. Reading is something one does in a cuddled-up state of mind. That is why Calvino's market-share is comparatively miniscule. That is why the bulk of Agatha Christie's readership is content to wait for Christie to reveal the solution, rather than beat her to the punch. Of course, we shouldn't overlook the fact that most of what philosophers of language have to say about fiction is imbued with reflective reading, and most of what they've said so far is false.

Xhingesse is right to press me on truth-sites. In so doing, he joins the many others who also misunderstand it. The fault is mine. In employing the *in situ*-markers "in the story" and "in the world", I've loosed the confusion caused by reading "in" as proposition of placement. In employing the idioms of sitehood, the faulty impression of placehood is given another boost. Sites are not places. They operate in geography-free zones. "Sites" is a noun of convenience for *truth-makings*. Fiction has a rare and remarkable logico-semantic peculiarity. Its hinged sentences attract two different and incompatible assignments of truth-value. The assignments are brought about by different truth-makers. In the one case, the truth-maker is the author who, in bringing them about, makes those sentences true. In the other, the truth-maker is the world whose facts concurrently makes it the case that those same sentences are not true. In normal conversational speech, we say that "Holmes waved our strange visitor into a chair" is true in the story and not true in the world. What makes this conversational way of speaking the right way to speak is that the

sentence was made true by the story's author and concurrently made untrue of the truth-making facts of the world. Readers everywhere and always know this implicitly and, because no contradiction is made thereby, they rightly make no fuss about it.

Reply to Dominic McIver Lopes

A sayso semantics for fiction is one that recognizes authors as truth-makers.[27] It is a semantics motivated by a semantic regularity that's been in play as long as fiction has been produced in written form. Everyone who has read fictional stories has taken it as given that the sentences made true by a story's author are sentences that are true in the story but untrue in the world, where their respective negations are made true by the world's own goings-on. Another of the ancient semantic regularities in human speech and thought is that if S is true and not-S is true, then by the meaning of negation, S is true and false at once. Everyone who writes or reads fiction knows this to be so, and is wholly untroubled by it. It is easy to see why. They have ready to hand the distinction between true in the story and untrue in the world.

In matters of fiction, there are two important points on which Dom Lopes and I are agreed. One is that the story-world dichotomy is not an ambiguity-marker. The other is that all the hinged sentences of stories stand to the world in a relation of logical inconsistency.[28] This, on the face of it, is puzzling. It suggests that fiction's worldwide readers are unable to grasp the fact that the story-world distinction does not extinguish the systematic inconsistency of what they read, and aren't semantically mature enough to be bothered by it. This may be a plausible explanation. But it is not open to Lopes or to me to embrace it. The reason is that each of us has pledged fidelity to the respect for data principle. The facts of the present case are universal and transcultural. Humanity at large ascribes inconsistent characteristics to the sentences of fiction, and take no occasion to be semantically troubled in so doing. These readers include the world's most brilliant people, some worldwide scant few of whom are philosophers relaxing with a book after a semantically trying day at the office. If the present diagnosis held water, we'd be stuck with a big-box scepticism in matters of fiction, when there is not a jot of evidence to suggest like failures in humanity's other universal and transcultural cognitive practices. Lopes and I have no option but to declare the present diagnosis foreclosed by the respect for data principle. So what are we to do? This is not the place for the full details — there isn't the space for them. But before moving on to Lopes' own constructive proposals, we should make a quick review of the position to which they are advanced as alternatives.

In the sayso semantics, all but the first of the four laws of fiction are struck down

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[27]It was first introduced under that name in Woods, *Logic of Fiction*, The Hague and Paris, Mouton, 1974. Second edition, with a Foreword by Nicholas Griffin, volume 23 of Studies in Logic, London: College Publications, 2009.

[28]A sentence is hinged in a story when its truth depends at least to some degree on sentences directly penned by the author. Author-penned sentences are themselves hinged.

as utter violations of the respect for data principle. It draws upon the respects-clause of Aristotle's characterization of the Law of Non-Contradiction at *Metaphysics* 1005b 19-20: "It is impossible that the same thing belong and not belong to the same thing at the same time and in the same respect." Accordingly, if we *honour* the respect for data requirement — thus ridding us of the existence, truth and fiction "laws" of establishment semantics — *accept* that the story-world distinction is not an ambiguity-marker, *acknowledge* that "true" and "untrue" are jointly inconsistent predicates and *adopt* Aristotle's definition of contradiction, we have it that:

1. The story-world distinction doesn't erase the inconsistency that attaches to fiction's hinged sentences.

2. All the same, since such sentences are true in respect of one thing (the story) and untrue in respect of another thing (the world), they are not contradictions.

3. Readers' cognitive composure in the face of fiction's inconsistencies suggests their implicit awareness that inconsistencies needn't be contradictions.

These three propositions constitute the *in situ* component of the sayso semantics for fiction.

This would be a good place to note Lopes' openness to the material significance of the respects-clause in a semantics of fiction. He is not minded to fault my solution for its reliance on the clause. Where we part company is on the Basic Laws of Fiction. He takes no firm stand for or against them. But he sees my repudiation of them as radical and surplus to need. On his telling, it is possible to write a semantics for fiction that handles the inconsistency problem while tolerating all the laws. Were Lopes to make good on this, it would be a considerable achievement. It would take care of fiction's greatest semantic peculiarity without the costs, and alienations, of putatively radical departures. Of particular appeal is the conciliatory tone of the Lopes approach. He offers would-be subscribers to the sayso semantics two ways in which they might have their cake and eat it too. This, I think, is not quite the metaphor he wants. Rather, what he proposes is a *split-the-difference* semantics. It is in that very spirit that he offers two candidate theories for consideration.

Before turning to the proposed improvements, I should say a little something about the Basic Laws, the very precepts so favoured by the bulk of analytic philosophers of language, and so confidently pedalled to the young. The first, the something law, is fine. There is nothing whatever that isn't something or other. It is a slight rewording of the old Law of Thought known as the Identity Law: "Whatever is is." The items of concern are Laws II and III. Law II, the existence law, has it that anything open to reference or quantification is something that must actually exist.

If it holds, it cannot be true that some things, e.g. Santa Claus, don't actually exist. Law III, the truth law, has it that any truth-evaluable sentence of any speakable language must fail to be true if it transgresses the existence law. If it holds, it cannot be that "Santa Claus is well-favoured at Christmastime" is true. Law IV, the fiction law, is a corollary of the existence and truth laws. It provides that there is nothing whatever that the hinged sentences of fiction refer to and nothing whatever that they could be true of.[29]

Were these laws to hold, Lopes' own provisions for fiction could not pass muster. It could not be true that Sherlock Holmes is Law-abiding. It could not be true that when, in *The Adventure of the Empty House*, Sherlock says, "No, Watson. I was never in it", he was addressing Watson or referring to the chasm that he, Holmes, was never in. It could not be true that there is no Sherlock Holmes and, by Godfrey, not true either that Doyle was his literary maker. There would be no way in which a theorist could make contact with him save by such myth-making devices as semantic ascent.[30] Of more intractable importance, if the laws held true, then language-speaking humanity worldwide would systematically disoblige them, notably those many of the utmost existential scrupulosity. Consider the list: God, Zeus, planet Vulcan, complex functions, the long-dead Caesar, universals, Santa Claus, the tooth-fairy, the cardinality of the irrational numbers, Jove. Every one of the existence-deniers makes referential successful claims in voicing these denials. We can have perfectly intelligible disagreements about whether certain classes of functions are primitive recursive. But the very idea of a fight over whether the present king of France is bald or well-haired is assinine. It fairly takes one's breath away. How, then, does all this bear on a theory of fiction pledged to honour the empirical realities of logico-semantic behaviour on the ground? It cannot be a theory that countenances the Basic Laws beyond the first. The only thing radical about those three laws are its espousers. The last thing its dissenters are is radical. Truly, these are renegade laws. By my lights, there is no saving any theory of truth in fiction that encumbers itself with the three renegades. Therefore, there is no saving any version of pretendism I've yet to lay eyes on. There is a good deal more to be said about this, but not in what there is space for here.[31]

We come now to Lopes' first attempt at reconciliation. This is his *Case One*. The *fact* of this case is that there is no Holmes. The *truth* of the case is that Holmes

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[29]The corollary is obvious, but hardly trivial. If false, then either the truth law, III, or the existence law, II, is false. Either way, establishment semantics falls on its face.

[30]Perhaps a case can be made for it for the likes of "The present king of France is bald" which, owing to reference-failure, say nothing whatever. But, if we are to abide by the respect for data principle, nothing of the kind can be said of "Holmes mustered the Baker Street irregulars".

[31]See, for example, Woods, "Pretendism in name only", *Analysis Reviews*, 78 (2018), 713-718.

mustered the Baker Street irregulars.

The first objective of Case One is to keep this truth in play — "Holmes mustered the Baker Street irregulars." Call it S for short. S is true *in situ The Sign of Four*. The second step is to pick a compossible way of presenting the fact that no one whomsoever is Holmes. To this end, Lopes *switches* from "There is no Holmes" to "Holmes is a fictional character" (W). This is puzzling. Everyone would accept "Holmes is a fictional character," and many of that many would reject "Holmes is nothing whatever." In present circumstances, it ought not to make a difference. For the case that Lopes is making is *predicated* on the utter nothingness of Holmes. Moreover, Lopes is not thrusting that claim upon us. He is arguing that even if the nihilist claim were fact, there would be a way of adapting the sayso semantics to make the inconsistency disappear. Given the design of his case, he serves it ill by the displacement of its pivotal and highly disputed fact with something that is wholly undisputed. So, again, the question is why? Let's park that worry for now, and get back to seeing how the case concludes. Lopes has it that since W is made true by the world and S by the story, no havoc is actually wreaked. Accordingly,

1. S is true *in situ* the story.

2. W is true *in situ* the world.

3. *Moreover*, the reader's awareness of the relation been S's truth and its truth in the story enables him to forsake the inferences that would otherwise wreak the havoc of inconsistency.

Aside from the puzzle about Lopes' choice of W, I have difficulty in reconciling myself to this account. For one thing, the *in situ* semantics was never intended to rid fiction's hinged sentences from their real or imaginary respective inconsistency with sentences made true by the world. It wasn't even designed to preclude the hinged sentences' inconsistency with their own negations made true by the world. As already explained, the objective was to acquit them of *contradictoriness*. If Lopes' manoeuvre had hit its target, it would have given the *in situ* semantics a depth it was never engineered for. To see how, keep S as it is and replace W with W^*, which is S's negation. Then, on Lopes' approach, readers could escape the havoc of inconsistency by suppressing the inference which, once performed, would have brought that havoc about. I agree with Lopes that people who know that Holmes mustered the Baker Street irregulars also know that no such thing actually happened. I agree that readers draw no inferences here that would rise to the high bar of havoc. And everyone agrees that the first of these sentences is made true by its author and its negation made true by the world. These are the facts from which

a Lopes-style case is to be made. The case is that there is no inconsistency between W^* and S. Whatever is to be said for it, it must also be said that, to secure it in the way that's done here, the sayso semantic would have to be re-engineered beyond recognition. Again, the whole point of it was that the inconsistency created by the fact that S is true in situ the story and untrue in situ the world, is no cause for anxiety or outrage. I therefore conclude that the last thing that a sayso semantics could do is solve a Lopes-problem for W^* and S.

Let's now return to the replacement puzzle. What explains Lopes' replacement of "No one whomever is Holmes" with the "Holmes is a fictional character"? In the first paragraph of his critique, Lopes notes that in some approaches to fiction, "Holmes does not fall *entirely* within the jurisdiction of the Laws." (Emphasis mine). In so saying, I see Lopes as leaning half-way towards the pretendists' pretence of honouring the laws while not in any way disrespecting the empirical realities of how humans write and engage with stories. One way in which Lopes' proposed evasions might be brought about is by solving his inconsistency problem for the old sentence S and the new sentence W. Again, perhaps the reason for this is that the average reader will not read "Holmes is a fictional character" as running foul of the two laws he's never heard of or obliged — the existence and truth laws. But without its recondite reading, there is no prospect of inconsistency between "Holmes is a fictional character" and "Holmes mustered the Baker Street irregulars." This, I think, poses a dilemma for Lopes. Without W's recondite reading, there is no inconsistency problem to solve. With that recondite reading the problem, I say, can't even be formulated.

Lopes also has in mind another and quite different offer of work for sayso semantics. This is his *Second Case*. It is a move he thinks I should welcome for the leverage and depth it gives to the original theory. To see where this is headed, we turn to the murderous wine-dark waters of *taste*. Like Lopes and everyone else of good sense, I have no patience with the *de gustibus non disputandum est* crowd. I have great respect for the problem, and much admire the efforts to solve it, not least those mentioned in Lopes' reference list, including his own very fine *Being for Beauty*. Lopes considers two schools of thought, *contextualist* and *relativist*. On the contextualist approach, when the imaginary Dom and John fall out over the taste of durian (ugh!), it need not be the case that either has false-footed himself. When Dom says that durian tastes heavenly and John says that, it does not, what Dom says is not contradicted by what John says. Dom says that durian tastes heavenly to Dom, and John says that it does not taste heavenly to John.

The truth-relativist approach is otherwise positioned. It acknowledges that what Dom asserts is the very proposition that John denies. Inconsistency is avoided by the fact that neither Dom nor John is speaking *untruthfully*. From which we have it

that what each is saying is true. What we have here is Dom-truth and John-truth. "Durian tastes heavenly" is Dom-true and "Durian does not taste heavenly" is John-true. There is no inconsistency here. The thinking behind this second effort is to generalize or leverage the truth-relativism invoked for matters of taste. The basic idea is that tastes are truth-makers. In exchanges like these, "what makes a sentence true is a context of assessment set by a personal parameter." The *generalized* idea is that sentences such as *W* are true if and only if they are true in a context of truth-value assessment in which the extra-story world serves as the truth-maker parameter. Similarly, statements such as S are true if and only if they are true in a context of truth-value assessment in which the story serves as the truth-maker parameter.

It is a bold idea. It is a bold idea in the style of *le grand jeté*. At its heart lies an assumption about truth, the same assumption that animates the truth-relativist approach to disagreements about matters of taste.

(a) When one speaks truthfully, one speaks *the* truth.

Compare this with

(b) When one speaks truthfully, one is speaking *one's* truth.

And now add:

(c) One's truth is a *bona fide* species of truth.

Bearing in mind Lopes' and my shared commitment to respect the empirically discernible realities of lived semantic experience, we are both bound to reject (a) as false. To speak truthfully is to speak what one honestly takes to be the truth. Given the fallibility that extends to our even most conscientious earnestness, it cannot be supposed that honest speech is a steadfast marker for truth. Lopes and I are equally bound to acknowledge that truth and falsity are properties that are subject to differences of assessment. This leads Lopes to announce the "location, location, location law" which, I note, also happens to be the first law of real estate.

(d) No sentence is true unless it is true *in situ* some context of assessment.

A key element of case two is its fidelity to the first three Laws of Fiction. There is no doubt now as to where Lopes stands on the existence and truth laws. The intention is to find reason to jettison Law IV, the *fiction law,* with its grim message that there is nothing to which fictional sentences refer and nothing of which they are true. If Lopes' manoeuvre could be brought off, it would mark a stupendous liberation in which he and Woods could eat each other's cake. Woods could have

his sayso semantics and Lopes could indulge the pretendist impulse to embrace the existence and truth laws.

It remains unclear to me how it could simultaneously be the case that Holmes is nothing at all and yet that "Holmes" *refers* to nothing unless it refers to someone who both exists and is the object of whom "Holmes mustered the Baker Street irregulars" *is true*. Perhaps this is a muddle of my own making, a failure to perceive the true arc of Lopes' *grand jeté*. So let's get back to the core of things. Given that what (a) says is false, what are the prospects for (b) and (c)? Proposition (b) says that when one speaks truthfully, he speaks the thing he thinks is true. In my book, that is a tautology and, being so, is of itself of no material importance for what concerns us here. What counts is whether (c) is true. It isn't. What (c) says is that one's conscientious belief that something, S, is true is to be identified as satisfying a species of the thing that truth actually is. This, of course, is a *pure laine* relativism in which subjective truth-belief achieves a purported foothold in objectivity. Whatever is to be said of it, I can only say that it rubs me the wrong way. An essential part of sayso semantics is its insistence that truth, far from being relative, is uniform across the story-world divide. I mentioned before that another point on which Lopes and I are as one is that, whatever their travels in the semantics of fiction, sentences retain their world-fixed meanings. I am unable to see how the truth of W is not the same species as the truth of S, without its being the case that truth is species-relative. I see this as causing two sorts of trouble for Lopes' case. One is that its provisions for "true" can hardly meet the requirements of an ambiguity-free semantics. Secondly, given that doubt, we have the related doubt about whether the hinged sentences of fiction could instantiate the same truth predicate, denying to worries about inconsistency any secure purchase.

I greatly admired *les grand jetés* in philosophy, of which Lopes is himself a master. That they don't have full swoop here is just one of the usual breaks in our line of work, especially at its most venturesome. And I very much thank Dom Lopes for the effort, and the workout.

Reply to Manuel García-Carpintero

It is interesting to compare Manuel García-Carpintero, Robert Howell and Dominic Lopes. Each claims to acknowledge the data that my theory is pledged to honour, save for weighty independent reason not to in particular cases. On abductive grounds, each advances a theory of fiction incompatible with mine and with each other's. It is possible, but not likely, that pairwise inconsistent theories of the same data — or of the same degree of respect for them — are equally good abductions. In the reply to Howell, I attempt to show that his rival theory rests in essential part in short-sheeting the data I take to be essential for an adequately structured theory of literary semantics. I take the same position with respect to García-Carpintero's alternative. To give some early hint of where I am headed, it might be helpful to note that García-Carpintero is an avowed pretendist of sorts (he doesn't say which). This commits him to hold that the best theoretical explanation of why human readers and writers of fiction have never experienced themselves as pretending to refer to Sherlock, pretending to make true ascriptions to him or deriving some genuine knowledge of him and his like from Doyle's texts, is that, for reasons of theory, they actually were pretending these things after all. My response to this is the same as my response to the pretendism of Armour-Garb and Woodbridge. Not to be too cheeky about it, the response is "Who here thinks he is kidding whom?"[32] I don't say that the explanation's puzzlement has conclusive force contra its maker, but it is fair to say that, having arrived there from the shared data, takes the heft of an Atlas to clean and jerk the sought-for abduction. Of course, García-Carpintero sees this coming. His plea in this contribution is not for pretendism. It is a plea for a theory that he doesn't endorse but, as he avers, resembles mine in two critical respects. It honours the data that I too want to honour, and it shares my rejection of Law IV, the fiction law. To his personally unendorsed rival doctrine he gives the name of Fictional Contextualist Realism, or FCR for short.

This is a nice get-up. The view that I'm answering in this reply is not the view that García-Carpintero himself holds, but rather is the one which, for present purposes, he pretends to hold. An odd way of rebutting a theory he takes to be very probably false, is by pointing out a better one that's, even so, very probably false. To be fair, we needn't formulate his project in quite these terms. We can say instead that García-Carpintero has a twofold objective in mind. One is to show that FCR

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[32] Already mentioned in the reply to Lopes, details can be found in John Woods, "Pretendism in name only", *Analysis*, 78 (2018), 713-718, is one of the critiques in an *Analysis* Book Symposium on Bradley Armour-Garb and James A. Woodbridge, *Pretense and Pathology: Philosophical Fictionalism and its Applications*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. Fellow critics were Fred Kroon and Jody Azzouni, with Armour-Garb and Woodbridge responding.

does at least as good a job as TIF does in fulfilling its procedural commitments, and a better job in abducing the theory that answers to them. The other objective is to promote a false theory that falls athwart the gunnells of a falser one and the pretendist one that García-Carpintero takes for true, the purpose being that, since the appearance of data-disrespect is larger when pretendism is compared to TIF, but lesser when compared to FCR and better on abductive grounds, there is an easier way to pretendism from the position staked by me. Well, well, I don't think I'll be playing chess with Manuel G-C anytime soon!

It is possible, as with Howell and others, that the data García-Carpintero takes himself to be sharing with me aren't in fact the data I am committed to respecting. Or it is otherwise possible that García-Carpintero falls out of step with another of my proposed ways of proceeding, two aspects of which I regard as especially important. One is that one should proceed with a theory that accounts for the data as freely as possible from philosophical preconception. It is clear that García-Carpintero gives no heed to this advice. His whole challenge to my ontic completeness claim is rooted in a theory of reference, now currently standard, which he himself has had a considerable hand in advancing. In calling on it here, García-Carpintero draws upon its provisions for indexicals and proper names, and attests to a strong metasemantic backing for the overall account. It is a selective account. Not a mention is made of the chapter I devoted to the name "Sherlock" and not a murmur about meinongian semantics.[33] García-Carpintero has drawn the pat hand he wanted to play on such matters, arrived at with no noticeable attempt at showing them innocent of disregarding the lived facts of referential life in literary contexts. Still, one of the best features of his contribution — and a genuinely welcome one — is the thoroughness with which one side of the established philosophical literature on reference is reviewed and cross-referenced. That turns out to be the prism through which "his" rival FCR theory is filtered tells us at once the extent to which each of us may have false-footed the other methodologically.

Closely related is my refusal to give big-box scepticism an unearned seat at the theoretical table. Big-box scepticism resembles big-box shopping malls of a size that rivals that of a decently sized airfield, e.g., Barcelona's BCN. The really big scepticisms are truly widescreen, wiping out our knowledge, and possibly the existence, of the external world, the past, other minds, causation, and whatever else. The scepticism I want to evade for fiction is more selective but still vast. If true, it would extend to every human being anywhere and anytime who has ever composed, told, heard or read a fictional story, or chatted with a friend about one, each of whom would stand convicted of the inability to experience himself veridically in any of

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[33]TIF, chapter 6.

these respects. My own starting-point combines a plain fact with a fundamental methodological assumption. The fact is that anyone who has engaged with a text knowing it to be fiction has experienced himself as referring to the story's people and doings, as ascribing properties to them, as deriving a solid knowledge of much of what goes on there, and as deriving further knowledge still from the text sometimes combined with what he already knows of the world. The methodological assumption is that virtually always such experiencings are veridical. This combination makes TIF a *common sense* theory of literary discourse. It suggests a further assumption about how to proceed. To the extent that the facts allow it, it is best to proceed simply, without artifice and, above all, without heavy-equipment mathematical technologies. *Ingenious* theories, moreover, stand a very good chance of misfiring against these assumptions. Think here of our pretendist friends Armour-Garb and Woodbridge. And we wouldn't be wrong to think of García-Carpintero as well.

Truth in Fiction sets out to break with the logico/semantics of truth canon. It is by design a somewhat affronting book, a book that risks dismissal out of hand. In an effort to give it some notice, I've sought for methodological measures which give the book's theory some defence against accusations of heresy. Although not expressly laid out in the book, the theory it advances is based on the low-hanging fruit principle. It bids us to orient its account to familiar and rather straight-forward fact-reporting tales. This is the right way to start a break with long-settled opinion, and the Sherlock canon strikes me as close to a perfect choice for a starter-theory. If the theory can't satisfactorily deal with Sherlock, what chance would it have with Priest's, "Sylvan's Box", da Bloo's "The end", Monterroso's "The dinosaur", and equally trouble-making baubles? "Serious" literature can also be a bit trying. When a critic opens his remarks with poor Gregor Samsa, we know that we're headed for a rocky ride, with too much cleverness and not enough horse-sense. I've thought it best to stay close to the home-fires of narrative entertainment. There is a legal counterpart of the low-hanging fruit principle. It is enshrined in the maxim "Hard cases make bad law". This is true in law. It is especially true in philosophy.

Although I've said it before, it bears repeating that from the perspective of a theory of reference, truth and inference, two facts stand out as the uttermost logico-epistemic peculiarities of readerly and writerly engagement. One is that, in processing the information carried by the pages of a story, readers are aware from the start that everything made true by the author is made false by the world. The other is that no reader of a story has taken this as a distraction from his business-as-usual with it. This is true of John Q. Public, and it's true of Saul A. Kripke when reads to the grandkiddies. Beyond question, these peculiarities pose the greatest challenge to the *desideratum* of producing a common sense accounting for them without being over-clever about it. In my respectful submission (as the lawyers say), the theory

advanced in TIF meets this objective. It is not an over-clever theory. It is not even all that clever. What it is is *observant.* There is scarcely a story-reader who hasn't noticed that there are two truth-makers which matter for "Holmes waved our strange visitor into a chair". The one truth-maker is Doyle, who made it true, and the other is God (or the world itself, for those of secularist leanings), who made it false.

Some will see this as shameless special pleading, for surely the two truth-makers land the reader in an inconsistency he clearly doesn't care about. Try explaining that without some fancy footwork! Or so, one might think. I concede that this is not a matter of what the common man might be prepared to tell us about how he figures inconsistent beliefs are best handled. It is a matter left for experts. We are now at a juncture at which I again tip my hat to Howell and Lopes, and since I see no sign of its contradictory in FCR, to García-Carpintero as well. What I mean is the absence of any appeal to *semantic ascent* in efforts to speak without embarrassment or self-defeat of things that can't be spoken of.[34] Early in his critique García-Carpintero writes, "I myself don't endorse FCR. I am what Woods calls a *pretendist* about fiction and a fictionalist about fictional objects and apparent reference *to* them." The first italics are in the original; I'll add two more of my own now: "...a fictionalist *about fictional objects* and apparent reference *to them.* I don't doubt for a moment that the author of these passages is doing his best to tell the truth. What would it take to take the measure of this assumption? Wouldn't we need the truth-conditions in virtue of which what García-Carpintero has told us is true, if indeed it is?

To ask the question is to embarrass the source of its provocation. One simply can't *say* García-Carpintero's piece about the objects of fiction in a "present-king-of-France" state of mind. How, then, is one to say it? How do the quantifiers function in FCR? We know that the fiction law fails there. We know that the others don't. As we saw in the reply to Lopes, this is not a consistent position to take. *Modus tollens* sees to it. Beyond that embarrassment, there is no reference to Holmes in the Doyle corpus, no truths told or known about him and nothing further that's inferable about him. Even so, by FCR's lights, it is *not* true that no Holmes-sentence refers, ascribes or says what's true. Short of systemic ambiguity, FCR embeds a contradiction and, in so saying, another point of comparison with Howell and his fellow critics arises.

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[34]The phrase is of Quine's making, another of his witty displays. He explains it as a wise way of avoiding the difficulties of individuating objects by switching to the easier task of individuating words. It is an odd fondness. The words of a human language are considerably more difficult to individuate than Sherlock Holmes and Baron Charlus are. Consider, for example, the German word *unabhärgigkeitserklärung.* Its translation in English is three words: "declaration of independence". Longer still is *Donaudampfschiffarhtselektorizitätenhauptbetrieswerk bauuterbeamtengesel,* fifteen words in English. In German, it's but one, albeit a bit long, with fifteen shorter ones within.

On empirical grounds — its lack of recognition in the linguistics of meaning in natural languages — there is no escaping the contradiction on a plea of lexical or syntactic ambiguity.

There are various other respects in which García-Carpintero and I are at cross-purposes. In its occurrence in the text of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, "Holmes waved our strange visitor into a chair" asserts no antecedent truth. Rather it asserts the sentence made true by Doyle by the mere fact of having penned it. Whatever the details, Doyle is not on that occasion putting a sentence forward as true. He is not *testifying*.[35]

More broadly, after laying out the key features of FCR, García-Carpintero writes "I take the outlined FCR view to be close to Woods' [data]." I have a take on this take. FCR is severalwise hostile to what I take as plain facts of readerly and writerly engagement. García-Carpintero has it that "Woods doesn't elaborate at length on how his view accounts for the psycho-epistemic datum, but as I have argued elsewhere (García-Carpintero forthcoming), FCR helps here." Well, chapter 3 of TIF, "What readers know" (49-71) runs to twenty pages, chapter 7 "Salty tears and racing hearts" (133-151) to eighteen pages, and chapter 8, "Other things Sherlock isn't" (153-172) to nineteen. Fictionalism has a two-page outing in section 6 of chapter 4 (88-91). I concede that these sixty pages don't, on the score of length, give *Word and Object* or the *Phenomenology of Mind* much of a run. Sixty pages represents a bit over 30% of TIF's working text. A fair bit of elaboration there, I should think.

It bears on this that much of what García-Carpintero has against TIF is cited rather than exposed, and a goodly part of it appears in works not yet published. One fairly knows how to respond to these phantoms, beyond those parts of established reference theory that have become common knowledge in philosophical semantics. It is here that my toe stubs. Why, having renounced it in the lift-off to TIF would I hold it now? The answer on García-Carpintero's behalf is that my renunciations disoblige the agreed-upon data of literary engagement and FCR disobliges them less. My response to this is twofold. García-Carpintero's review of the going theories of reference is more selective than comprehensive. What is more, in its toleration of the Basic Laws of Semantics (never mind fiction, for now) he betrays his unawareness that never in the recorded history of thought or speech has humanity at large ever conformed itself to them. Thus is the core question begged by means of philosophical preconception.

Another point of departure with García-Carpintero is his toleration of possible worlds semantics, which I myself will have none of; not only in regard to fiction but

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[35]See footnote 8 of the reply to Howell.

to the formal semantics of necessity, possibility, counterfactuals and whatever else.[36] García-Carpintero is not alone in seeing my truth-sites as possible worlds, notwithstanding my disavowal of them.[37] This inclines me to think that, contrary to early assurance, he and I part company rather closely to the starting-gate. If so, a ready explanation is to hand, and it was touched on in García-Carpintero's NDPR piece. It is that my view is that everyone so far has been wrong about fiction, everyone without exception, not least I myself in the modal semantics part of *The Logic of Fiction* (1974). That is true, and is made so in large part by my conviction that the Basic Laws of Semantics were dead upon arrival as instruments of instruction in the cognitive economics of our species. In his NDPR review, García-Carpintero characterizes TIF's literalist approach and its author as "opinionated". In one of its meanings, it means "strongly-advanced and held". In another, it means "conceited and dogmatic." In this same place, García-Carpintero scants TIF's motivating data as having no backing beyond my own unevidenced intuitions, and in another place, he writes "Woods *astoundingly* contends . . . that Sherlock Holmes is a fully determinate object." (italics mine). I have two responses to this response. One is that I am astounded that anyone should be astounded by the completeness of Holmes. The other, as brought forth in other replies, is that, short of Doyle's provision otherwise, Holmes is as fully determinate as object as any of the rest of us is. The confusion arises from a failure to grasp what I intend by the world-inheritance convention, what with its limits on what authors alone make true. This, too, is discussed elsewhere here; so I'll not tarry with it further, beyond closing with the observation that the very idea that I take impalpability as a synonym for nonconcreteness clinches the point at hand.[38]

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[36]Some details beyond those mentioned in TIF can be found in my "Making too much of worlds", in Guido Imaguire and Dale Jacquette, editors, *Possible Worlds: Logic, Semantics and Ontology*, with a Foreword by Kit Fine, pages 171-217.

[37]However, as I've said elsewhere in these replies and also during the session in Vancouver, I bear some significant responsibility for various misreadings of my notion of truth-sites. I hope that those unclarities have now been removed.

[38]It is no part of TIF's project to belittle the metaphysical questions stirred by the sheer fact of vagueness. The first question on the vagueness order-paper is what vagueness is a property *of*. Is it a property of thought and language? Is it a property of how the world actually is? Is it a property of each and, if so in what sense, the same or some pair of them? But none of this has any more bearing on the metaphysics of Sherlock than the metaphysics of Doyle, and withal on talk about each. It bears a last mention that, whatever else we make of it, hairwise cardinal indeterminacies couldn't settle the issue of whether, having had a brother, Sherlock lacked a mum and dad. Were that question left in any readerly doubt, Doyle wouldn't have earned a shilling from his *oeuvre*. Were García-Carpintero to lack a determinate number of hairs on his head and Howell's numbered exactly to n, for some unique n, we might conclude that García-Carpintero is in need of medical attention. But if either of them lacked a mum and a dad, that would be front-page news in the