Alberto Voltolini

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How Ficta Follow Fiction

A Syncretistic Account of Fictional Entities

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A Syncretistic Account of Fictional Entities

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To all my fictional friends who have kept me company in writing this book

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thirteen years ago, I published in Italian a book called *Riferimento e intenzionalità* [*Reference and Intentionality*] (ETS, Pisa 1992), in which I argued for a committal theory on intentional objects as possible entities. Intended to lie halfway between the ontological proliferation of entities *à la* Meinong and the ontological sobriety defended by Russell from 1905 onwards, this theory recognized that we both refer to and think about entities that do not exist insofar as they are entities that do not *actually* exist; yet it also insisted that these entities must be things that *possibly* exist. As a result, paradoxical and contradictory items—in a word *impossibilia*—were ruled out of *intentionalia* as well as out of the overall inventory of what there is.

However, it suddenly occurred to me that *prima facie* our thoughts "direct" themselves not only upon things such as the possible unactual son of Elizabeth I and Philip II, but also upon creatures of imagination such as Hamlet and Ophelia, Desdemona and Othello; that is, upon fictional objects. Since entities of this kind may well appear to be contradictory or paradoxical entities, it is hard to rank them among possible entities. Nonetheless, it seems to be a firm intuition that we think about them as much as about possible unactual entities such as the actually nonexistent complex made up of this jacket and those trousers. So it appeared clear to me that the theory of intentionality I had originally developed should be somehow implemented in order to account also for the fact that we think about fictional entities. Yet I did not want this thinking about fictional entities to force me to accept all kinds of would-be items from the Meinongian jungle.

A solution came to mind in 1994 when I published a paper, "*Ficta* versus *Possibilia*" (*Grazer Philosophische Studien* 48, 75–104). In that paper, I drew a distinction between possible and fictional entities. But I included the fictional in the domain of *actualia*, as entities that actually exist albeit in a non-spatiotemporal way: that is, as actual abstract entities. Moreover, I conceived

of these *abstracta* as a peculiar kind of complex entity. I imagined that two distinct factors led to their identity: a set of properties, the properties mobilized in the relevant story, and a make-believe game, the storytelling process in which one makes believe that there is an individual having more or less the properties which figure in that set.

For a long while, this idea remained an undeveloped intuition. Yet more and more reading of the literature on the subject convinced me that the logical space of the positions on fictional entities should also contain the articulated expansion of that original intuition. A conference I organized on this subject in 2002 at the University of Eastern Piedmont at Vercelli, *Do Ficta Follow Fiction?*, gave me the opportunity of resuming my original thoughts and comparing them with the opinions of some of the most well-known experts on this subject. I also benefited greatly from presenting my ongoing ideas in several seminars with students and in talks at conferences held in various universities and institutions (the Jean-Nicod Institute in Paris and the universities of Barcelona, Geneva, Messina, Padua, Palermo, Prague, Sienna, and Vercelli). Some preliminary results from all of this work have already been published elsewhere ("How Fictional Works Are Related to Fictional Entities", in A.Voltolini (ed.), *Do Ficta Follow Fiction?*, special issue of *Dialectica* 57 (2003), 225–238; "Synkretistická ontologie fiktivnícк jsoucen [A Syncretistic Theory of Fictional Beings]" in K. Císař and P. Koťátko (eds), *Text a dílo: případ Menard*, Φιλοσοφια-Filosofia Publications, Prague 2004, 223–247; "Names for *Ficta*, for *Intentionalia*, and for Nothing", in M.J. Frapolli (ed.), *Saying, Meaning and Referring: Essays on François Recanati's Philosophy of Language*, Palgrave Mcmillan, Houndmills 2006 (forthcoming)). However, all that material required thorough re-elaboration, which I hope I have provided in what follows.

I am very grateful to many people for the discussions I had with them on this subject on many different occasions, academic and non. These exchanges helped me to clarify my original intuitions. To name just a few, let me thank Carola Barbero, Tilli Bertoni, Andrea Bonomi, Clotilde Calabi, Roberto Casati, Gregory Currie, Michele Di Francesco, Petr Koťátko, Paolo Leonardi, Diego Marconi, Cristina Meini, Kevin Mulligan, Ernesto Napoli, Gloria Origgi, Jerome Pelletier, François Recanati, Marco Santambrogio, Barry C. Smith, Paul Tucker, Gabriele Usberti, Kendall Walton, and Edward Zalta. Other people also read and commented on particular parts of the manuscript as it was gradually being written; I learned a great deal from them. In this respect, let me thank primarily Marta Campdelacreu, Eros Corazza, Manuel Garcia-Carpintero, Andrea Iacona, Frederick Kroon, Francesco Orilia, Stefano Predelli, Beppe Spolaore, Amie Thomasson, Achille Varzi, as well as some anonymous referees of previous versions of this book. I am also very grateful to Leigh S. Cauman, former managing

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INTRODUCTION

This book is devoted to fictional entities or, to be more precise, fictional entities as they emerge from the literary process of storytelling. They encompass the great immortal figures in human literature—Don Quixote, Faust, Sherlock Holmes and so on—as well as the protagonists of single novels such as Anna Karenina, Emma Woodhouse and Emma Bovary and even the unknown characters in the oral tradition of storytelling developed by small communities of people for their own entertainment. This is presumably how Achilles, Penelope and Ulysses originated. We must also include among these figures mythological characters such as Apollo, Odin and Zeus, regardless of the fact that they were originally thought to be supernatural beings rather than fictional individuals.

The subject of this book is not new, which may make it seem less appealing to a prospective reader—just one more book on fictional entities. Yet I would argue that this apparent drawback is fundamental to the purpose of the book, which is to present a *syncretistic* doctrine of fictional entities. In other words, it is a theory which firmly acknowledges that the various other theories already developed on this subject have great merits. Their main flaw, however, is not that they are wrong but, rather, that they are *incomplete*. Accordingly, they are not to be put to one side; instead, they need to be *integrated* into a single theory that aims both to maintain their positive results and to overcome their defects.

It is to be taken for granted, moreover, that my theory is a *committal* theory on fictional entities; that is, it adopts a realist stance on *ficta*: the complete inventory of what there is cannot fail to contain such entities. Yet the syncretism of my doctrine intends to have a broader scope than that of a mere synthesis of already existent committal theories on fictional entities. I wish to acknowledge that noncommittal theories on fictional entities are also, at least partially, right. Indeed, the mode of generation of fictional

entities that my doctrine refers to presupposes precisely that a great deal of activity involving fiction has to be noncommittal.

The book is divided into three parts: the metaphysical side (Chapters 1–4), the semantic side (Chapters 5–6) and the ontological side (Chapter 7).

In the metaphysical part, I deal with the issue of what kind of things fictional entities would be if there were any. That is, apart from the question of their *existence*, I address the question of the *nature* of these entities. Traditionally, these issues have been conflated into a single issue. It has probably been considered not worth going into the question of the nature of such entities if one does not at the same time endorse a committal position toward them. Since they are rather problematical (given that one cannot definitely encounter any of them, where are they?) it has been thought that it is only possible to ask what kind of entities they are if one presupposes that they do in fact exist. However, I follow Thomasson (1999) in holding that the topic of *ficta* can derive enormous benefit from separating the two questions mentioned above and starting with the metaphysical one.

From the metaphysical angle, the syncretism of my present theory is clearly manifest. First of all, among the many possible theories on this subject, I maintain that two main groups of them are definitely the best ones for dealing with the metaphysics of *ficta*. These two groups share the idea that *ficta* are abstract entities, namely, entities that fail to possess a spatiotemporal location. Yet they diverge in that one group holds that *ficta* are *free idealities*, that is, *abstracta* not depending for their own existence on any other kind of entity, and the other that they are *bound idealities*, that is, abstract entities depending for their existence on another kind of entity: typically, human beings or, better, their intentional states.

In the first group I place Neo-Meinongian theories of fictional entities (see Chapter 1). Zalta (1983) and (1989) is a paradigmatic example of a theory belonging to the first group. But I also put in the same group theories that are not, literally speaking, abstractionist for they believe—in different ways—that *ficta* are (one-one) correlates of abstract entities rather than these entities themselves: see, for example, Castañeda (1989), Parsons (1980) and Rapaport (1979). I try to extract from all of these an *ideal Neo-Meinongian theory*, namely, a theory that has literally been held by no one but which represents the best representation of a fictional entity that can be developed within a Meinongian framework. I call it "the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist doctrine of fictional entities". According to this theory, *ficta* are *sets of properties*, the properties mobilized in the relevant piece of fiction; these properties are moreover internally predicated of *ficta*.

In the second group (see Chapter 2) I place all those theories—stemming in the analytic tradition from seminal works by van Inwagen (1978) and Kripke (1973) and in the phenomenological tradition from Ingarden

(1931)—which hold that fictional objects are abstract artifacts depending for their own being primarily on the existence of humans or, better, of human thought, if not also on the existence of man's cultural activities as crystallized in literary works: see, for example, Salmon (1998), Predelli (2002) and especially Thomasson (1999).

Although they share an abstractionist conception of fictional beings, those two groups of theories seem to be very far apart. On the one hand, according to the first group *ficta* are like Platonic entities, timeless (if not eternal) and necessary beings, whereas according to the second they are like games or institutions for they originate at a certain point in time (and may also end at another) and are contingent. On the other hand, the metaphysics of the first group is revisionary as no man in the street would think that *ficta* are Platonic entities; but the metaphysics of the second group is close to common sense for it shares with common sense the idea that *ficta* are artifacts created by authors. This apparent distance notwithstanding, the syncretistic theory attempts to combine these theories while preserving what is best in them and discarding the rest (see Chapters 3–4).

In the syncretistic approach, *ficta* are compound entities consisting of both a set-theoretical and a pretense-theoretical element. These two factors are, respectively, a certain *set of properties*, the properties corresponding to those mobilized in the make-believe process-type that leads to the generation of a certain *fictum*—the relevant part in a particular game of story-telling—and that very *process-type itself*. Thus, both elements—the set of properties and the make-believe process-type—contribute to the identity of the *fictum* by being its necessary and its jointly sufficient conditions respectively. This is what makes a *fictum* an object "by sets & make-believe." In that it fails to be spatiotemporally located, a *fictum* so conceived is also abstract. Since it is made up of a set of properties, it possesses these properties internally as the best Neo-Meinongian theory claims. Yet, since it is also composed of a make-believe process-type, this makes it a set-correlate rather than a mere set; a *fictum* results from the operation of regarding a certain set of properties as make-believedly such that the properties corresponding to its own properties are instantiated by a typically concrete individual. Since different make-believe process-types may be seen as applying to one and the same set of properties in order to generate distinct *ficta*, a *fictum* is—to put it more precisely—a many-one correlate. This paves the way to the conception of a *fictum* as both originating in time and contingent, as is also maintained by artifactualists.

This metaphysics is undoubtedly very far from what the man in the street takes *ficta* to be. In this respect, it is even more revisionary than the Neo-Meinongian conception and for artifactualists this is a defect. According to at least some of them, what the nature of a *fictum* is must be very close to

what ordinary people think it is, to our commonsensical notion of it. For we cannot expect to be able to revise this notion in concomitance with progress in our knowledge of the world as we admittedly do with our notions of natural kinds.[1]

To be sure, one may believe to begin with that no appeal to commonsensical intuitions has ever succeeded in justifying a philosophical position; what some accept as an intuitive position is for others not intuitive at all. So, though artifactualists may take their conception of *ficta* to be intuitively evident, others are ready to deny this.[2] Even leaving this (rather general) problem aside, however, there is a deeper one. The artifactualist way of putting things presupposes that common sense has a clear and coherent notion of what a *fictum* is. Yet, as frequently happens with any notion that gives rise to philosophical investigation, such investigation may well show that this is not the case. Hence, one may well expect that the admittedly intuitive and commonsensical notion of a fictional character will turn out not to match its nature, even though this nature would clearly not be like that of a natural kind.

To give just one example of this, artifactualists hold that it is intuitive to think of a *fictum* as a character that originates in a given author's mind and then keeps its life, that is, its identity throughout all the sequels and continuations "of it" that the same or even different authors produce, provided that certain conditions are met. Yet suppose an author creates different characters *A* and *B* in a certain version of a work and then "fuses" them as one and the same character *C* in a later version. If we knew only of character *A*, we would intuitively be ready to regard *A* as identical with *C*. And if we knew only of character *B*, we would likewise intuitively be ready to take *B* as identical with *C*. Since *A* is clearly distinct from *B*, no such identity subsists. As "fusions" in myths testify, this problem is clearly not restricted to different versions of one and the same work. Consequently, the admittedly intuitive idea that one and the same character is spread over different works turns out to be not so well-founded as it originally seemed.

Whatever the correct metaphysics of fictional entities, many people are convinced that there are no such objects. Certainly, it is undeniable that there is a part of our language apparently committed to such entities: there are numerous sentences, even of intuitively very different kinds, in which we seem to speak about them. Yet, it is argued, it may well turn out that the

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[1] Cf. Thomasson (2003a: 144–7).

[2] Take, for instance, this statement (applied to van Inwagen's theory of *ficta*): "in the case of fictional entities, the second alternative suffers the defect of being intuitively implausible" (Hunter 1981: 23)

discourse about *ficta* is nothing but "mere discourse;" in other words, a deeper analysis of that part of language may reveal that no such commitment is needed to account for it. Therefore, in this view, believers in fictional entities are simply being led astray by misleading linguistic appearances.

For a long time now, semantics has been the arena in which committal and noncommittal theories on *ficta* have competed with one another. Detractors of *ficta* claim that a semantic treatment of fictional discourse does not need to appeal to such entities. For any sentence regarding fictional matters, one can always provide a paraphrase showing that its semantic content involves no such entity. In a nutshell, there is no truthconditional need for *ficta*. On the other hand, *ficta* supporters reply that any attempt to dispense with *ficta* is destined to fail; the proposed paraphrases are not only implausible but also wrong. Either these paraphrases fail to give the right truth conditions for the paraphrased sentences or, at least in some cases, they are non-starters: they have no firm foothold from which to put forward their noncommittal truthconditional alternative.

From a historical point of view, it is quite understandable that this contention has taken place in the field of semantics. It was Bertrand Russell who, at the beginning of the last century, originally shifted the ontological battle onto the semantic terrain, claiming that only an adequate semantic treatment of singular terms can (*inter alia*) dissolve the illusion that there are entities such as the creatures of fiction. By convincing all further participants in the debate that the issue must be settled in semantic terms, Russell's influence has been greater than the merits of his theory of descriptions warrant.

In my opinion, however, to see things in this way has two major drawbacks. First, it forces one to view the committal and noncommittal positions as mutually exclusive. Second, it forces both committal and noncommittal participants in the debate to make mandatory moves: either to invent more and more sophisticated counterexamples to paraphrases or to provide more and more complicated paraphrases as a response to such counterexamples. This has made the debate to some extent sterile. However ingenious a counterexample may be that a *ficta* supporter comes up with, there is no guarantee that in the future a *ficta* detractor will not excogitate some brilliant way to counter it. Moreover, it is not clear whether providing paraphrases is the best method for settling ontological issues. As has been pointed out, paraphrases merely show that the to-be-paraphrased and the paraphrasing sentences have the same meaning. As such, they can be read not only in an ontologically eliminative way—say, from left to right—but also in an introductive way—say, from right to left.

In what follows, I begin by following the well-honored tradition of stating the controversy in linguistic terms, and I take sides with the committal

semantic account of discourse on *ficta*. In the semantic part of the book, I first try to show (see Chapter 5) that the main noncommittal truthconditional accounts of sentences apparently involved with *ficta*—from the grandfathers of analytical philosophy, Gottlob Frege and Russell, to the most recent intensionalist (traceable back to Lewis (1978)) and pretense-theoretical (impressively articulated in Walton (1990)) attempts—all fail to work. Furthermore, I provide a committal truthconditional account of the same sentences (see Chapter 6), which is compatible with the metaphysics of fictional entities developed in Chapters 1–4.

However, I also attempt to avoid the two above-mentioned drawbacks contained in the tradition. First of all, I extend the syncretistic stance of my theory to the point of stating that even the noncommittal theories are partly right given that there is a use of sentences apparently involving *ficta*, the *conniving* use, in which we actually designate no *fictum* at all. To acknowledge this noncommittal use is important for two reasons. First, as Recanati (2000) has shown, it fulfills a cognitive function, namely that of imaginatively displacing oneself into an unreal context of utterance different from the real one. This unreal context determines the meaning of the uttered sentence in its conniving use. Secondly, it gives us the basis on which the *non*-conniving use of the same sentences—hence the committal discourse—can be developed or, what amounts to the same thing, *ficta* can be generated.

The general picture is as follows. On the one hand, fictional discourse is make-believe discourse: in novels, as well as in plays, we make-believe that in the outer world there are persons, things, times and places that in fact do not actually exist. On the other hand, by enabling one to mobilize sets of properties to be regarded as make-believedly such that the properties corresponding to their own properties are instantiated by such pseudo-entities, such discourse leads to an ontological creation. Indeed, if we see property sets in this way, we generate individuals of a new kind, fictional characters, that genuinely belong to the overall domain of what exists.

The syncretistic theory thus treats fictional discourse both as a make-believe activity, a game played with words, and as a serious activity, which concerns particular entities. In this respect, it is once again revisionary. As Braun (2005) has pointed out, common sense not only fails to acknowledge that, as far as fiction is concerned, there are both terms that actually fail to refer to something and (often homonymous) terms that genuinely refer to *ficta*—think of the name "Hamlet" when used to tell the story of a shy Danish prince, and think of that name again when used completely outside that storytelling process to refer to a fictional character—but it is also unable to indicate *when* the committal use begins. In contrast, the syncretistic theory not only allows for both uses, the noncommittal and the committal, but it is also able to say when the latter use starts: that is, precisely when

the set of properties corresponding to those mobilized in a certain make-believe process is seen to concern this very process.

However, the syncretistic theory is able to go even further. It parts company with the above-mentioned linguistic tradition in that it follows Thomasson (1999) and holds that the question of whether there really are fictional entities must ultimately be solved by properly ontological rather than semantic means. Therefore, in the final chapter of the book (Chapter 7) I leave semantics and try to provide a genuinely ontological argument in favor of the existence of fictional entities. This argument is centered on the idea that such entities are necessary identity conditions for other entities we preliminarily accept, that is fictional works, syntactical-semantic entities consisting of a certain syntactically individuated text and a semantic content generated by the propositions explicitly expressed in the sentences of that text.

In the end, therefore, what we have is a very complex and sophisticated picture both of fictional entities and of the discourse allegedly involving them. Let me briefly explain why such a picture is in my view indispensable. As everybody knows, fiction is the realm where everything including the impossible is, so to speak, possible. From a historical point of view, the twentieth century in particular was the period in which, across all the arts, fiction was stretched in every conceivable direction. As a result, there now exist not only apparently contradictory stories with apparently impossible personages, but also paradoxical metafictional tales that take fiction and fictional characters as their objects while still remaining fiction themselves. Also, it is possible to imagine more and more tales of this kind. As Fine (1982) rightly maintains, even philosophical paradoxes of every kind, primarily those involving theories of fiction, can be described in terms of fiction.

Faced with all this, a theory of fictional entities has to be descriptive and not prescriptive: whatever has been, is or will be conceived as a piece of fiction must be such that its characters and the relations between them are dealt with by the theory. In a certain sense, the theory should even be applicable to itself and to its apparent counterexamples. There is nothing to prevent someone from telling a story in which the very syncretistic theory that is the object of this book has been invented in order to cope with fictional entities, or from telling another story along the lines that in fiction things happen in quite the opposite way to what the syncretist claims.

Yet in order to do all this, the theory must have the right multiplicity. This is why a complex picture such as the one developed by the syncretistic theory is needed. It is by properly referring to the greatest possible number of conceptual elements which have been mobilized throughout the philosophical tradition concerning fiction and fictional entities that the theory may hope to be able to account for all cases, real as well as imaginary, of literary fictions that exploit all the resources of imagination.

In this book I deal only with fictional beings stemming from literary practices. Yet a comprehensive theory of fictional entities must, of course, be able to cope with all cases of *ficta* originating in any possible expressive medium. This is so not only because the theory would otherwise be too limited but also because, as far as *ficta* are concerned, narrative and all the other media interact: a character in a story may become the protagonist in a painting, cartoon or film, hence be represented two-dimensionally (in both static and dynamic images) if not also three-dimensionally (in a sculpture). By capitalizing on the elements that have been mobilized in this book, an extended syncretistic theory should be able to explain how a *fictum* can be a trans-media entity. But the details of such an extension will, I hope, be the subject of another book.

GLOSSARY

Absolute properties: non (story-) relative properties (see below)

Being abstract: having subsistence (see below)

Being concrete: (possibly) having spatiotemporal existence (see below)

Bound idealities: *abstracta* which depend for their existence on the existence of other beings

Conniving use: use of a fictional sentence (see below) in order to say make-believedly that something is the case

Correspondence: relation of identity or of matching subsisting between the properties mobilized in a certain make-believe process-type and the properties belonging to the set constituting a certain *fictum*

Dependence:

Metaphysical: necessarily, if something exists, some other thing exists as well

Constant: at every moment in which a certain entity exists, some other entity must exist as well

Generic: necessarily, if something exists, some other thing of a particular type exists

Historical: in order for something to come into existence, some other thing must already exist

Rigid: necessarily, if something exists, a particular individual exists

Temporal: the dependent entity must be such that it begins to exist when some other being brings it into existence

"Kinds of property" distinction: distinction between nuclear (or constitutive) and extranuclear (or extraconstitutive) properties

"*Modes of predication" distinction*: distinction between modes of predicating one and the same property (modes respectively called determining/satisfying, constituency/exemplification, encoding/exemplifying, internal/external)

Everlastingness: existence at some time *t* and at every time later than *t*

Existence: being involved in the causal order of the world

Spatiotemporal existence: being directly involved in the causal order of the world, both producing and undergoing effects

Non-spatiotemporal existence, subsistence: being indirectly involved in the causal order of the world, producing effects

Existentially conservative make-believe game: game in which one makes believe *of* a certain object that it is such and such

Existentially creative make-believe game: game in which one makes believe *that* there is a certain object which is such and such

Explicit propositions: what is explicitly said by a story

Explicitly expressed propositions: the propositions which contribute to determine what both parafictional and internal metafictional sentences say, that is, their articulated truthconditional content

Explicit fictional truths: fictional sentences that are fictionally true

External discourse: linguistic contexts neither directly nor indirectly imbued with fiction in which we nevertheless seem to talk about fictional entities

External metafictional sentences: sentences allegedly concerning fictional characters not only from outside the perspective of a storytelling process, but also involving no fragment of the fiction in which these characters are allegedly spoken of. There are many different kinds of such sentences: *interfictional fiction-dependent relational* sentences, *interfictional fiction-independent relational* sentences, *transfictional fiction-dependent relational* sentences, *transfictional fiction-independent relational* sentences, *fiction-dependent interfictional monadic* sentences, *fiction-independent interfictional monadic* sentences, sentences of *psychological ascription*, *authorship* sentences, sentences expressing *transfictional inclusion* (see below), sentences expressing *transfictional sameness* (see below), *categorial* sentences, *(negative) existential* sentences.

Fiction: see "story"

Fictional sentences: sentences occurring in fictional texts (see below) that may be used both connivingly and nonconnivingly

Fictional texts: collections of fictional sentences

Fictional truth conditions: the truth conditions (fictional) sentences have in their conniving use

Fictional "worlds": sets made up of both explicit and implicit propositions (see below). They may be regarded as both inconsistent and incomplete in a derivative sense of these notions

Fictional works: syntactical-semantic entities consisting of fictional sentences and their real truthconditional interpretation

Fiction-embedded character: *fictum* which belongs to a particular fiction

Free idealities: *abstracta* which do not depend for their existence on the existence of other beings

General character: the protagonist of a entire cycle of novels

Imaginary "individuals": pseudo-entities that merely make-believedly exist in imaginary "worlds" (see below)

Imaginary "worlds": pseudo circumstances of evaluation for connivingly used sentences. They may be inconsistent and perhaps also fail to be maximal

Implicit fictional truths: what is fictionally implied by fictional sentences that are fictionally true

Implicit propositions: what is implied by the explicit propositions of a story

Incomplete entity: an entity such that, for any property *P* about whose possession or lack of it by that entity the relevant story says or implies nothing, it has neither the property nor its complement *not-P*

Internal discourse: linguistic contexts directly or indirectly imbued with fiction

Internal metafictional sentences: sentences of the form "in the story S, p"

Metafiction: a fiction that has fiction itself as its subject

Native objects: fiction-embedded characters

Nonconniving use: use of a fictional sentence in order to say that something is the case

Absolute nonconniving use: sentential use which is nonconniving with respect to no fiction of any degree

Genuine nonconniving use: sentential use which is really nonconniving; a sentence so used is equivalent to the corresponding internal metafictional sentence of the appropriate degree

Straightforward nonconniving use: the use featuring the external character of external metafictional sentences, namely the fact that such sentences are typically regarded as being employed in order to speak about a fictional individual without involving fiction either directly or indirectly

Parafictional sentences: sentences that do not occur in a fictional text and are equivalent to internal metafictional sentences

Explicit parafictional sentences: sentences that are equivalent to fictional sentences used nonconnivingly

Implicit parafictional sentences: sentences that are entailed by explicit parafictional sentences

Phantasmic entities: things that (if there were any) would be generated out of oneiric (or at least hallucinatory) processes

Predicative negation: negation mobilized by negative properties, properties of the form *being not-P*

Propositional negation: negation whose scope is an entire sentence or a proposition: it is not the case that *P*

Pseudo-immigrant fictional objects: the general characters of cycles

Reality-relative properties:properties of the form *being-P-according-to-reality*

Real truth conditions: the truth conditions (fictional) sentences have in their nonconniving use

Sempiternality: existence at some time *t* and at every time earlier and later than *t*

Story: (i) an imaginary "world" (ii) a fictional "world" (iii) a fictional work (iv) a fictional text (v) a story-telling practice

Story-relative properties: properties of the form *being-P-according-to-the-story-S*

Transfictional inclusion: asymmetrical relation between *ficta* mimicking an inclusion relation

Transfictional sameness: nontransitive relation of intentional similarity between *ficta*

Unarticulated constituent: a truthconditional constituent of a sentence which is not designated by any linguistic material composing that sentence

PART I THE METAPHYSICAL SIDE

Chapter 1

THE COMMITTAL THEORIES (I)

1. Synopsis

In this chapter I deal mostly with the theories committed to fictional entities inspired by Alexius Meinong's ideas concerning nonexistent entities. First, I evaluate Meinong's doctrine of nonexistent entities and its possible application to fiction. This evaluation ends with a dilemma, both horns of which are equally unsatisfactory.

Meinong is concerned to understand the nature of nonexistent entities as entities that are beyond the realm of being—*außerseiende* entities, as he puts it. He interprets these entities "Platonistically." Either one accepts this position, but then no theory of *fictional* entities is gained, or else one gives a phenomenological slant to Meinong's ontology of *außerseiende* entities. This last approach enables one to hold a Meinongian phenomenological theory of *ficta*, but at the cost of implausibly attributing to thought two ontological powers, the generative and the ascriptive.

I consider also two recent types of theories that in one way or another can be traced back to Meinong, namely the *possibilist* and the *abstractionist* theory of fictional entities. The abstractionist proves to be more promising than the possibilist theory for *ficta*, unlike *possibilia*, are likely to be abstract rather than concrete entities. *Ficta* not only are not, but cannot be, involved directly with the causal order of the world.

After considering different versions of Neo-Meinongian abstractionism, both the set-theoretical and the genuinely Platonic, I am in a position to outline what I take to be the best possible Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory of *ficta*. In this theory, a *fictum* is a *set of properties*, those properties which are ascribed to it in the relevant fiction. Since the properties belong to the set as its members, they are *internally* predicated of it and, accordingly, internally predicated of the *fictum*. Moreover, a *fictum* may also have properties in

the *external* mode of predication, sometimes even the very same properties ascribed to it in the relevant fiction.

I try to show how this theory can deal successfully with a series of data that come both from the commonsensical idea of what a *fictum* is and from linguistic intuitions regarding sentences that appear to concern *ficta*: the "nonexistence" datum, the "incompleteness" datum, and the "analyticity" datum. I claim, however, that the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory provides at most necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for the individuation of a fictional entity.

Finally, I present a weakened version of Neo-Meinongian abstractionism, according to which a *fictum* is a one-one set-*correlate*. This doctrine is definitely more adequate than the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory since it acknowledges that a *fictum* is something over and above a set of properties. Yet it does not altogether solve the problems that forced that theory to provide only necessary conditions for the individuation of a *fictum*.

2. Meinong's Theory of Objects and its Application to Ficta

As is well known, Meinong put forward an apparently astounding theory of objects. To start with, in his view spatiotemporally existing objects such as this stone and this chair are flanked by non-spatiotemporally existing, or *subsisting*, objects such as numbers and other mathematical entities: that is, all the items that have traditionally been called *abstracta*. Taken together, these entities are those which populate the real world; in other words, they are the entities that actually exist.[1] Yet over and above them are many other entities that fail to exist actually. As Meinong says, "there are objects of which it is true that there are no such objects" (1971[1904]: 83).

This remark has led many commentators to think that Meinong's doctrine is contradictory: how can it be that there are things which at the same time are not there?[2] But Meinong's *dictum* is only apparently paradoxical. As many have stressed, once one distinguishes between the two uses of the locution "there are" which that *dictum* contains, no paradox arises. Although, theoretically speaking, in a Meinongian perspective this distinction of uses may be accounted for differently, let me interpret it in the following way. On the one hand, the first occurrence of "there are" in the above *dictum* represents a contextually *unrestricted* use of the particular quantifier, where the quantifier is

[1] Cf. Meinong (1971[1904]: 79–80).

[2] Cf. Salmon (1982: 39 n. 41).

interpreted in an existentially unloaded way. In other words, the variable bound by such a contextually unrestricted use of the quantifier ranges over all entities, existent or not. On the other hand, the second occurrence of the locution represents a contextually *restricted* use of the same quantifier, a use in which the quantifier is interpreted in an existentially loaded way. That is, the variable bound by this contextually restricted use of the quantifier ranges only over entities that exist.[3] This restriction presupposes that there is a first-order property of *existence* that is possessed precisely by the above-mentioned beings only, not by any entity whatsoever.[4] The nature of this property can further be conceived of in a variety of ways. According to one very plausible interpretation, it is the property of *being involved in the causal order of the world*.[5] As a consequence, beings that actually exist spatiotemporally are those for which it is actually the case that they are *directly* involved in the causal order of the world; beings that actually exist non-spatiotemporally, that actually *subsist*, are those beings for which it is actually the case that they are only *indirectly* involved in the causal order of the world.[6] As a result, what Meinong's *dictum* says is that in the overall ontological domain there are entities which fail to occur in the subdomain containing only entities that have the above-mentioned first-order property of *existence*: in a nutshell, there are things that do not exist.[7]

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[3] Cf. Parsons (1980: 7).

[4] Cf., for example, Orilia (2002: 137). For a recent revival of this idea, cf. McGinn (2000).

[5] For this thesis, cf. Castañeda (1989b: 241–2), (1990c: 461). A similar first-order property of existence is also contemplated both by Geach (1969a: 58), (1969b: 65) and by Williamson (1990: 173), (2002).

[6] Frege took the characterization of *subsistence* given in the text, namely that of being indirectly involved in the causal order in the world, as straightforwardly stating what *abstracta* are, thereby distinguishing them from *concreta*. Literally, Frege speaks of *abstracta* as entities that merely produce effects, thus distinguishing them from *concreta*, entities that both produce and undergo effects. Cf. Frege (1986[3]: 370–3), (1967: 212). Yet Frege's distinction between producing effects and both producing and undergoing effects can be suitably mapped onto the distinction I present in the text between being indirectly and being directly involved in the causal order in the world.

[7] Another possible interpretation of Meinong's *dictum* appeals to a distinction between two particular quantifiers, a nonexistential ("Meinongian") and an existential one. Parsons (1980: 6) and above all Routley (1980: 176–80) are tempted by this interpretation. It says that the *dictum* speaks about things falling within the scope of the first but not the second particular quantifier. Yet this interpretation unnecessarily increases the number of quantifiers and, consequently, also the second-order properties they designate. Moreover, it can be derived from the distinction between an existentially unrestricted and an existentially restricted particular quantifier. As Lewis says, "loaded quantification is simply a restriction of neutral quantification" (1990: 25).

In view of the mere fact that they belong to the overall ontological domain, one could say that, in spite of their nonexistence, the actually nonexistent entities have another "existential" first-order property. This would be the "existential" property that any entity whatsoever possesses. Thus, the difference between those entities and the actually existing ones would be that, over and above this further all-embracing "existential" property, the latter entities would also possess the above-mentioned property of *existence*. In so distinguishing between the properties of *being* and of *existence*, the early Russell seems to have been committed to this position.[8]

Yet Meinong would disagree. To his way of thinking, entities that are such that there are no such beings fail to have any kind of "existential" first-order property. In his own words, such entities are "beyond being and non-being" (1971[1904]: 86). This does not mean that Meinong draws no further distinction between the entities that are beyond the realm of being—the *außerseiende* entities, as he puts it. On the one hand, there are those entities which, though they actually fail to exist, *could* have existed: namely, *possible* entities. This is the case of the golden mountain: although in the real world there is no golden mountain, it could have existed. On the other hand, there are those entities which fail to exist not only really, but also *possibly*: namely, *impossible* entities. This is the case of the round square: not only in reality, but also as a possibility, there is no such thing as a round square, for nothing can exist that is round and square at the same time.[9]

It is true, though, that the thesis I espoused here—that there is just one and the same particular quantifier, which sometimes occurs unrestrictedly and sometimes restrictedly—could be interpreted in another way. According to this alternative reading, the particular quantifier always means one and the same second-order property of existence. But sometimes the quantifier is restricted, binding a variable that ranges only over the entities existing *in the real world*, whereas sometimes the quantifier is unrestricted, binding a variable ranging over entities existing in *all* possible worlds. For such a reading, cf. Bradley (1992: 46, 52–4). Note, however, that this reading not only presupposes Modal Realism, according to which possible worlds are full-fledged individuals—cf. Lewis (1973), (1986: 148–9). More problematically, this reading does not seem to account for Meinong's *dictum*. Meinong intends the variable bound by the particular quantifier expressed in the first occurrence of the locution "there is" in that *dictum* not merely to range over possible entities (in Lewis's terms, over entities inhabiting some possible world or other). Rather, it is meant to range over entities that are "beyond being and non-being," hence even over entities that are impossible.

[8] Cf. Russell (1937[2]: 43–4, 449–50). Another way to interpret the first-order property that any entity possesses is to take it as the property of *being (identical with) something or other*. This is what Salmon (1987: 64–5) proposes, though in an utterly non-Meinongian framework, where only *one* first-order existential property is at issue. For a commitment to that property within a framework closer to that of Meinong, cf. Williamson (2002).

[9] Cf. Meinong (1971[1904]: 82).

Now, a theory that allows for *außerseiende* entities will also be ontologically committal as far as fictional entities are concerned.[10] If we allow our discourse on golden mountains and round squares to be ontologically successful, we should also allow the same for our fictional discourse. From an intuitive point of view, it is quite understandable that we have qualms about allowing for golden mountains and especially round squares. Yet from the same intuitive point of view we are undoubtedly more prepared to allow for Sherlock Holmes, Desdemona and King Arthur, that is to allow for *fictional entities*, the characters that novels and myths are about. Such entities seem to be entirely respectable.

In the framework of Meinong's theory, it is natural to take fictional entities as a subset of *außerseiende* entities because this accounts for what I would call the "nonexistence" datum of fictional entities: the fact that such individuals do not exist or, to put it more neutrally, the fact that certain negative existentials apparently about such individuals are true.[11] This is the "tragic" discovery a child makes when he learns that there is no Santa Claus. Yet it is also the comforting thought we all repeat to ourselves when watching a horror film that all the monsters on the screen thankfully do not exist.

Yet such a conception of fictional entities obviously inherits all the problems that arise with the idea of *außerseiende* entities. Needless to say, entities that are "beyond being and non-being", *Meinongian objects* (as they have subsequently been called), immediately appeared to be ontologically problematic. How can there be entities that do not actually exist, sometimes not even as a possibility?

To address this question, it must first be seen *what* these entities are. A *Meinongian object* is an entity endowed with the properties it possesses insofar as these same properties characterize, describe it. In other words, a Meinongian object satisfies what Richard Routley has called the *Characterization Postulate*: "According to the Characterization Postulate objects, whether they exist or not, actually have the properties which are used to characterize them, for example, where *f* is a characterizing feature, the item which *f*s indeed *f*s." (1980: 46).[12] So, the round square is both round and square if we describe it by means of these properties, or, what amounts to the same thing, if we denote it by means of the definite description "the [thing which is a] round square."

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[10] It is indeed natural to take Meinong as maintaining a committal theory of fictional entities. But a word of caution is in order here due to the fact that, at least in the early phase of his thought, he seems to have favored a purely "make-believe"—hence a noncommittal—theory of fiction. Cf. on this Kroon (1992: 503–10).

[11] For this more cautious formulation of the datum, cf. van Inwagen (1990: 247).

[12] This formulation is implicit in Meinong (1971[1904]: 82).

Nevertheless, endorsing the Characterization Postulate does not dispel another question: how can it be that Meinongian objects possess the properties by means of which they are characterized? On behalf of Meinong, one might respond that it is language itself that lets objects have certain properties by so characterizing them. This is hardly credible since how is it that language has such *ascriptive* power?[13]

There is, however, an even more extraordinary consequence that the Characterization Postulate seems to entail: change the description and you obtain a different Meinongian object. Insofar as it possesses the properties of *being golden* and *being mountainous*, the thing which is described as golden and as a mountain is different from, for example, the thing which through being denoted by the description "the round square," possesses the different properties of *being round* and *being square*. As a result, it appears that language has the power not only of assigning properties to Meinongian objects, but also of *generating* these objects by referring to them through different descriptions, that is, descriptions involving different properties. This is difficult to accept. Remember that our original question was: how can it be that there are *außerseiende* entities? It now seems that this question could be addressed by Meinong by saying that language has the capacity to generate these entities by referring to them descriptively. But, to put it more strongly, this comes across as a very bizarre view. It is common knowledge that what ultimately led Russell to dispense with Meinongian objects through his theory of definite descriptions is the fact that commitment to such objects seems to entail the ascription to language of this ontologically generative power.[14]

Meinong would reply that language has in fact neither this ascriptive nor this generative power: language is inert in that its only function is to express the thoughts that lie behind it.[15] Elaborating on this, one could say that, according to him, it is the thought underlying language that has such powers. In brief, in this elaboration Meinongian objects are *intentional objects*. As such, Meinongian objects would be brought into the overall ontological domain in consequence of their having the properties that enable us to describe them.

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[13] Note, moreover, that assigning to language this ascriptive power easily leads to making a Meinongian object into a contradictory entity. Russell was the first to notice this when he said that the nonexistent object allegedly designated by the description "the existent present King of France" is forced also to exist by the Characterization Postulate. On this problem, cf. n. 64 below. For other related problems raised by the Postulate, cf. Priest (2005).

[14] Cf. Russell (1905a: 482).

[15] According to Meinong, a linguistic term designates (means) an object only insofar as it expresses a presentation, whose content in turn presents that object. Cf. Meinong (1977[1910^2]: 27). On this as well as on the later modifications of Meinong's semantic theory, cf. Simons (1990: 162–3, 183).

First of all, as Franz Brentano originally said, intentional objects are the targets of thought: every thought has an object it is "directed" at, whether or not that object exists; this entity is the intentional object of the thought.[16] This would account for the *generative* power of thought. As Brentano would say, by "inexisting" in the thought, that is, by depending for its own being on the thought that thinks it, the intentional object is brought into the overall ontological domain. Adopting Brentano's conception of intentional objects, Meinong would have agreed with him in attributing this generative power to thought. Moreover, in the thoughts that are "directed" at them, intentional objects are indisputably conceived of as having certain properties. One would therefore conclude that Meinong would have gone beyond Brentano in maintaining that thought also has the *ascriptive* power: intentional objects are the entities that possess the properties they are *conceived* of as having.

This elaboration amounts to what I would call a Meinongian *phenomenological* conception of *außerseiende* beings: entities that are "beyond being and non-being," "are there" with the properties they have as a result of being thought of as having those properties.[17]

If Meinong had endorsed the phenomenological conception of *außerseiende* items, he would have outlined thereby a certain theory of fictional entities. According to the phenomenological conception, Meinongian entities are *außerseiende* items that an act of thought brings into being with the properties they are conceived of as having in that act. As a result, fictional entities would be a particular subset of the set of the *außerseiende* intentional objects, the set of those *außerseiende* intentional objects which are brought into being by an act of thought of a specific kind, namely an act of imagination. We may call this a Meinongian *phenomenological* theory of *ficta*.[18] Although it has been merely sketched out, it is obvious that this theory would be able to account also for the "nonexistence" datum of fictional entities. According to the Meinongian phenomenological theory, fictional entities do not exist since they are *außerseiende* objects of our imagination.

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[16] Cf. Brentano (1924: 88). Brentano's thesis is revived by Meinong (1971[1904]: 76).

[17] For such an elaboration, cf. Bencivenga (1985/6).

[18] According to Kroon (1992), in the mature phase of his thought Meinong defended a similar theory: fictional beings "are there" insofar as they are posited by thought, and they possess properties ascribed to them in the relevant fiction insofar as it is pretended of them that they possess such properties. A similar interpretation of Meinong's conception of fictional entities is given by Raspa (2001), who holds that for Meinong, *ficta* are higher-order nonexistent objects produced by human fantasy. A genuine phenomenological theory of *ficta* as objects of imagination was also held by Sartre (1940). Yet this theory is not Meinongian since for Sartre imagination does not posit *außerseiende* beings. On Sartre's theory, cf. Thomasson (1999: 21–3).

Yet, because it attributes both generative and ascriptive power to thought rather than to language, the phenomenological conception of Meinongian objects does not convincingly address the problems that originally faced language. An agnostic on *außerseiende* beings might indeed retort that if one moves back from language to thought, one still has to face the very same question as to what enables *thought* to have those powers.

As I have said above, according to the Meinongian phenomenological theory of *ficta*, fictional entities are taken to be a subset of Meinongian objects conceived phenomenologically. As a result, the general problem of what enables thought to have both generative and ascriptive power remains open as regards this theory. How can it be that a thought, let alone an imaginative thought, brings a fictional entity into being with the properties it is imagined as having?

Be that as it may, it does not seem that Meinong pursued the phenomenological path to *außerseiende* beings. In his opinion, not only language but also thought lack both generative and ascriptive power. Certainly, Meinongian objects are intentional objects insofar as they are thought of in an act of thinking. Yet in such acts thought grasps independently constituted entities.[19] Consequently, not only are such entities independent of the thoughts that are "directed" at them, but they also have the properties such thoughts conceive them as having regardless of those acts of conceiving.

On behalf of Meinong, various philosophers have tried to account for his position. They defend a principle of object-generation that appeals not to thought but to properties themselves. This is the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption, which may be formulated in various ways. In its weakest formulation, the principle says that for any collection of properties there is (in the above-mentioned nonexistential sense of the particular quantifier) an object that has all of them. In Meinong, this generation principle is expressed as follows: an object corresponds to every being-so.[20] I would say that this defense of Meinong is a *Platonist* conception. For the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption starts by assuming that there are properties (in a hyperuranic realm as it were) and it makes *außerseiende* objects depend for their own "being" on the existence of those properties. Moreover, the way this principle

[19] Cf., for example, Meinong (1978: 153–4).

[20] Cf. Meinong (1972[1916]: 282). A stronger formulation of the principle says that for any collection of properties, there is an object that has all *and only* those properties; according to an even stronger formulation, for any collection of properties, there is *just one* object that has all and only those properties. Cf. Zalta (1983: 6). I think that the last formulation expresses best the intuition that Meinong wanted to defend, though this is irrelevant for my present purposes. Without doubt, further stronger formulations of the principle are possible: cf., for example, Parsons (1980: 19), Rapaport (1978: 175), Zalta (1983: 12).

generates Meinongian objects trivially ensures that they possess the properties they are characterized as having. A certain Meinongian object is, so to speak, made to belong to the overall ontological domain by the fact that it possesses all the properties involved in any instantiation of the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption.[21]

Endorsing the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption thus excludes the view that thought has powers which, in the absence of any convincing explanation, would make it something magical. Yet, as we have seen above, attributing such powers to thought allowed us to develop a theory of fictional entities as a subset of *außerseiende* intentional beings: fictional entities are those intentional beings which are thought of in an act of imagination. In contrast, the objects generated by means of the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption are merely *außerseiende* beings, but not *fictional* entities. On behalf of Meinong, a supporter of the Platonist conception might reply that the Platonist framework confirms that, for Meinong, fictional entities are simply a subset of *außerseiende* beings. Yet no hint is given as to how, within the general realm of *außerseiende* beings, entities that are fictional are generated. However it manages to do so, thought limits itself in *grasping* a (previously constituted) *außerseiende* being, regardless of whether it is a fictional entity or not.

Thus, the review of Meinong's position shows that it can lead to at least two different conceptions of Meinongian objects, one more akin to the historical Meinong—the Platonist conception—and another assigning to thought an ontological role—the phenomenological conception. With respect to the issue of fictional entities, this leads to the following dilemma. If one endorses the phenomenological conception, one arrives at a phenomenological theory of fictional entities as *außerseiende* objects of imagination. This yields a specific theory of fictional entities, but it attributes to thought—in particular, to the imagination—the unexplained power of generating such entities and of ascribing properties to them. On the other hand, if one endorses the Platonist conception, there is no mystery as to how there can be *außerseiende* objects endowed with certain properties, but it is not made clear how the overall realm of *außerseiende* beings can have a subset of *fictional* beings.

[21] A full-fledged Platonist would tend to reject the idea that the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption is a principle of object-*generation*, for he or she would take it to be a principle of object-*description*: it indeed says that for any collection of properties, there is "out there" a certain object that has them. Yet as Deutsch (1991) has shown these two interpretations of the principle are not incompatible. For that, for any objects and collections of properties, there is an object that has a certain collection of properties matches a stipulation to the effect that there is an object that has those properties.

3. The Possibilist Conception

As we have seen, the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption allows us to have Meinongian objects at our disposal. Yet it still seems incredible that objects so derived from (collections of) properties are *außerseiende* beings. Why must we acknowledge that entities so introduced are homeless entities (to use Meinong's own characterization)?[22] In particular, why should fictional objects, which in Meinong's framework are a subset of Meinongian objects, be homeless entities? This does not even fit in with common usage. In speaking of fictional characters, we do not describe them as homeless. What we often say is that they inhabit fictional worlds, the worlds of imagination described in the literary works that tell us about them.

Nevertheless, speaking of fictional *worlds* suggests that there is a natural candidate for a place in which to locate, if not Meinongian objects as such, at least those Meinongian objects which are fictional entities: that is, possible worlds. From this perspective, fictional objects are *possibilia* or entities that do not actually exist, not because they are "beyond being and non-being" but, rather, because they exist in possible worlds different from the real world.

The first advantage of the possibilist theory of *ficta* is that the "nonexistence" datum is accounted for, but not in the radical and implausible way chosen in Meinong's theory. *Ficta* are not found among us because they live in possible yet unactual worlds; that is, they do not exist in that they do not exist *actually*, but only *possibly*.

This possibilist perspective, moreover, allows us to retain the link between fictional objects and properties which is pointed to by the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption. Fictional characters are possible individuals who, in the possible unreal world in which they exist, possess all the properties that characterize them in a given piece of fiction. Accordingly, Sherlock Holmes is the possible individual who, in the possible world in which he exists, does all the things that are ascribed to Sherlock Holmes in Conan Doyle's novels.[23]

It has been objected, however, that being possible is not a necessary condition for being a fictional object. Since fiction is the realm of the *conceivable*, fictional objects may well be *impossible* objects. Take a character who, in the fiction that narrates his or her story, has contradictory or at least incompatible

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[22] Cf. Meinong (1975[1907]: 8–27). See on this Chisholm (1982b).

[23] Cf. Lewis (1978). For a novel defense of this position, cf. Kroon (1994); see also Priest (2005). There are further subtle aspects as regards the problem of individuating both which properties a story really ascribes to a fictional character—what are the properties a story both explicitly and implicitly attributes to a *fictum*?—and which possible worlds are exactly those which the *possibile* that a *fictum* is equated with inhabits. For an attempt to improve Lewis's position on this point, cf. Currie (1990: chap.2).

properties, not only in the weak sense that such properties are ascribed to the character in different parts of the fiction, but in the strong sense that such an ascription occurs in the very same part of the fiction. Imagine that I start a story about a wooden steel cannon.[24] This is an impossible object. If we insist on taking this very small part of the fiction in question as contributing to the determination of the fictional world that this object inhabits, that world will be not a possible world, but—paradoxically—an impossible one.[25]

Moreover, being possible is not a sufficient condition either. As many have noted,[26] different possible worlds may contain different possible individuals, each satisfying the properties that are ultimately acknowledged as effectively characterizing the *fictum* in a certain story. So, *which* among all these *possibilia* is the *fictum* in question?

The possibilist fictionalist might reply that this problem is just a version of the general question of identity conditions for nonexistent entities. In this respect, merely possible individuals as such are no better off than fictional entities. Take for instance the actually uninstantiated property of *being a golden mountain*. What determines whether or not the merely possible individual that instantiates that property in a certain possible world *w* is the same as the merely possible individual instantiating it in a different possible world *w**?[27] If we have not previously individuated the possible golden mountains in question and found them to be the same or different entities, this question is in principle unanswerable. So, says the possibilist fictionalist, suppose we have a workable criterion of identity for merely possible individuals. This criterion can, for example, be given in terms of an actually uninstantiated individual essence, that is a property which, though nothing actually has it, is possessed by a certain individual in all the possible worlds in which this individual exists and may be possessed only by such an individual.[28] As a result,

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[24] This example comes from Twardowski (1982[1894]: 106).

[25] Lewis is tempted to account for "blatantly impossible" *ficta* (such as the one presented here) in terms of impossible possible worlds, but he himself immediately admits that speaking of impossible possible worlds does not provide a serious solution to the problem represented by those characters. He is however not impressed by the *ontological* side of this problem, for he holds that from the *semantic* point of view, not only sentences about blatantly impossible *ficta* but also sentences about "venially impossible" *ficta* (those whose inconsistency arises from slips of the storyteller's pen) are accountable for within a possibilist framework. Cf. his (1978: 45–6), (1983: 277–8). That there are inconsistent *ficta* is also acknowledged by Parsons (1980: 184), Santambrogio (1992: 311) and Orilia (2002: 177).

[26] Starting from Kripke (1973: 40), (1980: 157–8).

[27] As regards *possibilia* themselves, this question can be traced back to Kaplan (1973: 505–6). See, moreover, Rosenkrantz (1984: 142–3).

[28] For this definition of an (actually uninstantiated) individual essence, see Rosenkrantz (1984), (1985/6: 199–200).

if an individual inhabiting a possible world *w* and an individual inhabiting a different possible world *w** have the same individual essence, they are the same individual. For instance, with respect to the actually uninstantiated individual essence constituted by the property of *being the offspring of a certain sperm of Philip II of Spain and of a certain ovum of Elizabeth I of England*, if both *a* in *w* and *b* in *w** are the offspring of those (actually existing) gametes, then they are the same entity, the same possible individual. Once that criterion is adopted for *possibilia*, the possibilist fictionalist could go on to say that it may also hold for fictional entities. Suppose, in fact, one writes a story about the offspring of the above-mentioned gametes, a son of King Philip and Queen Elizabeth who united the crowns of Spain and England. As is well known, in reality Philip and Elizabeth had no children. So why should the protagonist of this story not be that same possible individual who is individuated by the above actually uninstantiated individual essence?

Let me put to one side the fact that this reply would enable the possibilist fictionalist to account for a very small number of fictional characters. For most of what we commonsensically accept as fictional characters, there undoubtedly are no suitably individuated possible individuals who correspond to those characters (to put the matter in theoretically uncompromising terms). If this were the problem with the view, the possibilist fictionalist could reply to it by relaxing the individuation condition for fictional objects. Instead of looking for an individual essence, the possibilist fictionalist might point to a similarity relation holding between different possible individuals, each located in a different possible world, and claim that *the* fictional character is actually nothing but an appropriate plurality of such *possibilia* linked by that similarity relation.[29] The real difficulty confronting this view is another. There is a reason why being possible provides neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for being fictional: a fictional entity *cannot* be a possible spatiotemporal individual. For it cannot be an actually spatiotemporally existing individual either. Let me explain.

As everyone knows, the mythical sword Excalibur which King Arthur extracts from a rock does not exist. Its nonexistence would not be threatened by someone discovering an object with all the properties that the Breton cycle ascribes to Excalibur. (As a matter of fact, a sword in a rock exists in St. Galgano's abbey in Tuscany.) Its similarity to Excalibur notwithstanding, that object could *not* be Excalibur.[30] Now, this means that a certain fictional object cannot be identical with any actually spatiotemporally existing individual, not

[29] Counterpart theorists actually provide this reply. According to them, *possibilia* are counterparts of actually existing individuals. Such counterparts are each located in a distinct possible world, understood as a full-fledged entity. Cf., for example, Kroon (1994: 211–2).

[30] Cf. again Kripke (1980: 157).

even one that shares all its properties. Yet if a fictional entity cannot be the same as an *actually* spatiotemporally existing individual having precisely the properties the relevant story attributes to it, how can it be identical with a *possibly* spatiotemporally existing individual having (in the possible world in which it exists) those very same properties? If it is not identical with the one, a fortiori there is no likelihood at all of its being identical with the other.[31]

As a consequence, the offspring of a certain sperm of Philip II of Spain and of a certain ovum of Elizabeth I of England that is the subject of a fictional story is not the same as the possible individual who has as his or her individual essence the property of *being the offspring of a certain sperm of Philip II of Spain and of a certain ovum of Elizabeth I of England*. At first sight, this may seem paradoxical. Yet a moment's reflection will show us that the fictional offspring is already *actually* the offspring of those gametes,[32] whereas the possible offspring evidently is not: he or she is merely *possibly* such an offspring.[33] If this is the case with respect to a *fictum/possibile* pair whose members are seemingly identical, it is all the more so with respect to all other *ficta/possibilia* pairs, such as the one involving the fictional golden mountain—the thing described in a fictional story as golden and a mountain—and the possible golden mountain—the thing (if it is *one* thing) that is both golden and a mountain in a possible yet unactual world. All these pairs contain *different* items.

4. The Neo-Meinongian Abstractionist Conception

The above-mentioned criticisms are all well and good, but what is the essential reason for which a fictional object cannot be identical either with an actually or with a possibly spatiotemporally existing entity? The natural answer is that both a really and a possibly spatiotemporally existing entity are *concrete* entities: that is entities which are, respectively, actually or possibly involved directly in causal relations.[34] Yet a fictional object is not such an entity. Not only is a fictional object never actually encountered, it *cannot* be encountered either. (It is not only a false belief for children to think that Santa Claus is coming tonight; that belief is a *category* mistake.)

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[31] As Kripke has envisaged (see previous footnote). Cf. also Kaplan (1989b: 609).

[32] In a sense to be explained later, by appealing to the so-called "internal mode of predication" of a property.

[33] This observation is intended to cope with a problematic remark by Kaplan (1989b: 610 n. 107), who wonders whether in such a case the story would refer to the possible offspring. This is equivalent to wondering whether the possible and the fictional offspring are the same individual.

[34] On possible entities as concrete items, cf. Cocchiarella's (1982: 183–5) interpretation of the early Russell.

So, if a fictional entity is not a concrete entity, what can it be? Again, the fact that it is something one *cannot* encounter naturally suggests the following answer: it is an *abstract* entity, that is an entity which is neither really nor possibly involved directly in causal relations.[35] This is in fact the answer given by several Neo-Meinongians. They, too, make *ficta* subsets of Meinongian entities. But, unlike Meinong, they conceive of them as abstract entities. Let us consider the main available options in detail.

According to one option, a fictional entity is a Meinongian object, which in turn corresponds to a set of properties. In particular, a fictional entity corresponds to the set of all the properties that are mobilized in the relevant fiction. Literally speaking, this position holds that a Meinongian object—and hence a fictional object as well—is a set-*correlate* rather than a set.[36] For it is generated via a particular application of the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption, according to which, for any collection of properties, there is a certain Meinongian object possessing all those properties. Yet, for the time being, I shall consider this option as asserting that a Meinongian object—hence a fictional object—is simply a set of properties rather than a correlate of such a set. For, in consequence of being taken as a set (of properties), a fictional entity genuinely is an abstract entity.

According to another option, a fictional entity is once again a Meinongian object, which is generated via an application of the Principle of Freedom of Assumption by mobilizing a certain collection of properties. But this time the entity that is generated via that application is taken to be something like a generic object or a Platonic type, which concrete entities (may) instantiate.[37] From this standpoint, a fictional entity is a thing like the generic triangle or

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[35] In (1996), Linsky and Zalta attenuate the concrete/abstract distinction by viewing *concreta* as contingently—and (ordinary) *abstracta* as necessarily—abstract beings. I suspect that this move makes no significant difference. Since *possibilia* are concrete entities in the sense that they may be directly involved in the causal order of the world, they may also not be so involved. They may be said to have at most a contingently indirect involvement with the causal order of the world and, hence, to be contingently abstract beings in Linsky-Zalta's terminology. On the other hand, *ficta* turn out to be paradigmatic cases of necessarily abstract beings in that, for them, it is necessarily the case that they are at most indirectly involved with the causal order of the world.

[36] This is the position literally held by both Rapaport (1978) and Parsons (1980). I will evaluate it in the next section. In point of fact, there is room to doubt that this position does not amount to identifying *ficta* with property sets. Cf. Smith (1980: 99).

[37] Cf. Zalta (1983). For a similar position, cf. Santambrogio (1990, 1992). Yet Santambrogio's theory intends to be less ontologically committal. For him, one is entitled to speak of generic objects as targets of *aboutness*$_2$ only insofar as there is a notion of aboutness—say, *aboutness*$_2$—that is different from the one involved in reference to ordinary individuals—call it *aboutness*$_1$.

the generic bed, namely, that which all the specific triangles or all the specific beds respectively have in common. Simply put, a *fictum* is that particular type which is characterized by all the properties attributed to it in the relevant narration. In virtue of being one such type, a fictional entity is an *abstractum*.

Let me first observe that, in both options, the properties mobilized by applying the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption are to be understood not so much as *entia* endowed with causal powers, but rather as anything that can be legitimately represented via a lambda predicate, that is, a predicate of the kind $[\lambda a_1, \ldots, a_n\ A]$, where $a_1, \ldots, a_n$ are variables that possibly occur freely in the open sentence A.[38] This is because the entities that are to be ranked among the constituents of a Meinongian, hence of a fictional, object, include not only entities such as *being a horse*, which can be conceived as a causally effective property, but also entities such as *being a hobbit, being a non-horse, being a round square*, and even *being propertyless*, which for different reasons obviously cannot be conceived as causally effective items. This is particularly relevant as far as fiction is concerned because (as we will see shortly) a story may be so imaginative, or even paradoxical, as to contain sentences such as "Once upon a time there was . . . (a hobbit, a non-horse, a round square, a propertyless being)" which at least *prima facie* commit one to causally inert properties supposedly instantiated by the protagonist of the story.

The above observation has two implications: first, there are no linguistic uses in fiction where one merely pretends to express properties; second, though there are fictional entities, there are no fictional properties that one genuinely expresses in such uses. I believe that once one acknowledges that in fiction (as everywhere else) one can mobilize not only actually uninstantiated properties but also both actually and possibly uninstantiated properties, the second consequence is generally acceptable. On the other hand, the first consequence sounds more problematic. Take the famous first lines of the poem *Jabberwocky* in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, "Twas brillig, and the slithy toves/ Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:/ All mimsy were the borogoves,/ And the mome raths outgrabe." Is it not the case that the predicates here simply pretend to express properties?[39]

I do not think so. As regards so-called "fictional" predicates, it seems to me that, theoretically speaking, either we understand them or we pretend to

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[38] According to Orilia (2002: 148), both Castañeda and Parsons take every lambda predicate to express a property. However, in this respect I add the adverb "legitimately" since some neo-Meinongians who accept Russell's theory of types do not believe that *every* lambda predicate effectively represents a property. Cf., for example, Zalta (1983).

[39] I thank Kendall Walton for having pointed out (in conversation) this problem to me. As Fred Kroon (in correspondence) has reminded me, this problem was first raised by Kripke (1973).

understand them.[40] Yet the second option is hardly viable. Perhaps we merely have a quasi-understanding of singular terms that do not designate actually (or possibly) spatiotemporally existing objects as pretending to refer to individuals. Yet the condition for this quasi-understanding is that we fully understand the predicative terms those singular terms are linked to in fictional contexts. Therefore, only the first option is still available. However, if we understand those predicates, we give them a meaning and whatever this meaning is, it is the meaning of a predicative term, hence a good candidate for a property (perhaps both actually and possibly uninstantiated). One might suspect that the properties in question are too private to be accepted as such since anyone could understand such predicates differently, hence associate with them different properties. Yet (as we see in Chapter 3) there may be a criterion for ruling out property privacy: in order for a predicative term to express a property *P*, a sentence such as "*S* think(s) of a *P*" must possibly be true (in its *de dicto* reading) for *any* subject *S*.[41]

Let me now go back to my main line of argument. The Neo-Meinongian conception of *ficta* has a definite advantage over Meinong's own position. As a Meinongian object, a *fictum* owes its being to an application of the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption: given a specific collection of properties, those which pertain to a personage according to a piece of fiction, a fictional entity is generated as that entity which has all those properties. This is something Meinong would have agreed with. But Neo-Meinongians go beyond him in that they conceive of Meinongian objects—hence also fictional entities—as abstract entities, sets and types in the case in point. This makes Meinongian objects no longer *außerseiende* beings, as Meinong had maintained, but really existing beings. In Meinong's own terms, abstract entities actually *subsist*; that is they really exist but in a non-spatiotemporal way.

In Meinong's favor, one could say that this conception of Meinongian objects is inadequate, above all as far as *ficta* are concerned. It does not account for the "nonexistence" datum of *ficta*, which is, on the contrary,

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[40] We quasi-understand them, as Gareth Evans would say. On quasi-understanding expressions in fiction, cf. Evans (1982: 363).

[41] As an example of a fictional predicate, Walton gives us a phrase such as "_ is a fictional character" (1990: 423). Certainly, one has to see this example in the context of Walton's non-committal theory of fictional beings. For according to such a theory, it is merely make-believe that there is a fictional individual, "of which" one may further predicate in make-believe that it is such. But the point is that, even if one accepts such a theory, that predicate is not fictional but simply expresses an actually (and perhaps even possibly) uninstantiated property. If I am an eliminativist about—say—holes, when I claim that there are no holes I do not say that the predicate "being a hole" is fictional, but rather that the property it expresses is actually (and also possibly) uninstantiated.

explained by Meinong's theory of Meinongian entities as *außerseiende* entities. It is intuitively acknowledged that Don Quixote and Sancho Panza do not exist; yet if *ficta* (*qua* Meinongian objects) are abstract individuals, they do exist.

Nevertheless, Neo-Meinongian abstractionists may well reply that their theory saves the "nonexistence" datum. What we really mean by saying that those characters do not exist is that there is no chance of our encountering them in the outside world. But this means further that they do not exist *spatiotemporally*. This is successfully accounted for by a theory which claims that *ficta* are abstract entities and so entities that actually exist but non-spatiotemporally. They subsist—exist non-spatiotemporally—yet they do not exist—meaning that they do not exist spatiotemporally.

At first sight, this answer might leave one perplexed. It was stated above against the possibilist fictionalist that there are some *ficta* which are impossible entities. But if they are impossible they definitely do not exist, even non-spatiotemporally, in the actual world because they do not exist in any possible world.

All the same, the Neo-Meinongian abstractionist can easily reply to this doubt. If a Meinongian object contains inconsistent features, as some *ficta* do, then it will be impossible in a sense that is compatible with its nature as an abstract entity, and hence compatible with its non-spatiotemporal *actual* existence. That is, it will be impossible not in the primary sense that it exists in no possible world, but only in the secondary sense that it is impossible for there to be a concrete being having all its features.[42]

The Neo-Meinongian abstractionist conception of fictional objects turns out to be the most promising among those hitherto considered. It accounts for the "nonexistence" datum of fictional entities without either implausibly locating these nonexistent items in a possible world different from the actual world, as the possibilist conception does, or—oddly—locating them in the realm of the entities "beyond being and non-being" (which is really a way of not locating them at all) as in Meinong's conception, whether that conception is understood platonistically or phenomenologically. Fictional entities are *actually* existing entities such as you and me, this stone and this chair. Unlike these individuals, however, they have no spatiotemporal connotation for they are abstract entities, that is, entities of the same general kind as the number 4 or the letter A.

Up to now, I have treated on a par the two Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theories of fictional objects presented here—let me call them the *set-theoretical* and the *genuinely Platonic* doctrines. However, once we take it for granted that a fictional object is an abstract entity, it is time to ask whether

[42] For the definition of the corresponding notions of possibility, cf. Zalta (1983: 75–6).

it is better to conceive of it as a set of properties or as a generic object. My answer is that the *set-theoretical* doctrine is preferable. The reason is that there are two further data, the "incompleteness" datum and the "analyticity" datum, which the *set-theoretical* doctrine addresses more adequately than the Platonic. This needs to be explained.

Let me start with the "incompleteness" datum. This datum amounts to the indisputable fact that, if a story says or even implies nothing as to whether one of its characters has or lacks a given property *P*,[43] it is pointless to ask whether or not that character has *P*. Take the story of Gertrude, the Nun of Monza, as recounted by Alessandro Manzoni in his novel *The Betrothed*. The story tells us that attracted by Egidio, a young man courting her, one day Gertrude responds to his greeting ("the miserable girl replied"). Although there is then no literal reference to sexual intercourse between Gertrude and Egidio, the clear implication is that it did take place. Therefore, if we are asked not only whether Gertrude responded to Egidio's greetings, but also whether she had sexual intercourse with him, it is correct to answer both questions in the affirmative: Gertrude has both the properties of *responding to Egidio's greetings* and of *having had sexual intercourse with Egidio*. On the other hand, the story not only says but also implies nothing about whether Gertrude plays chess. So, it is pointless to ask whether or not Gertrude has the property of *being a chess player*. Now, it may sound natural to interpret the "incompleteness" datum as suggesting that a fictional entity is an *incomplete* entity in the sense that, for any property *P* about whose possession or lack of it by the entity the relevant story says or implies nothing, that entity has neither the property nor its complement *not-P*. For example, Gertrude is incomplete in that she has neither the property of *being a chess player* nor its complement.[44]

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[43] It is clear that the fictional "world" that a story yields contains not only what is said explicitly, the *explicit* propositions, but also what is left implicit or is in some way implied by the explicit propositions, that is, the *implicit* propositions. One may take the implicit propositions as derived from the explicit propositions through relevant entailment [cf. Zalta (1988: 124–5)] or according to the principles of a paraconsistent logic [cf. Deutsch (1985) and Orilia (2002: 198)]. Due to these options, one will be able to maintain that stories are logically closed sets of propositions. Alternatively, one may take it that such a derivation holds by means of a strong inductive argument or by appeal to some rationality principle [cf. Phillips (1999: 280, 287)]. The question of how far the subset of the implicit propositions in a story must go amounts to the question of determining a principle of story composition, that is, of "determining precisely which propositions are contained in a given story" [Phillips (1999: 274)]. Yet, whatever its solution, this question arises apart from the issues focused on here, namely, the issues regarding what kind of things fictional entities would be if there were any and whether fictional characters really exist.

[44] This is what in Voltolini (1994: 91–4) I treated as the essential incompleteness of a (fictional) entity. Moreover, I explained *ficta*'s incompleteness by means of *predicative* negation

The "incompleteness" datum is in some way reversed by the "analyticity" datum. As we have just seen, the "incompleteness" datum makes clear that it is pointless to ask whether or not a fictional entity has a property about whose possession or lack thereof the relevant story is silent, that is, it neither says nor implies that the entity either has or lacks the property. On the other hand, the "analyticity" datum makes clear that it is pointless to ask whether or not a fictional entity has a property such that the relevant story says or implies that entity has it, or a property such that story says or implies that entity lacks it. For in the former case the answer is trivially affirmative and in the latter it is trivially negative. Still using the example from Manzoni's novel, it is both trivially the case that Gertrude responds to Egidio's greetings and trivially not the case that she resists his approaches. Now, it may sound tempting to interpret this datum as suggesting that a statement "F is P"—where "F" designates a certain *fictum F* and "_ is P" designates a property such that the relevant story says or implies that *F* has it or else says or implies that *F* lacks it—is either analytically true or analytically false. "Gertrude responds to Egidio's greetings" is analytically true; "Gertrude resists Egidio's advances" is analytically false.[45]

Now, the *set-theoretical* doctrine of fictional entities directly accounts for both data. As to the "incompleteness" datum, this doctrine holds that a *fictum* lacks both a property *P* and its complement *not-P* and that it is therefore incomplete if neither property belongs to the property set that constitutes that *fictum*.[46] As to the "analyticity" datum, the sentence "F is P"—where "F" designates a certain *fictum F* and "_ is P" designates a property such that the relevant tale

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(negation mobilized by negative properties: *being not-P*). This enables us to put aside Russell's well-known doubt that, *qua* Meinongian objects, *ficta* violate the Law of Excluded Middle according to which either a sentence or its contradictory is true and there is no other possibility. See on this Russell (1905a: 485, 490). Indeed, when incompleteness is so explained, a Meinongian object clearly involves no violation of the Law of Excluded Middle, which uses the *propositional* sense of negation ("it is not the case that *P*"). For example, the incompleteness of Gertrude leads to the fact that of the sentential pair "Gertrude is a chess player" and "it is not the case that: Gertrude is a chess player", as well as of the pair "Gertrude is a non-chess-player" and "it is not the case that: Gertrude is a non-chess-player", the first members of these pairs are false whereas their second members are true. Thus, both pairs contain genuinely contradictory sentences. See Simons (1990: 182, 184). Accordingly, it is not the case that, as both Smith (1980: 101) and Farrell Smith (1984/5: 317) maintain, Meinongian or at least fictional objects require a restriction on the Law of Excluded Middle.

[45] On the analytical nature of the way in which the characterizing properties are predicated of a certain *fictum*, see Bonomi (1979: 46–8). I say only that it may sound tempting to thus interpret the datum in question because one may confine oneself to noting that the datum suggests that the sentences in question are *unrevisable*. In other words, the datum might at most point to a cognitive, rather than a semantic, sense of analyticity. Eco (2000) is tempted to interpret it in this way. See also Priest (2005: 147–8).

[46] Cf. Parsons (1980: 183).

says or implies that *F* has it—is analytically true if *P* belongs to the property set which constitutes that *fictum*, and analytically false otherwise.[47]

On the other hand, no such direct account is provided by the genuinely Platonic doctrine. As to the first datum, one may well agree with the Platonist that, *qua* type, a *fictum* is an incomplete entity in that, for many properties and their respective complements, a type possesses neither.[48] Yet, unlike the defender of the set-theoretical doctrine, the Platonist seems to provide no clear criterion for deciding, for *every* pair consisting of a property and its complement, whether the *fictum* fails to have both properties. Once a set of properties is given, it is immediately clear whether the individual identical with that set has a certain property or its complement. In contrast, given a Platonic type, it is not immediately clear whether the individual identical with that type has either property. Moreover, as to the "analyticity" datum, the genuinely Platonic doctrine of fictional entities may well say that it is necessarily the case that a *fictum* has a property whose possession by it is either stated or implied by the relevant story. For a type such as the P, P′, P″ . . . cannot but have the properties *P, P′, P″* . . . by means of which is characterized. Yet what the datum in question points out is not necessary possession, but rather *trivial* possession. By saying that a *fictum* has a property attributed to it within a narrative body one makes no discovery about it; no genuine information about it is conveyed. In other words, if that narrative body says or implies that a certain character has a given property, then it is trivial that character has that property. On the other hand, such triviality is clearly accounted for by saying that any sentence "F is P", where the singular term "F" designates a set of properties and "_ is P" designates one of those properties, is analytically true. In this approach, the sentence is trivially true insofar as the property which constitutes the meaning of that predicate belongs to the set that constitutes the meaning of that singular term. Now, this makes the sentence analytically true, not merely in the sense criticized by Willard Van Orman Quine that the sentence is true in virtue of its meaning, but rather in the old Kantian sense that the meaning of the predicate is contained in the meaning of the subject.

Thus, among the Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theories of fictional objects, the set-theoretical doctrine deals more intuitively than the genuinely Platonic doctrine with the "incompleteness" and the "analyticity" data. At this point, however, two further intertwined questions arise. First, what does it mean for a *fictum* to possess the properties the relevant story assigns to it? Second, in

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[47] Cf. Castañeda, for example, (1985/6: 58–9).

[48] This is indeed the traditional doctrine of the incompleteness of Platonic types, which was accepted by Meinong with respect to Meinongian objects. On this cf., for example, Chisholm (1982b: 49–52). See also Reicher (2005:177–84).

what sense can a *fictum* possess properties over and above those which are assigned to it in the relevant story? Without doubt, both questions arise with respect to Meinongian objects in general. Yet, wherever possible, I intend to address them directly to that particular subset of the set of Meinongian objects whose members are, according to Neo-Meinongians, fictional entities.

As to the first question, let me first recall that Meinong appealed to the Principle of the Independence of the *Sosein* from *Sein*. This principle is fully compatible with Meinong's Principle of the Indifference of a (Meinongian) object to being, namely the above-mentioned thesis of the *außerseiende* nature of a (Meinongian) object.[49] According to the first principle, it is possible for a Meinongian object to have the properties by which it is characterized—to have its *Sosein*—even though it does not actually exist. Thus, the round square can be both round and square, the golden mountain can be both golden and a mountain, even though neither actually exists.[50]

Many have found this principle disconcerting. Properties such as *being round* and *being square*, *being golden* and *being a mountain*, seem to be (as the early Russell would have said) *existence-entailing* properties: if an object has one of them it must actually exist. How, therefore, can a Meinongian object, which is *außerseiend*, have those properties? Insofar as it actually exists, Mont Blanc is a mountain. But how can the golden mountain be a mountain as well and not actually exist?[51]

Neo-Meinongian abstractionists try to answer this question by discarding Meinong's Principle of Independence. As we have seen, for them Meinongian objects actually exist, in the non-spatiotemporal way that pertains to abstract entities. Consequently Meinongian objects, like other actually existing entities, have properties. Thus, insofar as a fictional entity is a Meinongian, hence an abstract, object, it has all the properties it is characterized as having (in the relevant story), just as any other actually existing entity has. Hamlet is no less a prince than Charles, Prince of Wales is.

Nevertheless, this is just part of the answer to the first question (what does it mean for a *fictum* to have the properties the relevant story assigns to it?). In order to consider the complete answer that Neo-Meinongians give to it, we must take into account the second question formulated above (in what sense can a *fictum* possess other properties?). To fictional objects are not only ascribed the properties that are predicated of them in the relevant narration. Independently of their occurrence in certain stories, they are endowed with other properties as well. For instance, Hamlet is not only said to be an apparently mad prince bent on revenging his father's murder, as in

[49] For these labellings, cf. Lambert (1983: 13–23).
[50] Cf. Meinong (1971[1904]: 82).
[51] Cf. Cocchiarella (1982: 197), Williamson (2000: 202–4).

Shakespeare's tragedy. Outside of the play, he is said to be a host of other things: for example that he was created by Shakespeare, that he has been approved of by many people, that he has been a model for other fictional characters, that he does not exist spatiotemporally, and—last but not least—that he is a fictional character. So fictional entities appear to have not only the properties that are attributed to them in the relevant narration, but other properties that are not story-related. How is this possible?

Following a suggestion of Meinong's, set-theoretical abstractionists are in a position to deal with this question by at the same time completing the answer to the first question. On the one hand Meinongian objects, hence fictional entities, have *nuclear* properties, that is the properties that belong to the sets in which those objects consist. Accordingly, one may also call them *constitutive* properties. This was Meinong's own terminological choice. As far as fictional entities are concerned, the nuclear properties that constitute the sets in which these entities consist are those which are ascribed to them in their respective narratives. Over and above these properties, however, Meinongian objects also possess properties that do not belong to the sets that constitute them. These are therefore called *extranuclear* or—in Meinong's own terminology—*extraconstitutive* properties. As far as fictional entities are concerned, these are precisely the properties that are attributed to such entities *outside* the relevant narration: in the case of Hamlet, *being created by Shakespeare*, *being approved of by many people*, *being a model for other fictional characters*, *having no spatiotemporal existence* and—last but not least—*being a fictional character*.[52]

Certainly, it is hard to find a criterion for distinguishing between the nuclear and the extranuclear properties of a Meinongian object. Nonetheless, let me put this problem to one side[53] since those who have doubts about Meinong's Principle of Independence would still be dissatisfied. They would not find that this property distinction has made their original problem disappear. Let us grant that there is no problem about Hamlet's being a prince since he is not an *außerseiende* but, rather, an abstract entity. Yet how can he be a prince *in the same sense* as Charles, Prince of Wales? He also lives in Denmark, or so Shakespeare tells us. But how is it that if one had gone to Denmark, there would never have been the possibility of meeting him as there would be in respect of an actually existing real Dane?

There is a traditional reply to this problem, which goes back to Meinong's pupil Ernst Mally. In the abstractionist camp, it has appealed above all to Platonists. In this reply, it is not the case that Meinongian

[52] Cf. Meinong (1972[1916]: 176), Parsons (1978, 1980).

[53] In Voltolini (2001: 498–500), I recall some of the traditional difficulties affecting the search for such a criterion. See also Reicher (2005: 177–84).

objects possess properties of two *kinds*, the nuclear and the extranuclear. There is just one kind of property that they, like any other individual, possess. But there are two *modes* in which properties of one and the same kind can be predicated of individuals, Meinongian or not. These two modes can be labelled in different ways: determining/satisfying,[54] constituency/exemplification,[55] encoding/exemplifying,[56] internal/external.[57] For the sake of simplicity, I adopt here the last one.[58] According to Mally's abstractionist followers, properties that make up the nature of a Meinongian object are *internally* predicated of it, whereas they are *externally* predicated of an individual that is not a Meinongian object. So, actually spatiotemporally existing individuals have properties only in the external mode. Moreover, a Meinongian object can have properties not only in the internal but also in the external mode (possibly, the very same properties).

It has been widely debated which of the two distinctions, the "kinds of property" and the "modes of predication" distinction, is the better. Some philosophers have wondered whether the one can in fact be reduced to the other.[59] Others have even questioned whether the "modes of predication" distinction is tenable.[60] I do not want to deal here with these issues regarding Meinongian objects in general.[61] Yet it seems that the "modes of predication" distinction provides a better explanation than the "kinds of property" distinction of how *ficta* can have the properties that are ascribed to them. For example, internally Hamlet is a prince and an inhabitant of Denmark, but Frederik of Denmark has those very same properties externally. This is why if we go to Denmark and look through the list of Danish princes we will find Frederik, but there has never been any possibility of finding Hamlet. Moreover, it is true that Hamlet also has all those properties which are assigned to him outside of any fictional story given that he has all of them not internally, but externally.

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[54] Cf. Mally (1912: 64, 76).

[55] Cf. Rapaport (1978: 162).

[56] Cf. Zalta (1983: 12).

[57] Cf. Castañeda, for example, (1989a: 200).

[58] I do not, though, use it in the same way as Castañeda but rather as Rapaport and Zalta; namely, as if there were just *one* kind of external predication, not an (indefinite) number of such predications, as Castañeda would prefer [cf., for example, Castañeda (1989a)].

[59] As Fine (1982: 98–9) has noted, the two distinctions match each other, the "modes of predication" distinction being preferable where nonexistent objects are at issue.

[60] This is because it is apparently subject to semantic paradoxes such as those raised by Romane Clark and Alan McMichael [for which, cf. Rapaport (1978) and Zalta (1983) respectively]. I think the distinction does avoid the paradoxes, but I cannot go into this issue here in a systematic fashion. For a brief discussion of this point, See Chapter 3.

[61] As regards Meinongian objects in general, in Voltolini (2001) I opt for the "modes of predication" distinction.

Let me attempt to give some other reasons why the "modes of predication" distinction applies better to fictional entities than the "kinds of property" distinction. These reasons can be traced back to the fact that, as I said in the Introduction, fiction is the realm where the impossible is, so to speak, possible. Put differently, anything that can be imagined, whether it appears to be possible or not, can be a subject of fiction. So there may well be a novel starting with the following sentence:

(1) Once upon a time there was a fictional object.

This hypothetical novel represents a typical case of a *metafiction*, that is a fiction that has fiction itself as its subject. Twentieth-century art is full of such cases; in this respect, Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* is paradigmatic. Now, this example can hardly be dealt with in terms of the "kinds of property" distinction. Since in the above sentence of the novel the property of *being a fictional object* is assigned to the character that sentence deals with, this property would have to be a nuclear property of that fictional entity. But, as such a character is a *fictum* with the same right as Hamlet and Don Quixote, that property would also have to be an extranuclear property of that entity. So, this property would at the same time be a nuclear and an extranuclear property. As a result, no distinction between kinds of property would any longer subsist. On the other hand, this case is neatly accounted for in terms of the "modes of predication" distinction. One and the same property, *being a fictional object*, pertains both internally and externally to the same character.[62]

Moreover, twentieth-century art has given us not only metafictional but also highly paradoxical novels. Therefore, there may well be a one-sentence story that says:

(2) Once upon a time there was an individual having no property.

Uninviting as it may be, this is a story like any other. Its protagonist is assigned the "second-order" property[63] of *having no property*. Yet, if we step outside the story, it is simply be false that such a fictional entity has no property, for it has precisely (at least) the property of *having no property*. As a result, it would be not only the case that one property, *having no property*, is at the same time both nuclear and extranuclear. More problematically, that *fictum* would at the same time possess the property of *having no property* (for this is assigned to it in the story) and not possess it (for it is false that it has no property). Once again, the situation is easily dealt with in terms of the "modes of predication" distinction. One and the same property, the

[62] For a similar problem, cf. Priest (2005: 83–4).

[63] For this notion of a second-order property (clearly distinct from the one regarding properties of properties), cf. Kim (1998: 19–20).

"second-order" property of *having no property*, is at the same time internally possessed but not externally possessed by the same *fictum*.[64]

Clearly, it is not the case that a supporter of the "kinds of property" distinction cannot account for these and even more difficult cases. Again following a suggestion from Meinong,[65]it may be claimed that, for every extranuclear property, there is a watered-down (*depotenzierte*) nuclear property corresponding to it.[66] Consequently, in the metafictional example of (1) there are two properties at issue: the extranuclear property of *being a fictional object* and its corresponding watered-down nuclear property, which are both possessed by the same *fictum*, whereas in the paradoxical example of (2) there are again two properties, the extranuclear "second-order" property of *having no property* and its corresponding watered-down nuclear property, which, are not possessed and possessed respectively by the same *fictum*.

As many have noted, this answer seems highly *ad hoc*. There is no need to introduce this very large collection of watered-down nuclear properties except for the purpose of saving the "kinds of property" distinction.[67] In fact—as Russell replied to Meinong's use of a similar strategy[68]—no one can grasp what a watered-down counterpart of an extranuclear property could be. What exactly is, say, the watered-down property corresponding to the (allegedly extranuclear) property of *being a fictional object*? In respect of *ficta*, this perplexity is increased by the fact that there is no explanation for why some of the properties assigned to a *fictum* within a story have to be watered-down nuclear properties. Suppose there were another metafictional story starting with the sentence:

(3) Once upon a time there was a fictional golden mountain.

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[64] For many such examples, see Fine (1982). As Castañeda has already noted (1989b: 247–8), the "modes of predication" distinction vindicates Meinong's (1975[1907]: 223) reply to Russell's (1905a,b) basically similar objection that Meinongian objects contravene the Principle of Non-contradiction, in that the existent present King of France both does and does not exist. The point is that the existent present King of France is a Meinongian object which exists internally but fails to exist externally (in the sense that externally it fails to exist spatiotemporally).

[65] Cf. Meinong (1972[1916]: 291). Here Meinong elaborates his reply to Russell's problem of the existent present King of France (see previous footnote). He says that that one must distinguish between the property of *being existent* (that the existent present King of France possesses) and the property of *existing* (which the King lacks). Cf. Meinong (1975[1907]: 223).

[66] This is precisely what Parsons has done by again considering the case of the existent present King of France and distinguishing between the extranuclear property of *existence* and its watered-down nuclear variant. Cf. Parsons (1980: 42–4).

[67] For similar doubts about this thesis in its general form, cf. Parsons himself (1980: 44). In fact, Parsons seems to admit that a distinction should sometimes be drawn between *including* a property and *having* it (1980: 171). In my view, this distinction seems equivalent to the distinction between internal and external predication.

[68] To be exact, with regard to Meinong's distinction (cf. n. 65) between the properties of *being* existent and existing: cf. Russell (1907: 439).

The properties ascribed to the protagonist of this story by means of the predicates "_ is golden" and "_ is a mountain" are obviously the ordinary properties of *being golden* and *being mountainous*. According to the supporter of the "kinds of property" distinction, they have to be taken to be nuclear properties. Yet it seems also that the property ascribed to that protagonist by means of the predicate "_ is fictional" is the ordinary property of *being fictional*. Thus it seems that it is only the fact that, in the framework of the "kinds of property" distinction, the ordinary property of *being fictional* is taken to be an extranuclear property that forces the supporter of that distinction to take the property ascribed to the *fictum* in the above sentence to be not the ordinary property of *being fictional*, but an unwieldy watered-down nuclear property.

When considering *ficta*, moreover, being *ad hoc* is not the most difficult problem that the appeal to watered-down nuclear properties has to face. Once we have watered-down nuclear properties, nothing prevents us from imagining a more complicated both metafictional and paradoxical story starting with the following sentence:

(4) Once upon a time there was both a fictional and a watered-down fictional object.

According to the proponent of the "kinds of property" distinction, the property ascribed in the story to its protagonist through the predicate "_ is a fictional object" is the watered-down nuclear property corresponding to the extranuclear property of *being a fictional object*. However, if this is the case, the property ascribed in the story to its protagonist by means of the predicate "_ is a watered-down fictional object" cannot be the very same watered-down nuclear property, but must be *another* nuclear property. Now what can this property be? If the proponent of the "kinds of property" distinction maintains that what is designated by that predicate is something like a *doubly* watered-down nuclear property, then obviously an infinite regress arises. Suffice it to consider another story starting with the sentence:

(5) Once upon a time there was a fictional, a watered-down fictional, and a doubly watered-down fictional object.[69]

[69] Evidently, this regress is not vicious. Yet it shows that the "kinds of property" approach is committed to an unnecessary number of *n*-ly watered-down properties. (I owe this remark to Francesco Orilia). As Jacquette (1996: 83–4) points out, moreover, infinite regress affects the application of the "kinds of property" distinction to Meinongian objects in general. For Russell's problem, originally regarding the existent present King of France, comes up again with respect to the existent-in-an-*undepotenzierte*-way present king of France, as well as with respect to the existent-in-an-*undepotenzierte*-(*undepotenzierte*-way)-way present king of France, etc.

To my mind, all these problems affecting the "kinds of property" distinction and especially its application to *ficta* show that the "modes of predication" distinction is the right distinction for a Neo-Meinongian abstractionist to adopt with respect to Meinongian objects in general and *ficta* in particular.

Yet at this point it seems that a further question arises. Of the two Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theories considered so far, the set-theoretical and the genuinely Platonic, I said above that the first seems to fit with our intuitions regarding *ficta* better that the second, especially as far as the "incompleteness" and the "analyticity" data are concerned. But set-theoretical abstractionists *à la* Terence Parsons defend not the "modes of presentation" but the "kinds of property" distinction. Taken as sets of properties, Meinongian objects, and hence fictional entities, possess both nuclear properties—those properties which belong to such sets—and extranuclear properties—those properties which do not belong to such sets. Can the set-theoretical approach to Meinongian objects, hence to *ficta*, therefore opt for the "modes of predication" distinction?

The answer is that this position is not only possible, but highly recommendable. Platonists such as Edward Zalta admit that in their framework the "modes of predication" distinction is primitive: there are no further notions in terms of which the different notions of internal and external predication can be analyzed.[70] This may lead one to suspect that the distinction is again *ad hoc*. In fact, it is adopted in order to account for how a Meinongian object can possess properties differently from an ordinary object. But if one does not allow Meinongian objects one can peacefully dismiss the distinction. Yet once a Neo-Meinongian abstractionist endorses the set-theoretical proposal, it becomes clear what it means for a property to be internally vs. externally predicated of an entity. Internal predication is nothing other than set-membership: a property is internally possessed by an object iff it belongs to the property set which constitutes it.[71] A property can, however, also be predicated of an object in a non set-theoretical way, that is, whenever we say that the object instantiates or exemplifies a property. This is what normally happens with ordinary individuals, which are not sets; but it may happen with sets as well. This is external predication.

As stated previously, moreover, the set-theoretical doctrine deals better than the genuinely Platonic doctrine with both the "incompleteness" and the "analyticity" data. Adopting the "modes of predication" distinction in a set-theoretical framework reinforces this conclusion. As to the "analyticity" datum, it is worth recalling that the Kantian explanation of what analyticity amounts to—namely that a sentence is analytically true iff the meaning of

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[70] Cf. Zalta (1983: 12).

[71] Cf. Castañeda (1989a: 200) and Rapaport (1978: 162).

its singular term contains the meaning of its predicative term—perfectly matched the case of a sentence in which a property belonging to a set is predicated of that set. In other words, a sentence is analytically true iff the property that is the meaning of its predicative term belongs to the set that is the meaning of its singular term. Now, if saying of a fictional object that it has a certain property internally is equivalent to saying that this property belongs to the set constituting that object, then what is analytically true is the sentence asserting that this property is possessed internally by that object. Accordingly, the "analyticity" datum is clearly accounted for in this "mixed" approach which adopts the "modes of predication" distinction within a set-theoretical framework. Naturally, the same holds for the "incompleteness" datum. With regard to a property about which the relevant story neither says nor implies that a certain *fictum* has or lacks it, it is false to state both that the *fictum* has it internally and that the *fictum* has its complement internally since neither the property nor the complement belong to the set constituting this *fictum*. Consequently, the *fictum* is incomplete.

To sum up, I take this mixed approach to Meinongian objects, which combines a set-theoretically based conception of these entities with the "modes of predication" distinction interpreted along the above lines, to be the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory of fictional entities. Among Neo-Meinongian doctrines, William Rapaport's theory is closest to this approach.[72]

5. The Insufficiency of the Neo-Meinongian Abstractionist Position

I will now summarize the results obtained so far in respect of the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory of fictional entities, which could be described as an assemblage of parts of those Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theories actually presented in the literature. First, making *ficta* into

[72] I say "closely resembles" since—as I said in n. 36—according to Rapaport's theory Meinongian, hence fictional, objects are set-correlates rather than sets themselves. Rapaport's theory owes a lot to Castañeda's theory of guises, the set-correlates which are Castañedean equivalents of Meinongian objects. On the set-theoretical characterization of internal predication, see Castañeda (1989a: 200). On the treatment of the "analyticity" datum, see his (1985/6: 58). Finally, on the treatment of the "incompleteness" datum, see his (1989a: 185–7). However, Rapaport differs from Castañeda in reducing external predication to just one form of predication, exemplification. Moreover, Castañeda is even further from abstractionism than Rapaport for, according to the former, guises are concrete rather than abstract entities. See next section.

abstract entities explains their nonexistence in that it takes them to be actually but non-spatiotemporally existing entities. Furthermore, making them into sets of properties—those properties which are assigned to them in the relevant narration—rather than generic objects accounts more effectively both for their being incomplete entities and for the analytical character of the sentences in which these properties are ascribed to them. Moreover, taking those properties to be ascribed to *ficta* in the internal mode of presentation allows us to explain why one and the same property can be possessed both by an actually spatiotemporally existing object and by an actually non-spatiotemporally existing object such as a *fictum*. For the actually spatiotemporally existing object possesses externally what the *fictum* possesses at least internally. I say "at least" because a fictional object may also possess properties externally, sometimes the very same properties it also possesses internally. Finally, once this "internal/external" mode of predication distinction applies to *ficta* taken as sets of properties, it is not baffling at all. Although external predication is ordinary exemplification, as regards both *ficta* and actually spatiotemporally existing individuals internal predication is just set-membership: a property is possessed internally by a *fictum* iff it belongs to the property set that constitutes that *fictum*.

These are all positive results, ones that a satisfactory theory of fictional objects must include. Yet they are insufficient. Being a certain set of properties is definitely a necessary condition for the individuation of a *fictum* since the set is one of its constituents; change the set and you obtain a different *fictum*.[73] No matter which property is internally possessed by a *fictum*, insofar as that property is a member of the set which constitutes that *fictum*, if that entity had not possessed that property it would not have been that *fictum*. It is quite obvious that Yolanda, the daughter of the Black Corsair, could not have failed to be the Corsair's offspring (by being instead his niece, or someone else's daughter). But this heroine in one of Emilio Salgari's adventure novels, very popular in countries where Romance language are spoken, could not even have been such, that the Corsair had not bestowed that name on her (but, say, had named her "Concetta"). Both *being generated by the Corsair* and *being called "Yolanda"* are indeed for Salgari's heroine internally possessed properties, hence members of the set constituting that character. However, being a certain set of properties is not a sufficient condition for a *fictum*'s individuation. In this respect, two problems arise. First, there may be a property set without any *fictum* (I call this the "no-*ficta*" problem). Second, one and the same property set may be

[73] For this thesis, cf. Parsons (1980: 28).

matched by different *ficta* (I call this the "many-*ficta*" problem). Let me address them in turn.

The attentive reader will have noticed that in dealing with the Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theories of fictional objects, although I have always tried to focus on these entities, the results obtained hold also for Meinongian objects in general. In fact, the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory will hold that *a Meinongian object* is a set of properties at least internally predicated of it. So, with respect to this theory the same question arises as with Meinong's original position: what makes a Meinongian object a *fictional* entity since by itself a set of properties is not a fictional object? This is the "no-*ficta*" problem. Take the following example.[74] In the past, interpreters of the Bible erroneously took the name "Moloch" to refer to a mythical monster, whereas modern philology has shown that it is in fact used as a common noun either for kings or for human sacrifices. Now, notwithstanding this philological error, there is undoubtedly a set $M = \{F,G,H \ldots\}$ constituted by the properties that past interpreters mistakenly understood the Bible to assign to a certain character. However, that set is not identical with a fictional character because within the realm of fictional characters there is no such entity as Moloch.

A defender of the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory of fictional entities might try to circumvent the "no-*ficta*" problem by saying that a *fictum* is a Meinongian object whose constitutive properties are the properties *effectively* mobilized in a fiction. That is, if a fiction *effectively* narrates that certain properties are possessed by an individual, then the set containing all those properties coincides with a fictional entity. Since in the "Moloch" case the Bible effectively performs no such narration, there is no such fictional character as Moloch.

Yet this reply just moves the issue one step back. Since the Neo-Meinongian abstractionist says that the properties which turn a set of properties into a fictional object are the properties mobilized in a fiction, the difficulty is that there may well be one and the same set of properties mobilized by another fiction and different characters.

This is the "many-*ficta*" problem. It is not only the case that a set of properties does not by itself generate any *fictum*; it may also be that it matches more than one *fictum*. Take the famous example in which Jorge Luis Borges imagines that a man called Pierre Menard happens to write a text that is word for word identical with Miguel Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Suppose one idealizes this case so that not only is Menard taken to be totally unconnected with Cervantes (neither knows anything about the other), but

[74] Which I borrow from Kripke (1973).

the two literary works mobilized by such texts are imagined to coincide not only in their explicit but also in their implicit truths.[75] One may, for example, take the two works in question to be rather abstract works so that their implicit truths are mostly composed of general truths about the world. Or one may even suppose that Menard does not live some centuries after Cervantes but is his completely unknown next-door neighbor. In that case, one and the same set of properties matches different characters. If we take Borges' example as one of these cases, Cervantes' Don Quixote and Pierre Menard's Don Quixote are two distinct characters who, nonetheless, share all the properties attributed to them in the respective works. It would be useless for the Neo-Meinongian abstractionist to appeal to the fact that the properties in question are mobilized in a fiction. For such a mobilization yields different characters.[76]

The Neo-Meinongian abstractionist might deny that in this case two different *ficta* are in question: since the set of properties is the same, so is the fictional object.[77] But this is hard to accept. As I said above, in the idealized version of the "Menard" case, Pierre Menard is imagined to be a person completely unconnected with Cervantes, an individual who in writing his story just happens to repeat the words that were used by Cervantes in writing *Don Quixote*. One could even imagine that Borges' case reformulated in terms of a Twin-Earth experiment. Notwithstanding their spatial difference, Earthians and Twin-Earthians may well share the same mathematics. Hence, Earthians may conceive of the very same set-theoretical entities that are conceived of by Twin-Earthians. In particular, if Earthians comprehend a certain set of properties, the set constituted by the same properties that Twin-Earthians comprehend is the same. Yet it would be hard to admit that they share the same fictional characters and, more generally, the same fictional

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[75] All this is, of course, hard to maintain in the real Borges example, where Menard not only is well aware of Cervantes (oddly enough, he intends to compose the very same literary work as Cervantes did), but also lives some centuries later. As a result of, the implicit truths of Menard's *Don Quixote* would hardly coincide with the implicit truths of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, which of course refer to seventeenth-century Europe. To my knowledge, Currie (1990: 77–8) was the first to raise this problem. Moreover, in order for the expected idealization to hold, the involved *ficta* must also share all their relational properties. Naturally, this hardly holds for the real "Menard" case, where Cervantes' Don Quixote has the relational property of *mastering Sancho Panza*$_1$, whereas Menard's Don Quixote has the distinct relational property of *mastering Sancho Panza*$_2$.

[76] Cf. Lewis (1978: 39). For a repeat of this objection, see Fine (1982: 132) and Thomasson (1999: 56).

[77] Cf. Parsons (1980: 188). In the "Menard" case, the Neo-Meinongian abstractionist would also maintain that there is just one literary work at issue.

"world" (though, of course, the texts their fictions are made up of would be syntactically identical).[78]

Therefore, given both the "no-*ficta*" and the "many-*ficta*" problems, it turns out that a fictional object cannot coincide with a set of properties. Being (constituted by) a set of properties is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the individuation of a *fictum*. There must be something over and above being a certain set of properties that makes an entity a fictional entity, and so different *ficta* may correspond to one and the same property set.

If this is the case, one might think that the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist conception of *ficta* can survive in a weak form. It is true that for the above reasons a *fictum* cannot be a set; but it can be something like a set-*correlate*. I take this to be a weakening of a Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory of *ficta*. Yet it is still closer to the actual Neo-Meinongian theories than the above conception. We have already seen that Neo-Meinongian theories are committed to some version or other of the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption. According to that principle, for any collection of properties there is a Meinongian object that has those properties. As a result, a Meinongian object is really a correlate of a property set rather than such a set itself.[79] From this perspective, since a fictional object is nothing but a special case of a Meinongian object, it is a set-correlate as well.

As stated in the previous section, the set-theoretical Neo-Meinongians favor a conception of Meinongian objects as set-correlates rather than mere sets. I think that Hector-Neri Castañeda's doctrine of Meinongian objects gives the most systematic account of what a set-correlate may be. On Castañeda's theory, *individual guises* (his theoretical version of Meinongian objects) are the ontological results of the application of a certain operator *c* to a certain set of properties (the so-called *guise core*). These properties are therefore internally predicated of the guise.[80] Castañeda characterizes such an operator as a *concretizer*, for its function is that of converting an abstract entity such as a set into a concrete entity such as a guise.[81] I prefer, however,

[78] Fine (1982: 133–5) raises another similar problem, based on the qualitative identity of two distinct characters belonging to the same story. Fine's contrary opinion notwithstanding, this seems to me a weaker problem for Neo-Meinongians. For they may say that the two characters C and C' in question at least differ in the fact that the former has internally the property of *being distinct from C'* which the latter obviously lacks, whereas the latter has internally the property of *being distinct from C* which the former obviously lacks.

[79] As I said above (n. 36), this is really the core of both Rapaport's and Parsons's original doctrines. Cf. Rapaport (1978: 162) and Parsons (1980: 18 and n. 1, 54–5) respectively.

[80] Cf. Castañeda (1989b: 240).

[81] In (1986: 334–5), Castañeda gives an argument for the difference between sets (of properties) and individual guises which relies on their different behavior with respect to existence. To say that a set of properties exists, that is, that all its properties are located in space-time, is not to say that the guise constituted by this set exists. See also (1985/6: 53).

to consider this operator as an *individuator* as Castañeda himself sometimes labels it.[82] Given the above definition of concreteness as "(possibly) being directly involved in the causal order of the world", I strongly doubt that a guise can really be a concrete entity.[83] This is why I take Castañeda's doctrine to be a way of weakening Neo-Meinongian abstractionism rather than a rejection of it. Generally speaking, I take a set-correlate (such as a guise) to be an abstract-based entity rather than a concrete one. But let me put this issue to one side. For the weakening of the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory of fictional entities seems to constitute a real improvement over this theory by claiming that, though a *fictum* is indeed constituted by a property set, it is something over and above that set. So why cannot a set-correlate, such as a Castañedian guise, be the model for a fictional entity?

Yet the way a guise is constituted in Castañeda's doctrine shows that it is a *one-one* set-correlate: for each set of properties, there is just one guise corresponding to it. As a result, our two previous problems unfortunately return in a new form. First, as I have already suggested, guises are Castañeda's counterparts of Meinongian objects *in general*. So again the question arises: how can *those* guises which are fictional entities be singled out from the general domain of guises? It is clear that the individuator is unable to do this because it limits itself to the general function of converting a set into a guise. Thus, we can have a guise or, in general, a one-one set-correlate and yet fail to have a *fictional* entity.[84] Moreover, although the individuator can at most generate *one* guise out of a property set so that there is a one-one correspondence between property sets and guises, *different* fictional entities may be correlated to one and the same property set, as the "Pierre Menard" case shows.[85] These problems do not depend on the fact that set-correlates are Castañedian guises, but rather on the fact that they are one-one set-correlates. Consequently, the above problems would arise again with respect to any other non-Castañedian theory of *ficta* as one-one set-correlates.

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[82] Cf. Castañeda (1975: 138–40).

[83] I have criticized this conviction in Voltolini (1995). Orilia takes the operator as a concretizer since he sees it as representing a mental operation acting directly on properties (2002: 148).

[84] Castañeda is aware of this problem for he tries to locate in a specific type of external predication what makes a *fictum* out of a guise. In fact, in Castañeda's view a *fictum* may be just a single guise but is normally, instead, a system of guises tied together by a specific type of external predication, *consociation*. Cf. Castañeda (1989a). On this point, cf. Orilia (2002: 158–9).

[85] Undoubtedly, if—following Castañeda—one takes *ficta* to be systems of consociated guises, one may tie consociation to contextual factors such as different thinking individuals. As a result, in the "Menard" case one may obtain different *ficta* as different systems of identical guises consociated via different authors. (I owe this suggestion to Francesco Orilia). Yet this would provide no solution to a further idealized "Menard" case where the two authors think only one and the same single guise.

To sum up, the weak Neo-Meinongian abstractionism proposed by Castañeda is definitely superior to Neo-Meinongian abstractionism *tout court* because it understands that a *fictum* must be something over and above a property set. Yet the conception of guises as one-one set-correlates outlined by weak Neo-Meinongian abstractionism is still not sufficient to give us fictional entities.

Therefore, in order to see what makes an entity a fictional entity, one has to look to other factors beyond both the set-theoretical and the guise-theoretical ones. Two such factors immediately come to mind. First, there is the *fictum*'s creator: Cervantes' Don Quixote and Pierre Menard's Don Quixote are different *ficta* because Cervantes and Menard are different individuals. Secondly, there is the fictional work that tells its story: Cervantes' Don Quixote and Pierre Menard's Don Quixote are different *ficta* since the fictional works of these authors are different despite their syntactical identity. It is to these factors that we now turn.

Chapter 2

THE COMMITTAL THEORIES (II)

1. Synopsis

In this chapter I devote my attention to the evaluation of the alternative abstractionist conception of fictional entities, namely the *artifactualist* theory. I focus on one of the most articulate versions of that conception, namely Amie Thomasson's theory of fictional objects. This theory takes *ficta* to be entities that depend both in a rigid and a historical way on the specific mental acts of their creators and in a generic and constant manner on the literary works in which they appear. I agree that this theory is able to solve the problems left unresolved by the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist doctrine, but I try to point out some of its drawbacks.

First, by elaborating Thomasson's position a bit further, I show not only that it deals with the "incompleteness" datum in the same way as Neo-Meinongians from the structural angle but also that, unlike the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist doctrine, it fails to accommodate the "analyticity" datum.

More importantly, I point out that in Thomasson's account the artifactualists' basic claim that *ficta* are generated abstract artifactual entities is an unsatisfactory proposition.

Finally, and most significantly, I maintain that since the existence of specific mental acts and the existence of generic literary works do not, even jointly, constitute sufficient conditions for the existence of a fictional being, Thomasson's theory risks undermining her fundamental idea that there really are such things as fictional entities understood as abstract artifacts.

2. The Artifactualist Abstractionist Conception

As we saw in our examination of the "no-*ficta*" and the "many-*ficta*" problems, the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist doctrine of fictional entities foundered on the fact that a *fictum* is something over and above a set of properties. Although it took this fact into account, the Castañedean weakening of Neo-Meinongian abstractionism was also unsuccessful. It is now time to evaluate a (partially) new approach to fictional entities.

Up to now, *ficta* have been conceived in terms of a, broadly speaking, Platonic model of what an abstract entity is. According to this model, an abstract entity is an *atemporal* being as its non-spatiotemporal existence suggests. Moreover, though as stated above it is an actual entity, it belongs to that "part" of the real world—what Plato called the hyperuranic realm—which has no substantive relation with the area of concrete actual entities. Finally, as is suggested by its lack of interaction with concrete actual entities, it exists (non-spatiotemporally) not only in the real world but also in all the possible worlds: it is a *necessary* being. Mathematical entities are typical examples of this model of abstractness; but types satisfy it as well (as Plato claimed in developing his theory of ideas). So, inasmuch as *ficta* are taken to be either (one-one correlates of) sets or generic objects, they are also taken to be (one-one correlates of) abstract entities of the same kind.

Nonetheless, intuitively speaking, *ficta* do not seem to fit this model. It may be the case that mathematical entities and types exist independently of concrete entities and in particular of human beings.[1] But if there were no humans, would there be fictional entities? Could a spiritless world—specifically, a world without human beings—be a world in which Hamlet and Holmes are freely floating entities along with the number 4 and the classes that are members of themselves or with the Bold and the Beautiful? Moreover, again unlike abstract Platonic entities, *ficta* are often described as creations of (human) minds, as products of (human) fantasy. That is, not only do they seem to be entities dependent for their existence on the existence of other beings (humans or, better, human communities) but they also appear to be entities that come into being at a certain point in the history of the world as a product of someone's imagination. Not only, if there are no humans, there is no Hamlet; but also, if nobody had conceived (and correspondingly verbalized, written or performed) *Hamlet*, once again there would be no Hamlet. Whereas, if Plato is right, neither the number 4 nor the Beautiful needs a soul to activate it.

[1] I say "it may be the case" since one can genuinely question whether mathematical beings as well as types are Platonic-like entities—for instance, if one endorses mathematical constructivism.

Undoubtedly, however, this intuition does not mean that the abstractionist conception of fictional entities has to be abandoned. It merely means that *ficta* do not fit the model of what Edmund Husserl would call *free idealities*, namely *abstracta* having the Platonic features described above. But the domain of *abstracta* is not exhausted by free idealities. There are also what Husserl labelled *bound idealities*, namely *abstracta* that depend for their existence on the existence of other beings.[2] Furthermore, this dependence is not only *metaphysical*—the dependent entity exists only in possible worlds in which those other beings exist—but also *temporal*: the dependent entity must be such that it begins to exist when one of those beings brings it into existence.[3] Institutional entities, such as constitutions, nations and universities, are prototypical cases of bound idealities in the above sense. Following Wolfgang Künne, I will take species as an exemplifying case of such entities. Wherever we go, we never encounter the species *homo*, but only specimens of it. Nor could we: it is an abstract entity, a being that exists in a non-spatiotemporal way. Yet this species exists only insofar as there are specimens of it: in a world with no humans, the species would not exist. Moreover, the species must be such that it exists as soon as a specimen of it, a concrete human being, happens to exist (if Charles Darwin is right, the species has not always existed but came into existence as soon as its first specimen was born).[4]

Thus, as far as fictional entities are concerned it is possible not to give up abstractionism altogether but, instead, to develop a thoroughly different kind of abstractionist theory. This will be a doctrine that does not take *ficta* to be (one-one correlates of) free idealities, as Neo-Meinongians do, but rather bound idealities. According to this theory, *ficta* depend for their existence on the existence of other beings, on human mental acts. More precisely, they depend on them not only metaphysically, but also temporally. Moreover, temporal dependence on mental acts makes it possible to see *ficta* as *constructed* abstract objects. Lastly, since they are constructed entities, they may be thought of as abstract *artifacts*. This doctrine was first defended by Roman Ingarden[5] and then by several scholars on different occasions.[6] A new version has been recently presented in Thomasson's artifactual theory of

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[2] Cf. Husserl (1948: 267).

[3] Cf. again Husserl (ibid.).

[4] Cf. Künne (1982: 407). In point of fact, it is controversial that species are bound idealities. One might say instead that they are like types, for which existence means instantiation. Yet my point is completely independent of this issue.

[5] Cf. Ingarden (1931). In fact, Ingarden prompted Husserl to revise his original theory of *abstracta* and to allow for bound idealities. Cf. Künne (1982: 406–7). As to the advantage of Ingarden's theory of *ficta* over Meinong's own theory, see Smith (1980).

[6] Cf., for example, Kripke (1973), Searle (1979), van Inwagen (1979), and Salmon (1998).

fictional entities.[7] As far as I know, this is the most complete development of this alternative abstractionist conception of fictional entities. So, it is to the evaluation of this theory that I now turn.

To begin with, Thomasson openly acknowledges that a *fictum* is an abstract entity: no spatiotemporal location can be truthfully attributed to it.[8] Yet, on Thomasson's own account a *fictum* is abstract in the same sense as a Husserlian bound ideality is. Indeed, Thomasson's first substantive claim is that a *fictum* is an abstract entity which, both rigidly and historically, depends on the mental act by means of which its creator thinks of it.[9] Let me expand on this.

Following a widespread tradition, Thomasson elucidates existential dependence in *modal* terms: saying that the existence of one entity depends on the existence of another entity amounts to saying that the first entity *cannot* exist unless the second exists. But Thomasson enriches this traditional account by specifying dependence as such in a variety of ways. First of all, dependence can be either *rigid* or *generic*. The former is dependence on a particular individual: the dependent entity cannot exist unless a particular individual exists. This is a *specific* dependence: an object depends on another particular entity for its existence. The latter, in contrast, is dependence on something of a particular type: the dependent entity cannot exist unless something of a particular type exists.[10]

Now, according to Thomasson, *ficta* are primarily affected by the first kind of dependence. A *fictum* depends rigidly on the particular mental act of the author of the fiction that talks of it: if that act did not exist, the *fictum* would not exist either. Furthermore, this dependence is not only rigid but also *historical*, where by "historical dependence" Thomasson means that in order for the dependent entity to come into existence, another entity must already exist.[11] Hence, a *fictum* also requires that the mental act on which it rigidly depends already exists in order for it to come into existence: had that

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[7] Cf. Thomasson (1999).

[8] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 36–7). By taking *ficta* to be historically and, as will be seen below, also constantly dependent on other entities, Thomasson allows for *ficta* to have temporal features. Goodman (2003) holds that Thomasson's theory should be revised by saying that, though abstract, a *fictum* has not only temporal but also *spatial* features, in the sense of having a *generic* habitat of existence. This fits Husserl's conception of bound idealities, according to which their boundedness "is a boundedness to *spatio*temporal regions" (Künne (1982: 430; my italics)). Yet to allow for *ficta* to have an, albeit generic, location seems utterly counterintuitive. Would we be prepared to say that two *ficta* have switched places if the communities that respectively brought them into existence had exchanged settlements?

[9] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 35).

[10] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 29). For both kinds of dependencies, see also Mulligan-Smith (1986: 117–8).

[11] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 31).

act not occurred, the *fictum* would not have come into existence. Historical dependence is what entitles us to speak of the *fictum*'s original thinker, namely the author of the fiction talking of it, as its *creator*.

By means of this conceptual apparatus, the artifactual theory can provide a solution to the problems illustrated at the end of the previous chapter, namely the "no-*ficta*" and the "many-*ficta*" problems.

As you will remember, the "no-*ficta*" problem was exemplified by the "Moloch" case: although there already exists a set of "moloch-ish" properties, there is no such a thing as Moloch since no "Moloch" story is really recounted in the Bible. However, in the context of the artifactualist theory, it is clear that there might have been such a thing as Moloch, if the Bible had really contained the "Moloch" story. And if at the times when the Bible was written there had been someone who had conceived of (and, accordingly, included in a book of the Bible) Moloch as the protagonist of the story we erroneously think of as really found in the Bible.[12]

The "many-*ficta*" problem has a similar solution. Let us recall the idealized case of Pierre Menard: two syntactically identical texts written by two totally unconnected individuals, Cervantes and Pierre Menard. In that situation, there are two different mental acts of thinking about a character named "Don Quixote", one by Cervantes and another by Pierre Menard. Given the rigid historical dependence of *ficta* on their creators' mental acts, those thoughts bring into existence two different characters, two Don Quixotes; these are distinct *ficta* even though in both texts they are ascribed all the very same properties.[13]

At first sight, one might think that the mental act on which a *fictum* depends rigidly and historically is the extra factor, over and above its being a property set, that makes a *fictum* the entity it is. Yet Thomasson does not go in this direction. Certainly, as we have seen, she acknowledges with Neo-Meinongian abstractionists that a *fictum* is an abstract being. But, in her view, the fact that there is something a fictional entity *historically* depends on, that a *fictum* is an entity which comes into being as a result of something happening, shows that a *fictum* is nothing like a set. Indeed, for Thomasson a *fictum* is an *artifact*, though an abstract one; it is a product of human culture, such as games, institutions and laws.

At this point, it must be explained what makes a *fictum* remain in being once it has come into existence through being thought of by its creator. If a *fictum* were a set, this issue would not even arise. As we saw, by borrowing the Platonic conception of mathematical entities one might claim that, *qua* set, a *fictum*—like a number—is an atemporal being. Thus, it

[12] This is the solution suggested by Kripke (1973).

[13] Cf. Thomasson herself (1999: 6–7, 56).

neither comes into existence nor persists in it for its existence is totally independent of temporal connotations. Nonetheless, from the artifactualist perspective a *fictum* is no set at all, but rather an entity that comes into existence at a certain point in history by being thought of by its creator. Now, if it comes into existence in this way, how is it that, on Thomasson's account, a *fictum* may go on existing? Let me call this the *persistence problem*.

In order to address this problem, Thomasson advances her second substantive claim: over and above its rigid historical dependence on a given mental act of its creator, a *fictum* also depends generically and constantly on a literary work or other in which it is mentioned.[14] I have already explained what generic dependence is: the dependent entity cannot exist unless something or other of a particular type exists. In order for a *fictum* to exist, therefore, there must be a narration that speaks of that *fictum*. Moreover, this generic dependence is also constant. By "constant dependence" Thomasson means a relation such that the dependent entity requires that the entity on which it depends, exists at every moment at which the dependent entity exists.[15] As a result, by being constantly and generically dependent on literary works, a *fictum* requires that, at every moment it exists, there is a literary work that mentions it.

It is clear how such a claim enables Thomasson to solve the persistence problem. A *fictum* continues in being as long as there is a work that numbers it among its elements. In its turn, a literary work generically and constantly depends on a copy of itself. By "copy of a work", Thomasson means a semantically interpreted entity, a physical item understood in a certain way by a given linguistic community.[16] Accordingly, a *fictum* continues in being as long as there exists a copy of a work that has it among its characters.

An obvious consequence of this position is that a *fictum* is perishable. Suppose that every copy of every work in which a certain *fictum* is mentioned ceases to exist; that all the physical copies of those works are destroyed and all memories of the *fictum* fade into oblivion. The result is that the fictional entity itself also vanishes from existence.[17]

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[14] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 36).

[15] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 30).

[16] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 36, 65–6). To be more precise, for Thomasson even a mental remembering of a work may suffice in order for that work to be kept in existence. Cf. (1999: 11–2, 36). She would in fact remark that, once copies are taken to be semantically interpreted entities, there is no need for them to exist in the *outer* rather than in the *inner* world (as memories, *qua* mental acts endowed with content, do).

[17] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 10).

In the context of the artifactualist abstractionist approach to fictional beings, this is quite understandable. As stated previously, I take species to be an illuminating case of bound idealities, of abstract dependent entities. Now, just as it originates when its first specimen comes into being, a species ceases to exist as soon as its last specimen dies out.[18] One may therefore expect that, in general, any bound ideality will go out of existence as soon as the entities on which it constantly depends no longer exist.

3. The Drawbacks of the Artifactualist Abstractionist Conception

Up to this point, I have sketched a paradigm which is partially an alternative to the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist conception of fictional beings. This alternative seems more promising than the Meinongian conception for it develops an apparently more intuitive conception of fictional beings capable of solving the problems—the "no-*ficta*" and the "many-*ficta*" problems—on which the Neo-Meinongian conception had foundered. It is now time to see whether such merits give the artifactualist abstractionist theory a real advantage over the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist conception. I do not in fact think that they do. First of all, despite its intuitive nature, the artifactualist theory accounts for the second datum pointed out in the previous chapter—the "incompleteness" datum—in the same way as Neo-Meinongians. Also, unlike the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist doctrine, it does not explain the third datum, the "analyticity" datum. More problematically than this, moreover, it is unclear how it can support the artifactualist's basic claim that *ficta* are generated abstract artifactual entities. Finally and most perplexingly, even if that doctrine is taken to provide the necessary conditions for the identity of a fictional entity, it fails to offer convincing sufficient conditions for its existence. As a result, it risks providing no real basis for its ontologically realist stance on *ficta* as abstract artifacts. Let me address these issues in turn.

3.1 The Artifactualist Approach to Data

Since Thomasson's theory conceives of *ficta* as abstract entities, it is no surprise that it accounts for the first datum regarding *ficta* that I pointed out in the previous chapter, namely the "nonexistence" datum, in very much the same terms as Neo-Meinongian abstractionists. A *fictum* does not exist in the sense that it does not exist spatiotemporally, or, amounting to the same

[18] Cf. Künne (1982: 407).

thing, it exists non-spatiotemporally.[19] What is probably surprising is that Thomasson ends up accounting for the second datum, the "incompleteness" datum, in structurally the same way that Neo-Meinongian abstractionists explain it. To show that this is the case, a short digression is required.

To begin with, it will be remembered from the previous chapter that the idea that a *fictum* possesses the properties ascribed to it in the relevant narration can seem perplexing. How can it be that Hamlet is a prince, like Charles, Prince of Wales, and that Sherlock Holmes lives in London, like Queen Elizabeth II? Neo-Meinongians answer this question in the affirmative by appealing either to the "kinds of properties" or to the "modes of predication" distinction; for example, *being a prince* either is a nuclear property of Hamlet or is internally predicated of him. Thomasson, on the contrary, appears to answer this question in the negative. Because a *fictum* is an abstract artifact, it cannot have the properties that real concrete individuals possess. As she says, it is literally not true that Hamlet is a prince.[20]

Thomasson's answer, however, is more complex than this. First of all, she draws a distinction between two kinds of sentential contexts in which a property is predicated of a certain *fictum*. In her view, one and the same sentence can be understood both from the perspective of a real context and from that of a fictional context; that is, both with respect to a concrete section of the real world and with respect to an abstract section of the same

[19] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 112). On this issue there is a slight difference between Thomasson and Neo-Meinongians. On the one hand, the Neo-Meinongians tend to interpret the distinction between *abstracta* and other *actualia* in terms of their possession of different first-order properties: *abstracta subsist*, that is they exist non-spatiotemporally or, alternatively, merely bring about effects, whereas other *actualia exist tout court*, that is they exist spatiotemporally or, alternatively, both bring about and undergo effects. On the other hand, Thomasson deals with this existential difference in terms of a contextual restriction of the particular quantifier which for her has only an existentially loaded import. When one says that there are entities of a certain kind, one may take the quantifier to be either unrestricted—as bounding a variable that ranges over any entity whatsoever—or restricted—as bounding a variable that ranges only over spatiotemporally existent beings. So, when one says that there are such things as fictional beings, one is making a true statement if the quantifier is understood in the unrestricted sense, but a false statement if it is used in the restricted sense (ibid.). Certainly, some—perhaps most—Neo-Meinongians admit that when we say that there are no fictional entities, we are contextually restricting the particular quantifier to a domain of existents. Yet they stress that if we are to make such a restriction, a first-order property of existence *tout court* must be available. See the authors quoted in n.4 of the previous chapter. Nevertheless, such a difference between the two perspectives is irrelevant for our present purposes.

[20] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 107).

world, a section constituted by the relevant story in which that *fictum* originally occurred.[21] So, take a sentence such as:

(1) Hamlet is a prince.

With respect to the first context this sentence is false, for in the concrete section of our world it is simply not the case that the abstract artifact Hamlet has the property of *being a prince*. Yet with respect to the second context the sentence is true, for in a certain abstract section of our world, namely the story of *Hamlet*, the abstract artifact Hamlet does have that property. Indeed, *Hamlet* says that Hamlet is a prince.[22]

Although Thomasson would not put it in this way, one can say that on her account a *fictum* has the properties ascribed to it in the relevant fiction—let us take them to be *absolute* properties—only *relatively*; that is, only in the relevant fictional context. Indeed, the situation here is structurally similar to the situation affecting temporal contexts; one and the same sentence, for example:

(2) George W. Bush is president of the USA

is evaluated differently with respect to different temporal contexts, say 1995 and 2005; with respect to the first context it is false and with respect to the second it is true. Thus one may say that Bush has the property of *being president of USA* only relatively; that is, only in the second temporal context.

However, Thomasson adds that to say truly with respect to a fictional context that a *fictum* has a property ascribed to it by the story which determines that context amounts to saying truly *tout court* that according to the story that *fictum* has that property.[23] To my mind, this move amounts to allowing that fictional objects absolutely have *story-relative* properties, namely, relational properties of the kind *being P according to story S*.[24] One may take this property to be very close to a converse-intentional property of the kind *being told/believed by agent A to be P*, which may indeed be rephrased as *being P according to A*.[25] A comparison with the situation affecting standard contexts

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[21] I think that, like artifactualists in general [cf., for example, Predelli (1997) and (2002)], Thomasson regards these contexts as relevant merely for the evaluation of the sentences involved. It is obvious that, for her, the shift from a real to a fictional context does not induce any shift in the meaning of a sentence; rather, the contextual shift is relevant only in that it may alter the truth value of the sentence. In Chapter 5, however, we see that the artifactualists' belief that fictional contexts induce no meaning shift in the sentences involved is ungrounded.

[22] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 105–7).

[23] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 107).

[24] For many examples of relational properties of this kind, see, for example, Varzi (2001: 98–9).

[25] For the notion of a converse-intentional property, see Chisholm (1982a).

of sentential evaluation, possible worlds, will be useful here. Saying that with respect to a possible world *w*, an object possesses the absolute property of *being P* is the same as saying that this same object possesses absolutely the world-relative property of *being P-in-w*.[26]

Undoubtedly, Thomasson could do without this appeal to story-relative properties if, in saying that a sentence such as (1) is tantamount to:

(1′) According to *Hamlet*, Hamlet is a prince

she further claimed that (1′) has to be read *de dicto*. Yet she clearly rejects this option: for her, (1′) is to be read *de re*.[27] But this is precisely the same as saying that by means of (1′)—or of its equivalent (1)—the story-relative property of *being a prince according to Hamlet* is predicated of the fictional object Hamlet.

Once we bring in story-relative properties, it turns out that regarding the issue of property possession, Thomasson's position is not very far from that advocating the "type of property" distinction. At first sight, one might say that whereas the latter position distinguishes between nuclear and extranuclear properties, Thomasson distinguishes between story-relative and story-*non*relative, namely absolute, properties.[28]

Of course, Thomasson may immediately point out that there is a difference between her (possible) appeal to a distinction between story-relative and absolute properties and what the advocates of the "type of property" distinction maintain. According to them, a *fictum* genuinely possesses not only nuclear but also extranuclear properties. Thomasson, in contrast, thinks that a *fictum* genuinely possesses only story-relative properties. Absolute properties, which for her are not extranuclear properties but just the de-relativized counterparts of the story-relative properties, are properties that the *fictum* possesses only relatively, that is, with respect to the appropriate fictional context.

This view is correct. Yet it can immediately be retorted that, in looking at Thomasson's theoretical framework, the nuclear/extranuclear distinction should not be mapped onto that between story-relative and absolute properties but, rather, onto that between story-relative and (let me call them) *reality*-relative properties. In distinguishing between real and fictional contexts, Thomasson not only says that *ficta* possess certain properties with respect to

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[26] Cf. Plantinga (1974: 62).

[27] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 107).

[28] This seems to be the gist of Ingarden's distinction between *ficta* possessing *ascribed characteristics*, corresponding to true sentences such as (1'), and *properties in the strict sense*, such as *being a fictional character*. On this distinction, see Smith (1980: 101).

fictional contexts but not to real contexts, she also claims that *ficta* possess other properties with respect to real contexts but not to fictional contexts, for instance the property of *being a fictional character*.[29] This is to say that a *fictum* also possesses those very properties relatively. Moreover, one must say that for Thomasson to say truly with respect to a real context that a *fictum* possesses one such property is again tantamount to saying truly that, according to reality (that is, according to the concrete part of our world), that *fictum* possesses that property. Yet this is, furthermore, the same as saying that that *fictum* possesses absolutely the reality-relative property of *being a fictional character according to reality*.[30]

When things are viewed in this light, Thomasson's account of the "incompleteness" datum turns out to be structurally similar to the account given by the supporters of the "types of property" distinction or even by those favoring any kind of Neo-Meinongian conception. Regarding any property *P* about which the relevant narration neither says nor implies that a given character either has or does not have it, Thomasson claims that it is false both that, according to the story, the character has it and that, according to the story, that the character does not have it. For instance, she claims that it is false both that, according to Shakespeare's tragedy, Hamlet is of blood type A and that, according to Shakespeare's tragedy, Hamlet is not of blood type A.[31] In actual fact, for Thomasson this does not demonstrate that such a *fictum* is incomplete with respect to the property *P* in question. It is simply false that such a *fictum* has *P*, and it is also false that it possesses any property that, on the contrary, the relevant narration says it has. Stated more precisely, with respect to a real context it is false that the *fictum* has *P* or any of the properties the relevant narration says it has. For instance, in relation

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[29] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 106). According to Neo-Meinongians, these are in fact the extranuclear properties.

[30] At this point, one might even say that the "types of property" distinction is really grounded in Thomasson's distinction between story-relative and reality-relative properties. For that distinction is able to solve problems that the original appeal to the nuclear/extranuclear distinction had left open. As will be remembered from the previous chapter, scrutiny of the "types of property" distinction prompted (*inter alia*) the following doubts. Above all, how can the nuclear/extranuclear property distinction be justified? Moreover, what is the watered-down nuclear version of an extranuclear property? Appealing to relative properties can solve both problems at the same time. First, one can assume that nuclear properties differ from extranuclear properties in being *each* a watered-down version of the corresponding extranuclear property. Secondly, one can take extranuclear properties to be the reality-relative properties and watered-down nuclear versions of extranuclear properties to be precisely the corresponding story-relative properties.

[31] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 107–8).

to a real context it is false both that Hamlet is of blood type A and that Hamlet is a prince.[32] Yet, as we have already seen, the two false sentences:

(3) According to *Hamlet*, Hamlet is of blood type A

(4) According to *Hamlet*, Hamlet is not of blood type A

should for Thomasson be read *de re*:

(3′) Hamlet is such that, according to *Hamlet*, he is of blood type A

(4′) Hamlet is such that, according to *Hamlet*, he is not of blood type A.

But, as we have also seen above, this is the same as saying that, in Thomasson's view, Hamlet fails to possess the story-relative property of *being of blood type A according to Hamlet* and also fails to possess its complement, namely the story-relative property of *not being of blood type A according to Hamlet*. Thus, I conclude that Thomasson's position is very close to that of a Neo-Meinongian follower of the "types of property" distinction who holds that a *fictum F* is incomplete iff, with respect to both the nuclear property *P* and its complement *not-P*, the *fictum* fails to have them (this is equivalent to saying that both "F is P" and "F is not-P" are false). *Mutatis mutandis*, we have to say that, with respect to this point, Thomasson's position is in general close to that of a Neo-Meinongian.

Be that as it may, however, this way of accounting for the "incompleteness" datum is of no use with respect to the "analyticity" datum. As we saw in the previous chapter, this datum is that to say of a certain *fictum F* that it has a property *P* about which the relevant story either says or implies that it is indeed possessed by *F*, if it is a truth, is a trivial—or at least an unrevisable—truth. For example, it sounds trivially true to say that Hamlet is a prince since this is what *Hamlet* says he is. This datum suggests that the corresponding sentence "F is P" is analytically true. Now, this datum cannot be accounted for by saying that a sentence "F is P" is an abbreviation for "According to story S, F is P" and, hence, by appealing (admittedly indirectly) to story-relative properties. We still need an explanation of why the sentence "F is P", even when read as "According to story S, F is P", is *analytically* true. Thomasson may perhaps point to her distinction between real and fictional contexts and tentatively agree that, wherever "F is P" is true, namely with respect to some fictional contexts and not to real ones, it is also analytically true. Yet, if she did agree, she should further provide an original

[32] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 108 n. 24).

account of this analyticity because she could definitely not rely on a Neo-Meinongian explanation. A Neo-Meinongian can indeed say that that sentence is analytically true in that the *designatum* of the predicative term "_ is P"—either a certain nuclear property or an internally predicated property *P*—belongs to the set which constitutes the *designatum* of the singular term "F", that is the *fictum F* in question.[33]

3.2 Generation and Artifactuality of a Fictional Being from the Artifactualist Perspective

Granted that the problem of how to account for the data we have been discussing is just a minor problem for Thomasson's approach, she could perhaps disregard the fact that her theory does not specifically fit the "analyticity" datum by simply stating that that datum is disputable. To my mind, however, her theory faces bigger problems.[34] Above all, it risks being unable to provide any support for the general claim that characterizes the artifactualist position, namely that *ficta* are generated abstract artifactual entities.

To start with, Thomasson's account raises questions relative to the first part of the above-mentioned claim that *ficta* are generated entities. According to Thomasson, given the rigid historical dependence of a fictional entity on a particular mental act, a *fictum* comes into being as the *purely intentional object* of that act. Following Brentano, we would say that a purely intentional object is the *immanent* entity that a mental act is "directed" at. In Brentano's terminology, in fact, purely intentional objects "in-exist" in their mental acts.[35] A purely

[33] One might say that since Thomasson actually treats fictional and real contexts as circumstances of evaluation for sentences such as (1), she could here adopt a Kaplanian stance. Namely, by first separating contexts of utterance from circumstances of evaluation of such sentences and then saying that one such sentence is analytically true iff it is true in all its contexts of utterance. Cf. Kaplan (1989a). Yet this approach does not work because in all the utterance contexts whose world parameter is the fictional circumstance of evaluation, a sentence such as (1) are not such but in all the contexts whose world parameter is the real circumstance of evaluation, the sentence turns out to be false.

[34] However, a deep problem lies behind Thomasson's distinction between fictional and real contexts. Since such contexts are actually contexts of evaluation, and since this implies moreover that ascribing to a *fictum* an absolute property means ascribing that property to it relative to one such circumstance, it turns out that sentences which in her metaphysical account should be necessarily true are not such, for they are not true with respect to all circumstances of evaluation. Take for example "Hamlet was created by Shakespeare" or "Hamlet is a fictional being". According to Thomasson, these sentences are necessarily true (or at least, true in all circumstances of evaluation in which Hamlet exists) because the properties predicated of Hamlet in them are necessary properties of him. Yet if we evaluate those sentences with respect to the fictional context of *Hamlet*, they are false.

[35] Cf. Brentano (1924: 88).

intentional object, moreover, turns out to be a fictional entity insofar as we take it to be a *protracted* intentional object: an entity which, unlike a purely intentional object, survives the act of its conception by being kept in existence by the existence of some literary work or other; in other words, by its generic constant dependence upon literary works.[36] Now, as Thomasson herself claims, *intentionalia* vary in line with different kinds of dependence.[37] So, as far as *ficta* and pure *intentionalia* are concerned, the difference seems to be that, unlike a fictional object, a purely intentional object depends not only rigidly and historically, but also *constantly*, on the mental act that conceives it. Once that act no longer exists, its purely intentional object also vanishes.

This picture clearly assigns to thought a generative ontological power: thoughts create purely intentional objects—ephemeral entities that last as long as the thoughts last—as well as fictional entities—intentional objects that survive beyond the mental acts creating them.[38] But, as we saw in Chapter 1, ascribing such a power to thought is controversial.[39]

In the present context, let me reformulate this difficulty as follows. First, it is hardly acceptable to claim that there really is such a thing as a purely intentional object. Once a purely intentional object is characterized as above, it is the case that no purely intentional object can be shared both by different subjects and by one and the same subject at different times. Moreover, if a purely intentional object is one such ephemeral private entity, it is unclear how a fictional object can be an intentional object that survives the mental act that creates it. In order for such a survival to occur, it must be guaranteed that the object which, in the elaboration of a certain literary work, is thought of at time *t'* is the same as the object which, in inaugurating that work, was conceived of at time *t*. Yet this latter entity is *per se* a purely intentional object, that is, something that lasts as long as its initiating thought lasts. Hence, it cannot be identical with the former object. In a nutshell, if it is not clear both *whether* a certain mental act may bring into existence a purely intentional object, and *how* a purely intentional object can turn out to be an entity that is kept in existence by a literary work, that is a fictional entity, it will not be clear either how thoughts can generate fictional entities.[40]

Certainly, Thomasson may simply reply that I have misunderstood her position. According to her in contrast with Brentano, a purely intentional object is not an entity that is constantly dependent on its generating mental

[36] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 7, 36, 88–9).

[37] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 90).

[38] As Thomasson herself says, for both pure *intentionalia* and *ficta* the intentionality of a thought is a *creative* relation: it brings the object of thought, whether a pure *intentionale* or a *fictum*, into being. Cf. (1999: 90).

[39] On this difficulty, see also Howell (2002: 523).

[40] For a similar difficulty, see Reicher (1995: 107).

act. Rather, it is an entity which, following Ingarden, may well survive that act. For Thomasson, it is not the case that the very general category of *intentionalia* is divided into two subcategories, namely purely intentional objects, taken as Brentanian immanent objects, and fictional entities. On the contrary, purely intentional objects are already entities that survive their own creating mental acts. Furthermore, in that they also survive these creating mental acts, fictional objects are simply a subset of purely intentional objects.[41] As a result, it is not the case that a fictional object is a purely intentional object which, oddly enough, turns out to be a fictional entity. Rather, fictional objects are just one kind of purely intentional object taken to be entities that survive their generating mental acts.

Nonetheless, this reply raises further problems. First, if pure *intentionalia* survive their generating acts, then they face the classical problem of the identity of a both intersubjective and intrasubjective intentional object. If Hob and Nob, or if Hob alone at *t* and at *t*', think of a witch cursing the whole city, do they think of the same intentional object or not?[42] This problem prompts the search for identity criteria for pure *intentionalia*. Second, if a purely intentional object that is not a fictional object also survives its generating act, what makes it different from a fictional object? Thomasson has to give an explanation of such a survival for she obviously cannot appeal to constant generic dependence on literary works, which is what she does for genuine *ficta*. As she herself claims, *ficta* are just a subset of pure *intentionalia*. As long as these problems regarding purely intentional objects in general are not solved, the general question of how thought can generate such objects remains entirely open. Since, on this account, fictional objects are just a subset of purely intentional objects, the question is open for them also.[43]

Yet the general problem here is not only *how* a fictional object is generated, but also *what* kind of entity is generated. According to Thomasson, a *fictum* is

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[41] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 89).

[42] For this well-known problem, see Geach (1982[2]).

[43] More recently, Thomasson has explored another possibility: thoughts generate fictional objects by generating purely intentional objects (still in the Ingardenian sense), more or less in the same way that illocutionary acts are generated by the production of locutionary acts. Cf. (2003a) and (2003b). This possibility again makes fictional and purely intentional objects entities of different kinds, as in the first exposition investigated here (the one that treated purely intentional objects as Brentanian immanent beings). Unlike this exposition, however, it does not make a purely intentional object into a fictional object but takes pure *intentionalia* and *ficta* to be entities of different kinds from the very beginning. In these respects, this possibility is definitely better than the other two considered here. Yet it must still be clarified in what sense a thought may generate a fictional object over and above an intentional object by virtue of generating the latter. For example, why is it that dreams and hallucinations at most generate intentional objects, the objects that are dreamt of or hallucinated, whereas other thoughts also generate fictional entities by generating intentional objects?

not only a thought-generated purely intentional object, it is also an abstract artifact. This is in fact the remaining part of the artifactualists' basic claim about *ficta*. Accordingly, *ficta* should be entities that fall under the general category of *artefacta*, which includes also concrete items such as cars, coffee-machines and computers. Now what gives a *fictum* its artifactual character? Despite Thomasson's temptation to the contrary,[44] it is definitely not its origin for otherwise all the purely intentional objects, whether Brentanian or Ingardenian, would also be artifacts. But this does not seem to be the case. Perhaps there are purely intentional objects, but they are not at all artifacts. The simple fact that a single or different thoughts are "directed" at a certain intentional object does not make that object artifactual in any relevant sense of the term.

As a result, we seem to be forced into thinking that what gives a *fictum* its artifactual character is not its origin but rather its *protraction*—its life in some work or other; in Thomasson's terms, its constant generic dependence on literary works.

But even this suggestion does not work. Without doubt, one might reasonably claim that if *ficta* were affected by this kind of dependence, this would make them *cultural* entities. For, as Thomasson remarks, similar kinds of dependency allow universities as well as nations, hence institutions in general, to persist; and institutions clearly are cultural entities.[45] I limit myself here to speaking of a reasonable claim since I believe that i) *ficta* are not affected by this kind of dependence;[46] and ii) the genuine reason why they are cultural

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[44] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 35).

[45] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 13–14).

[46] As regards this dependence thesis, I can in particular hardly conceive of *ficta* as perishable entities in Thomasson's sense that, should any copy of any literary work in which a certain *fictum* is spoken of disappear, that *fictum* would also vanish. To begin with, it is not clear what it means for a copy of a literary work to disappear. Since, as we have seen for Thomasson, a copy is a *semantically* individuated entity, it is not clear whether it is a physical particular and hence whether it can vanish in the same way as physical particulars do. This problem refers to the general question of how to individuate a literary work, which is not very evident in Thomasson's perspective. For similar difficulties, see Reicher (1995: 95–7); I come back to this issue in Chapter 7. Moreover, what we have is that once it has died, I can legitimately say of a living being that it was such. But can I say of a *fictum* where the works in which it appears have all been destroyed that it *was* a fictional character? Furthermore, Thomasson suggests that *ficta* can not only perish but also be revived (1999: 11 n. 7). In my paradigmatic case of constant dependence, namely the relation subsisting between a natural species and its specimens, it is clear how revival works: a species is revived insofar as an entirely new specimen of it comes into existence through the proper re-assemblage of a certain DNA string. But in the case of a *fictum*, what can play the role of the DNA string? Definitely not the (perhaps scattered) physical ink patches that have survived the destruction of the last copy of the last work in which that *fictum* was mentioned. There is no guarantee that a re-assemblage of those patches would not be interpreted as an utterly different work speaking of an entirely new *fictum* (precisely as in the "Menard" case).

entities seems to me to be another one (mentioned below). However, let me put my own convictions to one side. The question is, rather, this: how can constant generic dependence on literary works guarantee not *ficta*'s cultural nature but its artifactuality? In other words, how can what distinguishes *ficta* from pure *intentionalia* (Brentanian or Ingardenian), whatever it is, be responsible for *ficta* being—but pure *intentionalia* not being—artifacts?

At this point, we are wavering between two unsatisfactory hypotheses. On the one hand it seems that, if a *fictum* is an artifact, it must be such from its very beginning; hence, whatever accounts for its protraction does not account for its artifactuality. On the other hand, it seems that a *fictum* cannot begin its life as an artifact as we have seen that if a *fictum* originates in the same way as a purely intentional object, at its beginning it cannot be an artifact. The question therefore remains: if *ficta* are artifacts whereas pure *intentionalia* are not, how is this to be explained?[47]

On behalf of Thomasson, one could reply that the former option has to be scrutinized more carefully. To speak of a particular mental act as what a *fictum* rigidly and historically depends on for its existence may well appear an inadequate, or at least merely partial, picture of a *fictum*'s generation. Certainly, such a dependence on mental acts can fit purely intentional objects, if there are any. But for fictional beings a rigid historical dependence must appeal to *processes* rather than to acts, to enduring rather than to instantaneous events. Intuitively speaking, it seems that in order for a *fictum* to be brought into existence, there must be a process that perhaps involves many mental acts as well as different subjects: namely, the storytelling process that leads to the composition of the work(s) that has (have) that *fictum* among its (their) main features. This process, moreover, is what lies behind a given *fictum* wherever it exists, namely in all the possible worlds where that *fictum* comes into being. At this point, one may say that such a process is not only what a *fictum* rigidly and historically depends on, but also what accounts for its artifactuality. A *fictum* is a constructed entity because it is conceived of through such a process.

Undoubtedly, Thomasson is prepared to allow for a modification of her theory that goes in this very direction. She herself says precisely that the generative process of a fictional being may be *diffuse*.[48]

Granted that appealing to storytelling processes rather than to mental acts gives a more convincing account of why we speak of *ficta* as *created* entities, it sounds more plausible to ascribe the power of generating fictional entities to the possibly intersubjective process of storytelling rather than to thought *per se*: if there is no such process, then there is no *ficta*

[47] For a similar critique, see also Sutrop (2001: 137–8).

[48] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 7, 140 n. 3).

either. Moreover, such an appeal may also provide an utterly convincing account of the *cultural* character of fictional entities; that is, an account which is even more plausible than the one sketched above in terms of constant generic dependence on literary works. Clearly, that creating a *fictum* may involve time as well as many subjects points to the fact that *ficta* need culture if they are to come into being. Nevertheless, to view the generation of a *fictum* as an intersubjective time-consuming event rather than an intrasubjective instantaneous event does not seem by itself to be helpful with respect to the present problem. For to appeal to such processes in themselves hardly explains why a *fictum* is an artifact. In order for something to be an artifact, it must be indisputably a *constructed* entity, that is an entity that derives its being from an (intentional) assemblage of building blocks. How can the mere storytelling process guarantee that a *fictum* be such an entity if what one may well regard as its natural building blocks, namely the properties attributed to it in the course of the relevant narration, are possessed by it only relatively, solely with respect to the story that is told?

One could reply that, according to our reading of Thomasson's position, there are properties that *ficta* possess absolutely: that is, the story-relative properties that emerge from the fact that those entities possess absolute properties only relative to a story. Yet even such properties can hardly work as the building blocks of such an entity. Above all, in order for properties to work as building blocks there must be a sense according to which progress in the construction of that entity, that is in the (intentional) assemblage of its blocks, affects the very nature of the entity itself. If one takes mathematical entities as constructed entities, one can say that the process by means of which new properties are attributed to that entity alters the nature of the entity: for instance, in this perspective π taken at the n-th step of the determination of its decimals is a different entity from π taken at the $n+1$-th step of that determination.[49] Yet no such thing would happen if a *fictum* came to possess a new story-relative property, which—admittedly—would be possessed by it only contingently.[50]

One might of course deny that the building blocks for a constructed entity play such an essential role. Yet when one thinks of examples for which building blocks do not play that role, only *concrete* artifacts come to mind. The straw used in making a chair is manifestly not essential to it. But this depends on the fact that a chair is a concrete, not an abstract, artifact. Furthermore, even if one were able to conceive of abstract artifacts for which building

[49] Cf. on this, for example, Wittgenstein (1978[2]: IV§9).

[50] As Thomasson herself claims, *being-P-according-to-S* is contingently possessed by a *fictum* for in a different possible world in which the story *S* had changed slightly, particularly as far as the ascription of the property *P* to that *fictum* is concerned, the *fictum* would not have possessed the above story-relative property. See shortly below.

blocks play no essential role, story-relative properties cannot be such building blocks for fictional entities, since they do not figure in the storytelling process that allegedly constitutes the construction of a fictional entity: such a process normally contains absolute, not (story-) relative, properties.

As a last attempt to defend the idea that the artifactuality of a fictional object lies in the diffuse storytelling process that allegedly brings that object into being, one can take into account the very general issue of what makes something an artifact, whether an abstract or concrete artifact. Regarding this issue, the fact that something is an artifact only if it is a constructed entity naturally prompts one to invoke constructive intentions in the identity of an artifact. This is because an entity is constructed insofar as it involves some constructive intentions; hence, an artifact must likewise involve such intentions. As some put it, an artifact is such insofar as it has an externally determined proper function, one that, unlike biological individuals, the artifact has been *externally* designed to perform by its planners.[51] For example, if a chair is to be an artifact, it must have a certain externally determined proper function; it must fulfil the planned intentions that lie behind its creation. Now, as the example of the chair clearly shows, these intentions cannot but occur in the generative process that brings the relevant artifact into existence. As a result, with Thomasson one may say that if there are such intentions in the generative process underlying a *fictum*, it is clear why such an entity is an artifact.

It is true that this proposal is very far from the typical approach adopted by artifactualists to the issue of artifactuality.[52] Nevertheless, appealing to constructive intentions would be a good way to ground a *fictum*'s artifactuality in its origins. Yet how can such intentions lie behind the generation of a fictional being? Undoubtedly, the coming into existence of a *fictum* may fulfil several goals, for instance aesthetic ones. But fulfilling these goals represents no proper function for the *fictum*. In point of fact, it is hard to find a proper function for a *fictum*: what is the function which the *fictum* was designed to carry out? Hence, no constructive intention can be found either. So, appealing to constructive intentions risks undermining the very possibility of conceiving a *fictum* as an artifact.

To sum up, Thomasson may be seen as legitimately stating that a *fictum* differs from a pure *intentionale*—whether Brentanian or Ingardenian—in that it rigidly depends historically on cultural processes rather than on mere mental acts. Yet it is not clear if and how this kind of dependence may account for the artifactual character that, from her perspective, *ficta* possess.

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[51] Cf. Millikan (1984: 1–2, 17).

[52] According to Nathan Salmon, one may create an abstract artifact without even being aware of it due to the mistaken belief that one's creative thinking acts are "directed" at a concrete entity. Cf. Salmon (1998: 304–5), (2002: 112).

3.3 Individuation and Existence of a Fictional Being from the Artifactualist Perspective

With respect to Thomasson's theory, then, we need to clarify the issues of the generation and the artifactuality of a fictional being. This could easily be dispensed with, however, if Thomasson provided satisfactory criteria at least for the existence, if not the individuation, of a fictional being. Yet, as we will now see, this hardly seems to be the case.

Let me start by recalling that the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist position foundered on the "no-*ficta*" and the "many-*ficta*" problems. These problems may now be viewed as follows. A collection of properties does not yield *sufficient* conditions for a *fictum*: there may be such a collection and no *fictum* at all—the first problem—or there may be such a collection and different *ficta*—the second problem. But these problems do not neutralize another claim that the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist position is inclined to defend, namely that the existence of a collection of properties is a *necessary* condition for a *fictum*. If you change the collection, Neo-Meinongians say, you will no longer obtain that fictional individual but a different entity instead.

Now, talking about necessary and sufficient conditions for something may be meant in two distinct ways: it is either a discourse about necessary and sufficient conditions for the *existence* of something or a discourse about necessary and sufficient conditions for the *identity* of something. In the first case, one says that a certain item exists if and only if certain conditions are satisfied. In the second case, one says that an item *x* and an item *y* are one and the same entity if and only if certain conditions are met. Conditions of existence are ontologically weaker than conditions of identity since both necessary and sufficient conditions of existence fail to provide conditions for the *individuation* of an individual, for what makes that individual the individual it is. This is precisely what necessary and sufficient conditions of identity for an individual do provide.[53] They encapsulate the individual essence of that very entity, that is the essence that only that entity can possess.[54]

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[53] Often, necessary identity conditions yield constituents of the entity for which they are conditions. Pointing to necessary conditions of identity rather than of existence, one may speak of individuation-dependence instead of existence-dependence: see, for example, Edwards (1994: 17 n. 16).

[54] For this notion of an individual essence, see the texts quoted in n. 28 of the previous chapter. As many have pointed out following Kit Fine, for example (1995), essence in general is not reducible to modality, which, rather, characterizes a dependence relation. An *essential* property is not simply a necessary property of an object but more a *constitutive* property of it, or better still, a property whose predication on an item is true in virtue of the identity, or the nature, of that item. See Fine, for example (1995: 273).

It is true that the distinction between existence and identity conditions is not particularly relevant for the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory of *ficta*. According to this theory as outlined above, the existence of a set of internally possessed properties is a necessary and sufficient condition both for the existence and for the identity of a fictional entity.[55] Therefore, the problems on which such a theory founders involve the fact that even though the existence of a property set is a necessary condition both for the existence and for the identity of a fictional entity, it is not a sufficient condition for either.[56]

On the other hand, the distinction between existence and identity conditions is relevant for the artifactualist position. Thomasson believes that her theory is able to provide only necessary conditions for the identity of a fictional entity across literary works. Yet she does not consider this as a problem since, in her view, her theory provides both necessary *and* sufficient conditions for the existence of such an entity. Let us address these questions in detail.

Regarding identity conditions, Thomasson obviously intends to part company with Neo-Meinongians. It is definitely the case that for her, unlike Neo-Meinongians, what I have called "absolute properties" cannot determine either sufficient or necessary identity conditions of a fictional entity. On her account, such properties are possessed by fictional entities only *relatively*: that is, not with respect to real but to fictional contexts, and, specifically, only with respect to some fictional contexts and not to others. For instance, according to Thomasson, it is true that Mademoiselle d'Escalot falls in love with Lancelot not with respect to reality (that is, the concrete part of our world) but with respect to some novels of the Breton cycle, and, moreover, only those novels: in other words, with respect to *Lancelot-Grail*, the late prose compilation belonging to the Breton cycle, but not with respect to an altogether different story (say, *Hamlet*) and, perhaps more interestingly, not with respect to *Lancelot*, Chretien de Troyes' earlier poem which also belongs to the Breton cycle. Moreover, such properties are relatively possessed only *actually*, that is, only with respect to the actual world in general, but not with respect to all possible worlds. For instance, they are obviously not possessed in this way in possible worlds in which the *fictum* in question does not exist—worlds in which no creation by its actual creator has occurred—as well as in worlds in which the *fictum* exists but is differently

[55] In the diluted version of the best Neo-Meinongian theory that makes a *fictum* a one-one set-*correlate* rather than a set, the existence of a property set is taken to be merely a necessary condition for the existence, if not also for the identity, of a *fictum*.

[56] In this respect, the diluting of the best Neo-Meinongian theory is equally ineffective. Since it ultimately solves neither the "no-*ficta*" nor the "many-*ficta*" problem, it still fails to provide sufficient conditions for both the existence and the identity of a fictional entity.

characterized, since it is kept in existence by means of different literary works.[57] As a result, absolute properties are not necessary properties of a *fictum*. Thus, they do not provide necessary conditions for its identity.

Moreover, for Thomasson story-relative properties could not fare any better. At first sight, one might think that a property such as *being P according to story S* is a necessary property of the entity which possesses it absolutely: that is, a property that the entity in question possesses not only actually, but in all possible worlds. For this normally holds with a world-relative property such as *being F in possible world W*: trivially, the entity which possesses one such property in a certain possible world also possesses it in all the remaining worlds. Yet Thomasson suggests that a story *S* remains the same even in possible worlds in which it is slightly altered.[58] Suppose that, in a different possible world, the story in question is altered precisely in that the *fictum F*, which had been characterized as *being P*, is no longer characterized in this way. (Imagine, for example, that in another possible world Shakespeare writes *Othello* so differently that Desdemona is not the owner of the famous handkerchief but of certain underclothes instead.) As a consequence, in such a world that *fictum* does not possess the property of *being P according to S*. That property, therefore, is not necessary for that *fictum*; hence its instantiation does not belong to the necessary identity conditions of that *fictum*.

What, then, replaces properties in Thomasson's exposition? She says that one may provide a criterion that yields sufficient conditions for the identity of fictional entities *within* literary works: *x* and *y* are the same fictional entity if they appear in the same literary work and are ascribed the same properties in it.[59] Yet, since in her view one and the same *fictum* may appear in more than one literary work, this criterion definitely does not provide necessary identity conditions *across* literary works. Certainly, for her in order to account for such cases one can put forward the following criterion for identity across literary works: in order for *x* and *y* which appear in literary works *K* and *L* respectively to be the same fictional entity, the author of *L* must be competently acquainted with *x* of *K* and intend to introduce *x* into L as *y*.[60] Yet, as she herself acknowledges, this criterion at most provides a necessary but not a sufficient identity condition across literary works.[61]

Nevertheless, for her this is not so problematic as it may seem. Even if there are both no necessary and no sufficient conditions for a *fictum*'s *identity*, one can find such conditions for a *fictum*'s *existence*. In order to find these

[57] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 39, 110–1).
[58] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 110 n. 25).
[59] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 63).
[60] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 67).
[61] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 68).

conditions, Thomasson appeals to her theory of *ficta* as dependent entities. First of all, what a *fictum* depends on, both rigidly and generically, for its very existence—namely, both the *specific* mental act by means of which its author creates it and the *generic* literary work that keeps it in existence—provides *eo ipso* its necessary conditions of existence. In every possible world in which the *fictum* exists, that particular mental act which actually originated it as well as a work in which that *fictum* is spoken of will also exist.[62] In addition, she holds that such factors provide also sufficient conditions for a *fictum*'s existence.[63]

As regards her first claim, it may be immediately questioned whether a *fictum* really depends rigidly on the particular mental act that originates it or, what amounts to the same thing, whether the existence of that mental act really is a *necessary* condition for the existence of that *fictum*.

To begin with, it is not clear whether this can really be the case for Thomasson herself. Since she says that *every* absolute property is contingently possessed by a *fictum*, this will also hold true for the very first property actually attributed to it by its creator. Yet this entails that the act by means of which the creator conceives of the *fictum* in a possible world in which that *fictum* lacks such a property has a different content. Can such an act then be the very same particular act as the act by means of which the creator *actually* starts to conceive of that *fictum*? For instance, suppose a world in which a certain author, Carlo Collodi for instance, generated a *fictum* by thinking not the sentence by means of which he actually generates Pinocchio, namely:

(5) How it happened that Mastro Cherry, carpenter, found a piece of wood that wept and laughed like a child

but rather a different sentence. As such an act of thought would then have a different content, could it be the very same thought-token as the act by means of which he actually thinks the above sentence?

In fact, Thomasson is silent about how a particular creative act of thought must be individuated. Since she says that one and the same character may appear in different works in different possible worlds, provided that the creative act is the same, one may legitimately suppose that for her the mental particular which constitutes such an act is individuated regardless of its content (so that it may have different contents in different worlds). Yet even if, on the contrary, she required that the particular act of thought by means of which a *fictum* is generated keep the same content throughout all the possible worlds where it obtains, it would still be the case that in a possible world in which the particular mental act by means of which a *fictum* is

[62] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 39, 109).
[63] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 39).

actually conceived by its creator did not obtain, that *fictum* would not exist either. This appears to be hard to accept. For it clearly seems that a *fictum* might have been brought into existence through a different particular mental act endowed with the same content. For instance, Shakespeare might have written *Hamlet* some years later than he actually did. So, by simply occurring later, the particular thought by means of which in that possible world he creates Hamlet would be different from the thought that purportedly brought Hamlet into existence in the real world. As far as the character Hamlet is concerned, this apparently makes no difference. Yet, if the dependence of *ficta* on particular mental acts were rigid, we would have a world without Hamlet.

Thomasson rightly thinks that if creative mental acts are different, *ficta* are different too. This enables her to solve the "many-*ficta*" problem in Borges' idealized case of the syntactically identical yet distinct "Don Quixote" thoughts of Cervantes and Pierre Menard by saying that in this case there are two Don Quixotes. But this case does not, as she believes, *eo ipso* speak in favor of *ficta*'s rigid dependence on particular mental acts.[64] It may also be accounted for by the fact that the dependence on mental acts is a *historical generic* dependence.[65] If a *fictum* depends historically and generically on some mental act of a certain type that brings it into existence, then if there really are *two* such particular acts of a different type, there actually are also two fictional entities.

Let us, however, assume that the doubt in question may be circumvented so that the specific mental act (however it is conceived by Thomasson) and the generic literary work provide effectively necessary conditions for the existence of a fictional being. The real question is another: do those factors provide not only necessary but also *sufficient* conditions for the existence of a *fictum*? What is definite is that they are not *individually* sufficient conditions. Imagine, for example, that after "directing" a certain thought at an individual, the subject of that thought stops thinking and never comes back to that same thought so that it does not give rise to any story at all. In such a case, one might perhaps follow Brentano's famous intentionality thesis—the claim that every mental act has an object it is "directed" at—and say precisely that there is a, rather ephemeral, intentional object that thought is "directed" at.[66] Yet, as we have seen in the previous sub-section, one could not say that such an object is a *fictional* object in any significant sense of the term "fictional".

Thomasson would undoubtedly agree with this. As seen above, she suggests that an intentional object ends up as a fictional entity provided that

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[64] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 8).

[65] For such a thesis, see Sosa (1985/6: 486). It is also envisaged by Lamarque (2003: 41–2).

[66] Cf. Brentano (1924: 88).

after *coming* into being through the mental act "directed" at it, it is *kept* in being by figuring in a literary work.[67] There is no real problem here for Thomasson. She says explicitly that the above factors—specific mental act and generic literary work—do not provide sufficient existence conditions individually, but at most *jointly*.[68]

The situation is, nonetheless, still problematic. Given that, according to Thomasson, a *fictum* depends specifically on a mental act whereas it depends generically on a literary work, she prompts us to suppose that the same fictional object exists both in the actual world and in a possible world in which the very same author conceives of a certain intentional object by means of the very same mental act as in the actual world, but makes it the central element in a totally different story. In more theoretical terms, we are inclined to suppose that, for her, the specific mental act and the generic literary work jointly yield *metaphysically* sufficient existence conditions for a *fictum*, that is, conditions the satisfaction of which in *any* world is enough to guarantee that something exists as the *fictum* in question in that world.[69]

However, imagine that after having written (or thought) the sentence that actually begins *Pinocchio*, namely (5), Collodi wrote a story that from that point on was completely different from the *Pinocchio* we know. It seems to me that the protagonist of that story in this possible world would hardly be the same as our character Pinocchio. Without doubt, in this world as well as in the actual world we would have a genuinely constructed entity. But the construction involved would be utterly different from the actual construction. With respect to concrete artifacts, if, identity of plans notwithstanding, the construction had given rise to something entirely different from what was actually built, we would say that distinct individuals were involved in the actual case and in the possible case. Why should matters be different with respect to *abstract* artifacts?

On behalf of Thomasson, one might think that this problem could be circumvented by expanding the first factor along the lines indicated in the previous sub-section concerning the generation of a fictional entity. That is to say, if one takes what a *fictum* rigidly depends on not as a specific mental act but rather as a (possibly intersubjective) process of storytelling, then this process provides a broader necessary condition that may also work, together with the appearance of the *fictum* in a literary work, as a metaphysically sufficient condition for the existence of a fictional entity.

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[67] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 7, 88–9).

[68] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 39).

[69] Indeed, as Thomasson herself puts it: "the character is present in *all and only* those worlds containing all of its requisite supporting entities" (1999: 39).

Nevertheless, I strongly doubt that the creative act (however broad) and being fixed in a literary work can jointly provide metaphysically sufficient conditions, at least if one sticks to Thomasson's characterization of what a literary work is, namely something for whose existence it is sufficient that a certain storytelling practice exists. Suppose that immediately on completion of a certain act of storytelling, its agent(s) could not talk about his or her (their) literary project to anyone else because he or she (they) dropped dead. According to Thomasson, a literary work would still have existed, albeit ephemerally, even in such a situation. The reason is that, in order for such a work to exist, it suffices for Thomasson that a copy of it exists, whether realized in a physical form—a written copy—or merely realized in the mind—the mental conception of the whole story. Now, in our case, before dying the author(s) did at least definitely conceive the whole story. Yet in such a situation, there would have been nothing more than a certain practice of storytelling, whose teller(s) make-believe(s), among other things, that there are certain individuals endowed with certain features. Hence, it is inexact to say that a *fictum* would have been generated out of that practice.[70]

That the existence of such a practice is not a sufficient condition for the existence of a *fictum* may be easily seen when the case is stated as follows. If that practice were a dream or a hallucination, one might perhaps legitimately

[70] Thomasson would probably reply that if such a situation occurred, it would not be a *fictum*'s existence that was threatened but, rather, its *persistence*. In such a case, in fact, once a certain work exists through the existence of a single copy, the *fictum* in question also exists. Yet, since that work then immediately disappears, so does that *fictum*. I doubt, however, that this answer is viable. First, the problem with such a broader story-thinking (-telling) is not that it may exist ephemerally, but rather that, once again, its mere existence does not suffice to ensure that a *fictum* will exist. Second, the reason I wanted to formulate my counterexample in terms of an immediately vanishing story-thinking (-telling) process was precisely that, as I stated above, Thomasson allows such a process to be a sufficient guarantee that a certain literary work exists. Now, I agree that if such a sufficiency claim were correct, then Thomasson's rejoinder referred to above would be reasonable enough. In fact, she invites us to conceive of a certain literary work directly in *semantic* terms: see (1999: 65). In Chapter 7, I precisely endorse this conception. Since I also assert there that literary or (better) fictional works conceived in this way are to be *individuated* in terms of the fictional entities they are about—that is, *ficta* belong to the identity conditions of literary or (better) fictional works—it would be trivial to regard works as yielding conditions of existence for fictional entities. However, I doubt that the above sufficiency claim is correct for a storytelling practice is hardly individuated in semantic terms (as will be seen in Chapter 5, that practice consists in a conniving use of fictional sentences, which allows these sentences to have fictional, but not real, truth conditions). Or, to reformulate the point I am making: even if there were a, really nonsemantic, sense of "literary work" for which the existence of a storytelling process is a sufficient condition of existence—a sense which not even Thomasson can endorse—in that sense a literary work would not be a sufficient condition for the existence of a *fictum*.

assert that these delusory mental processes have generated dreamt-of or hallucinatory objects, that is the intentional objects of those states. Yet nobody could justifiably maintain that, over and above those *intentionalia*, the processes have generated further objects, namely things that we may call delusory objects. Now, apart from its length and (possible) intersubjectivity, in what does the storytelling practice substantially differ from those processes?[71] In both cases, what happens is that subjects imaginatively put themselves either consciously, as in the storytelling practice, or unconsciously, as in the delusory processes, in a context different from that in which they ordinarily utter sentences. As a result of this imaginative shift, sentences are to be taken as uttered by the agent of the fictional or of the oneiric context—in other words, the imaginary narrator or the oneiric subject.[72]

Notice, lastly, that no improvement would be obtained if Thomasson were to claim that the creative act (however broad) and being kept in a literary work jointly provide mere *factually* sufficient conditions, that is, conditions the meeting of which in a *certain* world (typically, our world) is enough for something to be the *fictum* in question in that world. For the above-mentioned supposition does not question the existence of a *fictum* already existing in certain possible worlds but, rather, raises doubts about whether in a particular world (typically, our world) in which things were as the above-mentioned supposition describes, such a situation would be able to generate a *fictum*.

Now, if I am right in maintaining that Thomasson does not provide necessary and (admittedly, jointly) sufficient conditions for the existence of *ficta*, then the theoretical situation becomes definitely more problematic for her than it already is because of her acknowledged failure to provide both necessary and sufficient conditions for the identity of *ficta*. In the absence of viable necessary and sufficient existence conditions, the situation she describes in ontologically committal terms (a certain author generates a *fictum* while telling or writing a story about it, and later other people join in that author's project by their intention to import that *fictum* into other stories) may theoretically be described also in the following, ontologically noncommittal, terms. An individual pretends to refer to something by employing (mentally or orally) certain terms; then other individuals join in the feigned reference by employing those terms again while in turn pretending to refer to that same something. Yet, in this description, only a chain of referential uses has been established. No fictional entity has been generated by that chain

[71] For an analogous comparison between make-believe games and dreams, see Walton (1990: 43–50).

[72] For this idea of storytelling practices as context-shifting practices, see Recanati (2000: 215–6). For the notion of an imaginary narrator, see Currie (1990: 123–6).

since it ends in a mere mock-reference.[73] Thus, for want of both necessary and sufficient conditions for the existence of *ficta*, the whole artifactualist conception of fictional entities risks being seriously undermined.

Let me now summarize. We saw in the previous chapter that the best Meinongian abstractionist theory of fictional entities was unable to solve certain problems. Since the artifactualist abstractionist account of fictional entities can indeed deal with those problems, one might think that such an account must replace the best Meinongian theory. Yet we have just seen that artifactualism raises different problems of its own.

At this point, one could adopt a negative stance toward both abstractionisms and look instead for an altogether different theory of fictional entities. But this assumes that these approaches are mutually exclusive. I believe that this assumption is in fact false: the two theories are, or can be made, wholly compatible. In the next chapter I try to show how this is possible by developing my own syncretistic theory of fictional entities.

[73] This is what Donnellan (1974: 22–5) originally described as a "block". For a defense of such an antirealist perspective, see also Künne (1990: 267).

Chapter 3

THE SYNCRETISTIC THEORY

1. Synopsis

In this chapter I set out the basis of the syncretistic theory of fictional entities, the tenet of which is that a *fictum* is a compound entity composed of a pretense-theoretical and a set-theoretical element. These elements are, on the one hand, the make-believe process-type in which it is pretended that there is a (typically concrete) individual that has certain properties and, on the other, a set of properties. The members of this set correspond precisely to the above properties in the sense that the properties of the set are either identical with the properties of the pretended individual or simply match them, insofar as they are typically the relational counterparts of the pseudo-relational properties of that pretended individual which are mobilized in the make-believe process-type.

2. The Core of the Theory

The syncretistic theory of fictional entities aims to provide an account of fictional entities that combines the two abstractionist theories examined above, namely the best Neo-Meinongian theory and the artifactualist theory. We have seen that the best Neo-Meinongian theory provides necessary but not sufficient conditions for a *fictum*'s identity, whereas the artifactualist theory provides necessary but not sufficient conditions for a *fictum*'s existence. The syncretistic theory not only acknowledges this, it also claims that the factors invoked by the two theories (or by their developments) as necessary identity conditions and necessary existence conditions, respectively, are not only necessary but also *jointly* sufficient conditions for a *fictum*'s identity. In fact, as we shall see, according to the syncretistic theory a *fictum*

is an abstract compound entity consisting of both a set-theoretical and a pretense-theoretical element. Let us look at these points in detail.

First of all, the syncretistic theory accepts the Neo-Meinongians' claim that a certain property set yields a necessary condition for the identity of a fictional entity. This is the set of the properties corresponding to the properties that are directly or indirectly mobilized in a certain process of make-believe, that is, the process of storytelling in which one makes believe that a certain, typically concrete, individual explicitly or implicitly possesses precisely the properties in question. The distinction between direct and indirect mobilization (or the corresponding distinction between explicit and implicit pretended possession) of a property parallels the fact that in the make-believe process either one effectively make-believedly asserts that the (typically concrete) individual in question possesses that property or the effective mock-assertions make-believedly imply that such an individual possesses that property.[1]

Here two clarifications are in order. First, unlike Neo-Meinongians, I describe the properties that constitute the set as related to the properties mobilized in a storytelling process, rather than describing them straightforwardly as the properties involved in the (fictional) work itself which emerges from that process. This description does not depend on the fact that the properties involved in such a work are different from the properties constituting the set. On the contrary, those properties are the very same entities. This approach simply allows me to make no reference at all to fictional works in the explanation of what constitutes the identity of a *fictum*.[2]

Furthermore, I take the relation subsisting between the properties constituting the set and the properties mobilized in the storytelling process to be a relation of correspondence rather than a straightforward relation of identity. The reason for doing this is that the set may also be composed of properties which, given the way I interpret the role of storytelling processes, cannot figure in such a process. As we will see below, within such a process there are no fictional entities; fictional entities are generated (*inter alia*)[3] out of such processes. As a result, such a process cannot mobilize properties that involve such entities, that is, relational properties such as, for example, *being jealous of Desdemona, being a close friend of Watson*, or even

[1] In (1982: 354) Evans formulates some rules for make-believe entailment, which he calls the "incorporation principle" and the "recursive principle" respectively.

[2] As will be seen in Chapter 7, *ficta* determine the identity of fictional works rather than the reverse.

[3] We will soon see why this specification is needed.

answering the innkeeper whose inn looks like a castle, which involve fictional entities such as Desdemona, Watson, and the host in Chapter XVI of *Don Quixote* respectively. Yet these properties figure of course in the set constituting the relevant *ficta*, Othello, Holmes and Sancho Panza, in our example. Naturally enough, however, that process mobilizes properties that match those mentioned above, primarily in the sense that the process mobilizes properties that are the pseudo-relational correspondents of the relational, *ficta*-involving, properties belonging to the set in question; in our case, pseudo-relational properties such as *being jealous of a (concrete) individual called "Desdemona," being a close friend of a (concrete) individual called "Watson," answering the only (concrete) individual who is an innkeeper whose inn looks like a castle*.[4]

Given the possibility of a "Menard"-like case involving pseudo-relational properties, such a matching is a one-many correspondence. Two typologically distinct make-believe processes which are however *de dicto* identical, in the sense that both processes contain the same make-beliefs that there are certain (concrete) individuals doing such and such things, may well mobilize one and the same pseudo-relational property of the form *being R-ed to an individual named "F,"* yet matching two distinct relational properties *being R-ed to F*. These latter properties are different in that they involve distinct *F*s, different fictional *relata*.

It must, however, be stressed that those pseudo-relational properties are still properties of the same general kind as their relational correspondents: they are ordinary properties, not special ones (say, *fictional* properties). If this were not the case it would be impossible, whenever monadic properties are at stake, for the properties mobilized in the storytelling process to be the very same properties that figure in the set constituting a certain fictional entity. Put linguistically, as many have noted,[5] predicates genuinely express ordinary properties both when they are used within a certain make-believe

[4] These properties are pseudo-relational in that the terms used in the predicates designating them are empty: there is in fact no concrete individual called "Desdemona," etc. The reason why I say that this is only the primary sense of matching between properties in the set and properties in the make-believe process is that the process also mobilizes relational properties that simply match relational properties involved in the relevant set. These are the properties that involve concrete, not fictional, individuals; for example, *living in Baker Street*. In the next chapter, I maintain that there are no immigrant concrete objects in fiction but only fictional analogues of these entities. As a consequence, relational properties involving concrete entities do not figure in any property set that constitutes a fictional entity. At most, they match relational properties that precisely involve those analogues (in our example, *living in the Baker Street of Doyle's stories*).

[5] Cf., for example, Castañeda (1989a: 186–7).

process, in order to contribute to the process itself, and when they are used outside that process, in order to contribute to determining the content of the work that has emerged from that process.[6]

Finally, I want here to entertain the most liberal notion of a property. By a *property* I mean whatever meaning of a predicate "P" can make true a sentence of the form "S think(s) of a P" (in its *de dicto* reading), where "S" designates some subject or other.[7] As a result, not only am I not interested in drawing any distinction here between concepts as the meaning of predicates and properties as their designations (in their *de dicto* reading, "S thinks of an equiangular triangle" and "S thinks of an equilateral triangle" may differ in their truth value and therefore be conceptually different, hence designate different properties, although the extensions of the predicates respectively involved in those sentences are (necessarily) identical) but also I admit uninstantiated as well as uninstantiable properties. Indeed, if one can tell a story to the effect that there is an individual that *P*-s, one can think that there is such an individual, whether or not it is possible that there be such an individual. In point of fact, storytellers need not be limited by any constraint of plausibility, coherence, or non-paradoxicality. A subject *S* could start to tell the following story:

(1) Once upon a time, there was a set of all self-membered sets that was a member of itself.

In such a process of storytelling, *S* mobilizes the property of *being a set of all self-membered sets that is a member of itself*. That property makes the following sentence:

(2) S thinks of a set of all self-membered sets that is a member of itself

[6] As seen in Chapter 1, this thesis has two implications: first, that in fiction there are no linguistic uses in which one merely pretends to express properties; second, that although there are fictional entities, there are no fictional properties that are genuinely expressed in such uses. For a reply to objections with regard to such implications, I refer the reader both to that chapter and to what immediately follows below.

[7] This notion of property is even more liberal than the notion attributed to Neo-Meinongians in Chapter 1, which takes properties to be everything that can be legitimately represented through a lambda predicate. For, as we will now see, fiction may mobilize even properties that, for example, Zalta (1983), by appealing to Russell's theory of types, would rank as illegitimately construed. Moreover, this notion is very close to that defended by Orilia who, however, formulates his similar criterion for a property by appealing to the truth of an intentional sentence involving the predicate directly ("S thinks of P") rather than as embedded in an indefinite description. See Orilia (2002: 121–2).

true in its *de dicto* reading even though, given its paradoxicality, the property in question cannot of course be exemplified.[8]

Accordingly, I accept the claim of the best Neo-Meinongian theory that a set of properties provides a necessary identity condition for a fictional entity: *x* and *y* are the same fictional entity only if they share the same property set. Given the "no-*ficta*" and the "many-*ficta*" problems outlined in Chapter 1, however, I do not accept the further claim of that theory that such a set provides also a sufficient condition both for the existence and for the identity of a fictional being. Not only is the existence of a property set not sufficient to make any *fictum* come into being, but also a *fictum* is something over and above a property set.

This situation prompts the quest for other identity conditions. In this respect, I have to say at once that having a property set is not the only necessary identity condition for a fictional entity. There is another such condition. Broadly speaking, this is the condition that artifactualists envisage when they say that *ficta* depend upon human cultural activities. For a more precise definition, however, some further reflection is needed.

To begin with, it will be recalled from Chapter 2 that Thomasson's idea that the existence of a particular mental act of an author is a necessary condition for a *fictum*'s existence is rather difficult to accept. Intuitively, nothing seems to exclude the possibility that this author first conceived of this fictional creation some days later than he or she actually did. Since mental particulars appear to be individuated *inter alia* by the time of their occurrence, this means that, *pace* Thomasson, a certain *fictum* exists even in a world in which the particular mental act that actually initiated its conception does not exist and a different mental particular of the same kind but happening a bit later replaces it.

As I outlined there, this problem could be obviated if we replaced mental particulars with storytelling processes as necessary existence conditions for a *fictum*. As hinted at in the previous chapter, a storytelling process may well be not only an *intra*-subjective but also an *inter*-subjective time-consuming entity. Following Walton,[9] we can see such a process as a game of make-believe. Therefore, like any such game, it may require the participation of different agents. Typically (but not exclusively), this happens in the elaboration of (literary) myths. Moreover, unlike an event such as a mental act, a process seems to enjoy a certain indeterminacy in the time of its occurrence. Or at least, this seems to be true of a cultural process such as storytelling, which

[8] As we already know from Chapter 1, according to the "modes of predication" distinction approach, this means that the property in question cannot be *externally* possessed (which does not imply that it cannot be *internally* possessed).

[9] Cf. Walton (1990).

also admits interruptions in its occurrence. Like any other make-believe game, storytelling may be interrupted and resumed some time later. Again, myth-telling is the prototypical example of such a situation.[10] So it seems to be quite possible that a certain storytelling process started later than it actually did. Thus, in the world in which the conception of a certain *fictum* was initiated by another mental act that happened later than the actually initiating mental act, the very storytelling process would still subsist starting from that later mental act. As a result, unlike the existence of a particular mental act, the existence of a storytelling process can legitimately be seen as a further necessary existence condition for a *fictum*.

In actual fact, in order to replace a particular mental act with a storytelling *process* as something whose existence is a necessary condition for the existence of a *fictum*, it is not so convincing to appeal to the weak intuition that the property of occurring within a certain time interval is just a contingent property of that cultural process. If we had the opposite intuition,[11] by means of that replacement we would fare no better. For then we would be forced to conclude that a world in which a *fictum* was brought into existence by a later, hence *ex hypothesi* different, storytelling process would be a world containing a different *fictum*. But this conclusion would be as implausible as the conclusion that we drew with respect to the case of a world in which a *fictum*'s conception was initiated by a later, hence by a different, particular mental act.

Essentially, this problem may be solved by falling back on the weaker thesis that the existence of a certain storytelling *type* acts as a necessary existence condition for a *fictum*. Regardless of whether or not a possible storytelling process starting later than the actual storytelling process is taken to be the same process-token as the earlier process, these processes definitely belong to one and the same process-type. So we may conclude that, in order for a certain *fictum* to exist, some storytelling process of a certain type must also exist.

The idealized "Menard" case prompts me to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for the type-identity of make-believe processes. Two tokens of such processes are tokens of the same make-believe process-type iff (i) they are causal-intentionally related, that is the agent(s) of the second intend(s) to instruct him- or herself/themselves to imagine what the agent(s) of the first has (have) instructed him- or herself/themselves to imagine and (ii) they are either *de dicto* or *de re* identical in that (to put it in Walton's terms)[12]

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[10] On the possibility of non-continuants, cf. Varzi (2001: 102–3).

[11] If we held with Quine that the time indeterminacy of a (cultural) process is just a matter of semantics, of the way we describe that process, and not of ontology, we would tend to espouse precisely this opposite intuition. See on this Varzi (2001: 46–7).

[12] Cf. Walton (1990: 39–41).

they are the same instructions either to imagine that there is an individual, typically a concrete one, doing certain things, or to imagine, with respect to some individual, also typically concrete, that he or she is doing certain things.[13] Both conditions are necessary;[14] by itself, however, neither of them is sufficient. The "Menard" case shows the insufficiency of the second condition. Cervantes' and Menard's pretenses are certainly *de dicto* (as well as *de re*) identical, but since they are causally unrelated, they are type-different.[15] Yet even causal-intentional links are obviously insufficient. If I make believe that there is an individual made of iron whose name is "Holmes," my make-believe is not in agreement with Collodi's making believe that there is an individual made of wood whose name is "Pinocchio," despite my intention to the contrary; because our pretenses are *de dicto* different.[16] Hence, those conditions are only *jointly* sufficient.

The syncretistic theory holds, therefore, that the existence of a storytelling process-type is a necessary condition for the existence of a fictional being. Putting this thesis in terms of dependency, it can also be said that a *fictum* depends *generically* on storytelling processes: necessarily, if a *fictum* exists, some storytelling process of a certain type exists as well. Once things are put in terms of generic dependence, moreover, the syncretistic theory can maintain that this dependence is also *historical*: that is, *ficta* also depend historically on some storytelling process of a certain type. In point of fact, that *ficta* are historically dependent entities could hardly be expressed if one remained

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[13] In these terms, I take into account Evans' suggestion that a make-believe process can be either an existentially creative or an existentially conservative game—see below. For the time being, moreover, I continue to speak of *de dicto* vs. *de re* make-believe processes as if make-believe were the analogue of an intensional operator which, once applied to sentences, produces complex non-truthfunctional sentences open to different readings. From Chapter 5 onwards, however, it will be clear that make-believe has to be understood, rather, as the analogue of an operator inducing a contextual shift for the interpretation of the sentences it applies to. In this respect, the real difference between *de dicto* and *de re* make-believe processes is a difference in the reference of the singular terms of the sentences whose shifted interpretation is involved. In *de dicto* make-believe processes, such terms have a reference only in the imaginary context relevant for yielding the sentences containing them fictional truth conditions. In *de re* make-believe processes, also in the same imaginary context such terms give to the fictional truth conditions that the sentences containing them have in that context the very same reference which they have when those sentences are interpreted in a real context that provides such sentences with real truth conditions.

[14] On the fact that a causal-intentional link between pretenses is a necessary condition for their type-identity, see Evans (1982: 362, 368) and Walton (1990: 403); see also Lamarque-Olsen (1994: 42).

[15] This corrects a previous view of mine, namely that these processes are type-identical *tout court*. Cf. Voltolini (1994: 88).

[16] This is implicitly admitted by Thomasson (1999: 68–9).

at the level of storytelling process-*types*. For although an Aristotelian stance on universals may well lead one to say that a type exists only if it is tokened, that is, only if a token of it exists as well, it may be controversial to hold at the same time that a type exists *once* a token of it also comes into being. Thus, to remain at the level of storytelling process-types would prevent a syncretist from saying that a *fictum* is an entity that comes into being once the entity it depends on also comes into being. Yet this is definitely something the syncretist wants to say since he or she shares the artifactualists' idea that a *fictum* is a *created* entity. A storytelling process of a certain type must have been completed in order for a *fictum* to come into being.

So it is that in order for a *fictum* to come into existence, a certain storytelling process-type must also be instantiated through the existence of at least one of its tokens. Whatever happens to be the original token of such a process-type in a given possible world is, so to speak, responsible for the existence of the fictional individual in question in that world. This is why its agent(s) is (are) legitimately considered to be the creator(s) of such a *fictum*. In simply repeating the same storytelling process, further listeners or readers of a certain story do not obviously share the same responsibility.

Without doubt, this way of putting things enables the syncretistic theory to retain the idea that a *fictum* also depends, both generically and historically, on some mental act or other of a certain kind. A storytelling process-type includes a mental act-type as the act that lies at its beginning. Since the existence of a storytelling process-type is a necessary condition for the existence of a *fictum*, so is the existence of a mental act-type. For the same reason, in order for a *fictum* to come into existence, some token of the mental act-type that lies at the beginning of the corresponding storytelling process-type must exist as well. However, it must be stressed that the *fictum* in question can be generated (again *inter alia*) by means of the (instantiation of the) mental act-type in question only if that type is embedded in the corresponding storytelling process-type. For, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, we want to be sure of each fictional object that is not an intentional entity that has turned into a fictional entity, but rather that it is fictional from the very beginning.

These clarifications notwithstanding, I regard the above theses as a structured development of the artifactualist theory. As suggested in the last chapter, understanding that storytelling process-types are what fictional entities not only generically, but also historically, depend upon is a view that precisely is compatible with the modification of Thomasson's theory which is allowed by Thomasson herself when she acknowledges that the generation process of a fictional entity may be diffuse.[17]

[17] See n. 48 of the previous chapter.

At this point, another clarification is called for. To speak of a *storytelling* process-type as a necessary existence condition for a fictional entity is to some degree inadequate. If this were really the case, then all the fictional entities involved in the same storytelling process-type would share the same pretense-theoretical base. Those entities, then, would be distinct only if their set-theoretical bases, their property sets, were different. (We would have a situation the opposite to the "Menard" case.) Yet this is not how things stand. Suppose that an alteration in a certain storytelling process made it type-different from what it actually is, although that difference did not affect the *specific* properties mobilized in the process by making believe that there is an individual with those properties. For instance, let us assume that when writing *The Betrothed*, Manzoni started by telling us about that branch of Lake Como which extends toward the *west* (rather than about the branch that extends toward the south, as he actually did). It seems that, as far the male protagonist of the novel, Renzo Tramaglino, is concerned, this change would make no difference. However, if a specific storytelling process-type were a necessary condition for the existence a fictional entity, then the world in which Manzoni started the story as described above would be a world without Renzo.

So it is more appropriate to say that the relevant necessary existence condition of a *fictum* is not a storytelling process-type as a whole but, instead, the part of that process-type which makes it possible to mobilize the properties composing the relevant set; in other words, that part of the storytelling process-type in which the storyteller(s) make(s) believe that there is a certain individual that has the properties corresponding to the properties belonging to the set in question. As we saw above, one can take a whole storytelling process-type as a game of make-believe of the same general kind as the games played by children when they make believe that a doll is a baby or that some kids are cops whereas others are robbers and so on. The participants in a storytelling game usually make mock-assertions to the effect that there are some individuals that have certain properties. Only some of these mock-assertions are precisely those which feature the relevant make-believe process-type, namely those in which it is make-believedly said that there is a certain individual with certain properties. Incidentally, as I hinted above, a storytelling process may well be a discontinuous entity: it may be interrupted and then resumed. Consequently, it is no wonder that the same discontinuity may hold true for that part of it which is the make-believe process in question.

From now on, therefore, by "make-believe process-type" I mean that part of a general storytelling process which is relevant for the constitution of a given *fictum*. Certainly, the make-believe and the storytelling process-type sometimes coincide. This happens when a story pretends to be about

just one individual; quite typical in the case of a very short story. Imagine that I told the following one-sentence story:

(3) Once upon a time, there was a king who ruled over the entire universe.

In this case, the make-believe process that there is an individual who is a king and rules over the entire universe *is* the whole storytelling process.

But note that this would not be the case if the relevant storytelling again consisted of just one sentence, which pretended however to be about more than one individual. For example, imagine that I told the following one-sentence story:

(4) Holmes admired Watson.[18]

In that case, two distinct make-believe process-types would be activated, one in which it is pretended that there is an individual named "Holmes" admiring another individual named "Watson," and another in which it is further pretended that there is an individual named "Watson" who is admired by another individual named "Holmes."

The kind of make-believe process that leads to the constitution of a *fictum* is what Evans would label an existentially *creative* game of make-believe. In other words, those who take part in such a process do not make believe *of* a certain individual that it has certain properties, as they do in an existentially *conservative* make-believe game (usually, a game involving concrete, not fictional, individuals). Rather, they make believe *that* there is an individual, typically a concrete one, that (explicitly or implicitly) has a certain set of properties.[19] In the terms used above, they are pretending *de dicto*, not *de re*.[20]

I say "typically" since this is what normally happens in such processes. Yet nothing rules out a storyteller employing sentences such as the following:

(5) Polly was a polygon suffering from isolation from other beings.

By means of such a mock-assertion, its utterer makes believe not that there is a concrete individual but rather that there is an abstract individual,

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[18] For this example, cf. Fine (1982: 128).

[19] See Evans (1982: 358). Walton's distinction between a prop-oriented and a content-oriented make-believe [cf. for example (2000)] closely resembles Evans' distinction between existentially conservative and existentially creative make-believe games. Certainly, as I try to show later, each existentially creative game may also be seen as a *set-based* existentially conservative game.

[20] But see n. 13.

the polygon Polly, that has the property of *suffering from isolation from other beings*. Moreover, we saw in Chapter 1 that there may even be stories in which it is pretended that there is a fictional individual. These are, it is true, rather paradoxical stories.[21] Yet there are also more ordinary stories in which similar phenomena occur. Take stories that are characterized by a "play-within-a-play" narrative mechanism such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in which it is mock-asserted that Hamlet arranged a theatre performance whose actors further mock-assert the sentences corresponding to the *The Murder of Gonzago* (as modified by Hamlet). In such stories, it is often pretended (in the play) that there is a fictional individual that arises from the further pretense (in the play-within-the-play) that there is a concrete individual.

On the basis of the above reflections, I am finally able to state that, over and above the possession of a property set, there is another necessary identity condition for fictional entities. Up until now, in expounding the artifactualist approach to *ficta*, I have limited myself to speaking of the existence of a storytelling process-type as a necessary condition for the existence of a fictional being. I now want to make a metaphysically stronger assertion: like a property set, that process-type provides also a necessary condition for the *identity* of a fictional being. Like that set, in fact, that process is literally a constituent of a *fictum*. In order to be that *fictum*, the fictional entity in question must also possess a certain make-believe process-type.[22]

Even though the make-believe process-type in question is understood to be a necessary condition for the identity of a fictional entity, however, its existence is definitely not a sufficient condition for the existence of

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[21] The possibility of such stories is implicitly admitted by Walton himself when he says that there may be make-believe games whose participants precisely make believe that there are individuals who have the property of *being fictional characters*. Cf. Walton (1990: 423). This is what Recanati (2000: 220) labels "the Meinongian pretense."

[22] My saying that to have a make-believe process-*type* is a necessary identity condition for a *fictum*, hence that that type is one of the *fictum*'s constituents may lead one to think that I am committed to a realist theory of types. This is not, however, mandatory since what I say is compatible also with a nominalist position on types. In this case, the constituent in question would simply be the set of all make-believe process-tokens that satisfy conditions (i) and (ii) above; namely, two tokens of make-believe processes are tokens of the same make-believe process-type if and only if (i) they are causal-intentionally related—the agent(s) of the second intend(s) to instruct him-herself/themselves to imagine what the agent(s) of the first has prescribed him-herself/themselves to imagine—and also ii) they are either *de dicto* or *de re* identical insofar as they are the same instructions either to imagine that there is an individual, typically a concrete one, doing certain things or to imagine of an individual, typically concrete, that he or she does certain things.

that entity.[23] As I remarked in the previous chapter, if the participant(s) in one such process ceased to exist as soon as that process came to an end, so that no trace of the process remained, no fictional entity would emerge from it. This does not depend on the fact that such a process is private for a make-believe game may well be (in fact, typically is) intersubjective. Rather, it depends on the fact that pretending is *just* pretending. That is, pretending is an activity in which one may make believe that there are plenty of (typically concrete) individuals. Yet pretending that there are such individuals does not mean that there really are such things, nor that there really are abstract entities related to those individuals in some way. Therefore, by merely pretending that there is a (typically concrete) individual, no *fictional* individual comes into being.[24]

Let us look at this in more detail. In all the existentially creative games, one simply makes believe that there are (typically concrete) individuals. But

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[23] *Pace* Schiffer (1996: 156). His account seems to me to be independently problematic. On the one hand, he maintains that a make-believe process-type is a (metaphysically) sufficient condition for the existence of a fictional entity. So, in a possible world in which people just have make-believe practices but no concept of a fictional being, *ficta* would also exist. Yet, on the other hand, Schiffer also says that having that concept constitutively determines the very essence of a fictional being (*ib*: 258–9). Thus, in the possible world in question *ficta* would exist prior to having their essence. It is difficult to understand how this can be.

[24] In (2003: 50–61) Schiffer explicitly strengthens his position (cf. previous footnote) even further by actually maintaining that the existence of a certain make-believe process-type is *conceptually* sufficient for the existence of a certain *fictum* (for example, he says that "it is a conceptual truth that using the name '*n*' in writing a fiction creates the fictional character *n*" (2004: 55)). This seems to me even harder to accept. It amounts to holding that antirealists such as Evans (1982) and Walton (1990) who believe that there are make-believe practices while disbelieving that fictional entities are generated out of those practices have inconsistent views, like someone who believes that there are unmarried males while disbelieving that there are bachelors. I think that here Schiffer is misled by his conviction that passing from sentences such as "Joyce wrote a novel in which he used 'Buck Mulligan' in the pretending way characteristic of fiction" to "Joyce created the fictional character Buck Mulligan" is a "something from nothing" entailment leading to a commitment to fictional entities as well as passing from "Lassie is a dog" to "Lassie has the property of being a dog" is a "something from nothing" entailment leading to a commitment to properties [cf. (2003: 61)]. Now, that entailment between the last two sentences indisputably subsists insofar as the biconditional "Lassie is a dog iff Lassie has the property of being a dog" is necessarily true apriori. Yet a biconditional of the kind tokened by "Joyce wrote a novel in which he used 'Buck Mulligan' in the pretending way characteristic of fiction iff Joyce created the fictional character Buck Mulligan" may even be false since its consequent may be true while its antecedent is false; as happens whenever the *fictum* which is generated has a name which is not mobilized within the corresponding make-believe game. (In Italy we call "Bip-Bip" the incredibly fast character that Wile E. Coyote never manages to catch. Nonetheless, what one makes believe in watching Warner Bros. cartoons in the original or even dubbed in Italian is that there is an incredibly fast creature called "Road Runner.")

there are really no such individuals. Alternatively, we can say that within the context (the space, the world) of that process there definitely are (typically concrete) individuals. Yet, outside that context there is no such individual at all. Indeed, it would be pointless for someone to look in Denmark for a concrete prince named "Hamlet," or to look in Lapland for a concrete white-bearded old man named "Santa Claus" and dressed in red, etc. Moreover, over and above the fiction that such a, typically concrete, individual exists, there is no *further* entity that the make-believe process is concerned with, not even things such as *fictional* entities. Put differently, the fiction that such a concrete individual exists not only does not assign a new, typically concrete, individual to the overall realm of the objects of discourse, but it also does not enrich that realm with an entity, say a fictional one, that allegedly does not exist in the same sense as a concrete individual does, that is, in the spatiotemporal way. There is a gap between making believe that there is a (typically concrete) entity and committing oneself to a fictional entity. The fact that, *within the circumstance* postulated by means of the relevant game of make-believe, there is indeed a (typically concrete) entity says nothing about whether there is a fictional entity existing *outside* that circumstance.[25] To think otherwise would be the same as implausibly claiming that in order for an object to exist in a possible unactual world, *some other* entity must also exist in ours.[26]

In this respect, an existentially creative make-believe process is like a dream. In an existentially creative dream,[27] one imagines that there are many concrete individuals; yet these individuals have no being at all outside the context of the dream itself. Over and above the oneiric fantasy that there are such concrete individuals, there are no further phantasmic entities that the dream is concerned with.[28] That is, dreams have no magical power to generate phantasmic entities. Likewise, neither do make-believe processes have any magical power to generate fictional entities. Admittedly, dreams are intrasubjective

[25] For a detailed criticism of fictional creationism along these lines, in particular of pretense-based creationism, cf. Yagisawa (2001: 155). See also below.

[26] Undoubtedly, the fact that a *possibile* exists in an unactual possible world may entail that some other individuals exist in the actual world, if they are involved in its individual essence. Yet no "individuals" existing only in the scope of a make-believe activity have anything like an essence such that their existence within that scope entails the existence of entities outside that scope.

[27] Since it is not relevant to the present discourse, I do not question here the thesis that there are existentially conservative dreams. Cartesians would of course be dissatisfied with this thesis.

[28] An advocate of *intentionalia* would say that since a dream is a mental state endowed with intentionality (or, better, a collection of such states), there really are such intentional objects as the objects dreamt of in the dream. This may be so. But they would not be phantasmic objects for the same reason I gave in the previous chapter: intentional objects are not fictional objects.

processes whereas make-believe games are intersubjective but, if one wishes to do so, it possible to treat them as collective dreams.[29]

Undoubtedly, in contrast with dreams (whether individual or collective), while playing make-believe games one may intend to generate fictional entities out of those games. But this intention is not a self-fulfilling intention. That is, merely having the intention of generating a *fictum* does not mean that such a *fictum* will come into being. It may be that these games, like dreams, are able to activate intentional entities: if one makes believe that there is a certain, typically concrete, individual, then perhaps *there really is* an individual as the target *of* one's underlying act of imagination, as an intentional object. But only perhaps. Like any shift from a *de dicto* to a *de re* existence, this is rather controversial. Yet I here adopt a neutral position as regards the question of the actual existence of *intentionalia* for, in any event, intentional objects are not fictional entities. As stated in the previous chapter while discussing Thomasson, unlike a fictional entity, an intentional object is not an artifact: that it originated in an act of thought does not make it an artifact in any relevant sense of that term. Put differently, the mental acts involved in a certain make-believe process may justify the idea that an intentional object has been brought into being by that process. Yet they do not justify the idea that a fictional object has also been created in this way. It is definitely the case that the existence of an intentional object does not suffice for the existence of a fictional object. Nor can any further justification be found since the make-believe process is simply the *de dicto* pretense that there is a, typically concrete, individual.[30]

Accordingly, the existence of a certain make-believe process-type is not a sufficient condition for the existence of a fictional being, as creationists wrongly maintain.[31] Can it provide, then, a sufficient condition for the identity of such an entity? By itself, one such process-type—precisely as a set of properties—does not constitute a fictional entity.

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[29] For an analogous comparison between make-believe games and dreams, see Walton (1990: 43–50).

[30] A similar erroneous conflation of *intentionalia* with *ficta* seems to be made by Meinong in the second edition of his (1910[2]). In Kroon's opinion, unlike in the first edition, Meinong seems here to favor an ontologically conservative view of pretense, according to which the pretense that there is a certain object doing such and such things has to be grounded in a mental act of intending that very object; hence it turns out to be the pretense *of* that intentional object that it does such and such things. See Kroon (1992: 518–9, 522).

[31] Goodman (2004: 133) acknowledges that Yagisawa's objections against pretense-theoretical creationists (see n. 25) are well grounded. Yet he further proposes that once an author begins a storytelling process, a fictional entity gradually comes into being (ibid.: 144). But this is precisely what *cannot* happen if the storytelling process is, as I believe, a make-believe process. Now, a make-believe process may be interrupted and then resumed later. A sign of

In the context of the syncretistic theory, however, this is not a problem. As we have just seen, the evaluation of both the best Neo-Meinongian theory and Thomasson's artifactualist theory provides us with two different necessary identity conditions for a *fictum*: possession of a certain property set and possession of a certain make-believe process-type, that is the process in which properties corresponding to those which figure in that set are mobilized. Moreover, that evaluation shows that to have a certain property set is not a sufficient condition of identity: it is not the case that *x* and *y* are the same fictional entity provided that they share the same property set. Yet it also shows that having one such set works as a sufficient condition once it is *combined* with a certain make-believe process-type: take a certain property set and a certain make-believe process-type and you will have the same fictional entity.[32]

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resumption is the fact that the storyteller says things such as "Let me continue my story about James the monster, who liked frightening little children. Don't be too frightened, however—remember that James doesn't really exist! He's just a story monster." Such a sign may lead one to wonder whether a *fictum* is not generated within a make-believe process. (I owe this suggestion to Fred Kroon.) But sentences such as those above can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, they are also mock-assertions, that is they genuinely belong to the make-believe process itself. In such a case, no *fictum* has yet been generated; simply, the *fictum* which will be generated after the completion of the entire make-believe process will contain (internally predicated) inconsistent properties, such as those of *being concrete* and *being fictional*. On the other hand, those sentences may be uttered outside the make-believe game. In such a case, a *fictum* will be created at that point. But the mock-assertions that follow those utterances start a *new* make-believe game, as when new episodes of a literary cycle are written. Hence, *other* fictional entities will be generated out of the new make-believe process, which will stand in a certain relation with the previously generated *fictum* (see on this the next chapter).

In a similar vein, Braun (2005) acknowledges that, by itself, a pretending use of language is not sufficient for a *fictum* to be created. He suggests, however, that a *fictum* comes into existence once an author, while make-believedly referring to something, also has a fictional character in mind. Yet it is not clear to me how this "having a fictional character in mind" is supposed to work. Braun says that while writing, an author may have the intention of creating a fictional character; but this intention a) does not seem to have a singular content and b) it is hardly self-fulfilling. In fact, Braun himself ends up thinking that there may be no fact of the matter as to whether there is a point after which there really is reference to a fictional character on the author's (and even on the reader's) part, so that the distinction between a non-committal make-believe process and a reference to a fictional object stands in need of a *theoretical* reconstruction.

[32] To be more precise, this does not rule out the possibility that a make-believe process-type is by itself a sufficient identity condition of a *fictum*. Since, as we will see immediately below, *ficta* are *many*-one set-correlates in such a way that the make-believe process-type determines the relevant set of properties as the set whose properties correspond to the properties mobilized in the make-believe process type, one might well say that if *x* and *y* share the same make-believe process-type, they are the same fictional entity.

To put it differently, having the make-believe process-type and having the property set are necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for the identity of a *fictum*, given that a *fictum* is a *compound* entity which is *constituted* precisely by the above-mentioned pretense-theoretical and set-theoretical elements. Thus, we have arrived at the thesis that *x* and *y* are one and the same fictional entity if and only if they share both the same make-believe process-type and the same property set. This claim brings us to the core of the syncretistic theory of fictional entities.

3. The Motivation of the Theory

The thesis that the pretense-theoretical element and the set-theoretical element are the only constituents of a fictional entity immediately prompts the question as to its motivation. It is quite improbable that if asked pretheoretically to say what a fictional entity is, anyone would reply that it is a compound of a make-believe process-type and a property set. The average person who talks about *ficta* as an everyday phenomenon would definitely be surprised to hear that *ficta* are such compounds.

There is no doubt that such a person would probably be surprised in the same way as she would be in learning that if Frege is right, numbers are classes of classes. In other words, such surprise would show that—like the Fregean conception of numbers—the present doctrine of *ficta* is *revisionary*, very far from what ordinary common sense would take *ficta* to be.[33]

However, having a revisionary conception of *ficta* is not really a drawback in itself. For, as I said in the Introduction, we do not share a clear pretheoretical idea of what a fictional entity is. So, *pace* Thomasson,[34] it may well be pointless to justify one's own conception of a fictional entity by appealing to a commonsensical notion of it since this would presuppose that common sense has a stable notion of fictional entities, which is definitely not the case. For example, some intuitions, according to which *ficta* are created by their authors, prompt us to think that fictional beings are artifacts. Yet other intuitions, according to which *ficta* essentially possess the properties used to characterize them, prompt us to think that they are a kind of Platonic entity. As a result, to describe as revisionary our conception of a *fictum* as a compound of a make-believe process-type and a set of properties only means that such a conception is something that common sense would not expect. Just as it would not expect *ficta* to be property sets,

[33] For a distinction between revisionary and nonrevisionary metaphysical positions on *ficta*, see Thomasson (1999) and (2003a).

[34] Cf. Thomasson (1999), (2003a).

one-one correlates of such sets, or even properties of properties, as some philosophers take them to be.[35]

Nevertheless, even if it is not a philosophical sin to conceive of *ficta* in an unexpected way, one may well ask why *ficta* have to be conceived in *this*, admittedly unexpected, way. That is, the question naturally arises: why should a fictional entity be *this* kind of compound entity?

This question may be divided into two separate questions: first, why must a *fictum* be a *compound* entity? And second, why (*qua* compound entity) must it be *so* composed? Dividing the original question in two is important as, in itself, it may have both a theoretical and a substantive answer. Yet as a result of this division, it may well be that after theoretical answers have been given to both sub-questions, the original question essentially remains unanswered because its second sub-question has not been substantially addressed. Let us consider this in detail.

To begin with, at the end of Chapter 1 I evaluated a weak version of the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory of fictional entities which conceived of *ficta* as set-correlates. As I said there, this weak version improves on the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory: although it maintains a property set as a component of a fictional entity, it takes that entity to be something over and above that set.

Nevertheless, this weak version had to be put to one side as it turned out that it basically failed to solve the two problems on which the best Neo-Meinongian theory had foundered: the "no-*ficta*" and the "many-*ficta*" problems. Yet this failure, especially regarding the "many-*ficta*" problem, depended on the fact that *ficta* were taken by that weak version to be mere *one*-one set-correlates. According to the proponents of this approach, for each set of properties there is just one fictional entity correlated with that set. But those problems, in particular the "many-*ficta*" problem, would be basically solved if we were able to conceive of *ficta* as *many*-one set-correlates: that is to see *ficta* in such a way that, for each property set, there may be different fictional entities correlated with it. Now, it is precisely this that we are able to do if we add storytelling process-types to property sets in the identity conditions of *ficta*.

Taking the "no-*ficta*" problem first, abstractly speaking the weak version of the best Neo-Meinongian theory has an answer: the existence of a property set is insufficient for the existence of a *fictum* because a *fictum* is not a set, but a one-one set-correlate. Yet simply correlating a set with another entity does not explain why that entity is *fictional*. The syncretistic theory accounts for this by claiming that there is no *fictional* entity at all unless a certain *make-believe* process-type is added to the relevant property set as a component of

[35] Cf. Landini (1990) and Orilia (2000), (2002).

that very *fictum*. Moreover, as to the "many-*ficta*" problem, the weak version of the best Neo-Meinongian theory has no, even formal, answer. Making *ficta* one-one correlates of property sets does not explain why in the problematical case two *ficta* are involved, although just one property set is available. Yet the syncretistic theory solves this problem by making *ficta* many-one set-correlates: different make-believe process-types may be joined to one and the same property set in order to obtain different *ficta*. In the idealized case of Cervantes' and Pierre Menard's stories, the storytelling processes that are joined to the same property set are type-different. Indeed, whenever Cervantes and Menard make two syntactically and physically identical mock-assertions, they hardly make a pretense of the same kind. Since they are totally causally unrelated to one other, those mock-assertions do not exhibit the same similarity as, say, Cervantes' mock-assertion and the mock-assertion of the first person to reiterate it in reading Cervantes' text. This is why there are two distinct Don Quixotes although they do exactly the same things.[36]

It is true, moreover, that as seen in the previous chapter, the artifactualist theory is able to account for the idealized "Menard" case: in it *two* fictional individuals are there for they depend on different, causally unrelated, authors' thoughts. Theoretically, the syncretist could account for the same case by appealing to dependence on different make-believe process-types: different *ficta* are involved since they depend on different such processes. The syncretist, however, has to assume that those processes yield not only existence conditions but also identity conditions for *ficta*. If they provided no identity conditions, for the syncretist *ficta* would be nothing more than set-theoretical entities. Hence, those processes could not yield existence conditions either since it is difficult to maintain that a set depends upon those processes. This is the case not only because, if we are Platonists, sets are autonomous entities but also because, even if we rejected a Platonic conception of sets and saw them as dependent entities, they would depend for their existence on the existence of their members and clearly not on the existence of make-believe processes.

Therefore, from a theoretical perspective everything tallies. A *fictum* has to be a compound entity and, in addition, it has to be a compound entity consisting of both a property set and a make-believe process-type as this enables us to solve problems that other theories have left unresolved. Yet a basic

[36] According to the syncretistic theory, moreover, a *fictum* cannot be a one-many set-correlate. It cannot be the case that, for each make-believe process-type, there may be different sets of properties that correspond to it. This is so even in the case of a one-sentence story involving two characters, such as (4) above. Even in that case, as we have seen, two distinct make-believe process-types are involved. Hence, those distinct processes are, respectively, constituents of the two distinct *ficta* involved.

question remains: aside from theoretical requirements, why should a *fictum* be made up of *precisely* those factors? If the syncretist does not address this issue, the answer to the original question—why should a *fictum* be such a compound entity?—is only theoretical and not substantive.

In order to address this issue, let me start by noting that the distinction borrowed from Evans between existentially creative and existentially conservative make-believe games can be attenuated. Making believe that a certain individual, typically a concrete one, has certain properties is the same as making believe, *of those properties*, that that individual possesses them. But then it turns out that one such process may further be seen as a process in which, *of a certain set of properties*, its actors make believe that the properties corresponding to its properties are instantiated by an individual, typically a concrete one. Thus, one may end up taking all existentially creative games of make-believe to be *set-based* existentially conservative games. For example, one may see Shakespeare's storytelling of *Hamlet* as a fiction in which a certain set of properties, the properties corresponding to those mobilized in that storytelling in order to make believe that there is a certain (concrete) individual that has them (*being a prince, being irascible*, etc.), is made believe to be such that the latter properties are instantiated by a concrete individual. By the same token, one may see the bizarre story of Polly, whose beginning I recounted above, as a fiction in which the set made up of the properties *being a polygon, suffering from isolation from other beings*, etc., and of these properties only, is made believe to be such that the properties corresponding to its properties are instantiated by an abstract individual, that is a geometrical figure.

Certainly, people taking part in the practice of make-believe are not aware of making believe *of a set of properties* that the properties corresponding to its properties are instantiated by a (concrete) individual. It would be rather absurd to think that they were aware. If any participant in a given existentially creative make-believe game were asked to say what they are making believe, they would merely answer that they are making believe *that* there is an individual engaged in such and such actions.

Generally speaking, however, lack of awareness is not a problem for a make-believe practice. As Walton maintains, making believe is not a propositional attitude for which first-person authority may be required[37] but, rather, an intrinsically *normative* imaginative activity: making believe that something is *prescribing* that we imagine that something, is establishing what is the right thing to imagine.[38] As such, make-believe may well lie

[37] *Pace* Currie (1990).

[38] Cf. n. 12.

beyond the scope of application of awareness. Again following Walton,[39] take a game of make-believe involving props, such as a game in which one makes believe of that tree over there that it is a bear and that its branches are the bear's limbs. If those branches are effectively moved, then *eo ipso* one also makes believe that the bear moves its limbs whether or not one is conscious of doing so. In general, one makes believe *more* than what one explicitly, hence consciously, mock-asserts. In consequence, as Evans has emphasized, over and above explicit make-believe truths, there are also implicit make-believe truths that can be suitably derived from the explicit ones.[40] Participants in a make-believe game may well be aware of explicit make-believe truths but not of implicit make-believe truths.

Furthermore, apart from the awareness aspect, notice that the description of an existentially creative game of make-believe as a set-based existentially conservative game is to be given only *outside* that game. In reconsidering the practice in question, one may describe what happens in that practice as follows: a certain set of properties is made believe to be such that the properties corresponding to its properties are instantiated by an individual, typically a concrete one. This amounts to saying that by reconsidering the practice from the outside, one *eo ipso* commits oneself to a fictional entity. In other words, once the make-believe process-type in question is seen in this way, a fictional entity arises.

It is obvious that such a description can be given only outside the game[41] since it is only outside the game that the set of properties in question can be invoked. Indeed, that set may well refer to fictional entities *other* than the *fictum* which that set helps to constitute, namely the entities that figure in the relational properties possibly contained in that set. Within this practice, as said above, no commitment to fictional entities may arise. For within such a practice one prescribes to oneself to imagine merely that there are typically concrete individuals having certain properties.

Accordingly, by reconsidering the practice from the outside in this way, one *eo ipso* commits oneself to a fictional entity. Or, to put it more precisely, one

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[39] Cf. Walton (1990: 35–43).

[40] Cf. n. 1.

[41] Undoubtedly, the description of a certain make-believe game as the make-believe process-type, for example, that a certain individual has a certain property, can also be legitimately given only once that game is over. For if such a description were given while one was still playing the game, it could not be the description of *that* type. As seen above, the identity conditions of a make-believe process-type prescribe that two tokens of make-believe processes are tokens of the same make-believe process type only if they are *de dicto* (or *de re*) identical. As a result, the token of a make-believe game still in progress, that very section of the process, cannot be type-identical with a token of that game once the process is over since the *de dicto* (or *de re*) pretenses mobilized by the two tokens are different.

eo ipso commits oneself directly to that entity. Moreover, one *eo ipso* commits oneself indirectly to all the fictional entities that are involved by the set mobilized by the above description via the relevant relational properties that belong to that set itself. These are the fictional entities to which one directly commits oneself to outside of their specific make-believe process-type.

We saw above that creationists are wrong in holding that the existence of a certain make-believe process-type is a sufficient condition for the existence of a fictional being. However, they are right in holding that a fictional entity must be such that commitment to it may obtain only *outside* a make-believe process. From the syncretistic perspective, this view basically depends upon the fact that only outside the game can we describe a certain set of properties as related to a certain make-believe process-type, the process that mobilizes properties corresponding to the properties which belong to that set. Since it is only when that process is assumed to be so that a *fictum* arises, it is only outside that game that we can commit ourselves to such an entity. One may even say that such a fictional character corresponds to the imaginary "individual" that exists only within the perspective of such a game—most of the properties that are mock-ascribed to that imaginary "individual" are genuinely possessed by the fictional one, including the property of having a certain name ("Hamlet," "Holmes"). Provided that one recalls that the latter imaginary "individual" does not really exist at all.

I am now able to provide a substantial reply to the question of why a fictional entity must be both a pretense-theoretical and a set-theoretical compound. The answer is simple. Since it is precisely when a certain make-believe process-type is taken to apply to a certain property set that a *fictum* arises, this explains why a *fictum* is a compound made up not only of that property set but also of the other entity the set is related to, that is the process-type in question. Therefore, a commitment to a *fictum* concerns an entity composed of both a set of properties and a make-believe process-type. An alternative way to express this is that such a commitment made outside of a certain make-believe process-type *n* is a commitment to the result of taking a certain set of properties to be make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to its properties are instantiated by an individual, typically a concrete one.[42]

A further effect is that the fact that a *fictum* has as its components both a set-theoretical and a pretense-theoretical element makes it more comprehensible that it can be a (many-one) set-correlate. A *fictum* is related to a set by having that set as one of its constituents. Moreover, it is so related by means of its other constituent for this other constituent is the relevant make-believe process-type, once this is taken as pertaining to that set.

[42] For a first formulation of this idea, see Voltolini (1994: 97).

We have, then, the following situation. On the one hand, in virtue of what happens *within* the relevant make-believe process of a certain type *n*, outside that process a certain property set acquires the (cultural) property of *being taken as make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to its properties are instantiated by a certain individual [typically, a concrete one]*. One may well see a set as made believe in a certain way, yet this certainly does not affect its nature: it is only accidentally an object *of* make-believe. On the other hand, the result of taking that set to be make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to its properties are instantiated by a certain individual is a new entity that one is committed to. But make-believe does affect the nature of this new entity: unlike a set, it is an object *made of* essentially of make-believe. That is why it is appropriate to consider it a *fictional* entity. Indeed, this new entity has as its constituents not only a certain set of properties but also a certain make-believe process-type. Among its essential properties are both *being such that it has a set of properties* (seen as make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to its properties are instantiated by a certain individual) and *being such that it has a certain make-believe process-type*. Those set-theoretical and pretense-theoretical elements are components of this new entity precisely insofar as they are related to each other in the way already indicated: the make-believe process-type is taken as pertaining to that set. As a result, a *fictum* is a set-correlate in that it relates to a set as one of its constituents via its other constituent, the make-believe process-type taken as pertaining to that set.

This way of putting things enables me to address a further question: what role do such constituents have to play in order for a fictional entity to *exist*? This problem is particularly relevant as it may be doubted that a set-theoretical and a pretense-theoretical element provide jointly sufficient conditions for the existence of a fictional entity. Let me look at this in detail.

Undoubtedly, as I have already stressed, many people have defended a creationist position in fiction more or less along the lines sketched here. "Within the story," that is in playing the relevant, existentially creative, make-believe game, there is no commitment to a fictional entity. One simply makes believe that there is a, typically concrete, individual. But once one locates oneself "outside the story," that is out of that game, one may well commit oneself to such an entity.[43]

[43] Many authors have drawn a distinction between an "in the story" and an "out of the story" perspective as a noncommittal and a committal perspective respectively; see, for example, Bonomi (1999), Kripke (1973), Searle (1979), Schiffer (1996), (2003) and Thomasson (2003a), (2003b). Although the majority of these authors tend to believe that commitment to *ficta* concerns only what has been called "external" discourse on fictional entities, I believe that it also affects internal discourse on such entities. For clarification of this point, see Chapter 5.

Nonetheless, it is hard to understand how such a commitment can arise by simply locating oneself outside the game. Have I not acknowledged that, by itself, the existence of a certain make-believe process-type does not suffice in order for a fictional entity to exist? Of course, I could part company with the above creationists by claiming that since I maintain that a certain property set yields a sufficient condition for the identity of a fictional entity only together with a make-believe process-type, the same holds with respect to existence conditions: in order for a *fictum* to come into existence, only the joint existence of a certain property set and a certain make-believe process-type is sufficient. This approach, however, would fare no better. The reason is that a set of properties is a free ideality, namely, an abstract entity whose existence is independent of the existence of any other entity.[44] Hence, it is also not the case that it is historically dependent on other entities; as some would express it, a set exists atemporally, or perhaps *sempiternally*, that is it exists at some time *t* and at every time earlier and later than *t*.[45] This allows one to say that it already exists while the relevant make-believe process-type exists. So, if the existence of that process does not suffice in order for a *fictum* to exist, it is hard to see how attaching to it the existence of a certain property set can suffice.

In fact, the Platonic conception of sets which underlies this remark could be questioned. As we have seen, property sets constituting *ficta* may involve relational properties that are relations to (other) fictional entities. Now, it is difficult to see how one such property, hence the set containing it, can exist if its constituent, a fictional entity, does not also exist. So, it might well be the case that once that very set comes into existence as soon as the *ficta* constituting some of its properties also start to exist, another *fictum* also comes into existence. This is the *fictum* which has that set as one of its constituents.[46]

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[44] To use the Husserlian terminology revived by Künne: see n. 2–4 of the previous chapter.

[45] For this definition of sempiternality, cf. Smith (1989: 309).

[46] According to such a perspective, at least relational properties, sets made up (at least) of them, and *ficta* made up (at least) of such sets would simultaneously come into existence. Parsons (1980: 195–6) sees this as a problem for a constructivist conception of fictional entities: how can a *fictum* be constructed out of a property if that property does not exist prior to it? Fine (1982: 126) extends this perplexity to simultaneously intergenerated *ficta*, such as the Holmes and the Watson of the one-sentence story told in (4) above: how can (that) Holmes be generated in terms of the property of *admiring (that) Watson* if that property is in turn generated in terms of (that) Watson, which is again generated in terms of the property of *being admired by (that) Holmes*, hence also by (that) Holmes? Note, however, first that (as we see in the next chapter) the sense in which, in my view, *ficta* are entities constructed from properties is that increasingly broader *ficta* turn out to exist as enlarged make-believe processes, hence bigger property sets, become available. Moreover, Parsons' problem concerns only a constructivist but not a creationist conception of fictional entities, such as the

Although I am strongly in favor of a non-Platonic conception of sets, I do not want the syncretistic theory to rely on a particular, non-Platonic, metaphysical conception of such entities. For argument's sake, then, I assume that the Platonic conception of such entities is correct. Moreover, a similar reasoning may be provided as regards make-believe process-types. Although the fact that they are constituted by prescriptions to imagine leads one to presume that they exist only *once* they are tokened, *qua* types they may be again conceived of as Platonic atemporal, or perhaps sempiternal, entities. Thus, in order to allow for Platonists to be right about sets and types I have to admit that, although a property set and a make-believe process-type provide jointly sufficient conditions for the identity of a *fictum*, the existence of both is not a jointly sufficient condition for the existence of a *fictum*.

Yet this shows only that a further element is required for a *fictum* not to be the *fictum* that it is but to come into existence: in other words, that there is a relation between that process-type and that set. This is precisely the relation I spoke of previously: the process is in fact to be taken as pertaining to that set. Now, as I have repeatedly stated, such a relation holds only when a token of that process is completed. As seen above, the description of that very process-type as a process regarding a certain property set may be correctly given only when at least a token of that process has come to an end. As a result, a *fictum* can exist only once (the original token of) that very process has been completed. For it is only outside that completion that not only the process-type and the property set but also their relationship, according to which the former is taken as regarding the latter, exist. Hence, once that relationship obtains, the *fictum* will also exist.

To put it differently, a *fictum* is not simply the mereological sum of its constituents, the make-believe process-type and the set of properties since if the latter are atemporal, if not sempiternal, entities, so is their mereological sum. Rather, a *fictum* is the outcome of an *operation*: the result of *taking* the make-believe process-type as regarding a certain property set. Once that

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one I endorse. For, in his allegedly Platonist approach to *ficta*, Parsons admits that in the identity conditions of a *fictum* there are relational properties involving other *ficta*. (I see Parsons as merely defending an allegedly Platonic approach to *ficta* since in taking *ficta* to be set-*correlates*, he actually has to split their identity from their existence conditions. See the following footnote). As a result, a creationist approach to *ficta*, such as mine, simply applies to the existence conditions of *ficta* what it already shares with a set-theoretical anti-creationist approach to such entities as regards their identity conditions: *ficta* may well be mutually dependent (on other *ficta* as well as on other entities, such as relational properties) to the same extent as mutually individuated entities.

make-believe process is so taken, a *fictum* comes into being as the compound of that process and of that set.[47]

4. The Theory Accounts for the Data

The core of the syncretistic theory is, then, that a fictional individual is a compound entity consisting of both a make-believe process-type and the set of properties corresponding to the properties mobilized in that process, as a result of seeing that process-type as regarding that set. To proceed further let me first emphasize that since the theory is a combination of the previous abstractionist theories, it deals in predictable ways with the data mentioned in the previous chapter: the "nonexistence," the "incompleteness" and the "analyticity" data.

To begin with, the syncretistic theory accounts for the "nonexistence" datum in precisely the same way as abstractionists (both Neo-Meinongian and artifactualist). In the syncretistic theory a *fictum* is a compound made up of both a pretense-theoretical and a set-theoretical element. Therefore, the theory endorses the conviction, shared by Neo-Meinongians and artifactualists, that a fictional object is an abstract entity given that, unlike (actually existing) concrete entities,[48] it exists non-spatiotemporally. So I agree with Thomasson that, first, when one truthfully states that *there are* fictional beings, one quantifies unrestrictedly over both spatiotemporal and non-spatiotemporal existents and, second, when one takes such a statement to be false, one also takes the particular quantifier as contextually restricted

[47] That there is a distinction between sufficient identity conditions and sufficient existence conditions is not specific to my theory. Practically the same applies to the standard weak versions of the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory of fictional entities. For Parsons, a property set provides a sufficient identity condition: *x* and *y* are the same *fictum* if they share the same (nuclear) properties. [He sees this as concerning Meinongian objects in general. Cf. Parsons (1980: 19)]. Yet, since in his perspective a *fictum* is not simply a set but rather a set-*correlate*, it follows that in order for a *fictum* to *exist*, something more than the existence of that set is required. In this perspective, the additional element is not determinant for the identity conditions of a *fictum* because, as Castañeda is thought to maintain [in respect of Meinongian objects in general: cf. Orilia (2002: 148)], this element amounts to a *mental operation* that regards the set: *seeing* that set as a concrete individual. *Mutatis mutandis*, practically the same holds for the syncretist. A *fictum* comes into being as a result of *seeing* a certain process-type as pertaining to a certain property set.

[48] As I said in Chapter 1, following the early Russell, I take concrete entities as beings that *may* be involved directly in causal relations, hence as *possibilia*, some of which actually exist whereas others merely possibly exist. See on this Cocchiarella (1982: 213). See also Zalta (1983: 60, 93). I have defended this position in, for example, Voltolini (1994).

over spatiotemporally existent beings.[49] As a result, a quantified negative existential sentence such as:

(6) There is no such a thing as Santa Claus

is true since it means that, in the *restricted* domain of the spatiotemporal existents, the fictional object Santa Claus is not to be found. As many from Saul Kripke onward have emphasized,[50] this allows us to distinguish the truth of (6) from the truth of:

(7) There is no such a thing as Rudyard

where we want to say that as no character by that name has ever been created through any make-believe process, within the *overall* domain of beings no thing by that name can be found.

Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter 1, such a restriction is legitimized only by assuming that there is a first-order property of existence shared only by the members of the subdomain over which the variable bound by the restricted quantifier ranges. This is what Meinongians in general (old and new) normally believe. Now, regardless of how this first-order property is further conceived,[51] it makes sentences of the kind "F does not exist", where "F" is a genuine singular term referring to a fictional entity and the predicate "_ exists" designates this property, true.[52] Consequently, we have to draw a distinction between the truth of the singular, non-quantified, negative existential corresponding to (6), namely:

(8) Santa Claus does not exist

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[49] Cf. n. 19 of the previous chapter.

[50] Cf. Kripke (1973), Santambrogio (1992: 319), and Bonomi (1994: 95–6).

[51] As seen in Chapter 1, according to both old and new Meinongians, this property of existence contrasts with another first-order existential property: non-spatiotemporal existence or *subsistence*. Viewed in this way, spatiotemporal and non-spatiotemporal existence are species of a common genus, the first-order property of existence *tout court*. This can be explained if we take spatiotemporal existence as the first-order property of *being directly involved in the worldly causal order*, namely the property of *both bringing about and undergoing effects*, and non-spatiotemporal existence as the first-order property of *being indirectly involved in the worldly causal order*, namely the property of *merely bringing about effects*. See Chapter 1, n. 6. If one wanted moreover to see the overall domain of beings as comprising more entities than both the spatiotemporal and the non-spatiotemporal existents, the first-order property of existence *tout court* could be viewed as restricting quantification over the, admittedly broader, sub-domain of the existing entities. More on this can be found in Voltolini (2006a).

[52] On the semantic problem of reference to fictional entities, see Chapters 5–6.

which has to be interpreted as truthfully saying of the *fictum* Santa Claus that it does not *spatiotemporally* exist,[53] and the truth of the singular negative existential corresponding to (7), namely:

(9) Rudyard does not exist

which must be accounted for metalinguistically, as more or less equivalent to:

(9') "Rudyard" does not refer to anything.[54]

Qua abstract, a *fictum* is thus an actually yet non-spatiotemporally existing entity. This makes a denizen (at least) of the actual world. As a result, it can be either a possible or an impossible entity, not in the primary sense that it exists either in a possible unactual world or in no possible world at all, but only in the secondary sense of these notions already employed by some Neo-Meinongians.[55] In other words, a *fictum* is (im)possible only where it is (im)possible that there exists a concrete entity instantiating all the properties featuring its set-theoretical base. In the overall inventory of the world, *ficta* and (*im*)*possibilia* belong to different kinds of entities.[56]

Since *ficta* also are pretense-based entities, moreover, as we have seen they are not sempiternal beings; they begin to exist. Furthermore, they can begin to exist only after the relevant make-believe process has taken place.

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[53] This is fully compatible with the falsity of (8) itself when it is taken to mean that Santa Claus does not exist *tout court*. I return to this point in Chapter 6.

[54] Thomasson has very recently maintained that one can give a metalinguistic account both of (8) and of (9). According to her, a non-quantified negative existential containing a name "N" is true iff the history of the previous uses of that name in predicative statements made with the intention of referring to some entity of ontological kind K does not meet the condition for referring to an entity of kind K. As a result, when uttering (8) we truthfully say that "Santa Claus" does not meet the conditions for referring to a *person*, while by uttering (9) we truthfully say that "Rudyard" does not meet the conditions for referring to a *fictum*. Cf. Thomasson (2003b). As far as (8) is concerned, a similar conception is held by van Invagen (2000: 246–7). Yet it seems to me that, in uttering a sentence such as (8) in front of a child who believes in Santa Claus, we say something more than that the name "Santa Claus" does not meet the condition for referring to a person. For we intend to tell the child that Santa Claus is not encounterable or, what comes to the same thing, that the child has a grossly metaphysically misleading belief in this regard. Such intentions are satisfied if what we say by uttering (8) is that Santa Claus does not possess the first-order property of existence which spatiotemporal existents have.

[55] Cf. Chapter 1, n. 42.

[56] As I said in Voltolini (1994). As seen in Chapter 1, many people endorse the same thesis; see, for example, Thomasson (1999) and Zalta (1989).

Indeed, as I said before, the make-believe process which contributes to constituting a *fictum* is also something this entity *historically* depends on.

Admittedly, the fact that *ficta* are *created* entities does not mean that they are also *perishable*. In Thomasson's terms, historical dependence on make-believe processes does not entail constant dependence on something else—literary works in Thomasson's case. For the time being, I want to remain neutral on the issue of the identity of literary works, hence also on the question of whether they are perishable entities *per se*.[57] Nonetheless, whether or not works are perishable entities, *ficta* do not seem to be so. As seen in the previous chapter, in Thomasson's view properties are possessed by *ficta* only relatively, that is according to literary works. Now, this relativity of property possession by itself already suggests perishability. If it were the case that a *fictum* no longer possessed all its properties relatively (which would happen in Thomasson's view if all the works in which the *fictum* is spoken of died out), that *fictum* would definitely be close to disappearing altogether. Yet, unlike Thomasson, I claim that the properties corresponding to those mobilized in the relevant make-believe processes belong to fictional objects absolutely and not relatively; that is, not according to any particular work. Indeed, these properties belong to the sets that contribute to the identity of *ficta*. In general, an item cannot be the member of a set according to some (contextual) parameters; either it is one of the set's members or it is not. For the set is in turn individuated by having that item as its member. A fortiori, properties cannot be relatively possessed by *ficta* because, since the sets constituted by the relevant properties contribute to the identity of the *ficta* that have them, those properties contribute also to the *ficta*'s identity. Thus, absolute possession of properties by *ficta* suggests that even if works could legitimately be said to perish, it would not be the case that *ficta* would lose the above-mentioned properties, hence that they would also disappear.

This suggestion is corroborated by the fact that in the syncretistic account, the constituents of *ficta* may well be conceived as sempiternal entities. Since *qua* sempiternal those constituents continue to exist forever, why should not *ficta* be *everlasting* entities, that is, entities that exist at some time *t* and at every time later than *t*?[58]

If, of course, every physical copy of every work in which a certain *fictum* is spoken of were destroyed—say, as the result of a nuclear war—probably nobody would be able either to refer or understand references to that *fictum* any longer. More problematically than this, there would probably be no more make-believe process-token instantiating the type constituting that

[57] I deal with the question of what a literary, or better a fictional, work is in Chapter 7.

[58] For this definition of everlastingness, cf. Smith (1989: 312).

fictum. Yet this would not mean that the type in question would have ceased to exist as the type-token relation is not one of existential dependence.

Undoubtedly, one could object to this conclusion. Is it not possible to hold that a type comes into existence only when a token of it occurs? Hence, could not one also hold that once the last token of a certain type disappears, the type itself ceases to exist? Suppose then that, by virtue of this objection, we superimposed the existential-dependence model on the type-token relation. As a consequence, we would be forced to say that once all its tokens vanish, the make-believe process-type which those tokens instantiate also disappears. Yet the type's disappearance would not entail that the *fictum* which that type constitutes has ceased to exist.

If this were the case, within the general field of *abstracta* this predicament would not concern only fictional entities. Suppose there are semantic entities such as singular propositions, that is, structured entities made up of object(s) and a property. It is definitely the case that one such entity does not come into existence until its constituents also exist. On the other hand, it continues to exist even if one of its constituents no longer exists.

At any rate, for syncretists—like artifactualists—*ficta* remain origin-bound idealities not only in the temporal but also in the modal sense. They exist only in the worlds where the make-believe processes-types by virtue of which (*inter alia*) they are generated also exist. As I said above, the make-believe process that is a constituent of a *fictum* is also something that *fictum* generically depends upon. In order for a *fictum* to exist, some make-believe process of a certain type must also exist. This makes *ficta* contingent beings. In a nutshell, a world in which no make-believe occurs is clearly also a world without *ficta*.

Since, moreover, a property set is a basis for a fictional entity, both the "incompleteness" and the "analyticity" data can be accounted for in practically the same way as they are in the best Neo-Meinongian theory outlined in Chapter 1.

First of all, the syncretistic approach shares that theory's idea that properties may be predicated of a *fictum* both in the internal and in the external mode of predication. As I have said, a set of properties is one of the components of a fictional entity and so that entity possesses a property which belongs to that set at least in the internal mode. As we saw in Chapter 1, according to the best Neo-Meinongian theory, for an item to possess a property internally means precisely that this property is a member of the set that constitutes that very item. This is why a *fictum* can possess those properties absolutely, as concrete actual entities do. As I said in Chapter 1, it may seem strange that a *fictum* such as Hamlet, as well as a concrete actual entity such as Charles, Prince of Wales, can be a prince absolutely. This oddity, however, vanishes when it is noted that Hamlet absolutely has this property

internally, whereas Charles absolutely has the very same property noninternally, that is externally.

Yet a fictional entity may also possess properties—possibly, also the very same ones—in the external mode; that is, when it simply instantiates properties just as concrete actual entities do. This is typically the case of a property such as *being a fictional individual*. A *fictum* definitely possesses such a property externally. But it may also possess that property internally, for example, if its existence arises from a metafictional make-believe process of the kind: "Once upon a time, there was a fictional individual that . . . ."[59]

Once we apply to *ficta* the "internal/external" mode-of-predication distinction, it can legitimately be said that a fictional being *F* is incomplete if, with respect to both property *P* and its complement *not-P* which are not members of its base set, it possesses neither internally. As I said in chapter one, this does not violate the Law of Excluded Middle. For in both sentential pairs "It is/it is not the case that F is P" and "It is/it is not the case that F is not-P," where "F" designates the *fictum* in question, "_ is P" designates a

[59] Since the syncretistic theory endorses the internal/external mode of predication distinction, it has to address Clark's paradox regarding internal predication (cf. Chapter 1, n. 60). A syncretist may simply follow Zalta's solution to this paradox (1983: 160) in not allowing that properties belonging to the set which constitutes the *fictum*, that is, the properties which are (at least) internally predicated of the *fictum*, contain internally predicated properties. This may undoubtedly seem an *ad hoc* move [cf. Pasniczek (1988: 138)]. Nevertheless, in order to obviate the paradox, one could interpret that prohibition as a prohibition to apply internal (as well as external) predication to properties apparently figuring in apparently complex properties that constitute genuinely internally predicated properties. Take, for instance, the apparently complex property of *having a property internally*, which figures in the logically complex property *having a property internally but not externally*. I can definitely imagine that the latter property is internally predicated of a *fictum*. Suppose there is a story that begins: "Once upon a time, there was an object which had a property internally but not externally." (One such story allegedly leads to Clark's paradox.) Moreover, I can also imagine that the former property is internally predicated of that *fictum*. If I had a story starting "Once upon a time, there was an object which was both golden and a mountain," that *fictum* would possess internally not only the property of *being golden and a mountain*, but also the two component properties of *being golden* and of *being a mountain*. Yet I might prohibit the property of *having a property*, which apparently figures in the apparently complex property of *having a property internally*, from being either internally or externally predicated of that *fictum*. For it is the alleged internal but not external possession of *that* property which actually (via lambda-conversion) leads to the paradox. To put it differently, what the *fictum* in question possesses internally as a genuine component of its logically complex properties that it also possesses internally is the property of *having-a-property-internally*. Perhaps this fact, namely that in this case it is not legitimate to pass from "_ is internally P" to "xP" (to use the standard symbolism for internal predication), might be useful also in order to obviate McMichael's paradox regarding internal predication [on which see Zalta (1983: 159–60)].

certain property and "_ is not-P" its complement, the second members of the pairs are true but the first are false.

Furthermore, a sentence of the kind "F is P," where "F" designates a given *fictum* and "_ is P" a certain property *P*, may well be seen as analytically true (false) if *P* is (not) possessed internally by that *fictum*; in other words, it belongs (does not belong) to the base set of the many-one set-correlate which the *fictum* in question turns out to be.[60] For, if that property belongs to that set and that *fictum* consists of that set, it is true that the meaning of the predicate—the property in question—is contained in the meaning of the subject—the *fictum* itself.[61]

Once the syncretistic theory adopts the "internal/external" mode-of-predication distinction, it can also account for further problems regarding the possession of properties by fictional entities. To start with, since having a certain set is essential for a *fictum*, the properties constituting that set are essential also for that *fictum*. As the properties composing the set are in fact essential for it, they are *a fortiori* essential for the *fictum* made up of such a set. In other words, such properties contribute to the *fictum*'s identity. Once this is combined with the "internal/external" mode-of-predication distinction, I conclude that for a *fictum* the properties belonging to its constituent set are essential *qua* predicated of it in the internal mode. It is essential for a *fictum* to possess internally the properties featuring its constituent set. Moreover, although I follow Fine in holding that essence is irreducible to necessity,[62] clearly the former entails the latter. Thus, internal possession is also necessary. For instance, *living at 221B Baker Street, qua* internally predicated of Holmes, is necessary for Holmes.

Undoubtedly, the thesis that *ficta* essentially, hence necessarily, possess the properties that are invoked in the relevant make-believe game may leave one perplexed. In the course of one such game, can a storyteller not make believe, either explicitly or implicitly, that a certain individual has some properties *merely possibly*? That is, can a storyteller not make-believedly assert, or make-believedly imply, that such an individual might be *P* (or even that, although it is not *P*, it might have been)? Given that this is the

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[60] Incidentally, this gives a preliminary sketch of the truth conditions of a sentence in the form "F is P," where "F" refers to a *fictum* and "_ is P" designates a property internally predicated of it. A sentence in that form is true iff the *fictum* that "F" refers to internally has the property designated by "_ is P". I deal with this issue in detail in Chapter 6.

[61] This is just a provisional explanation of the "analyticity" datum on behalf of the syncretistic theory. In Chapter 6, I give a more complex explanation, which takes into account the fact that a sentence such as "F is P," where "F" designates a *fictum* and "_ is P" a property, in its non-conniving use is equivalent to an internal meta-fictional sentence of the form "In the story S, F is P" in its absolutely non-conniving use.

[62] See n. 54 of the previous chapter.

case, how can the corresponding *fictum* possess the property *P* essentially, hence necessarily? Still using the previous example, might it not have been the case that Holmes lived at 221*C* Baker Street?

Here again, I have to rely on the distinction between external and internal predication in order to combine it with *ficta*'s possession of modal properties. Certainly, over and above non-modal properties, modal properties such as *being possibly P* are mobilized in make-believe games. According to the syncretistic theory, this means that the fictional beings that are generated out of such games possess internally not only non-modal properties but also modal properties. Take for instance the description of the Nun of Monza in chapter X of Manzoni's *The Betrothed*:

> Gertrude might have proved a holy and contented nun, however she had become one. But, instead of this, the unhappy girl struggled under the yoke, and thus felt it heavier and more galling.[63]

In the first sentence of the above quotation, Gertrude is precisely characterized in the text as having the modal property of *being possibly a holy and contented nun*. Hence, according to the syncretistic theory, the fictional object in question possesses that modal property internally.

So there definitely are cases in which saying that a *fictum* possesses internally a property of the form *being possibly P* is true. Yet saying that a *fictum* possesses internally the property of *being possibly P*—for instance, the property of *possibly living at 221C Baker Street* or the property of *being possibly a holy and contented nun*—is not the same as saying that it is possible for it to possess internally the non-modal property of *being P*—for instance, the property of *living at 221C Baker Street* or of *being a holy and contented nun*. If the latter property does not occur within its constituent set, the latter statement is simply false. For, if the fact that a given fictional object *actually* possesses certain properties internally characterizes the essence, hence the very identity, of that *fictum*, saying in this sense that that *fictum* might have internally properties other than those it actually has is like saying that it might be different from what it is, which is impossible.

In taking sides with neo-Meinongians on this point, I *eo ipso* part company with artifactualists such as Thomasson. As we have just seen, I allow for the fact that a *fictum* is *possibly P* internally, but I do not allow for the fact that such a *fictum* might have been *P* internally. In her framework, on the contrary, Thomasson allows *mutatis mutandis* not only for the existence of story-relative modal properties, but also for story-relative non-modal properties

[63] Harvard Classics, vol. 21, Bartleby.Com, New York 2001, http://www.bartleby.com/21/10.html, § 51.

being contingently possessed by fictional characters. As she says, it is not only often true that, according to story *S*, a given *fictum F* might have been *P*; it is sometimes also true that a given *fictum F* might have been *P* according to some story or other.[64] This merely stresses once more that from her perspective, properties mobilized in the relevant storytelling process provide no contribution at all to the individuation of a fictional individual. This is because, insofar as such properties are contingently possessed by such an individual, they are possessed by it neither necessarily nor essentially.

5. A Comparison with Zalta's Latest Version of his Abstractionist Theory

The idea that make-believe contributes to determining the identity of a fictional individual has been recently espoused also by Zalta. As will be recalled from Chapter 1, Zalta supports a specific version of the Neo-Meinongian doctrine of *ficta*. According to this version, a *fictum* is a Meinongian object taken as an abstract entity of a genuinely Platonic kind, something like a Platonic type which concrete entities (may) instantiate. Among Meinongian objects so conceived, *ficta* are characters that originate in a story in the sense that they are abstract entities which are characters in a story and are not characters of any earlier story.[65]

Recently, Zalta has updated his theory of abstract entities in order *inter alia* to accommodate the intuition that make-believe has something to do with the nature of fictional beings. First, he maintains that, in general, an abstract entity is nothing but a natural pattern of properties. Then, he explains the naturalized character of such patterns by saying that they are grounded in the natural world, specifically in human behavior. Finally, he says that those abstract entities which are also fictional are precisely patterns of properties that are connected by a grounding relation or, as he also (alternatively) says, a supervenience relation with certain behavioral patterns. Under these latter patterns are included instances of pretense behavior. Instances of one such pattern are the make-believe game that original storyteller(s) play and also those which further subjects play by conforming to the prescriptions contained in the original game.[66]

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[64] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 109–11). She limits herself to suggesting that it may be also true that a given *fictum F* might have been *P* according to a *given* story *S*. For this involves the problematic idea that not only a *fictum*, but even a story involving it, remains the same story across possible worlds independently of whether its content changes slightly.

[65] Cf. Zalta (1983: 92–3), (1988: 124–6), and (2000: 127–8).

[66] Cf. Zalta (2000: 138–43).

Undoubtedly, Zalta's new vision has many points in common with the syncretistic theory I am attempting to defend here. For example, the syncretistic theory is also committed to defending a thesis according to which *ficta* supervene over make-believe processes. In fact, in saying that *ficta* are many-one set-correlates, I reject not only the view that they are one-one but also that they are one-many set-correlates; in other words that *ficta* are such that for each make-believe process-type there may be different sets of properties which match it, hence different *ficta*. As a result, I acknowledge that there is no difference between *ficta* without a difference in kind between the pretense patterns that give rise to them.

Yet differences do remain. First of all, precisely with respect to the supervenience thesis just mentioned, Zalta's naturalistic project obliges him to hold that the existence of behavioral pretense patterns is a sufficient condition for the existence of those patterns of properties which *ficta* are identical with according to his account. This is not the case for the syncretistic theory. As we have seen, make-believe games are not by themselves sufficient to yield a fictional entity since sets still have to come into play; fictional beings are (many-one) *set*-correlates. On behalf of Zalta, one might think that the thesis of *ficta* supervening over behavioral pretense patterns entails by itself the thesis that the existence of the latter is sufficient for the existence of the former. As some would say, a metaphorical way of reformulating the idea that the first thesis entails the second thesis is to say that once God has created behavioral pretense patterns, no further action is required in order for fictional entities to be generated. Yet this entailment clearly does not subsist. To borrow an example from the different domain of the philosophy of mind, even psychophysical parallelists may agree that mental properties, or states, supervene on physical properties, or states. But they would say that once God has created physical properties (or states), there still remains much to do in order for mental properties (or states) to come into being.[67] As Jaegwon Kim has convincingly argued, the supervenience relation is just a covariation relation, not a grounding relation.[68] Thus, the present disagreement between the syncretistic theory and Zalta's updated theory of fictional objects is as follows. By claiming that there is a grounding relation between the pattern of properties of which a *fictum* consists and a behavioral pretense pattern, Zalta holds that there is a stronger relation between *ficta* and behavioral pretense patterns than the supervenience relation which the syncretistic theory accepts as subsisting between the two kinds of things.

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[67] See on this Kim (1998: 15 n. 22).

[68] Cf. Kim (1998: 14). On supervenience relations in general, see Kim, for example (1993).

Yet there is an even stronger divergence between the two perspectives. In holding that *ficta* are just patterns of properties, Zalta also has to face the problems that made the Neo-Meinongian account founder: the "no-*ficta*" and the "many-*ficta*" problems. He may be able to deal with the former problem. He could indeed appeal to the grounding relation that holds between *ficta* and behavioral pretense patterns: a pattern of properties is not a *fictum* in itself; it turns into (or it comes into being as) a fictional entity once it is grounded in a behavioral pretense pattern.[69] But the latter problem remains. For in the idealized "Menard" case, where (as we saw in Chapter 1) two syntactically identical texts are supposed to coincide not only in their stated but also in their implied truths, one and the same property pattern is obviously mobilized, and yet two fictional beings are at stake. Of course, Zalta might reject the problem by simply denying *à la* Parsons that different *ficta* are involved there.[70] Yet then he could hardly continue to say that there is a *grounding* relation of property patterns over behavioral pretense patterns since, as we have seen above, in the "Menard" case it is difficult to believe that type-identical behavioral pretense patterns are involved. Whenever Cervantes and Menard make two both syntactically and physically identical mock-assertions, they hardly make a pretense of the same kind. Insofar as they are totally causally unrelated to one another, those mock-assertions do not exhibit the same similarity as, say, Cervantes' mock-assertion and the assertion of the first person who reiterates it in reading Cervantes' text. So, how could one and the same property pattern be grounded in such different behavioral pretense patterns?

Be that as it may, this point marks a bigger difference from the syncretistic theory. As I have already pointed out, because of the "many-*ficta*" problem the syncretistic theory asserts not only that fictional beings are set-*correlates*, but also that they are not one-one but, rather, many-one set-correlates.

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[69] Apparently, Zalta wishes to remain neutral between the "artifactualist" option that a property pattern comes into being as a fictional entity once it is grounded in a behavioral pretense pattern and the Platonic option that a pre-existing property pattern turns into a fictional entity once it is so grounded. Cf. Zalta (2000: 142 and n. 129). Yet the latter option is incompatible with the idea that the relation between behavioral and property patterns is a *grounding* relation. If it really were a grounding relation, that is, a relation stronger than the supervenience relation, then it could not be the case that, for a property pattern, being a fictional entity would amount to simply being a contingent fact, which is what Zalta says in support of the Platonist position (ibid.).

[70] Cf. Chapter 1, n. 77.

Chapter 4

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS OF THE SYNCRETISTIC THEORY

1. Synopsis

In this chapter I try to show how the syncretistic theory applies to two further issues: the question of the identity of characters within a literary cycle or, better, the question of whether a *fictum* can migrate from one fiction into another, and the question of whether there are immigrant alien objects in fiction, that is, individuals that migrate into fiction from the realm of concrete (and abstract) actual (or even possible) entities.

Expressed briefly, the answer to the first question is that although, according to the syncretistic theory, there are no fictional characters that migrate from one fiction to another, there is a *general* character which is the *fictum* at the centre of an entire cycle. The answer to the second question is totally negative: there are no (either concrete or abstract) immigrant objects at all in fiction. Stories concern fictional entities only.

2. Characters in Single Episodes vs. Characters in Cycles

Let me summarize the story of the generation of a fictional being as follows. To begin with, until the make-believe process that there is a certain (concrete) individual which is so-and-so is completed (typically in the course of a broader storytelling process), there is no such fictional being. As stated above, it is not necessary for this process to occur continuously. As often happens with respect to elementary make-believe games, the participants may start a game, leave it and resume it later. Given such latitude, it may also be difficult to assess at what point the game, the make-believe process in question, is definitely over. Sometimes this may depend on an explicit agreement between the

participants; at other times no such agreement obtains and yet the game nonetheless does come to an end. Sooner or later, as in the case of any other game, this game is over. Once it is over, people can start thinking *of* it as the process in which a certain set of properties is made believe to be such that the properties corresponding to its properties are instantiated by a certain, typically concrete individual. As soon as this happens, a fictional entity comes into existence, as made up of that process(-type) together with the very set of properties which that process is then seen as involving. Participants in the game could *not* think of such an entity. Since they are *in* the game, they simply imagine that there is a (concrete) individual having the properties corresponding to the members of the set in question.

The fact that a *fictum* has come into existence once the relevant make-believe game is over, however, does not prevent that game from being revived. Reviving a game is something quite different from merely resuming it because in order for a game to be resumed after an interruption, no special intention is needed. Think of the simplest examples of make-believe games, such as those involving dolls and puppets. Children playing with such props can interrupt their games—for instance, when their mothers tell them to have a snack—and then resume them as if no interruption had occurred. In contrast, if a game is to be revived, a special intention is required. With respect to storytelling games, a new storyteller has to start his or her tale with the intention of *protracting* a previous make-believe process. He or she must intend to pretend that the *very same* (concrete) individual that was thought of in the previous make-believe process as being so-and-so is (also) such-and-such. Intentions of this kind underlie the formation of myths and literary cycles.[1]

However, the new storyteller's intention to protract a previous make-believe game is only a *necessary* condition for *that* game to be revived. It is not in fact a *sufficient* condition for that game to be protracted since that intention (like any other intention) may go unfulfilled. This can happen in different ways. For instance, because that intention is seen as thwarted given the intentions of *further* participants in the new storytelling practice to start a new make-believe process that there is an individual doing such-and-such things,[2] or because what the new storyteller happens to make believe "about" the

[1] This phenomenon occurs widely in cross-media cycles such as those involving both literature and other fictional media, such as two-dimensional media such as cartoons and movies and three-dimensional media such as sculpture and theatre.

[2] Certainly, these further intentions may also not be automatically fulfilled. In order to establish whether protraction of a game has occurred, what ultimately counts is that agreement between players' intentions and recognitions takes place (see immediately below). In general, as I said above, a make-believe process-type may be seen as coming into existence by means of *diffuse* participation in its original tokening.

individual whose story is being told is too distant (chronologically or qualitatively) from what the original storyteller(s) made believe. Or even further reasons may be imagined. As a result, there is no revival of a previous make-believe game; the new practice amounts to an entirely new game, type-distinct from the first.

Of course it is also possible that the new storyteller's intention to protract a previous make-believe game is indeed fulfilled. This happens when further participants in the game *recognize* that the new game is just the old game protracted. However, although it is another necessary condition, such recognition by the participants is obviously not also a sufficient condition for the game's revival. Nothing prevents the new storyteller in question from making up an entirely new story, albeit resembling an earlier one. Yet the storyteller's intention together with that recognition may well function as *jointly sufficient* conditions for the revival of a make-believe game. Only in this case does the new practice really amount to reviving the old game. In that revival of a game, one often continues to pretend that there is a (typically concrete) individual, the very same individual as the one whose existence was pretended beforehand. So what is revived is an existentially creative make-believe game, in which one pretends *that* the very same, typically concrete, individual which was previously pretended to be *F*, *G*, *H* . . . is also *I*, *J*, *K* . . . .

Game revival of this kind is a quite typical phenomenon in literature. Expansions of myths constitute typical, but definitely not the only, examples of such revival. Hence, they are not to be confused with another similar, yet distinct, phenomenon that may affect metafictional bits of fiction, in particular those in which one makes believe *of* a previously constituted fictional abstract character that it has certain properties. Suppose one told a story in which Oedipus expresses his delight in having been created by Sophocles long ago since this enabled him to become a model both for later writers and for psychoanalysts. This is a—perhaps extravagant—example of an existentially conservative make-believe game, in which one makes believe of an independently existing item—a given fictional character, Oedipus—that it has certain properties.[3] As will be remembered from the previous chapter, existentially conservative make-believe games typically involve an actual concrete individual. Nevertheless, in (admittedly rare) cases they may also involve actual abstract individuals, hence fictional characters as well.

[3] Without doubt, a protraction of the existentially creative make-believe game that there is a certain individual may well be joined to an existentially conservative make-believe game about a fictional individual. In *A Samba for Sherlock*, Jô Soares makes believe *that* the concrete individual Sherlock Holmes about whom Conan Doyle had previously made believe that he was a detective, etc. is such that he is cleverer than the fictional character Poirot, who is thus concerned by Soares' *de re* make-believe.

Now, as far as *ficta* are concerned, failure versus success in reviving an old game makes a difference. In the first case (failure), at the end of the new make-believe process we have an entirely new fictional being. This new *fictum* is made up of both the type which that process is a token of and the new set of properties corresponding to those invoked in that process. In contrast, in the second case (success), at the end of the game we have a fictional being broader than the one that became available before the game's revival. This *fictum* consists of both the broader make-believe part of the enlarged storytelling practice, the part covering the revival, and the broader set of properties that is mobilized by pretending throughout the broader part as a whole that there is just one and the same individual having all the properties corresponding to those belonging to that set.

Famous examples of literary situations where we have to consider whether there is just one extended relevant make-believe process(-type) or many different such process(-types)—hence whether over and above the original character there is merely one broader fictional being or simply (possibly many) different ones—are Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Richardson's *Pamela* and Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and *Shamela*, and even Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*.

Let me now add another very illuminating example, taken from Italian literature of the Renaissance. As is well known, Ludovico Ariosto intended his masterpiece *Orlando Furioso* ("Orlando Enraged") to be a continuation of Matteo Boiardo's earlier poem *Orlando Innamorato* ("Orlando in Love"). In particular, he wanted to continue making believe that there was a certain individual named "Roland," the very same individual that Boiardo pretends to be one of Charlemagne's best paladins, who fell in love with Angelica, the daughter of the king of Cathay. Ariosto, however, pretends that such individual, Roland, also did other things, such as going insane when he learns that Angelica has fallen in love with the Saracen soldier Medoro. In the second octave of Canto 1 of the epic *Orlando Furioso*, the narrator says:

> In the same strain of Roland will I tell/ Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme,/ On whom strange madness and rank fury fell,/ A man esteemed so wise in former time.[4]

Now, if we take Ariosto's intention to be unfulfilled, we have two type-distinct make-believe practices, constituted by the narrations of Boiardo and Ariosto respectively. Hence, we have two entirely distinct fictional Rolands: first, Boiardo's Roland—made up of both Boiardo's

[4] Transl. by William Stewart Rose (London, 1910; http//sunsite.berkeley.edu/OMACL/Orlando/1-2canto.htm).

make-believe process-type involving the name "Roland" and the set of the properties mobilized in the narration of *Orlando Innamorato* by making believe that there is an individual having the corresponding properties—and, second, Ariosto's Roland, made up of Ariosto's make-believe distinct process-type with "Roland" and the set of the properties corresponding to those mobilized in the narration of *Orlando Furioso*. On the other hand, if we take Ariosto's intention to be fulfilled, then in Ariosto's narration we have the protraction of a previous make-believe practice performed by Boiardo. As a result, over and above Boiardo's Roland we have a larger Roland, composed of the make-believe process-type started by Boiardo and protracted by Ariosto, with the bigger set of the properties corresponding to the properties mobilized in both of the above narratives. In this example, the second option is definitely more probable than the first. (In fact, we may also say that we have an even larger Roland, stemming from a make-believe practice initiated with the telling of the older, medieval, *Chanson de Roland* and protracted by the storytelling of other authors, including Boiardo, up to Ariosto and perhaps after him. I will come back to this point below.)

In other cases, the first option (discontinuity) is more natural than the second. James Joyce's intentions notwithstanding, are we not more likely to speak of Leopold Bloom as an entirely new character, rather than to see James Joyce's narration of *Ulysses* as enlarging a storytelling practice began by Homer so as to constitute a larger Ulysses than Homer's Ulysses?

Certainly, it is possible that the larger *fictum* turns out to be an impossible object, in some Neo-Meinongians' above-mentioned secondary sense of being an impossible object.[5] That is, since at least some of the properties that constitute its set are incompatible, it is not possible for a concrete individual instantiating all those properties to exist. Yet this precisely fits the protracted make-believe practice in which different authors happen to make believe that the very same (concrete) individual has incompatible properties. Thus, Edmond Dantès plans to escape from Monte Cristo's prison in Alexander Dumas' telling of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, but he does not make the same plan in Italo Calvino's telling of *Il conte di Montecristo* (it is Abbé Faria who does so).

Here a clarification is in order. In the previous chapter I said that necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for two make-believe process-tokens to be instances of the same type are that there be a causal-intentional link between their agents and that they be *de dicto* (or *de re*) identical. Now, I take the protracted make-believe practice to be the protraction of the very same original practice. However, according to the above criterion for type-identity of a make-believe practice, the protracted practice and the original

[5] Cf. Chapter 1, n. 42.

practice cannot be of the same type. For they are obviously not *de dicto* identical: the original practice makes believe that there is an individual that is *F*, *G*, and *H*, but the protracted practice makes believe that the individual hitherto made believe to be *F*, *G*, and *H* is also *I*, *J*, and *K*. But how can this be possible? If the protraction of a make-believe practice is the protraction of the same game, the original practice and the protracted practice are token-identical: they are just one and the same practice being engaged in. A fortiori, they are also type-identical.

This is entirely correct: the protraction of a certain make-believe game is the (numerically) very same game protracting itself. Yet since we are dealing here with a process, we can distinguish between the process as a whole and its stages. So, we can take the original make-believe practice to be the initial stage of the protracted make-believe practice. If this is the case, we can draw a distinction in type between the former and the latter since the initial stage is definitely not *de dicto* identical with the protracted practice: as we have seen above, the former makes believe that there is an individual that is *F*, *G*, and *H*, whereas the latter pretends that the individual which has up until now been made believe to be *F*, *G*, and *H*, is also *I*, *J*, and *K*.

In my view, this way of expressing the distinction has several merits. First, it allows me to retain the idea that *ficta* are only many-one, not also one-many, set-correlates. In other words, according to the syncretistic theory, it cannot be the case that one and the same make-believe process-type matches different property sets so that different *ficta* are generated out of these matches. But if the original and the enlarged make-believe practices were type-identical, we would obtain precisely this result: one and the same make-believe process-type generate (*inter alia*) two distinct *ficta*, both the smaller and the larger character. This undesired result is circumvented when the original and the enlarged make-believe processes are typologically distinct because then the two distinct *ficta* correspond to these two type-distinct processes.

Moreover, once we allow for a type distinction between the original and the enlarged make-believe practices by taking the former to be a mere stage of the latter, we can also distinguish in the same way between the original make-believe practice and subsequent stages of the enlarged make-believe practice. Consequently, we can also distinguish between different characters of a cycle, each corresponding to a given stage of the enlarged make-believe practice, even if we allow for a character that is larger than all of these, namely the result of the enlarged practice. Returning to the above example of Roland, we would wish to distinguish between, say, the Roland of the *Chanson de Roland*, the Roland of *Orlando Innamorato* and the Roland of *Orlando Furioso*, although we have to admit that there is one and the same make-believe practice occurring the whole time, hence a general Roland—the one of the entire cycle, so to speak. Indeed, we tend to say not only:

(1) In passing from the *Chanson de Roland* to *Orlando Furioso*, Roland becomes more and more insane

where by "Roland" we want to refer to the general Roland, but also:

(2) The Roland of the *Chanson de Roland* is wiser than the Roland of *Orlando Furioso*

where by means of the two singular terms involved we intend to refer to two distinct Rolands.

Incidentally, note that this approach allows us to commit ourselves to distinct *ficta* even when fictional works not conventionally accepted as distinct stem from subsequent practices; when one and the same storyteller interrupts his or her story and only after a long period of time intentionally comes back to it so as to complete it. Because authorial intentions are involved, one can here speak properly not merely of resuming but rather of reviving the old practice.[6] Yet, as above, one can also speak of the second stage of the revived practice as type-distinct from the first stage.[7] *Mutatis mutandis*, the same holds in the case of different versions of what later turns out to be a single work. In both cases, we would again be prompted to say that it is a question of distinct *ficta*, the characters generated respectively out of the first stage/the first version and out of the second stage/the second version respectively.[8] A famous example of the second type comes from Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*: the musician Berget in the 1912 draft version is definitely not the same as the musician Vinteuil in the final published version of the novel.[9]

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[6] Since in such a case only *intra*-subjective factors are in question, one may allow for intentions to protract a previous make-believe practice to be self-fulfilling, hence as being both necessary and sufficient for the revival of a game.

[7] In such cases we tend to take comments such as "Let me continue my story about James the monster, who liked frightening little children" as signalling that a new make-believe practice has actually started; hence that a *fictum* has already been generated whereas a new *fictum* will be generated out of the new practice, both *ficta* belonging to the same larger general character. See n. 31 of the previous chapter.

[8] In the "stages" case only, we would of course also be prompted to speak of a larger general character.

[9] Here the example is particularly relevant since, as some critics have maintained, Vinteuil actually comes out of the "fusion" of Berget and another 1912 character, the naturalist Vington: Vinteuil has (internally) both some of the properties (at least) of Berget and some (at least) of Vington. On this, cf. Bonomi (1994: 66). This also shows that, as will be seen below, the relation R' holding between similar characters is definitely not identity. For, in this case, Berget R'-s to Vinteuil as much as Vington does, yet Berget and Vington are not R'-ed to each other.

Once it is dealt with in the above way, the case of literary cycles is revealed to be of the utmost importance. For with reference to cycles, the syncretistic theory can again show why both the Neo-Meinongian and the artifactualist perspectives on fictional entities give only a partial account of what a *fictum* is.

First, according to some Neo-Meinongians, with respect to a character *C* belonging to a novel there really is a larger character C^+ belonging to the cycle in which that novel is embedded (to simplify, this novel can be taken as the first in the cycle). This broader character is individuated in terms of the set whose properties are mobilized throughout the *whole* cycle—the C^+-ish properties, to give them a collective name.[10]

Against this perspective, Thomasson has rightly objected that there is no reason for such a broader character to be identical with the set in question (rather than, one might say, with different sets). Indeed, one might wonder why the character in question should be identical with the set having as its members the C^+-ish properties rather than with any other set of properties sharing with the previous set only the *C*-ish properties, namely the relevant properties mobilized in the first novel of the cycle. Thomasson further claims that there is no way to address this question unless one is able to provide an independent criterion that makes clear which novels effectively constitute a certain literary cycle. Now such a criterion would rely on causal-intentional factors, that is, both on the fact that the storyteller of the new story is acquainted with the previous work and on the fact that such a storyteller intends to refer to the same characters in that earlier work. Once that criterion is adopted, however, literary cycles do not prompt the need to postulate something like a broader character. For, Thomasson concludes, this criterion also shows that the character of the cycle is identical with the character of the initial novel of the cycle.[11]

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[10] For this solution see Reicher (1995: 113–5).

[11] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 61–2). She also disqualifies (rightly, in my opinion) the other possible candidate for the character of a cycle that Neo-Meinongians might propose; namely, the smaller character whose properties are the "core" properties shared by the different characters of the different novels. For this raises the insoluble problem of individuating the right "core" properties. Cf. (1999: 57–60). I take this criticism as applying to a different metaphysical proposal which identifies *ficta* with individual essences, that is, with properties that may be possessed by one individual only. For this proposal, see Orilia (2000) and (2002). According to this proposal, a *fictum* F_1 is identical with another *fictum* F_2 of a literary cycle only if they have the same individual essence. However, because it may well be the case that no "core" property, hence no individual essence, is maintained through a cycle, there seems to be no possibility of equating F_1 with a further *fictum* F_3 of that cycle. Yet we may well be prompted to identify this latter *fictum* with F_2, insofar as a further individual essence is mobilized in the corresponding parts of the cycle. The only possibility is to interpret the relation

However, as we saw in Chapter 2, Thomasson acknowledges that the appeal to an intention of the above kind provides only a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for the identity of such a character across literary works.[12] So again, the best Meinongian theory and Thomasson's artifactualist theory each gives only a partial account of what a character that stretches across not a single novel but a whole cycle can be.

Once more, the syncretistic perspective is better able to account for the problem of what the character of a cycle is. According to that perspective, in the case of a literary cycle it is clear both why there really exists the larger character C^+ and why it is characterized by the C^+-ish properties rather than by any other collection of properties sharing with the C^+-ish properties only the C-ish properties. First of all, there really is such a larger character. This character is individuated in terms of a certain protracted make-believe process-type and in terms of a certain set of properties, the C^+-ish properties, that is, the properties corresponding to those mobilized in the protracted make-believe process. To account for this, we can reformulate the identity criterion of a fictional entity as follows: two characters x and y are the *same* character if and only if they are made out of the same, *possibly protracted*, make-believe process-type and the same set of properties, the properties corresponding to those mobilized in that process. Returning to what I said above about the conditions for a make-believe process to be protracted, we conclude that one such make-believe process-type is instantiated iff not only the further storytellers (of the cycle) have the intention of protracting the game inaugurated by the original storytellers (of the initial episode of the cycle), but also that intention has been fulfilled by means of the agreement of further participants in that make-believe game. Moreover, the set constituting the larger character is precisely the set of the C^+-ish properties, for the C^+-ish properties correspond precisely to those mobilized in the protracted make-believe process.

To complete this account, let me add that if the new storytellers' intentions to prolong a certain make-believe process are unfulfilled, or even if that part of the process, *qua* stage in the protracted process, is taken to be type-distinct from the process as a whole, we simply have other fictional characters over and

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subsisting between F_1, F_2, and F_3 not as identity but, rather, as a weaker sameness relation. We will see how to account for this situation in the context of the syncretistic theory.

[12] Cf. n. 61 of Chapter 2. In these passages of her book, in fact, Thomasson seems to suggest that the artifactualist conception must be supplemented by the Neo-Meinongian conception in a way that points toward the syncretistic conception: "Instead of treating [characters] as ideal abstracta distinguished *solely* by their properties, we may get farther by treating fictional characters as historical entities individuated *at least in part* by the circumstances of their creation. [my italics]" (1999: 62).

above the one which came out of the original make-believe process, taken again as a stage in the protracted game, from which it is type-distinct. That is to say, we have as many fictional characters as there are different make-believe process-types—the character *C*, the character C_1, the character C_2 and so on.

Without doubt, this huge variety of characters may leave one perplexed. Suppose we effectively have at our disposal not just a general character stemming from the protracted make-believe process, but a host of fictional characters each stemming from a particular stage of that process. When we speak of a fictional character *tout court*, for example when we simply say things such as:

(3) Holmes is a detective

which of these particular characters—Holmes, Holmes_1, Holmes_2 . . .—are we talking about? Or are we talking about the general character?

If we are in fact referring to a particular character of a cycle, it is easy for us to make explicit which of the many particular characters we are talking about: we just add some specification. As already seen in the example of (2), language helps us by providing us with certain specifying descriptions: we talk of the Holmes of *The Adventure of the Empty House*, the Holmes of *A Scandal in Bohemia*, and so on. Yet when we say something as generic as that Holmes is a detective, it is quite likely that we do not want to refer to any of these particular Holmeses. In such a case we are speaking of the *general* character of the cycle, the Holmes who is larger than the one generated by virtue of the initial stage of the relevant make-believe process, and also larger than any of these other particular Holmeses. As I just said, this general Holmes consists of the protracted make-believe process-type occurring throughout the storytelling of the whole cycle of the Holmes stories, together with the set of all the properties corresponding to those invoked in that protracted process.

Nonetheless, this answer prompts a further doubt. If things stand as the syncretistic theory claims, then when people said that Holmes is a detective toward, say, the middle of the period in which Conan Doyle created the Holmes stories, and when people say apparently the same today after the entire Holmes cycle has been completed by Doyle, they are not referring to the same general fictional character. For, whereas the former referred to what in their day was the general Holmes, the *fictum* made up of the make-believe process-type protracted up to that time and of the corresponding property set, the latter, in contrast, are referring to an even larger Holmes, the *fictum* made up of the make-believe process-type protracted up to the end of Doyle's creation and of the corresponding, even larger, property set. By the same reasoning, if tomorrow some new author should take up Doyle's pretense, then

we would subsequently no longer be referring to the general Holmes we are referring to today but to a character that is even larger than this one, and so on. In sum, even with respect to the general character of the cycle, we end up with a host of such characters. Any character of a cycle larger than the original character is the general character of the cycle until the cycle is prolonged and an even larger character arises. Intuitively, this seems perplexing. At this point, one can reply on behalf of the artifactualist: is not the idea that there is just one character throughout a whole cycle more intuitive than this? For one may then say that people refer to that one character at any (past, present or future) moment in the cycle's elaboration.

I admit that, on this issue, the position of the syncretistic theory is allegedly counterintuitive. Depending on whether at t' a character even larger than what was the largest character at t has been generated, the reference of the corresponding singular term does or does not shift. For instance, supposing that the cycle of Roland has been protracted even after Ariosto, then the name "Roland" in (1) *now* refers to a general character different from the one it referred to in the Renaissance period. This seems hard to accept.

First of all, however, let me note that in the end the idea that the artifactualist position on this issue is closer to our intuitions is without foundation. As we saw in Chapter 2, in the artifactualist conception *ficta* possess the properties ascribed to them in the relevant work of literature only *relatively*, that is, according to that work. Because they so possess such properties, they may also lose them when that work disappears. Accordingly, such properties do not contribute at all to the individuation of the *ficta*. Moreover, as we saw in scrutinizing Thomasson's view, in such a conception no further candidate for the genuine individuation of a fictional entity is really provided. Thus, once we face the problem of individuating a character *across* literary works, the artifactualist theory leaves us with no more than the intention of the further storytellers to refer to the previously generated character. Yet, as Thomasson herself admits, this provides only a *necessary* condition for the identity of a *fictum* across literary works. If a new storyteller wrote that Holmes is a rock, in spite of his or her intention he or she would not be referring to the character of the Holmes stories.[13] Besides, since no both necessary and sufficient

[13] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 68). On behalf of Thomasson, one might suggest that a certain overlapping of properties ascribed to characters in different yet contiguous stories provides another necessary condition for the identity of a character across literary works. More precisely, according to this suggestion a *fictum* F_1 spoken of in work W_1 is the same as a *fictum* F_2 spoken of in a contiguous work W_2 only if F_1 and F_2 share a certain number of properties. Moreover, F_2 is the same as another *fictum* F_3 spoken of in another work W_3 contiguous to W_2 only if F_2 and F_3 also share a certain amount of properties (not necessarily the same amount as that shared by F_1 and F_2). Through transitivity, F_1 and F_3 will also be identical. Together with the "referential intention" requirement, the "overlapping" requirement would

conditions for the identity of a *fictum* are admittedly to be found in the artifactualist's theory and, furthermore, since—as I claimed in Chapter 2—*pace* Thomasson no both necessary and sufficient conditions for its *existence* are to be found either, we are left with the perplexity I already raised in that chapter. By pointing to causal-intentional connections, we can reconstruct a history of the uses of a certain term, say "Holmes." Such a history will lead us back to some initiating uses of that term in a certain storytelling practice performed by a certain person—in this case Doyle. But, if we lack genuine criteria of individuation, what assures us that *there really is* a certain fictional individual over and above those uses?

What is more, it is not true that the syncretistic theory cannot in some way accommodate the intuition that in speaking of, say, Holmes, we are always dealing with one and the same individual. Although this intuition cannot be accounted for at the ontological level of fictional entities, it can be explained at the cognitive level of make-believe. No sooner do we as readers take what we are reading as a new episode of a cycle,[14] than we *eo ipso* ensure that the author's intention to protract a previous make-believe process (roughly corresponding to the previous episode of the cycle) is fulfilled. We therefore join the very same make-believe process that involved the author of that episode. As a result, we share with that author the pretense that the episode deals with the very same individuals (typically, concrete

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probably provide also a sufficient condition. (I owe this suggestion to Marco Nani. A similar suggestion appears to be made by Thomasson herself in a previous work. Cf. Thomasson (1994).) Thus, change in a fictional character would be treated following the model of change in a concrete entity. Such an entity remains the same across time only if it changes gradually by retaining a certain number of properties across any change. Yet this model cannot be applied to *ficta*. For it may well be the case that at the same time two new works W_2 and W_3 arise which are both intentionally related to a previous work W_1 and in which both *fictum* F_2 of W_2 and *fictum* F_3 of W_3 share respectively a set of properties with F_1 of W_1, but these respective sets do not overlap. In this situation, according to artifactualists we have the intuition that F_1, F_2, and F_3 are the same character. We are indeed prompted to say that both F_2 and F_3 are the same as F_1; hence, through transitivity they should also be the same entity. However, following to the present suggestion we would have a situation in which, though F_1 is the same as both F_2 and as F_3, F_2 could not be the same as F_3. Therefore, property overlapping does not seem to provide a necessary condition for identity of *ficta* across literary works. Therefore, the present suggestion does not really improve Thomasson's original position. Nor would appealing to the maintenance of "core properties" be any more successful. Clearly, such an appeal rules out the previous example: in order for F_2 and F_3 to be the same character as F_1, they must not only (possibly in different ways) overlap its properties but also share the same "core properties." Yet it would lead us back to the problem Thomasson herself envisaged of how to individuate such properties. See n. 11. For other difficulties regarding this kind of solution, see Reicher (1995: 105–6).

[14] On audience games of make-believe, cf. Walton (1990: 51, 58–9).

ones) that the previous episode was make-believedly concerned with. We pretend, as does that author, that *precisely those individuals* which were described as doing a number of things in the previous episode are engaged in some further actions. However one such pretense does not of course entail that there really is just one and the same fictional character engaged in the new as well as the old actions. The reason is that pretense always retains one key feature, both in its initiation and in its protraction: it is *non-committal*. As I have stressed repeatedly, if there were nothing other than pretense, however protracted, there would be no fictional individuals at all.

More importantly, what seems to be a defect of the theory turns out to be another of its merits. This, allegedly counterintuitive, view of a variety of increasingly broader *ficta* generated through the protraction of certain make-believe process-types enables me to defend the conception of a *fictum* not only as an abstract entity, but also as an *artifactual* entity. This conception was espoused, but in my opinion, not sufficiently justified in Thomasson's artifactualist approach. As a result, even the alleged counterintuitiveness of the idea that the reference to a general character of a cycle is continually shifting disappears.

Once a certain make-believe process-(type) is finished, we end up with a certain fictional individual. When that process is protracted, we end up with another, larger, fictional individual. And so on. The provisionally largest *fictum* obtained at the end of any protraction is larger than the previously largest ones, insofar as the set which is one of its components has not only the same properties as the sets which contribute respectively to constituting the previously largest *ficta* but also some additional properties. All these elements show that a fictional character is not only a *created* entity but also a *constructed* entity. Properties—or, better, sets of properties—are the building blocks of any such construction in the following sense. Once the set of the properties corresponding to those progressively mobilized in the relevant make-believe process-type is connected with that very process, a certain *fictum* comes into existence. As regards that *fictum*, the answers to many questions remain indeterminate since, for a vast number of properties and their respective complements, that *fictum* does not possess either. Of course, an answer to each of these questions can be given. Yet providing an answer to any such question actually means having a *fictum* broader than the previous one and, hence, constructing this broader *fictum* on top of it. Indeed, answering such questions means connecting with the protracted game some more properties corresponding to those mobilized in the protraction in addition to a broader set containing the original properties. As a result of this operation, a new *fictum* is generated that is larger than the previous one.

Now, since a *fictum* is a constructed entity, we are justified in taking it to be an artifactual entity; namely, a fictional entity is a product of (human)

manipulation of properties or, better, property sets. Moreover, since properties or property sets are its building blocks, we are further justified in taking it to be an *abstract* artifact; in contrast, the building blocks of *concrete* artifacts are lumps of matter, not (sets of) properties.[15]

Therefore, the idea that each step in this construction leads to a different, on each occasion larger, fictional character finally enables us to conceive of *ficta* as *abstract artifacts*. However, as far as intuitions are concerned, we are now in a position to reverse the situation for it is finally revealed to us that the original intuition that there is just one and the same *fictum* persisting throughout a literary cycle is not so compelling as it originally appeared. In a cycle, the original character may well be seen as nothing more than a stimulus for generating further, definitely broader, entities.

This is particularly evident when the broader entity develops out of a "fusion" of different original characters. There are clear examples of this in mythology. The Jupiter of the early Romans is not at all the same as that of the late Romans as this later Jupiter results from of a "fusion" of the early Jupiter with the Greek Zeus: the Jupiter of the late Romans has (internally) both some of the properties (at least) of the early Roman Jupiter and some (at least) of Zeus. Hence, there is no more reason to say that the late Roman Jupiter is identical with the early Roman Jupiter than to say that it is identical with Zeus. We find other clear examples of this situation also at the other pole of narrative production, in an author's elaboration of an original character. To return to an above-mentioned case, there is no reason to say that the Vinteuil of *In Search of Lost Time* (published version) is the same as the Berget of the (1912) unpublished version of the novel. Vinteuil originates from a "fusion" of Berget and Vington, another personage of *In Search of Lost Time* (1912): Vinteuil has (internally) both some of the properties (at least) of Berget and some (at least) of Vington. Thus, there is no more reason to say that Vinteuil is identical with Berget than to say that he is identical with Vington. *Who* is Vinteuil, Berget or Vington? There is no way in principle to answer this question.

Examples such as these show that the intuition that literary cycles typically involve one and the same character throughout is not only driven by consideration of only a limited number of cases, but also that it is ungrounded even with respect to these cases. We are thus faced with the problem already discussed in

[15] Deutsch (1991) defends a constructivist approach to *ficta* that bears *some* similarity to the one I here put forward. It is similar in that for Deutsch a *fictum* is constructed insofar as an author stipulates that it has certain properties. Yet it is also dissimilar because, since Deutsch appeals to a version of the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption (see Chapter 1), that stipulation matches the fact that the *fictum* is already there as the individual possessing the properties in question. As a result, in Deutsch's view a *fictum* is an abstract but not an artifactual entity.

the Introduction: an intuition about the identity of fictional characters seems correct only until reflection shows us not only that its scope is limited, but also that it is ungrounded. As a result, even when it is not a question of character "fusion," we have to admit, by parity of reasoning, that a character at the end of a cycle will not be identical with a character at its very beginning.

In fact, I believe that we are in the same situation with respect to fictional entities as we are with respect to mathematical entities. As I implicitly suggested in Chapter 2, there is a close analogy between the constructivist conception of *ficta* and the constructivist conception of mathematical entities. As with *ficta*, the apparent counter-intuitiveness of the constructivist conception of mathematics is grounded only in implicit endorsement of its realist opponent, that is, a nonconstructivist theory of *mathemata*.

As I have said, once a make-believe process-(type) is finished, a *fictum* is generated out of that process together with the property set that process deals with. Properties outside that set are simply not possessed (internally) by the *fictum*. As Neo-Meinongians rightly hold, the *fictum* is therefore incomplete in the sense that, for any property and its complement neither of which belongs to its set, the *fictum* does not possess either. This accounts for what I called in Chapter 1 the "incompleteness" datum, namely the fact that in respect of a property that is neither explicitly nor implicitly attributed to an individual in the course of a narration, it seems meaningless to ask whether the *fictum* in question possesses it. Likewise, according to a constructivist conception of a mathematical entity, it is meaningless to ask whether a mathematical entity possesses a property that lies outside the scope of its construction. For, if this is the case, the entity in question fails to possess either that property or its complement.

Certainly, as far as a fictional entity is concerned, an answer to the above question may ultimately be given. Yet, as we have just seen, providing an answer to such a question means protracting the relevant make-believe process by mobilizing a broader property set; and so, it leads to the generation of a larger fictional entity. This will be an entity distinct from the previous fictional being for, since a *fictum* has essentially the properties it possesses internally, a *fictum* having the property in question internally is distinct from a *fictum* failing to have it internally. As a corollary, intuitions notwithstanding, there is no single *fictum* across a storytelling cycle but, rather, a host of increasingly broader *ficta*. Now, the same holds for constructed mathematical entities. Once the construction of such an entity is protracted, a new larger mathematical entity is generated, larger in that it possesses properties essentially that were not possessed at all by the previous mathematical being.

Notice finally that even in the case of *mathemata*, we may have the intuition that there is just one and the same mathematical entity at every step in

the construction. Yet, since mathematical entities are constructed from properties possessed essentially by them, this intuition is also ungrounded. If I say:

(4) π is an irrational number

and numbers are constructed entities, then, if I state (4) at different stages in the mathematical development of π, at each of these stages in using "π" I refer to a different entity.[16]

A final point remains to be dealt with. Suppose we accept the fact that there are a great many characters stemming from every protracted make-believe practice, either because we agree that each time the practice is extended, a new character comes into being larger than those preceding it or because we agree that a new character corresponds to each stage of the protracted practice. What, then, are the relations between all these characters? In the first case, how is the first Holmes related to the broader Holmes at t_1, the even broader Holmes at t_2, and so on? In the second case, how are all the particular Holmeses related to each other so that they are not simply distinct fictional entities?

Obviously, since different entities are involved, the relationship in question is not one of identity. Moreover, to speak of *different* relationships is more exact as they have different features. In the first case, the relation R involved is not identity because it is asymmetrical: C is R-ed to C^+ but not the reverse. In the second case, the relation R' involved is again not identity, but it is also a different relation from R because it is not transitive: C is R'-ed to C_1, C_1 is R'-ed to C_2, but C may not be R'-ed to C_2. Thus, on the one hand R may be seen as mimicking an inclusion relation. Indeed, the set-theoretical and pretense-theoretical components of C are, respectively, a subset and a stage of the set-theoretical and pretense-theoretical components of C^+. On the other hand, R' is a relation of intentional similarity: C_1 is intentionally similar to C since the agent of the later make-believe process intends to protract the earlier make-believe process and, as a result of that intention, it turns out that there is a certain property similarity between these *ficta*.[17] I call the first of these relations *transfictional inclusion* and the second *transfictional sameness*.[18] Ariosto's Roland is R-ed to any progressively larger general Roland of the paladins cycle

[16] Wittgenstein explicitly emphasized this similarity between mathematical and fictional beings: see his (1978[2]: IV§9).

[17] This is the relation that, according to a suggestion previously considered, would be needed to support Thomasson's conviction that there is identity between a character of a certain novel and a character of another novel belonging to the same cycle. Yet, as we have seen, this relation failed in that purpose. See n. 13.

[18] In his guise-theoretical approach to *ficta*, Castañeda claims that a similar relation holds between different characters belonging to the same cycle. He calls that relation "transconsociational sameness." See Castañeda (1989a), (1990b).

but not *vice versa*. Furthermore, the Ulysses of the *Odyssey* is also *R′*-ed to the Ulysses of the *Iliad*. However, James Joyce's Leopold Bloom is not *R′*-ed to the *Iliad*'s Ulysses for, in spite of what James joyce's intended, there is too much dissimilarity between these *ficta*.[19]

3. Are there Other Immigrant Objects in Fiction?

Up until now we have seen that insofar as the make-believe processes that lead to the generation of a fictional being may be protracted, there is a purely metaphorical sense according to which we can say that a *fictum* migrates from one fiction to another. There is in fact literally no migration. A *fictum* characterized as *the* fictional object of a *certain* fiction—*the* Roland of the *Chanson de Roland*, etc.—does not reappear *as such* in any further fiction: it is, so to speak, a *fiction-embedded* character. Yet different fictions cooperate in the construction of a character which is larger than any fiction-embedded character, the *general character*. By referring to such a character, we can (at least partially) account for the intuition that different fictions are about the same character. Consequently, when we say things such as (3) we are not talking about any particular "fiction-embedded" character, the character of *this* or of *that* fiction, but about one such general character.

However, over and above the intuition that in protracting fictions we are always dealing with the very same characters, there is another apparently strong intuition that the syncretistic theory has to face. This is the intuition that fictional works concern not only fictional but also *concrete* individuals, especially actually existing ones. Or, in order for the time being to neutralize any commitment to fictional works, it seems intuitively clear that, over and above existentially creative games, storytelling processes also consist of existentially conservative games in which one makes believe *of* concrete

[19] As a result of these characterizations, we could legitimately say that only if characters *C* and *D* are both *R*-ed to a further character *E, E* is the *fusion* of *C* and *D*. Yet it is not the case that *all C*'s and *D*'s internal properties are included among *E*'s internal properties, nor that both the make-believe process leading to *C* and that leading to *D* are included in the further make-believe process leading to *E*. For the first process is making believe that there is an individual engaged in certain actions, but the second process is making believe that there is *another* individual engaged in certain actions. So, how could the third make-believe process be the continuation of *both* processes? This is why when speaking of the late Roman Jupiter as the "fusion" of both the early Roman Jupiter and Zeus, or of Vinteuil as the "fusion" of Berget and Vington, I put "fusion" in quotation marks. In fact, both the early Roman Jupiter and Zeus are merely *R′*-ed to the late Roman Jupiter (but not to each other as there is no intentional make-believe connection between the two). The same holds with respect to Vinteuil, Berget and Vington; see n. 9.

individuals that they possess certain properties. The question is therefore: how does the syncretistic theory account for the intuition that, over and above *native* objects—or, better, "fiction-embedded" fictional entities generated *inter alia* via a certain make-believe process-type—and *pseudo-immigrant fictional* objects—that is the general characters of cycles—fiction also concerns *immigrant concrete* individuals, namely, concrete entities that (actually, if not also merely possibly)[20] exist prior to the fiction itself?

It is important to adopt here Evans' distinction between *conniving* and *nonconniving* uses of singular terms and extend it to sentences.[21] For the time being, let me characterize a *fictional* sentence as a sentence that occurs in a make-believe game insofar as it is uttered in that game. Once this characterization is adopted, it turns out that conniving uses of fictional sentences are precisely those sentential uses which prototypically occur in storytelling processes, as well as in all make-believe games which involve an audience engaged in the same kind of make-believe practice as that which concerns the storyteller(s). In contrast, nonconniving uses of the very same sentences employ these sentences outside of any make-believe practice. Such uses are intended to enable people to speak *about* fiction rather than *within* fiction.

In the next chapter I deal more systematically and in greater detail with this distinction. I refer to it here because the question of whether there are immigrant concrete objects in fiction concerns only *nonconniving* uses of fictional sentences. Indeed, as far as conniving uses of such sentences are concerned, it is indisputably the case that they may be about concrete individuals. Ordinary existentially conservative games of make-believe typically involve such uses. Since in such games one makes believe *of a certain concrete individual* that it is such and such, one will often make the corresponding linguistic mock-assertion about that very individual. For instance, in *War and Peace* Leo Tolstoy mock-asserts:

(5) Prince Andrew looked straight at Napoleon

(or—better—the equivalent in Russian), where by "Napoleon" he refers to the French emperor in order to make believe that a person named "Prince Andrew" looked straight at him. So the question is: what about the nonconniving uses of the same sentences? Do they still concern the very same concrete individuals or are they, instead, about further fictional individuals?

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[20] Cf. n. 48 of the previous chapter.

[21] Cf. Evans (1982: 365–6). Currie (1988), (1990) draws an analogous distinction between fictive and metafictive uses of names and extends it directly to sentences.

As various other philosophers maintain,[22] I think that the latter is the case. First of all, note that once they are over, ordinary existentially conservative games of make-believe may be seen in the same way as existentially creative games, namely as *set-based* existentially conservative games. Making believe of the flesh and blood Napoleon that he has certain properties may indeed be seen as making believe of the set having properties corresponding to the above properties that those properties are instantiated by Napoleon. When it is put this way, the road is open to committing oneself to a fictional entity made up of the above set together with the make-believe process-type in question. Hence, nonconniving uses of sentences such as (5) may be taken as also being about such fictional entities. As we tend to say in such a case, in its nonconniving use (5) is not about the flesh and blood Napoleon but about the Napoleon of *War and Peace*.

This approach will leave many readers perplexed. Certainly, there is a strong similarity between the new *fictum* and the concrete entity the make-believe game is about: the *fictum* possesses many properties internally such that the concrete entity possesses externally either the very same properties or properties that match them.[23] Among those properties are not only some about which the relevant work says that the *fictum* in question possesses them, but also others about which that work implies this possession. For instance, the Napoleon of *War and Peace* is (internally) an emperor as much as our flesh and blood Napoleon is (externally); what's more, the former is (internally) as arrogant as the latter is (externally). Nonetheless, are not stories in such cases intended to speak of the concrete entity and not some surrogate for it? For example, what is the point of *The Clouds* by Aristophanes if not to make fun of Socrates—*our* Socrates? How could this be done if that story concerned not Socrates but a set-based entity such as the Socrates of

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[22] Cf., for example, Bonomi (1994) and Landini (1990). In some respects, also Lamarque-Olsen share this idea [cf. (1994: 126, 293)]. Parsons presents, but only half endorses, the idea that stories contain what he calls "surrogate objects" (1980: 57–8). In (1999), however, Bonomi makes clear that, for him, it is only in what I later call external metafictional sentences (see Chapters 5–6) that singular terms refer to fictional characters which in some way correspond (see following footnote) to real (normally concrete) individuals.

[23] Bonomi (1999: 5) maintains that there are "systematic relations" between fictional entities and the corresponding real (normally concrete) individuals: "given a story H and a set of properties X, selected among those which are assumed to characterize an individual α, I will speak of a function g which, thanks to the properties in X, associates a character β to α. Thus, a statement of the form "$g(\alpha,H,X) = \beta$" means that β is the character which, in the light of the story H and of the relevant properties in X, corresponds to the real entity α". Castañeda holds that a relation of "trans-categorial sameness" holds between an actual concrete individual and the corresponding fictional individual. See Castañeda (1990b: 274–5).

The Clouds? Moreover, is it not for this reason that we sometimes call some stories *real* stories? Why do we speak of *historical* novels, such as *Ivanhoe*, *The Betrothed* and so on, if not because, among other things, they concern concrete individuals (Richard the Lion-Hearted, Cardinal Borromeo and so on)?

However, if we insist that nonconniving uses of fictional sentences concern concrete individuals (if there are any), we are forced to consider as false many sentences that in such uses we would intuitively deem to be true. Take once more, for instance, the case of (5). Intuitively, it seems that in an exam on nineteenth-century Russian literature a student has a good chance of passing it if, when asked to say what Prince Andrew does with respect to Napoleon, he or she nonconnivingly uses that sentence rather than its negation. So, in such a use (5) intuitively turns out to be true. But how can this be the case if "Napoleon" refers there to *our* Napoleon? In that case, what the sentence would then say in such a use is that our Napoleon was gazed at by a fictional individual.[24] But how can this be true? Our Napoleon was addressed by a host of strange persons, yet definitely not by fictional individuals! As a result, it seems safer to take (5) in its nonconniving use to be about two fictional individuals, Prince Andrew and the Napoleon of *War and Peace*, and to say that they are connected by the relation of *looking straight at* which is predicated of them in the internal mode.

Without doubt, there are some further arguments which defenders of the idea that concrete individuals are involved by fictional sentences in their nonconniving uses can present. First, they may say that in such a use a sentence "p" is elliptical for a sentence of the form "in the story S, p."[25] Thus, a sentence such as (5) turns out to be true in an ordinary *de re* reading about the flesh and blood Napoleon: it is indeed the case of our Napoleon that *in War and Peace* Prince Andrew looked straight at him. Or they may say that (in such a use) the sentence can be evaluated with respect to different contexts, specifically the real (concrete) context and a certain fictional context, the context of the relevant story. So, with respect to the real context, a sentence such as (5) will definitely turn out to be false precisely for the abovementioned reasons. In the context of (concrete) reality, the context in which (actually existing) concrete individuals are to be found, the concrete person Napoleon is definitely not addressed by a fictional individual. Yet with respect to the fictional context of Leo Tolstoy's story, (5) definitely turns out

[24] I deal systematically with the problem of the truth conditions of fictional sentences in their nonconniving use in Chapters 5 and 6.

[25] This approach counts Lewis (1978) among its inspirers.

to be true for in that context, Prince Andrew gazed at our flesh and blood Napoleon.[26]

I devote part of the next chapter to an evaluation of these points in general, that is, regardless of whether in their nonconniving uses fictional sentences are supposed to be about fictional or about concrete individuals. For the time being, let me simply say that if we interpret nonconniving uses of fictional sentences such as (5) as being about concrete individuals in the above two ways, with respect to those sentences (in such uses) we can no longer account for the "analyticity" datum described in Chapter 1. In other words, once interpreted in either of the two above-mentioned ways, those sentences in such uses would be as true as ordinary factual sentences. We would *discover* them to be true precisely as we do with regard to ordinary factual sentences.

One might, of course, swallow the bitter pill and reply that since in nonconniving uses those sentences concern concrete individuals, this result is precisely what one can expect. So, the datum in question may not be as robust as it appeared, at least to some extent, at the very beginning. Yet let us turn again to a sentence such as (5), which allegedly concerns at least one fictional individual, Prince Andrew. Here the intuition that it is not a matter of discovery or, perhaps better, that it is unrevisable that Prince Andrew gazed at Napoleon is as strong as possible. Moreover, it is as strong as the intuition regarding the nonconniving use of any other fictional sentence that does not involve any apparent reference to concrete individuals such as the following, again taken from Leo Tolstoy:

(6) Prince Andrew Bolkonski was a very handsome young man.

So, either we agree that sentences such as (5) and (6) in their nonconniving use must be dealt with in the same way, that is as expressing an analytic predication, or we abandon the idea that there is any analyticity at all as far as nonconniving uses of *any* fictional sentence are concerned. This second option seems to me totally implausible. Yet if we accept the first option we have to agree that, as far as (5) is concerned, analyticity is impermeable to its syntactic order. In other words, if it is analytic that Prince Andrew gazed at Napoleon, then it is also analytic that Napoleon was gazed at by Prince Andrew. Now, accepting that (5) is analytically true in both syntactic orders

[26] This approach is defended in Predelli (1997). See also his (2002) and, in addition, Salmon (1998) and Thomasson (1999). In fact, for Thomasson (as well as for the other artifactualists) there is no distinction between this approach and the previous one. For, as seen in Chapter 2, she believes that evaluating a sentence "p" with respect to a fictional context is equivalent to saying that such a sentence is elliptical for a sentence of the form "According to story S, p". See Thomasson (1999: 105–7).

is tantamount to accepting that *both* singular terms in (5), "Prince Andrew" and "Napoleon," refer to fictional individuals, Prince Andrew and the Napoleon of *War and Peace*. For if that sentence is analytically true in its active reading only insofar as the fictional individual Prince Andrew has internally the property of *looking straight at Napoleon*, then it must be analytically true in its passive reading only insofar as the *fictional* Napoleon of *War and Peace* has internally the converse property of *being looked straight at by Prince Andrew*. Yet if this is true of the name "Napoleon" in (5) in its nonconniving use, then it is true of it as occurring in any other nonconnivingly used fictional sentence. And it is true a fortiori of *all* singular terms in nonconniving uses of *any* fictional sentence.

Note moreover that, even putting aside the "analyticity" issue, the above example of (5) shows that once we admit fictional individuals, it is definitely more elegant to dispense with immigrant concrete individuals. This allows one to account for the truth of (5) both by saying that the fictional individual Prince Andrew has (internally) the relational property of *looking straight at [the fictional] Napoleon* and by saying that the fictional Napoleon has (also internally) the converse relational property of *being looked straight at by [the fictional] Prince Andrew*. If we said on the contrary that the Napoleon involved in (5) is the flesh and blood Napoleon, we would be forced to deny that he has the latter relational property—the French Emperor has definitely not been gazed at by any fictional individual—while still admitting that the fictional Andrew has the relational property of *looking straight at [the concrete] Napoleon*. But normally, if any two individuals x and y have the relation R to each other, then x has the relational property of *being R to y* while y has the converse relational property of *being R-ed by x*. Therefore, to deny that this obtains when x is a fictional individual and y is a concrete individual has no proper justification.[27]

The above considerations show that I do not want the thesis that characters in fiction cannot migrate from reality to be based on a perhaps questionable phenomenon such as the "analyticity" datum. To counter the opposite thesis there is indeed an argument stronger than considerations of elegance. This argument is that, like the intuition that fictional characters literally migrate from one fiction to another, the intuition that characters migrate from reality is equally unsound. In fact, the idea that fiction involves actual concrete individuals is based on simple cases where there actually is a one-one correspondence between a fictional and a concrete individual: the London of Doyle and our everyday London, the Napoleon of Leo Tolstoy and the flesh and blood Napoleon and so on. But there may well

[27] As Parsons, who admits immigrant concrete individuals, is forced to acknowledge. Cf. Parsons (1980: 59–60).

be more complex cases in which there actually is a one-many correspondence between fictional and concrete individuals. Andrea Bonomi has pointed out one such example: in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar*, the fictional personage of the Savoyard Vicar actually corresponds to two distinct concrete individuals, Monsieur Gâtier and Monsieur Gaime.[28] If we renounced the idea that a fictional individual is involved here, *which* of the two actual concrete individuals in question would Rousseau's story be about, Gâtier or Gaime? There is no answer in principle to this question: the character of the Savoyard Vicar is no more identical with Gâtier than it is identical with Gaime. Once again, then, if in such complex cases it is clear that a fiction involves no actual concrete individual, why should the situation be different in simpler cases?

Thus, no concrete actual, or even possible, individual migrates in fiction. Fiction contains fictional characters that at most correspond (possibly, also in a one-many form) to such individuals.

This negative result now needs to be generalized. Since in general individuals involved in existentially conservative make-believe games do not migrate in fiction, not only is it the case that concrete individuals do not so migrate, but also no abstract individuals migrate in fiction either.

Take a story one of whose sentences is apparently about a number:

(7) Number One was in a bad mood for it failed to count up to three.[29]

Although in its conniving use (7) is definitely about the number one, there is no more reason to say that in its nonconniving use it concerns that number rather than a fictional character corresponding to it, than there is to say that (5) in its nonconniving use concerns the flesh and blood Napoleon rather than the fictional Napoleon of *War and Peace* corresponding to the French emperor.

Curiously enough, this entails that when existentially conservative make-believe games concern already generated fictional characters that are the protagonists of certain fictional stories, the metafictional stories emerging from those games do not involve these fictional individuals. Instead, they involve *other* fictional characters, which correspond to the previous fictional characters practically in the same way as fictional characters such as the Napoleon of *War and Peace* correspond to their actual concrete counterparts, the French emperor in this case. The reasons why at most correspondence,

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[28] Cf. Bonomi (1999).

[29] G. Rodari, *Il trionfo dello zero*, in *I cinque libri*, Einaudi, Turin 1993, p. 17; my translation.

but not identity, holds between fictional characters in such cases are the same as before. For example, if the metafictional story were about the same fictional characters that a fictional story is about, it might say about these characters a series of falsehoods. Suppose the metafictional story in which Oedipus delights in having been created so early also said that Oedipus complains about the fact that the British do not know of his vicissitudes because his deeds have never been translated into English. Of course, of our ordinary fictional character Oedipus this is false—the British do know about him as there are many English translations of *Oedipus the King*, etc. But this is clearly true of the metafictional character Oedipus which corresponds to our fictional character Oedipus in practically the same way as the Napoleon of *War and Peace* corresponds to the French emperor.

One final remark to end this chapter. As we have seen previously, the fact that concrete, actual or possible, individuals (or even abstract ones) are prevented from being what sentences in their *nonconniving* use are about does not mean that they are prevented from being what sentences in their *conniving* use are about. Indeed, they are precisely the protagonists of what Evans calls "existentially conservative" games of make-believe. As a general consequence of this, we can see that, among the properties mobilized in the relevant make-believe practice and matching those involved in the set constituting the relevant *fictum*, there may be not only pseudo-relational properties of the kind *being a close friend of an individual named "Watson,"* but also genuinely relational properties such as *living in London*. Indeed, these relational properties involve concrete (or even abstract) individuals—our everyday London, in this example. This does not alter the fact that the corresponding relational properties belonging to the set that constitutes the relevant fictional character will involve fictional individuals. These latter *ficta* will be those which correspond to those concrete (or even abstract) individuals. Still with regard to the same example, the relational property corresponding to the relational property of *living in London* and constituting (*inter alia*) Holmes will involve the fictional London of the Conan Doyle stories.

PART II THE SEMANTIC SIDE

Chapter 5

THE NONCOMMITTAL THEORIES

1. Synopsis

In this chapter I discuss at length the theories that attempt to dispense with fictional objects by following a *semantic* path, that is, by maintaining that the best truthconditional account of sentences apparently about *ficta* does not involve such entities. I first evaluate the classical theories of Frege and Russell, which hold in particular that singular terms purportedly about fictional entities do not designate anything. Subsequently, I consider the more recent noncommittal semantic approaches, such as the intensionalist theory and the pretense theory of fiction. I try to show that, so far, neither the classical nor these more recent theories have provided any decisive argument which demonstrates that our language about fiction is not to be taken at face value, that is, as committing us to fictional entities.

2. From Metaphysics to Ontology Via Semantics

Up until now, I have limited myself to evaluating the broadly *metaphysical* question of the nature of fictional beings. In other words, I have asked myself what *kind* of entities fictional objects would be if there were any. By developing the syncretistic theory, I have finally answered this question as follows: a fictional object is a compound entity made up of a make-believe process-type and the set of properties corresponding to those properties mobilized in that process. It is now time to evaluate the antecedent of the previous question, namely whether there really are things such as fictional beings. In other words, it is now time to pass from the broadly metaphysical to the properly *ontological* question. For in whatever way one addresses the metaphysical question, the ontological question remains unanswered; metaphysicians

indeed aim at determining the nature of entities of a certain kind *provided that there are any*.[1]

Many people do not in fact believe that there really are things such as fictional beings. They obviously concede that there is *fictional discourse*, which it would be hard for anyone to deny. The reason being that there are very many linguistic contexts imbued with fiction: first, we tell and write stories, then we talk about those stories when commenting on, approving or criticizing them. In all such contexts, we seem to be talking about fictional entities. Moreover, it is recognized that we also seem to talk about such entities in contexts that are not even indirectly imbued with fiction. So, over and above the *internal* discourse, there is also an *external* discourse purportedly about such entities. Nevertheless, non-believers insist that the existence of all these contexts does not mean that there are fictional beings as the entities that those stories are really about.

In general, the fact that there are linguistic contexts of a certain kind does not entail that there are *non*-linguistic entities involved by those contexts. Take, for example, the fact that there are "sake-contexts," that is, linguistic contexts in which we fill out the incomplete expression "for *x*'s sake" with a noun or a singular term, such as "for argument's sake," "for God's sake" and so on. Now, the existence of such contexts definitely does not imply that there are such things as *sakes*, the kind of things those contexts should be about; the above constructions are only *prima facie* relational.[2] In fact, non-believers claim that whenever our language seems to commit us to problematic entities, a linguistic paraphrase can be given in which the apparent commitment is dispelled. And fiction is a case in point because its does seem that its apparently committal language can be paraphrased in noncommittal terms.

Undoubtedly, the fact that portions of language are noncommittal does not *eo ipso* prove that we are not committed to the existence of the entities those portions simply seem to be about. Theoretically speaking, we could still have committal thoughts about those entities. In this case, however, as far as the relation between language and thought is concerned, we would be going against the *expressibility* thesis, namely that every content can be expressed linguistically.[3] For we would have genuinely committal meaningful thoughts that are not accurately expressed by means of only *apparently* committal sentences. Now, the expressibility thesis is definitely not to be taken for granted as in many areas of contemporary philosophy of mind it turns out to be problematic.

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[1] For this distinction between the broadly metaphysical and the properly ontological question, see Thomasson (1999), Varzi (2002a). Fine (1982: 99) draws a very similar distinction between *naive* and *foundational* metaphysics.

[2] Cf., for example, Fodor (1972: 178–9).

[3] For such a thesis, cf. Searle (1969: 19–21).

But fiction is pre-eminently—although of course not exclusively—a linguistic or a potentially linguistic matter. Thus, with respect to fiction there appears to be no reason why expressibility should be violated. Hence, fiction at least partially justifies the general belief of twentieth-century analytical philosophy that, in relation to the ontological question, thought may be dispensed with in favor of language. For, as regards fiction, we cannot really have a committal thought in the presence of a noncommittal language.

In what follows I first present four attempts at dispensing linguistically with fictional entities. The first attempt, originally made by Frege, merely presupposes that fictional discourse is not committed to fictional entities and aims to explain why this is so. The three remaining attempts, originally made by Russell, David Lewis and Walton respectively, all refer to a strategy of paraphrase, albeit in different forms. Secondly, I try to show that *all* these attempts are flawed in that they are either insufficient or even inadequate since such paraphrases fail to be semantically equivalent to the sentences they allegedly paraphrase.

3. Frege's Theory

As is well known, Frege thought that singular terms apparently designating fictional entities and occurring in *fictional* sentences—fictional *Eigennamen*—refer to nothing at all. He maintained that fictional sentences are just a particular case of sentences that are without truth value in that the singular terms they contain have no referent.[4] Certainly, like any other sentence without truth value but meaningful, for Frege a fictional sentence expresses a thought. Yet such a thought not only fails *actually* to refer to a truth value, as is the case with any other sentence without truth value, but it also seems to have the specific feature of failing to have any connection at all—even a *possible* one—with a truth value. It therefore seems to be a thought of a different kind from ordinary thoughts, since ordinary thoughts are essentially connected at least with the *possibility* of having a truth value (essentially, they are possibly true as well as possibly false). As Evans originally pointed out, this different kind of thought is for Frege a *mock*-thought.[5] A mock-thought, however, is as compositional as any other thought. Hence, fictional *Eigennamen* each express a mock-sense, which is the contribution they make to the mock-thought of the fictional sentences in which they occur. Now, insofar as it contributes to determine a mock-thought, a mock-sense must retain all the qualifying features of the latter. This is to say, not only does

[4] Cf. Frege (1892: 62–3).

[5] Cf. Evans (1982: 28–30) and also Frege (1979: 130).

a mock-sense fail *actually* to refer to an object, like any other sense without a referent, it also fails to have any connection at all—even a *possible* one—with an object. As a result, in Frege's view it is not simply by chance that fictional *Eigennamen* lack reference. On the contrary, the fact that they have a *mock*-sense provides an explanation as to why they are without referents.

I think one may legitimately say that, as just described, Frege's theory of fictional *Eigennamen* is simply *incomplete*. If we take it together with the distinction between conniving and nonconniving uses of fictional sentences, it turns out that Frege's theory fits the conniving uses perfectly but says nothing about nonconniving uses. So, in order to evaluate Frege's theory of fiction thoroughly, let us see in more detail what these conniving and nonconniving uses are.

I have already described in the previous chapter what a conniving use of a given sentence is. A sentence is used connivingly iff it is uttered within a game of make-believe in order to make it make-believedly the case either *of* a certain actual individual that it is such and such—for example:

(1) Quick warm sunlight came running from Berkeley Road.[6]

where one (originally, James James joyce's) makes believe of a certain famous Dublin street that it is subject to a particular effect of the light—or *that* there is an individual, typically a concrete one, which is such and such, for example:

(2) Mr. Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls.[7]

where one makes believe that there is an individual named "Mr. Leopold Bloom" enjoying a certain meal.

In the first example, by "Berkeley Road" we refer to a real entity, our full-fledged Dublin street, and make believe of it that it is lit in a certain way. In the second example, by "Mr. Leopold Bloom" we do not refer to an actual entity, yet we make believe that we are referring to a concrete entity, and we make believe that "he" is enjoying a meal of a certain kind. Following Evans, I speak of examples of the first kind as referring to an existentially *conservative* make-believe game and those of the second kind as referring to an existentially *creative* make-believe game.

In a certain sense, the conniving use is what makes a sentence fictional since, as many have emphasized, in itself the sentence is not fictional at all. At

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[6] *Ulysses*, chapter 4 p. 2, http://www.web-books.com/Classics/Fiction/Other/Joyce_Ulysses/Ulysses_04_2.htm.

[7] *Ulysses*, chapter 4 p. 1, http://www.web-books.com/Classics/Fiction/Other/Joyce_Ulysses/Ulysses_04_1.htm.

the syntactical level, nothing reveals that the sentence is fictional; there is nothing to show syntactically that sentences (1) and (2) figure in James Joyce's *Ulysses* rather than in, say, Irish newspapers at the beginning of the twentieth-century. What's more, even at the semantic level, at least before the issue of its truth conditions is taken into account, there is nothing either to show that the sentence is fictional. Those who read (1) and (2) while not knowing whether they are taken from *Ulysses* or from Irish newspapers may well understand no more than that there is a road named "Berkeley" with a particular street lighting and that there is an individual named "Bloom" enjoying a certain meal.[8]

When it is used connivingly, moreover, a sentence will have *fictional* truth conditions. In the case of (2) this is especially evident. (2) is fictionally true iff *in the imaginary circumstances* postulated by the relevant fiction, a certain "individual" there named "Bloom" enjoys a meal of a certain kind. But also as regards (1), when we use it connivingly, we are interested in its fictional truth conditions. Whatever its real truth value, that sentence is fictionally true iff in the imaginary circumstances postulated by the relevant fiction, Berkeley Road—*our* Berkeley Road—is illuminated in a certain way. Generally speaking, in its conniving use a sentence is fictionally true iff the situation in the imaginary circumstances postulated by the relevant game of make-believe is in accord with what the sentence fictionally says, and fictionally false otherwise (think of children playing at soldiers who correct one of them shouting "I'm alive" if in the game that child has been killed).

In this respect, treating an existentially creative and an existentially conservative make-believe game as a *de dicto* and a *de re* pretense respectively—I have done this above—amounts to the fact that the fictional truth conditions of a fictional sentence are respectively determined by the imaginary "referent" and by the real referent of the singular term involved in that sentence. As far as (2) is concerned, its fictional truth conditions are determined by the imaginary "individual" named "Bloom" in the imaginary circumstances of the fiction and existing only in those circumstances, but not in our world.[9] As regards (1), in contrast, its fictional truth conditions are determined by the real referent of the singular term "Berkeley Road," our Dublin street, which remains designated by that term even in the fictional context in which (1) is taken to be uttered.

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[8] On this point, see Bonomi (1994: 16–7), Currie (1990: 1–9), Searle (1979: 235).

[9] As I have already said in Chapters 2 and 3 and will again stress below, this imaginary "individual" is *not* a fictional entity. There is in fact *no* such individual; we only act as if one such "individual" existed, which can be expressed by saying that one such "individual" merely belongs to the domain of the imaginary "world" postulated by the relevant fiction. On the contrary, there is actually a fictional individual insofar as this individual belongs to the overall domain of the entities we are committed to.

As we have just seen, in the conniving use of a sentence such as (2) a singular term refers to something only fictionally—namely, it refers to something only in the fictional context in which the fictional sentence is taken to be uttered—and hence does not refer to any actual entity. As a result, one may be legitimately tempted to say that though in such a use the sentence has fictional truth conditions, it actually fails to have any *real* truth conditions, or even to say that the sentence actually has them, but the fact that its singular term has no referent makes it inexorably false.

This would be correct if it were not the case that, over and above its being used connivingly, a sentence may also be used *nonconnivingly*, that is, completely apart from any make-believe game. In such a case, the sentence will be used in order to make not a mock-assertion but a genuine assertion. For in this use, we do not want to speak as if we were involved in the fiction, by taking part in the make-believe game that characterizes it. Rather, we want to speak of the fiction itself or, better, of what the fiction really tells us: its *content*, as we would be tempted to say. Generally and intuitively, in such a use that sentence will be true or false depending not on whether things in the imaginary circumstances occur or do not occur in the way we mock-assert, as is the case with the fictional truth or falsity of that sentence, but, rather, on whether the content of the fiction unfolds in the way we say or not.[10] Now, by speaking of a sentence in its nonconniving use as being true or false, I mean its having a *real* truth value. Correspondingly, in such a use the sentence does have real truth conditions.

Consequently, (2) will be not only fictionally but also really true. This because not only do things in the imaginary circumstances occur as the sentence fictionally says that they do, but also what the sentence really says is how the content of James Joyce's fiction unfolds. On the other hand:

(3) Mr. Leopold Bloom is a bachelor

is not only fictionally, but also really, false. Not only do the things imagined in the storytelling process not occur as the sentence fictionally says, but also the content of James Joyce's fiction does not unfold in the way it really says—Leopold is married to Molly.[11]

It is true that the distinction between a conniving and a nonconniving use of a given sentence can be vague. There are clear-cut cases in which a sentence is used connivingly: for instance, when an actor utters it on stage. There

[10] For similar remarks, see, for example, Bertolet (1984: 427).

[11] In the next chapter, I account more precisely for this distinction between fictional and real truth, in terms of the distinction between matching a state of affairs in an imaginary "world" and belonging to the propositional set constituting a fictional "world."

are other clear-cut cases in which a sentence is used nonconnivingly: for example, the sentences uttered by students sitting an exam on literature.[12] Nonetheless, there exist other cases in which we do not know how to define the use of a sentence. In the course of his or her narration, an author may insert a reflective aside on the story he or she is telling; or in writing a literary essay, a critic may describe the story being analyzed as if he or she were reviving it. Which of these two uses is the conniving one? If the first is conniving, why not also the second? However, as we learn from Paul Grice and Peter Strawson,[13] the fact that a notional distinction has vague boundaries, that there are no both necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of the notions in question, still does not mean that the distinction does not exist at all.

Furthermore, suppose that that distinction were not accepted or that, even if accepted, it was held to be only *pragmatically* relevant. Yet this would not mean that one and the same fictional sentence cannot have not only both fictional and real truth conditions but also the very fictional versus real truth conditions I have ascribed to the conniving and to the nonconniving use of that sentence respectively. In this regard, many taxonomical approaches are indeed possible. Following a Gricean communication model, one might be tempted to locate both those fictional and real truth conditions not at the level of *what is said* by that sentence, but rather at the level of *what is implied* by distinct utterances of it. Or, more realistically, one might locate only those real truth conditions at the level of what is implied since its fictional truth conditions correspond to what the sentence fictionally *says*.[14] Or one may even reject the Gricean communication model and claim that in having those fictional truth conditions, when uttered in a certain context that sentence effectively has—not simply implies—precisely the above real truth conditions. As Evans himself puts it, a speaker "*says* something absolutely true or false by [to use Walton's original symbolism to indicate mock-assertions][15] *saying something true* or

[12] *Pace* Salmon, who, in reporting Kripke's ideas on the matter, takes such a case as an example of conniving use. Cf. (1988: 295). Sometimes, as make-believe may be unintentional (see Chapter 2), we can ascribe *mock-reference* to people unaware of connivingly using the relevant sentences. Typically, this happens with respect to people uttering sentences while hallucinating. Cf. Wettstein (1984: 443, 448). *Pace* Wettstein (ibid.: 445–7), however, this practice grounds another practice of ascribing *genuine* reference to fictional objects to people who would be unaware of referring to *ficta*, as it happens in external discourse when we ascribe beliefs in fictional objects to people mistaking the nature of the object of their belief—typically, by taking it as a concrete object (see children's belief in Santa Claus).

[13] Cf. Grice-Strawson (1956).

[14] A similar proposal is put forward by Bertolet (1984).

[15] Cf. Walton (1973).

saying something false" (1982: 363–4; my italics).[16] But all of these are merely taxonomical approaches. Whichever approach one chooses, it is still the case that, at some level or other, one and the same sentence has the fictional and the real truth conditions I ascribe to the conniving and the nonconniving use of a fictional sentence respectively.

Moreover, one may well claim that what one such sentence conveys in its nonconniving use is what *another* sentence straightforwardly *says*. Take:

(2′) Leopold Bloom enjoys a meal of the inner organs of beasts and fowls.

(2′) does not figure in James Joyce's text, and we can further suppose that no-one has used it to pretend to say that Leopold Bloom enjoys such a meal. Since no-one has used it connivingly, no real information is given by saying that it is used nonconnivingly. Yet it is hard to deny that it has not only a semantic content, hence real truth conditions, but also the very same real truth conditions that (2) has in its nonconniving use. Let me thus call sentences such as (2′) *parafictional* sentences. These are not fictional as, unlike fictional sentences such as (2), they are not used to mock-assert that something is the case. Yet they involve fiction for, as Griceans would say, they have real truth conditions which are identical with the truth conditions really implied by fictional sentences when they are used to mock-assert that something is the case.

There is, therefore, no way to dismiss the fact that (either at a semantic or a pragmatic level) fictional sentences have, as fictional versus real truth conditions, what is communicated by their conniving vs. nonconniving use respectively. Accordingly, let me persist with the distinction between conniving and nonconniving uses of fictional sentences understood as the fundamental distinction for truthconditional purposes.[17] Indeed, I want to connect such uses with fictional versus real truth conditions of such sentences respectively.

Nevertheless, let me also allow for parafictional sentences by first saying that a parafictional sentence has the same real truth conditions as the corresponding fictional sentence in its nonconniving use. Clearly, nothing

[16] Richard (2000) has labeled this phenomenon "piggy-backing." Properly developed, this approach leads to a position according to which an utterance *qua* sentence in context effectively *says* what a Gricean would take it as implying. Taken as uttered in a fictional context, the sentence has fictional truth conditions; uttered in a real context, it has real truth conditions. For a thorough criticism of the Gricean view of communication and a defense of a pragmatic notion of what is said by a sentence, see Recanati (2003).

[17] In (1987) and (1999) Bonomi draws a parallel distinction between textual and paratextual sentences. The former have only fictional, the latter only real, truth conditions. Yet it seems to me that textual sentences may also have real truth conditions. This is why I prefer to take the distinction between conniving and nonconniving uses of a fictional sentence as being prior to the distinction between fictional (textual) and parafictional (paratextual) sentences.

prevents a parafictional sentence from turning into a fictional one. For this purpose, it is sufficient that some of its readers use it in the same conniving way as the original storyteller used the corresponding fictional sentence. Yet for the sake of simplicity, let me stipulate that a parafictional sentence has only real truth conditions, notably those of the corresponding fictional sentence in its nonconniving use. This allows me from now on to deal (when possible) with a parafictional sentence rather than with a fictional sentence in its nonconniving use.

One might think that, once one persists with nonconniving uses of fictional sentences as having certain real truth conditions, parafictional sentences become superfluous. But this is not the case. As we already know from Chapter 3, there are not only explicit but also implicit fictional, or make-believe, truths. Moreover, both explicit and implicit fictional truths match corresponding real truths. For example, returning to the example discussed in Chapter 1, it is really the case not only that Gertrude, the Nun of Monza, replied to Egidio—an explicit real truth—but also that Gertrude had sexual intercourse with him—an implicit real truth, a truth implied by the previous one. Now, although explicit fictional truths correspond to conniving uses of fictional sentences whose utterer speaks the truth fictionally—in composing *The Betrothed* Manzoni writes "the miserable girl replied," thereby generating an explicit fictional truth—this is not the case with respect to implicit fictional truths. In fact, there is no sentence that is connivingly used to mock-assert an implicit fictional truth. As a result, while explicit real truths can be expressed by nonconniving uses of fictional sentences, implicit real truths cannot be so expressed. For once more, in such a case there is actually no nonconniving use of a fictional sentence in which such a real truth is asserted. Thus, it may again be stipulated that parafictional sentences express not only the very same real truths that nonconniving uses of fictional sentences assert—the explicit real truths—but also those real truths which no fictional sentence nonconnivingly asserts—the implicit real truths. We are thus entitled to speak both of *explicit* and of *implicit* parafictional sentences.

Precisely w*hich* real truth conditions are mobilized by the sentences in question will be a matter for further discussion in both this and the next chapter. For the time being, furnished with these reflections and especially with the distinction between conniving and nonconniving uses of fictional sentences, let us go back to Frege. As foreshadowed above, Frege's doctrine of fictional *Eigennamen* as non-designating terms which nevertheless have a mock-sense may be perfectly accounted for by saying that such terms figure in a connivingly used fictional sentence. In fact, an allegedly non-designating singular term occurring in a connivingly used sentence fails to refer to anything in that when the term is used in a certain make-believe game, there is the *mere pretense* in that game that it designates something. In addition, insofar as in

such a use it has a pretended *designatum*, it pretends to make a truthconditional contribution to the sentence as a whole. As a result, in a conniving use such a sentence has only pretended, or fictional, truth conditions. Furthermore, since in such a use the sentence has merely fictional truth conditions, it fails to have any real truth value. Therefore, once one equates the thought expressed by a sentence with its truth conditions, one may say that when connivingly used, the sentence has a mock-thought. Moreover, one can take the fictional truthconditional contribution of the singular term figuring in a connivingly used sentence as its mock-sense.

When one passes from conniving to nonconniving uses, however, Frege's theory of mock-sense and mock-thoughts simply tells us nothing.[18] The fact that conniving uses are noncommittal does not imply that nonconniving uses are. So, Frege's account of fictional *Eigennamen* does not yet speak against the possibility for those terms to designate fictional individuals when they figure in nonconnivingly used fictional sentences or, what amounts to the same thing, in parafictional sentences. Thus, a committal reading of nonconniving uses is perfectly compatible with a noncommittal reading of conniving uses.

Hence, the analysis of Frege's theory does not reveal anything that contradicts the committal perspective. Despite what may seem to be the case, there is nothing in that theory that believers in fictional entities should reject, providing that Frege's remarks are suitably addressed to conniving uses of fictional sentences.

4. Russell's Theory

It is well known that one of the aims of Russell's theory of descriptions is to provide a linguistic tool that enables us to dispense with problematic entities. I use the expression "problematic entity" to mean all those items whose claim to existence infringes on what Russell calls "our robust sense of reality" (1919: 170). In his view, the method of paraphrase that contextual definitions of definite descriptions (as well as of all singular terms synonymous with them) permit us to employ should make it possible to dismiss such entities altogether. In fact, according to Russell for any sentence apparently imbued with reference to problematic entities, that method provides a paraphrase that rules out the illusion that the paraphrased sentence effectively concerns such

[18] As will seen below, there is undoubtedly a Fregean way of accounting for the fact that fictional sentences in their nonconniving uses—or, simply, parafictional sentences—have real truth conditions. However, according to this way there is no difference in kind between a Fregean thought expressed in fiction and a Fregean thought expressed outside fiction; parafictional sentences actually present genuine examples of indirect contexts in which their embedded sentences refer to an ordinary Fregean thought.

an entity. Since, moreover, Russell believes that fictional entities are among the problematic entities which the method of paraphrase has the task of eliminating, there are for him no such things as *ficta*.[19]

At first sight, Russell's theory raises a very deep problem for believers in fictional entities. The two-step approach which I adopted in respect of Frege's theory—first, distinguishing between conniving and nonconniving uses of fictional sentences; second, addressing Frege's noncommittal remarks to conniving uses—is no longer available with regard to Russell. Since Russell acknowledges that fictional sentences have genuine truth value, hence real truth conditions, we can consider his remarks as directly concerning parafictional sentences containing any singular term that allegedly refers to a fictional individual. Now, Russell aims to provide a paraphrase for those sentences which, like any such paraphrase, no longer contain any singular terms that refer to individuals, let alone fictional ones. Moreover, that paraphrase yields a complex sentence which is false insofar as its first conjunct, the one expressing an existential clause in Russell's analysis, is false. Hence, we cannot attribute a denotation to the singular term involved in the original sentence which is to be paraphrased. We should therefore conclude that if Russell is right, the idea that parafictional sentences commit us to fictional beings is totally ungrounded.

Russell acknowledges that a sentence such as:

(4) Apollo is young

has a definite truth value. So let us take it to be a parafictional sentence saying more or less the same as a corresponding sentence of the "Apollo" myth when used nonconnivingly. However, since for Russell the proper name "Apollo" is allegedly synonymous with the description "the sun-god," (4) has to be paraphrased as follows:

(4R) At least one individual is a sun-god and at most one individual is a sun-god and whoever is a sun-god is young.

As the paraphrase no longer contains the singular term "Apollo" which figured in the paraphrased sentence, the impression that in this sentence that term refers to an entity is dispelled. Besides, since the sentence is false in that its first conjunct (expressing the existence condition, in Russell's analysis):

(5) There is at least a sun-god

is also false, that name cannot be given a denotation. This can, on the other hand, be done with, for example, a description such as "the smallest

[19] At least from 1905 onwards; see, for example, Russell (1905a: 491).

natural number," which denotes 1 insofar as in the paraphrase of any sentence containing it both the first and the second conjunct (the one expressing the uniqueness condition in Russell's analysis) of that paraphrase are true.[20]

In fact, in endorsing a committal theory of fictional objects, Neo-Meinongians usually just eschew Russell's linguistic challenge to fictional objects. There are various reasons for this dismissive attitude. First of all, Neo-Meinongians may hold that, as far as *ficta* are concerned, semantic descriptivism is not so devastating as Russell believed. Some of them maintain that Russell's theory of definite descriptions does not cover cases in which descriptions are used to denote Meinongian objects, hence fictional objects as well. For in such uses, descriptions inevitably refer to Meinongian objects.[21] Others, instead, do not directly question Russell's theory of descriptions. Nonetheless, they have exploited Kripke's critique of descriptivism by claiming that, when used in fictional sentences, at least non-descriptive singular terms such as proper names directly refer precisely to fictional characters.[22] Moreover, Neo-Meinongians may think that descriptivism fails to respect the intuitions we have as regards the truth value we ascribe to fictional sentences when we assign them real truth conditions. It can be granted that, unlike Frege, Russell acknowledges that a sentence such as (4) has a definite truth value. Yet his analysis does not give it the *right* truth value. Pretheoretically, we seem to take (4) as true, but as we have just said, in Russell's analysis it turns out to be false given the falsity of its first conjunct (5). This is even more evident if we move out of fiction by leaving parafictional sentences aside and consider *external metafictional* sentences. By the latter I mean the discourse allegedly concerning fictional characters not only from outside the perspective of a storytelling process,

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[20] Cf. Russell (1905a: 491). So as to remain faithful to Russell's own example, I here draw no distinction between fictional and mythical entities. We would be forced to draw such a distinction if we maintained that the make-believe game leading to the constitution of a fictional entity had to be intentional in character. For a myth is definitely not intentionally told as a make-believe game. Yet, as seen in Chapter 3, following Walton (cf. n. 39 of that chapter) this approach is not compulsory.

[21] This was, for example, Castañeda's conviction: cf. (1977: 318). See also Parsons (1980: 117–8). One might be tempted to think that those uses are similar to Donnellan's (1966) referential uses of descriptions. But Castañeda would reject such a temptation; see, for example, (1990a: 256). For him, the definite article in a definite description is not an incomplete symbol; rather, it stands for the individuator, for the operator which, as stated in Chapter 1, in his approach constitutes a Meinongian object as an individual, that is, as a one-one set-*correlate*: "the singular sense of the definite article . . . is an *individuating* sense. Namely, it signals the constitutive individuation of the individual thought of" (1988: 95).

[22] Cf. Zalta (2000: 143–4), (2003).

but also involving no fragment of the fiction in which these characters are allegedly spoken of, as in:

(6) Apollo is a mythical character.

This sentence is incontestably true. Yet its Russellian paraphrase:

(6R) At least one individual is a sun-god and at most one individual is a sun-god and whoever is a sun-god is a mythical character

is false, for its first conjunct, again (5), is false.[23]

So, Neo-Meinongians believe that Russell's approach is not so problematic for the committal perspective as it appears to be. Indeed, not only does this approach assume a descriptivist theory of singular terms apparently designating fictional entities, which nowadays appears rather questionable, but also, in assuming that theory, it provides the intuitively wrong truth value for many sentences containing such terms.

However I believe that, on behalf of realism, we can even go beyond simply endorsing this dismissive attitude toward Russell's theory. For it may even be shown that, if descriptivism were correct, one could commit oneself to *ficta* in a Russellian form by finding a description which not only is allegedly synonymous with a singular term purportedly designating a *fictum*, but also has in such an entity its Russellian denotation.

As is well known, one of the traditional problems with a theory claiming that any proper name "N" is synonymous with a definite description "the F" is to find a suitable descriptional candidate for such synonymy; in other words, to find a description "the F" that makes an identity sentence of the form "N is the F" non-problematically both analytic and necessary.[24] Yet, as far as proper names purportedly referring to fictional entities are concerned, the syncretistic theory is able to provide precisely one such candidate. Any such term will be synonymous with a description of the kind "the result of seeing the set of properties $\{P,Q,R \ldots\}$ as make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to those properties are instantiated by an individual." Given the theory of *ficta* outlined in Chapter 3, not only is there no possibility to revise any identity sentence of the kind "N is the result of seeing the set of properties $\{P,Q,R \ldots\}$ as make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to those properties are instantiated by an individual." Also, such a description mobilizes the two constituents that, for the syncretistic theory, jointly individuate a certain fictional individual, a certain

[23] Cf., for example, Castañeda (1985/6: 13–14) and Parsons (1980: 32–7).

[24] On these problems, cf. obviously Searle (1958) and Kripke (1980) respectively.

make-believe process-type and a certain property set. So, that description gives the *individual essence* of that entity, namely a property which that entity necessarily possesses and only that entity can possess. As a consequence, we may take it that any such identity sentence holds necessarily.

Now, in the light of the syncretistic theory, any such description has a Russellian denotation. This is because, according to the syncretistic theory, in the overall realm of existents, both spatiotemporal and non-spatiotemporal, *there is* a result of seeing a certain set as make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to its properties are instantiated by an individual and there is *just one* such result; namely, a certain fictional entity. Thus, the Russellian denotation of that description is precisely a certain fictional entity.

Once expressed in this way, moreover, this proposal has the merit of complying with the truth values one intuitively ascribes to the sentences involving the proper name that one such description is allegedly synonymous with. For, if the description in question has its Russellian denotation in a fictional entity, the first two conjuncts of the Russellian paraphrase of any sentence containing it are true. Hence, the paraphrase retains the truth value that the paraphrased sentence intuitively possesses. For example, if the paraphrased sentence is true, then the paraphrase is also true since what could make it false in such a case are its first two conjuncts; but we have just seen that they are true.

Take, for instance, the case of (4). As we have seen, Russell's original paraphrase of (4), (4R), is not able to retain (4)'s intuitive truth value because (4R)'s first conjunct, that is (5), is false; there is actually no individual that has the property of *being a sun-god*. But if we take (4) to be synonymous with:

(4RS) The result of seeing the set of properties {. . . , *being a sun-god*, . . .} as make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to those properties are instantiated by an individual is young

and we paraphrase (4RS) *à la* Russell, we obtain a sentence that retains the same truth value as (4) intuitively has. In fact, the first conjunct of (4RS)'s paraphrase, namely:

(7) There is a result of seeing the set of properties {. . . , *being a sun-god*, . . .} as make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to those properties are instantiated by an individual

is true; there is actually a thing which has the property of *being a result of seeing the set of properties {. . . , being a sun-god, . . .} as make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to those properties are instantiated by an individual*. The same holds for the second conjunct of that paraphrase, which affirms that there is just one such thing. For, if the syncretistic theory is correct, there is just one such result. So, from the first two conjuncts of

(4RS)'s paraphrase there is no reason to think that (4RS) is false and hence that, our intuitions notwithstanding, (4) is also false.

One might be surprised to hear that a general existential sentence such as (5) is false while another general existential sentence such as (7) is true. If there is no such a thing as a sun-god, how can it be that there is such a thing as the result of seeing a set as make-believedly$_n$ such that . . . , etc.? Yet here one simply has to take into account the fact that for Russell existence is a second-order property; put linguistically, he sees existential statements as just a way of affirming the fact that certain first-order properties are instantiated. Now, (5) is false for the very simple reason that the property of *being a sun-god* is actually uninstantiated. Such a property requires for its instantiation the existence of a concrete entity. But in the subdomain of the *concreta* there is nothing that actually instantiates that property. In contrast, (7) is true since the property of *being a result of seeing the set of properties {. . . , being a sun-god, . . .} as make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to those properties are instantiated by an individual* is actually instantiated. That property requires for its instantiation the existence not of a concrete but, rather, of an abstract entity. Now, in the overall domain that includes both *abstracta* and *concreta* there is something that actually instantiates that property: a certain abstract entity, our given *fictum* Apollo.

In order to be more precise, I have to rely once again on the "internal/external" modes of predication distinction introduced in Chapter 1. On the basis of that distinction, it turns out on the one hand that (5) and, hence, (4R) are false, if the property of *being a sun-god* is there predicated *externally*. For there is nothing that has that property externally. Certainly, one could observe that, according to the syncretistic theory, there is something that has that property *internally*, for example, the very same *fictum* Apollo. So, if one appeals to internal predication, (5) turns out to be true. But even this is not enough to make (4R) true, as we intuitively wish it to be, because if that property is predicated internally, the *second* conjunct of (4R) is false: there is *more than one thing* that has that property internally. In fact, not only does Apollo have that property internally but, for example, the very set of properties {. . . , *being a sun-god*, . . .} also has it in the same way—to say nothing of other fictional sun-gods. On the other hand, (4RS) is true since, again, the property of *being a result of seeing the set of properties {. . . , being a sun-god, . . .} as make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to those properties are instantiated by an individual* is predicated *externally*. For there is just one thing that has this property *externally*: our *fictum* Apollo. Indeed, this property is not one of the properties corresponding to those mobilized by the myth. Hence, it does not belong to the property set that partially constitutes Apollo and, as a consequence, is not possessed by him internally. Undoubtedly, this merely shows that both the first and the second conjunct of the paraphrase of

(4RS) are true. Yet that paraphrase itself, hence also (4RS), is definitely true as its third conjunct is likewise true in that the property of *being young* is *internally* predicated of the Russellian denotation of its description, our fictional Apollo. This is the internal predication that, according to the syncretistic theory, is already contained in (4).

Let me sum up the above results. What we have seen is that *if* descriptivism were correct, one could still refer to a fictional entity by means of any proper name, for any such term would be allegedly synonymous with a description of the form "the result of seeing the set of properties $\{P,Q,R \ldots\}$ as make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to those properties are instantiated by an individual" which has that fictional entity as its Russellian denotation. Of course, I have not yet demonstrated that any definite description may have a fictional entity as its *designatum*, not even as its Russellian denotation. But this was not my aim in this section. Here I merely wanted to show that, *pace* Russell, his analysis of descriptions is perfectly compatible with a committal perspective on fictional entities. Thus, it is not Russell's theory that can thwart that perspective![25]

5. The Intensionalist Theories

5.1 The Genuine Intensionalist Approach to Ficta

At this point, antirealists may think that I have been too quick to dismiss the antirealist attitude toward *ficta* of the grandfathers of analytical philosophy, Frege and Russell. There is a way to recuperate their antirealist intuitions which depends on the fact that fictional sentences in their nonconniving use, or parafictional sentences, have a genuine truth value, hence genuine truth conditions.

The point is that when we use nonconnivingly sentences such as (2), or we utter their parafictional equivalent such as (2′):

(2′) Leopold Bloom enjoys a meal made of the inner organs of beasts and fowls

the claim that one such sentence has real truth conditions is supported by regarding it as meaning the same as:

(2″) In *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom enjoys a meal made of the inner organs of beasts and fowls.

[25] For a similar thesis regarding Meinongian objects in general, cf. Voltolini (2001: 494–6, 501–3). Perhaps Castañeda himself would have accepted this result: cf., for example, (1975: 139), (1977: 315).

In fact, our aim in uttering (2′) is to tell the content of a tiny part of a certain story. In (2), the phrase "In *Ulysses*" is simply left implicit since it is clear to everybody that what we are referring to is James Joyce's masterpiece. If there were the possibility of misunderstanding here or if we intended to draw a comparison between what a certain (general) character does in a certain story and what it does in another one, we would make such reference explicit as, for example, in:

(8) In *Orlando Furioso* Roland goes insane, while in the *Chanson de Roland* he is very wise.[26]

In general, one may say, then, that any parafictional sentence "p" is equivalent to a sentence of the form "in the story S, p:" its real truth conditions are indeed those of this sentence. Let me call sentences of the form "in the story S, p" *internal metafictional* sentences in order to distinguish them from *external* metafictional sentences such as (6) above. As with those sentences, internal metafictional sentences are taken to be outside the perspective of a storytelling process: one utters a certain internal metafictional sentence by regarding what is told in the relevant process from outside it. Yet, unlike external metafictional sentences, they involve fragments of fictions. These are the fictions that internal metafictional sentences are about in that they refer to them through the singular term occurring in a locution of the kind "in the story S."

Now, such a locution may be meant to characterize an intensional context, that is a context which, when filled by a certain sentence, produces a complex sentence whose truth value does not depend on the truth value of the previous sentence, which in our case is a parafictional sentence (or even a fictional sentence, which in its nonconniving use is equivalent to a parafictional sentence). The complex sentence may then be treated either *à la* Frege as featuring an indirect context filled by a simpler sentence whose reference is shifted to its ordinary sense.[27] Or it may be interpreted in terms of a possible-world semantics, according to which a sentence of the form "Iop," where "IO" is an intensional operator, is true iff its embedded sentence "p" is true in a (possible) unactual "world;" in our case the "world" of the fiction S.[28] The word "possible" is put here in parenthesis because it may be reasonably asked whether the "world" of the fiction is a *possible* world. The imaginary environments storytellers postulate as *niches* where the events they tell about

[26] For similar remarks, cf. Bonomi (1999).

[27] Cf. Künne (1995).

[28] This strategy counts Lewis (1978) among its inspirers. For some recent revivals of it, see for example Currie (1990) and Lamarque-Olsen (1994) (but see n. 33 below).

have to be located may well be contradictory. For individuals existing in them may both possess and not possess the same property—both a sentence in which that property is predicated of one such individual and its negation may be fictional truths in that environment. Hence, they may well fail to have the logical feature that a possible world has to possess: consistency.[29] Yet a defender of the present interpretation—let me describe it as the *genuine intensionalist* approach to sentences involving fiction—may limit him- or herself to taking the "world" of a fiction to be an unactual *circumstance* of evaluation for the embedded sentence. Accordingly, a sentence of the form "in the story S, p" is true iff the embedded sentence "p" is true in the "world" of the fiction S in question.[30] Now, Russell might have been content with that analysis of an internal metafictional sentence, for it rules out the drawback of his descriptivism when applied to fictional or even to parafictional sentences, namely the fact that the descriptivist paraphrase yields the wrong truth value for the sentence it paraphrases. Whereas a sentence such as:

(4R) At least one individual is a sun-god and at most one individual is a sun-god and whoever is a sun-god is young.

is false, an intensionalist paraphrase of:

(4) Apollo is young

in terms of:

(4RI) In the Greek myth the sun-god is young

[29] Perhaps these environments also fail to be maximal: that is, for some state of affairs *S* and its negative complement *not-S*, one such environment does not contain either. But this is more questionable since the "individuals" inhabiting them are, *qua* (make-believedly) concrete "entities," also (make-believedly) complete in the sense that, for every property, either one such "individual" (make-believedly) possesses it or (make-believedly) does not possess it—either a sentence in which a property is predicated of one such "individual" or its negation is a fictional truth, that is a truth in that environment.

[30] In the next chapter I underline the distinction between imaginary "worlds" postulated in a make-believe activity of storytelling and fictional "worlds" constituting the propositional content of a story. Yet this distinction is not normally drawn by intensionalists. So, for the time being, I present in general their doctrines as involving a generic notion of the "world" of a fiction and use the term "fiction" as ambiguously referring to either the make-believe activity of storytelling or the story *qua* characterized by a certain propositional content. Yet, since intensionalists take "worlds" of fiction to be circumstances of evaluation for the sentence embedded in an internal metafictional sentence, their notion of such "worlds" approaches that of the imaginary "world" postulated in a make-believe activity of storytelling. So, wherever possible, I speak of imaginary "worlds" rather than simply of "worlds" of fiction.

where the name "Apollo" is replaced by its allegedly synonymous description "the sun-god" and this description is analyzed *à la* Russell, is true. For it is true that in the "world" postulated by such a myth, there is just one individual who is a sun-god and that individual is young.[31]

In either case, *ficta* are eliminated because in the Fregean treatment, the singular term embedded in an internal metafictional sentence does not refer to a *fictum* but, rather, to its ordinary sense. Whereas, in the genuinely intensionalist approach, in order for the internal metafictional sentence to be true, there must be a designation for such a singular term *in the "world" of the fiction*—the embedded sentence is true in that world iff the denotation of that term in that "world" has in that "world" the property there designated by the embedded predicate—even though that term has no *actual* designation. In (4RI), for example, the description "the sun-god" may well denote something *in the "world" of the myth*, even though it denotes nothing *in reality*, a fortiori no fictional character.

In fact, this eliminative procedure is nowadays commonly pursued in non-Fregean terms along the lines of the genuinely intensionalist approach. Apart from other possible drawbacks to the Fregean procedure,[32] the dismissal of such a procedure may have been basically motivated by the fact that, if our aim is to rule out problematic entities such as *ficta*, no ontological parsimony is really gained if in order to fulfill that aim, we have to rely on other problematic entities such as Fregean senses as *designata* of the embedded singular terms.

Nevertheless, against the non-Fregean way of interpreting this eliminative approach, various replies have been made. First of all, it has been said that such an intensionalist paraphrase works for parafictional sentences, but is completely ineffective with respect to external metafictional sentences. Clearly, such sentences are not implicitly prefixed by an "in the story" locution. If for example we read a sentence such as:

(6) Apollo is a mythical character

in this way, it would mean that there is a fiction in which Apollo is a mythical character. But ancient Greeks do not describe Apollo as such. In the Greek

[31] On this development of Russell's position, see, for example, Rorty (1982: 112, 119).

[32] One of these problems is linked to the idiosyncratic character of Fregean senses. As Künne notes (1995: 146–7), if senses are idiosyncratic, an allegedly empty name such as "Holmes" may possess different senses, hence different indirect referents in contexts of the form "In the Doyle's stories, Holmes is F." Therefore, the sentence embedded in one such context may have different *Bedeutungen* (and possibly different indirect *Sinne* as well) for different speakers. As a result, it can hardly be the case that the resulting complex sentence presenting one such context satisfies the same purpose as the parafictional sentence it allegedly paraphrases, namely to contribute to telling *the* content of a certain story.

myth, Apollo is just a supernatural individual—a god—but not at all a mythical character! Hence, even if by appealing to the intensionalist paraphrase, *internal* metafictional discourse proved to be noncommittal, *external* metafictional discourse would remain entirely committal.[33]

Although, as a realist on *ficta*, I obviously believe that external metafictional sentences commit us to such entities,[34] I must confess that I find this line of reply disconcerting. It is not only because, if the problem with external metafictional sentences were simply that intensionalist paraphrases do not work in their case, it might well be true that other paraphrases would; a series of attempts have in fact been made in this direction.[35] (Indeed, whenever in ontology anyone has endeavored to keep to something like external discourse about a problematic entity of a certain kind in order to claim that one cannot dispense with such entities, the natural response has been to show that even that fragment of language which is purportedly about such entities can be paraphrased in noncommittal terms.)[36] But also and above all, it would be curious if our ontological inventory allowed for fictional entities only because we seemingly fail to account noncommittally for a rather limited and marginal number of sentences, the external metafictional sentences. Indeed, the sentences in which we seem commonly to discuss *ficta* are the parafictional sentences. Not only are they greater in number than the external metafictional sentences; they are also more important. For in them we discuss the properties that are assumed to characterize fictional entities: Holmes as a clever detective, Othello as a jealous man, Roland as an insane paladin.

Take another ontologically problematic case such as the discourse purportedly about mathematical entities. It would be odd for someone to hold that we must commit ourselves to numbers because we say things such as:

(9) 3 is a number

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[33] On this point see, for example, Castañeda (1989b: 188–90), Kripke (1973), Lambert (1983: 154–5), Schiffer (1996) and Thomasson (2003b). This point was conceded by Lewis himself (1978: 38). In fact, some of the defenders of the genuinely intensionalist approach to internal metafictional sentences allow for a committal approach to external metafictional sentences as concerning general entities such as (fictional) *characters* or roles. See Currie (1990: 171–80) and Lamarque-Olsen (1994: 95–101). Lamarque explicitly rejects the eliminativist approach in (2003: 44).

[34] At least in their nonconniving uses: see below.

[35] To quote just some of them, cf. Kroon (1996), (2000), Künne (1990), (1995), Napoli (2000), Leonardi (2003), Adams-Fuller-Stecker (1997), Walton (1990). I will focus on Walton's attempt later.

[36] Universals are a case in point. See, for example, Quine's attempts at paraphrasing away sentences such as "Humility is a virtue." Cf. Quine (1960: 122).

but not because we say things such as:

(10) 3 is odd.

If we agree that there is a convincing antirealist paraphrase for (10), I think this would prompt us to look for a way to dismiss also the apparent ontological commitment to numbers occurring in (9) rather than to hold onto (9) as the only rampart on which to organize the defense of a committal position on numbers. So, either we are able to provide an account which saves the apparent ontological commitment to *ficta* even in parafictional sentences, or it is better simply to give in to the eliminativists.

Consequently, I am quite prepared to approve realists who counter the genuinely intensionalist approach by claiming that though intensionalist paraphrases work for parafictional sentences, they fulfill no eliminative function. Unfortunately, I think that these attempts to combine intensionalism with realism with respect to *ficta* are unsuccessful and I try to show this in what follows.

To begin with, the intensionalist realist points out that, as is well known, any sentence of the form "IOp," where "IO" is an intensional operator, may be read in at least two ways, *de dicto* and *de re*. The former is admittedly noncommittal: on a *de dicto* reading, a sentence of the form "IOp" is true iff as regards its embedded sentence "p," the designation(s) of the embedded singular term(s) *in a certain unactual circumstance* possess(es) in that circumstance the property designated by the embedded predicate in that circumstance. This, then, is the way antirealists actually read internal metafictional sentences in the genuinely intensionalist approach. Yet the *de re* reading is committal for in it, a sentence of the form "IOp" is true iff as regards its embedded sentence "p," the *actual* designation(s) of the embedded singular term(s) possess(es) in an unactual circumstance the property designated by the embedded predicate in that circumstance. Thus, the intensionalist realist observes that one may well accept that parafictional sentences are to be paraphrased as internal metafictional sentences whose "in the story" locution features an intensional context. Yet such sentences may well be given a *de re* reading. As a result, any such sentence may still be seen as really committing us to fictional objects. Such objects will, moreover, be what the metaphysical investigation predicts them to be: Meinongian entities, possible nonexistent individuals, *abstracta* (either free or bound idealities) and so on.

As my metaphysical preference goes to the idea of locating *ficta* in the realm of *abstracta*, let me focus on the realists' attempts to take internal metafictional sentences in their *de re* reading to be about abstract entities, in particular about abstract artifacts. As will be recalled from Chapter 2, Thomasson first draws a distinction between real and fictional contexts in

which one and the same sentence may be taken to be uttered.[37] According to such a distinction, a sentence such as:

(2) Mr. Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls

is false when it is uttered in a real context. In such a context, the abstract object Bloom definitely does not possess the property of *enjoying a meal of a certain kind*. Yet that sentence is true when it is taken to be uttered in the fictional context of *Ulysses*. In this context, that very object does possess that property since this is the way in which James joyce's has told his story.[38] Moreover, Thomasson states that a sentence taken to be uttered in a fictional context says the same as its intensionalist paraphrase. This paraphrase is committal because it has to be read *de re* as being about the same abstract artifact as a sentence such as (2) is for Thomasson in both contexts of its utterance. In the case of (2), this intensionalist paraphrase is the following *de re* truth:

(2DR) Of [the abstract object] Bloom, in *Ulysses* it eats with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls.[39]

For artifactualists, an internal metafictional sentence in its *de re* reading therefore has precisely the same truth conditions as its embedded sentence when it is taken as uttered in a fictional context. According to them, when read *de re* an internal metafictional sentence is true iff, with regard to its embedded sentence *as uttered in the fictional context of the fiction*, the *actual* designation(s) of the embedded singular term(s) *uttered in that context* possess(es) in the circumstances determined by that context—the imaginary "world" of the fiction—the property designated by the embedded predicative term in those circumstances. Hence, the internal metafictional sentence read *de re* shares its truth conditions with its embedded sentence when it is taken as uttered in a

[37] Let me specify that the sentence is *taken as* uttered in a fictional context, for in actual fact that context does not exist at all and that sentence is uttered in a real portion of the world. Yet what really counts for artifactualists is that such a context determines a specific circumstance of evaluation for a sentence. With this point in mind, Predelli (1997), (1998) draws a distinction between context of utterance and context of interpretation of a sentence, holding that what sometimes counts for the evaluation of a sentence in context is not the former but the latter context. In this sense, a fictional context is a context of interpretation rather than, strictly speaking, a context of utterance for the sentence in question.

[38] On the other hand, for Thomasson an external metafictional sentence such as (6) has to be handled in precisely the opposite way. When uttered in a real context, it is true; when taken to be uttered in a fictional context, it is false.

[39] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 105–7). See also Salmon (1998: 300–3).

fictional context. *When taken as so uttered*, such a sentence is true iff in the circumstances determined by that context—the imaginary "world" of the fiction—the *actual* designation(s) its singular term(s) possess(es) *when taken as so uttered* has(have) the property its predicative term designates in such a "world."[40]

Pace artifactualists, however, we will now see that these are not the truth conditions which an internal metafictional sentence should possess when read *de re*, namely that the sentence in question is true iff, as regards its embedded sentence, the actual designation(s) of its embedded singular term(s) possess(es) in a relevant unactual circumstance the property designated by the embedded predicate in that circumstance. For the appeal to the distinction between fictional and real contexts forces a sentence to undergo, in some cases at least, a change in meaning which must not affect the sentence embedded in an internal metafictional sentence so that the latter can be read *de r*e. Let us consider this in detail.

According to artifactualists, both when it is uttered in a real context and when it is taken to be uttered in a fictional context, a sentence has the same meaning and so its singular terms have the same semantic value. In particular, if the singular term in question is a proper name, then it directly refers to one and the same object. Simply put, those different contexts determine different contexts of evaluation for that sentence with that fixed meaning; such circumstances may well make that sentence with that meaning true and false, respectively. So, let us take (2). Both when uttered in a real context and when taken as uttered in the fictional context of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, that sentence has the same meaning, in this case the singular proposition <Bloom, *enjoying-a-meal-of-kind-K*>. Indeed its proper name "Mr. Leopold Bloom" directly refers to a certain abstract object—the particular abstract artifact a certain *fictum* is identical with—both when uttered in a real context and when taken to be uttered in that fictional context. Those contexts determine different circumstances of evaluation for that very sentence endowed with that meaning. With respect to a real circumstance, that sentence with that meaning is false, for an abstract object really enjoys no meal. Yet with respect to the fictional circumstance of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, it is true since that very object, which is described in the context determining that circumstance as a concrete individual, definitely has that meal with pleasure there. As a result, the equivalent internal metafictional sentence in its *de re* reading is true because its embedded sentence, that is the previous sentence, when taken as uttered in a given fictional context, is true in the "world" determined by that context, the fictional circumstance narrated in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Again, when taken as so uttered, the *designatum* of its embedded name "Mr. Leopold Bloom," namely the same abstract artifact in question, has in that fictional circumstance

[40] For this way of putting it, see Predelli (2002: 264).

the property designated by its embedded predicate "_eats with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls" there, namely the property of *enjoying a meal of the kind in question*.

It is at this point that problems arise. To begin with, artifactualists must admit that their *de re* reading of internal metafictional sentences effectively supports realism only as far as the embedded sentence contains directly referential expressions such as proper names. For in a case where the relevant embedded singular term is a definite description, an abstract individual cannot be the actual denotation of that term. Take, for example, the sentence:

(11) The pipe-smoking detective befriending a doctor named "Watson" helped the police solve many baffling crimes.

Keeping to the distinction between the fictional and real contexts of utterance of this sentence, in such a case we may say that (11) has the same content in both contexts—in other words, it expresses the general existential proposition to the effect that there is only one individual who is a pipe-smoker and befriends a doctor named "Watson,"[41] and such an individual helped the police solve many baffling crimes. Moreover, when taken as uttered in the relevant fictional context, (11) is true for in the "world" determined by that context the description "the pipe-smoking detective befriending a doctor named 'Watson' " denotes a concrete individual, existing only within the scope of such a "world," who moreover so helped the police there. Yet when uttered in the real context, (11) is really false, primarily because in the real world that description has no denotation at all.[42] Now, take the corresponding internal metafictional sentence:

(11′) In the Holmes stories, the pipe-smoking detective befriending a doctor named "Watson" helps the police solve many baffling crimes.

If we read (11′) *de dicto*, it turns out to be true. For in the "world" of the Holmes fictions, the description in question has a Russellian denotation, which, moreover, precisely in this way helps the police. Yet if we read (11′) *de re*, it patently turns out to be false since, as we have just seen, there is no real

[41] The situation would be more complicated if the description in question were a description in which a name make-believedly referring to a concrete "individual," such as "Watson," were used rather than mentioned, for example "the pipe-smoking detective befriending Watson". For, then, in passing from being uttered in a real context to being taken to be uttered in a fictional context, the description would undergo the same shift in meaning which, as we see below, that name undergoes. But I will leave this complication to one side.

[42] Cf. Predelli (2002: 263–4).

Russellian denotation for the description in question. Thus, no real denotation is such that in the imaginary "world" of the Holmes fictions it so helps the police. A fortiori no fictional individual, let alone an abstract one, is really denoted by such a description. Therefore, if one insists that when taken as uttered in a fictional context, a sentence such as (11) is equivalent to an internal metafictional sentence such as (11′), one should conclude that such an equivalence holds rather in the *de dicto* reading of the latter sentence, where it does not commit us to any fictional individual, but not in its *de re* reading.

It may be that this problem can be dealt with in some way.[43] Yet artifactualists must face a problem that is more fundamental as it involves embedded proper names. To address this problem, let us begin by seeing what exactly the fictional and the real contexts are that artifactualists appeal to. On the one hand, as Thomasson admits, a fictional context is a context of discussions in which "often some pretense is involved" (1999: 105). But if this is the case, then the fictional context is the imaginary context mobilized by what I have called the *conniving* use of a fictional sentence. As a result, the circumstance of evaluation determined by that context is the imaginary "world" invoked by that use as much as by similar uses of other sentences: that is, the "world" invoked by a whole practice of storytelling, by a whole make-believe activity.[44] Properly speaking, in fact, by using a sentence connivingly we *act as if* we were uttering it in a fictional context, so that that sentence was being evaluated in the worldly circumstance determined by that context. On the other hand, a real context is a context in which *no* pretense is involved, a context in which we speak of something completely outside a make-believe perspective. In the framework of the syncretistic theory, one would expect this to be a context mobilized by a nonconniving use of a fictional sentence. However, for artifactualists this is hardly the case. In a nonconniving use, a fictional sentence may well be true. Yet for artifactualists a real context is such that when *ficta* as abstract artifacts are thematized in it, it always yields *false* sentences, except for the case in which the sentences uttered in that context are external metafictional sentences such as (6).[45]

With these considerations in mind, let us ascertain whether the artifactualists' claim is correct that the content of a sentence is the same be it uttered in a real context or taken as uttered in a fictional context. We have just seen that this

[43] For instance, by taking the relevant description to be elliptical for a description of the kind "the individual who is F *according to the story S*," which may apparently have a fictional object as its denotation. I come back to this elliptical treatment of descriptions for fictional characters in the next chapter.

[44] I here underline the *imaginary* feature both of the fictional context and of the "world" determined by that context so as to make clear that, properly speaking, neither exists.

[45] Cf. Salmon (1998: 302–3), Thomasson (1999: 105–7), Predelli (2002: 266–7).

may be the case when one such sentence contains a definite description. So let us now focus on sentences containing proper names. When the fictional context involves reference to *actual concrete individuals*, things stand as artifactualists claim. Indeed, take the fictional context in which a certain sentence containing a name of a certain actual concrete individual is regarded as uttered. That context is mobilized by a conniving use of that sentence which corresponds to an existentially *conservative* make-believe game in which *of* that very individual, one makes believe that it is such and such. Now, that very same individual is referred to by that name when the very same sentence is uttered in a real context, that is outside of any make-believe game. As a result, that sentence possesses the very same content in both contexts. Put alternatively, the fictional truth conditions of that sentence coincide with its real truth conditions. Those contexts will, moreover, determine correspondingly different circumstances of evaluation, a certain imaginary "world" and (a fragment of) the real world. These circumstances will yield the same evaluation or not for that sentence depending on how things respectively stand in them. Expressed differently, depending on how things stand in such circumstances, the fictional and the real truth value of the sentence in question will coincide or not.

Take for instance (1):

(1) Quick warm sunlight came running from Berkeley Road.

Both when taken as uttered in a fictional context and when uttered in a real context, (1) has the same meaning; its fictional and its real truth conditions coincide since the name "Berkeley Road" refers to the full-fledged Dublin street in both contexts. The fictional context is mobilized by the fact that the sentence with that reference is used to make believe, *of that actual street*, that it was so lit. Thus, when taken as uttered in such a context, the content of (1) can well be seen as the singular proposition <Berkeley Road, *having-a-certain-illumination*>.[46] In the imaginary "world" determined by that context, the "world" originally postulated by James Joyce's imagination, (1) is true; that is, it is fictionally true. When it is uttered in a real context, the sentence with that reference is used to assert that that street is so lit. So, when uttered in that context, its content again is the very same singular proposition cited above. In the world determined by that real context, (a fragment of) the real world, (1) will be really true or false depending on whether that street is or not so lit (in that fragment).[47]

[46] I here take for granted that insofar as proper names are directly referential expressions, they contribute their referents to the singular propositions that sentences containing them express. I return to this topic in the next chapter.

[47] On the analysis of *this* kind of case, therefore, I entirely agree with Predelli (1997).

Let us move on now to the case in which a fictional context for a sentence containing a proper name involves reference to "objects" that are *not* actual concrete individuals. In such a case, the fictional context will be normally mobilized by a conniving use of a sentence that corresponds to an existentially *creative* make-believe game. In such a game, one makes believe *that* there is an individual, typically a concrete one, being so named and having further properties. This means that there really is no such individual at all. Hence, there is reference to that "individual" only within that context. That is to say, it is only make-believedly the case that the name in question refers to such an individual. As a result, no such individual may be involved when that very sentence is uttered in a real context, outside any make-believe game, for there is no such individual at all. So, *pace* artifactualists, the sentence does not retain its meaning across contexts; a shift in meaning occurs. Because while taken as uttered in a fictional context, *in the scope of that context* a certain sentence is about a concrete individual (actually, an imaginary "individual" existing only in the circumstances determined by that context as the overall domain of beings includes no such individual), this is not the case when that sentence is uttered in a real context. In such a context, given that its name is referentless, that very sentence actually concerns nothing! As a result, the fictional truth conditions of that sentence do not coincide with its real truth conditions, if there really are any; for how can the sentence have real truth conditions, if its name fails to have a real referent?

Artifactualists would immediately retort that the sentence in question *does* retain the same meaning across such contexts since that sentence is precisely about one and the same abstract object even when it is taken as uttered in a fictional context. In that context that very *abstractum* is treated as a concrete entity.

But this is in conflict with the phenomenology of the situation. Certainly, if the fictional context were mobilized by a conniving use of a sentence corresponding to an, admittedly rare, existentially conservative make-believe game in which one makes believe *of* a certain actual abstract object that it is such and such, primarily that it is a concrete object, then artifactualists might be right. Some of these cases may even concern metafictional bits of fiction, in which a fictional context is mobilized by making believe *of* a certain, previously generated, actual abstract fictional character that it is such and such. For then the situation precisely matches the case in which, when already taken as uttered in a fictional context, the sentence is about an actual concrete individual. But this is not usually the situation involved. As I have already said, normally the fictional context is not mobilized by a conniving use of a sentence corresponding to an existentially *conservative*

make-believe game but, rather, by a conniving use of a sentence corresponding to an existentially *creative* game.[48]

Take for instance (2). When it is taken as uttered in a fictional context, the sentence does not have the same meaning as when it is uttered in a real context. In the first case, the fictional context is mobilized by a conniving use of (2) corresponding to an existentially creative make-believe game in which one pretends that there is a concrete individual named "Mr. Leopold Bloom" enjoying a meal of a certain kind. So, taken as uttered in that context, the name in the sentence refers to a concrete "individual" that, however, does not exist at all in any form outside such an imaginary context. Undoubtedly, when taken as uttered in such a context the sentence has a certain meaning, that is certain fictional truth conditions: the sentence is fictionally true iff in the imaginary "world" determined by that context, a certain concrete "individual" named "Mr. Leopold Bloom" enjoys the meal in question. But these fictional truth conditions do not coincide at all with the real truth conditions, if any, which that sentence has when uttered in a real context. For the real truth conditions of that sentence cannot involve that concrete "individual" existing in the above imaginary "world" because there is no such individual.[49] Provided that there really are any such conditions; for as long as "Mr. Leopold Bloom" has a mere make-believe reference, that is possesses reference only within that existentially creative make-believe game, that name is actually referentless.[50]

Clearly, if the sentence in question were the already considered:

(12) Number One was in a bad mood for it failed to count up to three

then one might reasonably say that its fictional truth conditions coincide with its real truth conditions because in that case the name "Number One" refers to one and the same actual abstract individual, the number 1, both when that sentence is taken as uttered in a fictional context and when it is uttered in a real context. One may even find cases of this kind

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[48] For similar observations, see Yablo (1999).

[49] This lies behind the idea that in a *de dicto* kind of pretense, the pretense element is relative only to the singular term contained in the fictional sentence [cf. Mulligan (1999: 63)]. For this amounts to saying that the contextual meaning shift in the sentence regards only its singular term, not its predicate (at least in ordinary cases; for some extraordinary cases in which the contextual meaning shift would affect the sentential predicate if it were successful, see below in the text).

[50] As will be seen below, the syncretist allows for such a sentence to recover real (as well as committal) truth conditions once it is seen as being used nonconnivingly.

mobilizing previously generated fictional objects precisely *qua* abstract entities. Take:

(13) Oedipus has been a model for writers and psycho-analysts

and imagine that it were uttered not only in a real context—as an external metafictional sentence making a critical comment on a certain literary development—but also in a particular fictional context—say, the metafictional story I imagined in the previous chapter, where Oedipus is introduced as a previously existing abstract fictional character. Even here one might say that the fictional and the real truth conditions of (13) coincide. For "Oedipus" refers in both cases to an abstract character, our ordinary fictional character Oedipus. Yet this is the case as far as all the examples such as (12) and (13) are concerned, for in them the fictional context of utterance of the relevant sentence is mobilized by a conniving use corresponding to a particular existentially *conservative* make-believe game in which one makes believe *of* a certain abstract individual that it is such and such. For instance, the original writer of (12), Gianni Rodari, in writing it makes believe *of* 1 that it is in a bad mood; in writing (13) while composing the metafictional story in question, its author makes believe *of* our ordinary fictional character Oedipus that it is a literary model.

Suppose that on behalf of the syncretistic theory one allows for nonconniving uses of fictional sentences and, furthermore, that one is able to give a committal account of such uses (as I try to do in the next chapter). As a result, one can pair fictional and real contexts with conniving and nonconniving uses of fictional sentences respectively and say that in the case of a sentence such as (2), when uttered in a real context and hence in its *nonconniving* use, that sentence is about a fictional character which is an abstract individual—as artifactualists maintain—and that it then recovers real truth conditions. Artifactualists would not of course placidly accept such an assumption since it happens that (2) uttered in a real context turns out to be true rather than false, whereas they claim the contrary.[51] But let us put this problem aside as it still true that *even then* the artifactualist claim that no shift in meaning occurs for a sentence such as (2) in passing from being considered as uttered in a fictional context to being uttered in a real context would be ungrounded. This is because the imaginary "individual" which a name such as "Mr. Leopold Bloom" refers to in a certain fictional context is *not* the abstract individual, the *fictum*, which for the syncretist is referred to by that name in a real context. *Qua* non-spatiotemporal being, that *fictum* belongs to the overall domain

[51] See the authors quoted in n. 45 above.

of what there is. Yet as creationists have clearly grasped (see Chapter 3), in that domain there is really no such imaginary individual; we only act as if it existed, or what is the same thing, that "individual" exists only in the imaginary "world" determined by the fictional context in question.[52]

In a nutshell, this critique of the artifactualist position may be summarized as follows. When we are dealing with *real*, either concrete or abstract, individuals (as mobilized by existentially conservative make-believe games), it is true that one may take fictional contexts as alternative evaluation contexts for the same *interpreted* sentences that are already evaluated with respect to the real context. Here fictional contexts behave in more or less the same way as, for Kripke, possible worlds do, as alternative evaluation points for sentences whose terms have an already *actually* established meaning and which have already been evaluated with respect to the actual world.[53] Yet

[52] In reporting Kripke's position on the matter, Salmon has clearly grasped this point. So he would admit that, if there were a conniving use of an allegedly empty proper name, this would not have the same reference to an abstract individual that it has when used nonconnivingly. Yet, *contra* Kripke Salmon further maintains that a conniving use of a proper name does not exist, for such a use is just a pretended use. Cf. Salmon (1998: 293–300). This seems wrong to me. What is pretended is the reference not the use—the use of a certain name is actual, but in such a use that name is taken as if it were uttered in an unactual context (put alternatively, in such a case the context of utterance is different from the context of interpretation: cf. n. 37). But even if one were right in insisting that the use in question is only a pretended use, one could not take as *fictional* a context in which the name is assumed to refer to an abstract artifact. For in the scope of the fiction there is no reference to such an individual. As I said in Chapter 3, I share with fictional creationists the idea that the individual in question comes into existence *later*, when the scope of the fiction is abandoned and the fiction is regarded from the outside. Not surprisingly, in order to maintain that also in a fictional context a certain name refers to an abstract artifact, Salmon has to weaken the creationist position he is however forced to defend *qua* abstractionist [cf. (ibid.: 301 n. 43)]. In evaluating the same cases, Bonomi seems to adopt an in-between position. On the one hand, he maintains that the "in the story" locution works as a context-shifting intensional operator, hence as an operator that shifts not only the circumstance of evaluation but also the meaning of the embedded sentence. But, on the other hand, he also admits that a sentence may be about an abstract character both when uttered in a real and when taken as uttered in a fictional context. Certainly, however, for him this occurs when the sentence is an external metafictional sentence. Moreover, when this sentence is taken as uttered in a fictional context, for him the abstract character is referred to *qua* concrete individual. Hence, when this very same sentence is uttered in a real context, one may say that it undergoes the following, further, contextual meaning-determining shift: from being about a character-*qua*-concrete individual, it switches to being about what *actually is another entity*, an abstract individual (a character *stricto sensu*, as Bonomi puts it). See Bonomi (1999).

[53] Cf. Kripke (1980: 6–7, 11–2, 44–7). Predelli (1997) precisely treats fictional contexts as Kripke does with possible worlds, that is, as yielding alternative evaluation points for already interpreted sentences.

claiming that the same holds as far as fictional entities are concerned is to put the cart before the horse. Apart from situations such as that presented in (13), we do not begin by having a fictional individual *of* which we in *our* language imagine certain non-actual situations (allegedly, those situations in which *it* is a concrete entity and does things that concrete entities do), as we do with the above-mentioned real individuals. Instead, the reverse applies. By playing existentially creative make-believe games, we start by imaginatively displacing ourselves into a non-actual imaginary "world" in which some entities different from the actual ones exist and are named *there*. It is only then, moreover, that we may come back to the actual world by constructing *ficta* as individuals which inhabit, *qua abstracta*, this world and are named *here*, even with the same names. As a result, both before and after that construction, when evaluated in our world a sentence having a certain name cannot retain the same meaning it had when evaluated in that imaginary "world," where that name is used for an "individual" existing only there.

At this point, defenders of the idea that internal metafictional sentences commit us to fictional entities in their *de re* reading might simply try to reject the idea that there is an equivalence between a *de re* reading of an internal metafictional sentence and the embedded sentence when it is taken as uttered in a fictional context. They might say: if the consideration of the embedded sentence as uttered in a fictional context makes that sentence undergo a shift in meaning in that it becomes about an imaginary "individual" designated in that context, then just ignore it. They might go on to say that we should keep to the *de re* reading of the internal metafictional sentence. Quite simply, in this reading that very sentence is true iff the actual designation of its embedded singular term, *taken as uttered precisely in the very same context as the one affecting the sentence as a whole*, in the "world" of the fiction possesses the property designated by the embedded predicate in such a "world."

But this approach is no more successful. First of all, if the relevant embedded singular term is a description then in all cases of sentences such as (11), even if one such sentence is not taken to be uttered in a fictional context (with its meaning thereby fixed by that context), the description involved retains no actual denotation. So, there is no fictional individual for that description to be really about in the *de re* reading of the internal metafictional sentence (11′) that the sentence (11) is allegedly tantamount to.[54] More importantly, even if we keep to the case in which the relevant embedded term is a proper name, this name does not refer directly to any fictional individual. If the relevant internal metafictional sentence were

[54] Yet see n. 43 for a possible way to handle this problem.

taken in its *de re* reading, this would mean that the actual direct designation of that term would possess in the "world" of the fiction, the circumstance relevant for the evaluation of the sentence embedded in such a sentence, the property designated by the embedded predicate in that "world." Now, let us refrain from considering that embedded sentence as uttered within a fictional context with the specific meaning that such a context determines for it. It nonetheless remains true that the "world" of the fiction may contain *actual* direct designations of proper names only when these are the actual concrete (or sometimes even the actual abstract) individuals that are appealed to by the corresponding existentially *conservative* make-believe game. This is because one such "world" remains the imaginary circumstance mobilized by one such game. In all such cases, then, one such individual may be an actual direct designation for the name in question such that, in the "world" of the fiction, *that individual* possesses a certain property. For, since that "world" is postulated via that existentially conservative game, it may well contain the actual (concrete or abstract) individuals *of* which the game pretends something. So, in all such cases one may envisage a true *de re* reading for an internal metafictional sentence. However, in all the remaining cases there is *no* fictional individual, no abstract entity which is an actual direct designation for the name in question such that in the imaginary "world" of the fiction, *that very individual* possesses a certain property. Insofar as that "world" is mobilized by an existentially *creative* make-believe game, what possesses that property in that "world" is not one such fictional individual but, rather, the concrete "individual" which is taken as existing *just* in that "world" because outside that "world," there is no such individual at all.

Undoubtedly, this problem confronted those who believe not only that internal metafictional sentences in their *de re* reading are about fictional individuals, but also that those individuals are abstract entities. For if one holds that *ficta* are straightforwardly *concrete* entities, then it may well be the case that a sentence read *de re* is about one such entity. In such a case, the sentence will say *of* that very concrete entity that in the "world" of the fiction, *it* possesses the property designated by the embedded predicate in that "world."

This is what possibilists with regard to *ficta* maintain. According to a possibilist approach, *ficta* are concrete entities that do not actually exist although they might have existed—they are unactualized *possibilia*. In this perspective, the fact that a "world" of the fiction is mobilized by an existentially creative make-believe game is not an obstacle to holding that there is a *bona fide* true *de re* reading of an internal metafictional sentence. For the object existing in that "world" is precisely the possible object which that sentence in its *de re* reading is allegedly about.

Technically speaking, there is no problem with this realist approach.[55] Yet, as we already know from Chapter 1, it raises various metaphysical problems. First, there is a problem of indeterminacy: which of the indefinitely many *possibilia* having the features ascribed to an individual existing within a certain existentially creative make-believe game is *that* individual? And even if this problem might in some way be solved,[56] why should that individual be a *possible* entity given that it may well contain contradictory features and perhaps also be incomplete—as testified to by the fact that it does not inhabit a full-fledged possible world but a mere imaginary "world?"[57]

At this point, antirealists may be content with this failure to provide a convincing *de re* reading for internal metafictional sentences since they can retain their *de dicto* reading of such sentences, which admittedly is noncommittal. An internal metafictional sentence in its *de dicto* reading is true iff the designation(s) that the *actually empty* singular term(s) of its embedded sentence

[55] One must simply be careful as regards the interpretation of the particular quantifier when taking a wide scope in the quantified sentence entailed by the *de re* reading of the internal metafictional sentence. On the one hand, if we believe that possible worlds have a fixed domain of *possibilia*, which simply exist in unactual possible worlds, then we have to give a non-existential interpretation of the quantifier. On the other hand, if we believe that possible worlds have a variable domain of *possibilia*, each existing in its own possible world, we may well take the quantifier in its existential sense as simply indicating existence in some world or other. On this, see also chapter 1, n. 7.

[56] Either by finding, or stipulating, an individual essence for each possible fictional individual or by endorsing Modal Realism, hence by defending the idea that each fictional individual is a class of similar counterparts bound to its own possible world. Cf. Chapter 1, especially n. 29.

[57] Theoretically speaking, as far as *ficta* are concerned one is not forced to adhere to possibilist concretism; in appealing to one-one set-correlates, Meinongian concretism is another option. In this respect, Parsons' *de re* reading of an internal metafictional sentence—see his (1980: 55, 181)—may be interpreted precisely as involving a Meinongian *concretum*. Yet metaphysically speaking this approach is no more successful. As I hinted at in Chapter 1, it is hard to understand how a one-one set-correlate can really be a concrete entity, as some neo-Meinongians claim. See Chapter 1, n. 83. Of course, one may also invoke a *de re* reading of internal metafictional sentences by relying on a Meinongian *non* set-theoretical concretist conception of *ficta*. See Priest (2005: 117–8). But this conception risks bringing us back to the problem discussed in Chapter 1, namely how to avoid assigning a generative power to thought. On the one hand, for Priest a *fictum* seems to be there even before its author conceives of it. As he says, the author is simply the first to imagine it. On the other hand, since in Priest's account a *fictum* is not described as a set-theoretical entity, it is hard to see how the *fictum* can be already there in order for it to be imagined. In fact, it is Priest's view that the author can really imagine the *fictum* only after having completed a certain story. Cf. (ibid.: 119–20). Yet this idea naturally suggests a creationist framework. To avoid this risk, Priest slides back into a possibilist interpretation of *ficta* (or, better, into an interpretation of *ficta* as entities that exist either in merely possible or even in *impossible* worlds). Cf. (ibid.: 136).

possess(es) *in the "world" of the fiction* has (have) in such a "world" the property designated by the embedded predicate in that "world."

Now, if one wants to be an antirealist, the above truth conditions well suit the case in which the relevant embedded singular term is an actually non-denoting definite description, such as the above "the pipe-smoking detective befriending a doctor named 'Watson'."[58] In such a case an antirealist is entitled to say that a sentence such as (11') embedding that description is true iff the denotation of that description *in the "world" of Doyle's fictions*, an individual existing only in such an imaginary "world," possesses in that "world" the property of helping the police to solve many baffling crimes. But suppose that the internal metafictional sentence embeds a directly referential expression such as an allegedly empty proper name. If the theory of direct reference is correct, then if that term in its actual use is empty, it is necessarily so.[59] As a consequence, it would have no designation even in the world of the fiction. Hence, the embedded sentence is true in *no* unactual circumstance. Yet the internal metafictional sentence embedding it is allegedly true iff that sentence is true in one such circumstance. So, how can that internal metafictional sentence ever be true in its *de dicto* reading? For example, how can the *de dicto* read sentence:

(2DD) In *Ulysses*, Mr. Bloom eats with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls

where the proper name "Mr. Bloom" occurs embedded, ever be true?

Antirealists might surely claim that empty names, or at least empty names occurring in parafictional sentences as well as in (internal) metafictional sentences, are synonymous with definite descriptions.[60]

I do not want to address here the general topic of empty names. Nevertheless, I want to underline once again that the antirealist endorsement of descriptivism as far as proper names in fiction are concerned sounds not only *ad hoc* in its lack of further arguments, but also counterproductive. It is *ad hoc* not only because in general descriptivism would have to be a viable option, if any, for *any* proper name—not just for those used in parafictional or metafictional sentences—but also because it would be rather odd if expressions that in their conniving use are employed as referentially direct

[58] Again, things would be complicated if the description in question contained a name make-believedly referring to a concrete "individual." For, if the theory of direct reference is correct, that name is a rigid non-designator; hence, that description has not only no actual, but also no unactual, denotation. See immediately below.

[59] Cf. Salmon (1998: 287, 291–2).

[60] For this option, see, for example, Currie (1990: 158–62).

expressions turned out to be camouflaged descriptions when used nonconnivingly.[61] But it is also counterproductive for, as already seen above, it is also possible to find *actually committal* descriptive candidates which are synonymous with proper names used in fiction. Think of descriptions of the kind "the result of seeing the set of properties $\{P,Q,R \ldots\}$ as make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to those properties are instantiated by an individual".

5.2 The Pretense-Intensionalist Approach to Ficta

In order to account in an eliminative way for parafictional, hence internal metafictional, sentences, there is a more appealing alternative for antirealists than endorsing eliminative intensionalism together with descriptivism. This alternative attempts to provide an antirealist account of both names and definite descriptions, taken however as different kinds of expressions. It combines eliminative intensionalism with the pretense approach to fictional sentences. In fact, it resorts to the idea that a fictional sentence is originally taken as uttered in a fictional context, namely in the context imbued with pretense. Let me therefore call this antirealist alternative the *pretense-intensionalist* approach.[62] As we already know, when taken as uttered in such a context, a fictional sentence is fictionally true iff the designation of its singular term *when so uttered* possesses in the imaginary "world" determined by that context the property designated by the predicative term in that world. These fictional truth conditions of the fictional sentence are paired by antirealists with the real truth conditions of the internal metafictional sentence not in its *de re* but, instead, in its *de dicto* reading. As we will see, this equivalence is intended to cover both the case in which the fictional sentence contains a definite description and that where it contains a directly referential expression such as a proper name. Let us see this more in detail.

First of all, in this theoretical alternative antirealists start from fictional sentences. When used connivingly, fictional sentences have fictional truth conditions: they are fictionally true iff things stand in a certain way in the imaginary "world" determined by the fictional context of utterance mobilized by such a use. Certainly, if a fictional sentence contains a definite description, as far as its fictional truth conditions are concerned this reference to its fictional context of utterance may make no difference; for its truthconditional

[61] On the fact that names in fiction are not disguised definite descriptions, see Napoli (2000: 200). According to Napoli, however, the reason is that such names are not genuinely empty since they directly refer to something within the scope of the fiction (according to him, genuinely empty names are indeed disguised descriptions).

[62] See originally Evans (1980) and above all Walton (1973), (1990). On its antirealist import, cf. Mulligan (1999: 64).

contribution to the sentence in which it figures may well remain the same. Whether or not it is taken as uttered in a fictional context, a fictional sentence of the form "the F is G" is fictionally true iff in a certain imaginary "world" (possibly determined by its fictional context of utterance) there is just one *F*, and that individual is *G*.[63] But suppose that the sentence contains a directly referential expression such as a proper name and, moreover, that such a name designates no actual individual. In order for that sentence to be ascribed fictional truth conditions, it *has to* be taken as uttered in a fictional context. For only when taken as uttered in such a context can that name be seen as having a (direct) designation. Hence, that sentence is fictionally true iff in the imaginary "world" determined by that context, that (direct) "designation" has the property designated by the predicative term of the sentence.

In addition, antirealists may well admit here that the very same sentences may also be used nonconnivingly so that they also have real truth conditions. Or, at least, they may hold that by having fictional truth conditions in their conniving use, these sentences also obtain real truth conditions.[64] Yet, what in this antirealist framework does a fictional sentence having real truth conditions consist in? The idea is extremely simple: a fictional sentence is really true iff it is correctly attributed truth within the pretense; in a nutshell, iff when mock-asserted it is fictionally true. Suppose that when connivingly used, that is when employed in a make-believe game, a certain sentence is correctly attributed truth in that game. For instance, imagine that when engaged in the storytelling practice originally tokened by Joyce while writing *Ulysses*, one utters both (2) and (3):

(2) Mr. Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls

(3) Mr. Leopold Bloom is a bachelor.

Unlike (3), (2) is true in that practice. For this is how things stand in the imaginary "world" determined by the context of its utterance, the imaginary "world" in which a concrete "individual" named "Mr. Leopold Bloom"

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[63] Once more, this cautionary form of expression depends on the fact that no such constancy of meaning holds for descriptions containing proper names having reference only in fiction. Take, for instance, "Holmes's closest friend," denoting an imaginary "individual" in the "world" of Conan Doyle's fictions through the fact that its constituent name "Holmes" refers in that "world" to another imaginary "individual;" that description denotes nobody in reality where that name designates nothing.

[64] Walton inclines toward the latter hypothesis: cf. (1990: 399), (2000: 75 and n. 53) but would also admit the former: see, for example, (2000: 93).

exists and enjoys precisely the meal in question. Yet for these antirealists this is tantamount to saying that the sentence is really true, is true in the real world.[65]

At this point, these antirealists are ready to endorse the equivalence between the fictional sentence and its internal metafictional paraphrase read *de dicto*. They claim that the latter sentence is really true when the former sentence is such, that is when it is fictionally true. As a result, an internal metafictional sentence is (really) true iff its embedded sentence, that is the fictional sentence, when taken as uttered in a fictional context is true in the imaginary "world" determined by such a context.[66]

I think however that there are problems in holding that a fictional sentence is really true iff when mock-asserted it is fictionally true. We can take as granted that its fictional truth is a *necessary* condition of its real truth; yet I doubt that it is also a *sufficient* condition for such a truth. Let me explain why.

I have no doubts as to the right-to-left direction of the above equivalence: being fictionally true when mock-asserted is definitely a necessary condition for such a sentence to be really true. All the game situations whose players engage in the same pretense as the original player of the game (possibly, a writer) make those players utter fictional truths.[67] Furthermore, the original player of the game utters (or at any event generates)[68] those very same fictional truths by stipulation since by mock-asserting anything within that game, he or she *eo ipso* make-believedly speaks truly.[69] Now, it may be the case that there are no further participants in a certain make-believe game pretending the same as its original player. Yet there must be at least such an original player in order for the relevant fictional truths to obtain. Now, if there were no such truths, there could hardly be the corresponding real

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[65] Cf. Crimmins (1998: 2–8). For a more articulated version of this idea, cf. Walton (1990: 400).

[66] According to Walton, there is an equivalence between the fictional sentence and the internal metafictional sentence embedding it; yet the former sentence is "primary" (that is, we have to start from the real truth conditions of such a sentence). Cf. Walton (1990: 401–2). A similar truthconditional treatment of internal metafictional sentences is given by Adams-Fuller-Stecker (1997).

[67] If I understand Walton correctly, in order for participants in further instances of a make-believe game to engage in the same kind of pretense as the players of its original instances, those participants have to comply with the prescriptions to imagine that are given in such an instance. Roughly, what I call further instances of a make-believe game are for Walton different make-believe games that are *authorized* by the original make-believe game in that they rely on the same props as the original game. Cf. Walton (1990: 51).

[68] I add this clause in order to take into account that, as we have seen above, there are not only explicit, but also *implicit*, fictional truths.

[69] In this sense, as far as the original players of a make-believe game are concerned there is no difference between making believe and making up a story, as Deutsch (2000) in contrast maintains. One makes up a story insofar as what one makes believe is *eo ipso* a fictional truth.

truths either. How could it really be the case that, say, Pinocchio is a piece of wood if nobody, ultimately not even Collodi, had make-believedly spoken truly by mock-asserting the corresponding sentence?

But there are problems with the left-to-right direction since being fictionally true when mock-asserted is hardly a sufficient condition for a sentence to be really true. Saying that a sentence is fictionally true when mock-asserted does not *eo ipso* mean that the sentence is also really true. Certainly, to assign it a real truth value we have to step outside pretense, hence also outside the very practice itself of make-believedly speaking truly. Yet assigning a sentence a fictional truth value when mock-asserted has no impact at all on whether that sentence also has a real truth value. We can express it in this way: the fact that a sentence is true *in* an imaginary "world," with the meaning it has *there*, is of no significance at all with respect to whether that very sentence is also true *in* the actual world, with the meaning it has *here*.

We can clearly see what the problem is if we consider the admittedly analogous case of dreams.[70] In a dream, the dreaming subject utters certain sentences. At least some of these oneirically uttered sentences are definitely also oneirically true: in the dream-like "world" determined by the oneiric context, things stand as they are oneirically presented by these sentences. But the fact that these sentences are oneirically true when oneirically uttered does not *eo ipso* mean that they are really true. For instance, if in the oneiric context the dreamer gives the name "Dreary" to something facing him or her which does not stop screaming, the sentence:

(14) Dreary continuously screams

is oneirically true. Yet why should this sentence thereby be also really true? Why should the sentence acquire a real truth value for the fact that it is true when uttered in a context *ex hypothesi* segregated from reality? Suppose the dream-like "world" in question were a genuine possible world.[71] Well, the fact that people in that world use terms, hence sentences containing them, with a certain meaning definitely means those sentences can be evaluated *in that* world; but it is of no significance at all for the evaluation of those sentences *in ours*.

Now, if this is the case with oneiric truths, the same will apply to fictional ones. As I already suggested in Chapter 2, apart from its (possible)

[70] Walton has precisely maintained that dream sentences have to be treated in the same way as fictional sentences. Cf. Walton (1990: 43–50).

[71] Which it hardly is, for a dream-like "world" may well be as contradictory and perhaps also incomplete as an imaginary "world" is.

intersubjectivity, a storytelling practice of make-believe does not substantially differ from oneiric or, at least, delusory processes. In both cases, what happens is that by exercising their imagination, subjects put themselves—either in a state of awareness, as in the storytelling practice, or unawareness, as in the delusory processes—in a context different from the one in which they ordinarily utter sentences.

Thus, it is not the case that an internal metafictional sentence in its *de dicto* reading is true iff its embedded sentence, when taken as uttered in a fictional context, is true in the imaginary "world" determined by that context. The fact that the embedded sentence, when endowed with a meaning in a fictional context, is true in the "world" determined by that context, does not make the internal metafictional sentence, with its *actual* meaning, true in our world. This would have been immediately clear if we had appealed to so-called fictional predicates. If they existed,[72] fictional predicates would be predicates which are endowed with meaning only in a fictional context, so that they would designate a property in the imaginary "world" determined by that context but would obviously not do so in the actual world.[73] A fictional sentence containing one such predicate would therefore be fictionally true iff in the imaginary "world" of the pretense, the thing there designated by its singular term possessed the "property" which its predicate designates in that world as the meaning it received in the fictional context determining that "world." Yet the corresponding internal metafictional sentence cannot be actually true for the trivial reason that it actually means nothing at all. For example, suppose one mock-asserted the sentence:

(15) Mum carulizes elatically

in a "Carnapian" make-believe game where one pretended that the predicate "_carulizes elatically" designated something as the meaning it make-believedly possessed whereas in actual fact that predicate, as Carnap taught us, has no meaning and hence no designation at all. Now, (15) would be fictionally true iff in the imaginary "world" of the "Carnapian" fiction, the *designatum* of "Mum" in the fictional context determining that "world" had the "property" there designated by the predicate "_carulizes elatically" as the meaning this predicate had in that world. Yet the sentence:

(16) In the "Carnapian" story, Mum carulizes elatically

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[72] As I am inclined to doubt: see Chapter 1.

[73] As I said in Chapter 3, for the purposes of this book I equate concepts as meanings of predicates with properties as *designata* of such terms. Yet what I say here would still apply even if the meaning of a predicate did not coincide with the property it designates.

is simply meaningless, regardless of whether its embedded sentence, namely (15), when taken to be uttered in the fictional context of that story is supposed to have a meaning.

It seems to me, then, that the pretense-intensionalist approach to internal metafictional sentences fails to achieve its eliminative purpose. For it does not provide the right truthconditional account for those sentences.

There is however a *weaker* version of the pretense-intensionalist approach to internal metafictional sentences.[74] What I can now label the *strong* version of the pretense-intensionalist approach has in fact an independent drawback. According to the strong version of the pretense-intensionalist approach, an internal metafictional sentence is really true iff its embedded sentence when taken as fictionally uttered is fictionally true. In this version, the locution "in the story S" taken as an intensional operator is not only a circumstance-shifting but also a context-shifting operator. For, as I have just said, it is not only the case that the internal metafictional sentence is true in the actual world iff its embedded sentence is true in a *shifted circumstance of evaluation*, the imaginary "world" of the fiction. Any intensional operator is circumstance-shifting in this sense. Take for instance a modal operator such as "possibly:" a sentence such as "possibly, p" is true in the actual world iff its embedded sentence "p" is true in some possible unactual world. Yet according to the strong version of the pretense-intensionalist approach, the locution "in the story S" is also such that it shifts the context of utterance of the sentence it embeds: whereas the whole internal metafictional sentence is uttered in (a fragment of) the actual world, the embedded sentence is taken as uttered in a fictional context which does not belong to the actual world. But, say the defenders of the weak version of the pretense-intensionalist approach, accepting that there are not only circumstance-shifting but also context-shifting operators is problematic. For example, as far as indexical expressions are concerned, an intensional operator may well induce a circumstance-shift, but definitely not a context-shift, for the sentence it operates upon. As David Kaplan maintains, in the case of indexicals "no operator can control . . . the indexicals within its scope, because they will simply leap out of its scope to the front of the operator" (1989a: 510). Let us take an example with a fictional sentence containing an indexical. As is well known, the *incipit* of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* is:

(17) For a long time I used to go to bed early

in which, within the fictional context mobilized by Proust's make-believe game, the first person refers to the concrete "individual" narrating the events

[74] Mainly defended by Recanati (2000).

that constitute the imaginary "world" of Proust's *Recherche*—an imaginary "individual" existing only in that world.[75] Now, if we take that sentence as being used also nonconnivingly, it will have not only fictional, but also real, truth conditions. In an intensionalist approach, we might be prepared to say that in such a use the sentence says the same as:

(17′) In *In Search of Lost Time*, for a long time I used to go to bed early.

However, this equivalence clearly does not work. For, supposing that (17′) is uttered by me, what it says is that the real utterer of "I" in (17'), namely myself, is such that in the imaginary "world" of Proust's *Recherche* he used to go to bed early for a long time. This definitely is false, for such a "world," whatever it is, definitely does not contain *me* (as having certain properties there). But we would expect that if (17) had a real truth value, this would be the True, not the False. Yet we are forced to read (17') so precisely because, taken as an intensional operator, the "in the story" locution does not shift the context of utterance for its embedded indexical "I." Thus, it fails to have the *Recherche*'s imaginary "narrator" as a designation in the story for "I," as strong pretense-intensionalists would like.[76]

It may be possible to obviate in some way the problem raised by Kaplan; or it may turn out to be circumscribed to the case of embedded indexicals.[77] Certainly, the thesis that there are context-shifting operators may have further drawbacks.[78] At any event, the weak version of the pretense-intensionalist approach yields a truthconditional account of metafictional sentences that refrains from taking "in the story" prefixes as context-shifting operators. The weak version maintains that also internal metafictional sentences have mere fictional truth conditions. According to the defenders of this version, internal metafictional sentences are taken as uttered within a pretense broader than the one imbuing fictional sentences, the so-called "Meinongian pretense." Within this pretense, one makes believe that in the overall domain of beings there are fictional "individuals" alongside concrete ones. Moreover, in this pretense those fictional "individuals" are described as inhabiting a portion of the

[75] One might question whether the "I" in (17) mock-refers to an imaginary "narrator" rather than referring to Proust himself. Yet the point I want to make is completely independent from this issue.

[76] On this point (as well as on the example), see Bonomi (1994: 14,21).

[77] Yet this may be questioned as well. Bonomi himself has put forward examples where indexicals appear to shift their reference in internal metafictional sentences. Take "In *War and Peace*, Napoleon is arrogant," in which the time signaled by the embedded verb is not the time of the real utterance of that sentence. Cf. Bonomi (1999).

[78] Recanati thinks that this is the case, insofar as such a thesis goes against a "semantically innocent" approach to intensional contexts in general. See Recanati (2000: 250–1).

domain different from the one where the concrete individuals live, namely, the imaginary "world" of the fiction. Unlike these latter individuals, the fictional "individuals" are pretended to be things that, in the overall domain of beings, do not exist. As a result, the "in the story" locution does not work as a context-shifting operator, but simply and normally as a circumstance-shifting operator. However, this operator is nested within the broader scope of the Meinongian pretense because, as far the internal metafictional sentence is concerned, there is actually a shift in the context of utterance. Yet this shift regards that sentence as whole. That sentence is entirely taken as uttered in a fictional context, the context of the Meinongian pretense. So the whole sentence has truth conditions, but only fictional ones: it is fictionally true iff the "world" of the Meinongian pretense is such that in the imaginary sub-"world" of the fiction, the "*designatum*" that the embedded singular term already has in the Meinongian pretense, a certain fictional "individual," possesses the property designated by the embedded predicate.[79]

This position remains eliminativist since it holds that internal metafictional sentences fail to have *real* truth conditions insofar as some terms in them do not yield any *real* truthconditional contribution. With regard to those sentences, this holds true particularly of names that do not refer to concrete actual individuals. A defender of this position indeed maintains that, although *in the scope* of the general Meinongian pretense which fixes the relevant fictional truth conditions for internal metafictional sentences these names refer to fictional "individuals," they *really* refer to *nothing*.

There is a problem, however, with assigning internal metafictional sentences mere fictional truth conditions. Without doubt, a sentence of the form "in the story S, p" may well have fictional truth conditions. Moreover, this is definitely the case when it is uttered within the context of a pretense. Yet this occurs when, within a game of make-believe, one pretends that there is another, typically narrower, game of make-believe in which something is pretended to be the case. Put alternatively, it may happen that what we previously discovered in respect of an external metafictional sentence applies to an internal metafictional sentence: namely, that one such sentence occurs also *within a fiction*. These are typical cases of a play-within-a-play: within a certain fiction, it is make-believedly the case that there is a(nother) fiction where something make-believedly happens. Now, suppose that one such internal metafictional sentence, uttered in the broader game of make-believe, embeds

[79] Cf. Recanati (2000: 214–5, 218–21). In (2000: 206), Recanati admits another possibility, which on the one hand gives an internal metafictional sentence real truth conditions and on the other does not contravene Kaplan's thesis that there are no context-shifting operators. But this possibility consists in endorsing a metalinguistic account of internal metafictional sentences, according to which the embedded material has to be taken as quoted material.

a proper name. In so uttering that sentence, its utterer often pretends, *in the play*, that there is an individual designated by that name which is a fictional "individual" and that that "individual" is such that it is further pretended, *in the play-within-a-play*, that there is a concrete individual engaged in certain actions. For instance, suppose that in playing *Hamlet* someone utters:

(18) In *the Murder of Gonzago*, Gonzago dies

(because, say, the utterer in the play wants to summarize the content of the play within that play, namely *The Murder of Gonzago*). In the play (*Hamlet*), the utterer pretends that there is an individual named "Gonzago" who is a fictional "individual" and that that "individual" is such that it is further pretended in the play-within-a-play (*The Murder of Gonzago*) that there is a so-called concrete individual who dies. So, in these cases one exploits a Meinongian pretense.[80] Hence, the internal metafictional sentence (18) has fictional truth conditions. Yet in a vast majority of cases, we definitely do not use internal metafictional sentences in such a way. In all such cases, we feel that such sentences are really true, not fictionally true, hence that they have real, not fictional, truth conditions. Indeed in all such cases, those sentences are not uttered in a play nesting another play but outside of *any play*.

Let me restate this point in a different and more general form. As we have already seen, fictional sentences may be used not only connivingly, that is as uttered within the pretense, but also *nonconnivingly*, that is as uttered outside the pretense. Now, let us accept that in this latter use, a fictional sentence "p" is equivalent to the corresponding internal metafictional sentence of *degree 1* "in the story S, p." But in order for this equivalence to really hold, this latter sentence must in turn be used nonconnivingly not only with respect to the fiction of degree 1 that it refers to but also *absolutely*, that is with respect to *any fiction*, because it may turn out that such a sentence is used connivingly within *another* fiction of *degree 2*, as in the "play-within-a-play" example. If this is the case, then we must again draw a distinction between the use of the internal metafictional sentence which is nonconniving merely with respect to the fiction of degree 1, so that it is actually a conniving use within a fiction of

[80] I have given here a theoretically neutral account of the situation. *Qua* syncretist, I would hold that in such a case one pretends in the play that there is a fictional individual who arises from the fact that, in the play-within-a-play, it is further pretended that there is a concrete individual doing certain things (among which, having the same name). See also Chapter 3. At any rate, whether theoretically reconstructed or not, this is exactly the typical situation that affects fiction nesting other fictions. For there may even be nested fictions which are metafictional: their protagonists are fictional "individuals" emerging from the nesting fiction. In such a case, one pretends in the play that there is a fictional individual *of* "whom" it is further pretended, in the play-within-a-play, that it does certain things.

degree 2, and its own *genuine* nonconniving use. In this latter use, the internal metafictional sentence of degree 1 will be equivalent to an internal metafictional sentence of degree 2: "in the story S', (it is the case that) in the story S, p." As a consequence, the nonconniving use of the original fictional sentence will be equivalent to this further internal metafictional sentence. Provided, of course, that this sentence is in turn used absolutely nonconnivingly, that is nonconnivingly with respect to any fiction.[81] Take the sentence embedded in (18), namely:

(19) Gonzago dies.

In its nonconniving use, this fictional sentence says the same as the internal metafictional sentence of degree 1 that directly embeds it, that is (18), provided this latter sentence is used *absolutely* nonconnivingly. If this is *not* the case, that is, if this latter sentence is used connivingly within a fiction of a higher degree (as it may turn out if this sentence is uttered in playing *Hamlet*), then both the fictional sentence (19)—in its genuine nonconniving use—and the above internal metafictional sentence of degree 1 (18)—in *its own* genuine nonconniving use—are equivalent to the further internal metafictional sentence of degree 2:

(20) In *Hamlet*, (it is the case that) in *the Murder of Gonzago*, Gonzago dies

in its absolute nonconniving use.[82]

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[81] Of course, we may decide to treat the story-within-a-story *S* as an totally autonomous story; in other words, completely independently of its being nested in another story *S'*. In such a case, one of its fictional sentences "p" may be used nonconnivingly as merely equivalent to the internal metafictional sentence "in S, p" taken as used absolutely nonconnivingly.

[82] For the syncretist, it is clear that an internal metafictional sentence such as (18), taken as used absolutely nonconnivingly (that is, as if *The Murder of Gonzago* were a completely independent story), does not mean the same as when it is used genuinely nonconnivingly; in other words, when it is equivalent to (20) in its absolute nonconniving use. For taken as used absolutely nonconnivingly, (18) is about the fictional individual arising out of the mere storytelling of *The Murder of Gonzago* in order to say that that *fictum* has the property of *dying* internally. Yet taken in its genuine nonconniving use, that sentence is about *another* fictional character arising out of the storytelling of *Hamlet* in order to say that that character has internally the property of *being such that in The Murder of Gonzago, p* (what "*p*" means here depends on whether *The Murder of Gonzago* is a metafictional story or, as is quite probable, a mere fictional story. Let me however pass over these complications). In this respect, a story nesting another story is like a metafictional story such as that described in Chapter 4 in which Oedipus delights in having been created so early in the history of mankind. Both the story nesting another story and that metafictional story concern complex characters, distinct from the characters in the nested story and the fictional story respectively. The Gonzago of *Hamlet* is not

We can therefore continue to say that fictional sentences have both fictional and real truth conditions, depending on whether they are used connivingly or nonconnivingly. Yet we can also say that the same holds also of internal metafictional sentences, depending on whether they are used nonconnivingly either only with respect to the fiction of degree 1 characterized by the fictional sentences or genuinely—or even absolutely, if (as is often the case) they are not further nested in other fictions. In fact, fictional sentences used nonconnivingly ordinarily have the same real truth conditions as the corresponding internal metafictional sentences of degree 1 used absolutely nonconnivingly. As a result, it may well be true that, as weak pretense-intensionalists claim, internal metafictional sentences of degree 1—sentences of the form "in the story S, p," in which "p" is a sentence not containing any further "in the story" prefix—have fictional truth conditions. Yet this holds only when those sentences are nonconnivingly used merely with respect to a fiction of degree 1. As regards, however, the majority of their uses, namely when they are used absolutely nonconnivingly, this is not the case; they then have real truth conditions. So, the weak version of the pretense-intensionalist approach provides a truthconditional account for internal metafictional sentences that, in fact, holds only for a minority of their uses, the conniving uses of those sentences. Nevertheless, those sentences also have genuinely, if not already absolutely, nonconniving uses in which they do have *real* truth conditions. Thus, weak pretense-intensionalists still have to face the problem of how to provide a convincing eliminative truthconditional account of internal metafictional sentences in these latter uses. In other terms, pretense-intensionalists cannot avoid the problem of providing a convincing eliminative truthconditional account of those sentences simply by passing from the strong to the weak version of this approach.[83]

To sum up. We have found no reason to deny that fictional sentences in their nonconniving uses, or the corresponding parafictional sentences, are equivalent to internal metafictional sentences, provided however that the

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the Gonzago of *The Murder of Gonzago*, as likewise the Oedipus of the metafictional story is not the Oedipus of Sophocles' drama. The difference between a nesting and such a metafictional story lies in the pretenses that ground them: in the first case, the *de dicto* pretense that there is a certain fictional character engaged in certain actions; in the second case, the *de re* pretense relative to a certain fictional character that it engages in some (other) actions.

[83] On this criticism, see also my Voltolini (2006b). In (2006), Recanati claims that there is a way to ascribe real truth conditions to internal metafictional sentences containing directly referential expressions; namely, to say that one such sentence is true iff in the relevant story there is an individual referred to by one such expression having the property designated by the embedded predicate. Yet in (2000: 224–5) he refrained from endorsing this account for its descriptivist halo, namely for its providing an internal metafictional sentence with a *generic* real truthconditional content rather than with the singular one it should have, provided that it had any.

latter sentences are also used (genuinely or even absolutely) nonconnivingly. Now, those who are eliminativists with respect to *ficta* claim that this equivalence complies with their *desiderata*. For once the "in the story" locution occurring in the latter sentences is taken as an intensional operator and, moreover, such sentences are taken in their *de dicto* reading, commitment to fictional entities no longer subsists. Yet such a strategy may only work when the relevant embedded singular term is a definite description. So, either eliminativists assume that descriptivism holds in so far as merely apparently non-descriptive singular terms are embedded in internal metafictional sentences, as seen in the previous sub-section, or they are able to show that the intensionalist approach may be supplemented by another approach such as the pretense-theoretic one. However, on the one hand the first option is either *ad hoc* or counterproductive and, on the other, the second option does not work either in its strong or weak version.

4.6 External Metafictional Sentences

Fictional, parafictional, and internal metafictional sentences do not exhaust the range of sentences that allegedly speak of fictional entities. As I said above, there is still another (albeit limited) amount of sentences that are *prima facie* about fictional entities, those that do not, even indirectly, mobilize pieces of fiction: external metafictional sentences.

Without doubt, to segregate external metafictional sentences from the sentences directly or indirectly involving fiction, particularly fictional (and parafictional) ones, is an arbitrary operation. There is indeed nothing to prevent external metafictional sentences from being fictional (or parafictional). As already emphasized in Chapter 1, it may well be the case that there are metafictional fictions where sentences that would ordinarily be taken as external metafictional sentences are directly involved. As stated above,

(6) Apollo is a mythical character

is a typical example of an external metafictional sentence. Yet we could imagine a contemporary metafictional piece on Greek mythical gods containing precisely a sentence such as (6).

In any case, let me suppose for a moment that there really is a separate class of external metafictional sentences. Assuming that this is the case, as I hinted at above these sentences cannot even be tentatively paraphrased in terms of internal metafictional sentences. Let us focus again on the example of (6), forgetting the possibility that (6) occurs in a metafictional fiction and taking it at face value as it is normally used. In such a case, no "in the story"

paraphrase would retain the intuitive truth value of the external metafictional sentence (6) to be paraphrased. Whereas (6) is true, its putative "in the story" paraphrase:

(6′) In the Greek myth, Apollo is a mythical character

is clearly false. As I said above, this is admitted also by intensionalists.[84] In the intensionalist approach, (6') would be true iff its embedded sentence (6) were true in the "world" of the Greek myth. But when evaluated with respect to that "world," (6) is clearly false since in that "world" Apollo is a supernatural, not a mythological, entity.

As I said above, this failure has prompted many realists to find in external metafictional sentences the rampart on which to defend the realist position. I repeat that this perspective seems to me misguided. For it concedes too much to its opponents, namely the fact that internal metafictional sentences (as well as parafictional sentences) do not commit us to *ficta*. This is why in the previous section I tried to show that the antirealist approach to internal metafictional sentences (as well as to parafictional sentences) comes up against various problems.

Certainly, at this point one might suppose that if I have managed to show that parafictional sentences cannot be successfully paraphrased away by an intensionalist approach, most of the argument against adopting eliminativism toward *ficta* has been demonstrated. Yet the failure of the intensionalist approach to internal metafictional sentences does not *eo ipso* rule out the possibility that some further antirealist paraphrase or other can be independently provided for external metafictional sentences. Furthermore, success in this enterprise might convince antirealists to make greater efforts to address noncommittally parafictional as well as internal metafictional sentences. In fact, realists are at least right in holding that our intuitions with respect to external metafictional sentences are committal. But if an antirealist were able to prove that these intuitions are ungrounded, he or she would be even more stimulated to prove the same in respect of parafictional and internal metafictional sentences.

This explains why in this section I oppose the eliminativist approaches that have been adopted with regard to external metafictional sentences. In doing this, I also utilize some of the observations advanced above against the antirealist approaches to internal metafictional sentences.

It must be noted to begin with that external metafictional sentences form a rather heterogeneous group. Let me just give some further

[84] Cf. n. 33.

examples of such sentences with a view to classifying them into different sub-categories:

(21) Peter Pan flies more agilely than Santa Claus

(22) Donald Duck is more loved than Mickey Mouse

(23) Cervantes died some years after Don Quixote

(24) Hamlet is more famous than Prince Charles

(25) Huey Dewey and Louie are still little guys

(26) Oedipus is still the paradigmatic tragic character

(27) My child admires Santa Claus

(28) Jane Austen created Emma Woodhouse

(29) Oscar Wilde killed off Dorian Gray by putting a knife through his heart

(30) King Arthur inspired Robert Wace as well as Walt Disney

(31) The Oedipus of *Oedipus the King* is an aspect of Oedipus itself

(32) The Roland of the *Chanson de Roland* is the same as the Roland of *Orlando Furioso*

(33) Santa Claus is a fictional character

(34) Santa Claus does not exist.

The external metafictional sentences from (21) to (24) can be grouped together. Indeed, if we take them at face value they all involve a comparison: in the first two sentences the comparison is cross-cultural between two *ficta* belonging to quite different cycles and in the last two it is trans-cultural between a fictional and an actual concrete entity. Moreover, (21) and (23) base the comparison they predicate of their respective subjects on features said or implied by the relevant fictions, whereas this is not the case for (22) and (24). We thus have: *interfictional fiction-dependent relational* sentences, such as (21), *interfictional fiction-independent relational* sentences, such as (22),

transfictional fiction-dependent relational sentences, such as (23), *transfictional fiction-independent relational* sentences, such as (24).[85] Yet we can also have both *fiction-dependent* and *fiction-independent interfictional monadic* sentences. (25) is a case of the first and (26) a case of the second kind. For in both, only general characters which are generated through a protracted make-believe practice are apparently thematized, by making reference to features that are mobilized within or outside that practice respectively. Moreover, in predicating a converse-intentional property of their subjects, (22) and (24) resemble (27) in that they allude (at least *prima facie*) to an audience's mental attitudes with respect to *ficta*. Thus, (22), (24) and (27) are either interfictional or transfictional sentences of *psychological ascription*. The group from (28) to (30) may, instead, be ranked under the category of *authorship sentences*. Indeed, all these examples seem to involve some sort of relation between authors (or authored texts) and characters. In turn, (31)–(32) appear to be respectively about the constitutive relations subsisting between characters generated out of different parts of a protracted make-believe practice and between one such character and the general character corresponding to that practice as a whole. Following what I said in chapter 4 on this matter, let me take the first as a sentence expressing *transfictional inclusion* and the second as a sentence expressing *transfictional sameness*. General characters appear to be thematized also in (33) and (34). The former apparently contains a categorial predication which accounts for the *prima facie* necessary truth of the latter. Like (6), (33) is indeed a *categorial* sentence whereas (34) is a (negative) *existential* sentence.

Naturally enough, this classification is not exhaustive—different ways of carving out sub-categories of external metafictional sentences are quite possible. But now the question which interests me is this: do we really have to take external metafictional sentences at face value, as committing us to fictional entities, or are there ways to paraphrase them in such a way that there remains no impression of a commitment on their part to fictional entities?

Let me first of all dispense with a somewhat problematic approach that antirealists tend to try first as regards external metafictional sentences. Let us take for granted that for the above-mentioned reasons these sentences cannot be read as being implicitly prefixed by an "in the story" operator; hence, this "in the story" approach does not allow an eliminativist to appeal to the idea that, once the complex sentence is read *de dicto*, the impression that the now embedded singular term refers to a fictional entity vanishes. Yet why not read those sentences as being implicitly prefixed by *another* intensional operator, so

[85] On this interpretation of (21)–(24), see Castañeda's comment to the effect that "fictional characters can be counted, classified, and compared with real persons. Comparative literature is the result of the attempt to create a professional discipline with such activities" (1985/6: 50).

that even in this case the impression of reference to a fictional entity founders? In such a case, the operator would refer not to a fiction but precisely to the realist conviction that the above impression apparently supports. In other words, why not read external metafictional sentences as being implicitly prefixed by an operator such as "according to the realist conviction"? Once they were so read, the commitment to a fictional entity that an external metafictional sentence "p" appears to possess would be cancelled out. The reason being that that sentence would fill a context initiated precisely by that operator, provided once again that the resulting complex sentence were read *de dicto*. Consequently, that there really are fictional entities would just be the realist belief. Put alternatively, that there really are such entities would ultimately be a fiction. We would thus have fictionalism about fictional characters.[86]

One can correctly maintain that this approach is either *ad hoc*, if addressed only to the issue of the existence of fictional characters, or empty since it may be adopted for any area of discourse.[87] These drawbacks aside, however, I think that this approach merely inherits the problems of the intensionalist approach when addressed to internal metafictional sentences. That is, either this theory implausibly or counterproductively appeals to descriptivism, or, if it accepts that directly referential expressions such as proper names remain such also in external metafictional sentences, then it has to supplement the intensionalist with the pretense-theoretic approach. However, since we have seen that the resulting mixed approach fails with respect to internal metafictional sentences, why should it be more successful as far as external metafictional sentences are concerned?

Fictionalism about fictional characters does not therefore work. Yet, on behalf of eliminativists, one could pursue a different strategy. Appearances notwithstanding, there is no distinction in principle between external metafictional sentences and the sentences directly or indirectly involving fiction. As a result, if the latter can be paraphrased in such a way that their apparent commitment to fictional entities is abolished, so can the former sentences. In fact, there is no reason why external metafictional sentences could not figure within a piece of fiction. As seen above, one can find examples of metafictional fictions whose protagonists are described precisely as fictional characters by sentences such as (6) or (33). These examples are less rare than one may suppose: fictional texts often contain narrative "intrusions" declaring the fictional or, at least, imaginary nature of the "individuals" that the texts contribute to make believe that they exist.[88] If external metafictional sentences

[86] For such a move, see Brock (2002), Philipps (2000).

[87] Cf. Orilia (2002: 178–9 n. 3).

[88] See Pelletier (2003). I have already discussed these examples and their twofold interpretation—conniving and nonconniving—in Chapter 3, n. 31 and Chapter 4, n. 7.

can figure within a text of fiction, then there is no principled reason for differentiating them from the sentences involving fiction. Thus, the eliminativist may insist that if the latter are successfully shown to be noncommittal, the same holds for the former sentences.

As I hinted at above, I agree with eliminativists that there is no reason in principle for differentiating external metafictional sentences from the sentences involving fiction. Yet this is not at all surprising for we have already seen in the previous section that this holds also of internal metafictional sentences: internal metafictional sentences can likewise figure in a fictional text and so be uttered within a game of make-believe. It is now the moment to underline that the right distinction is not that between *kinds* of sentences, those involving (directly or indirectly) fiction and those not involving it. Properly speaking, there is no such distinction: *any* sentence—fictional, parafictional or metafictional—may figure within a piece of fiction, may occur within a certain make-believe game. Rather, the right distinction is between *uses* of sentences—conniving versus (absolutely) nonconniving uses.

As a result, it may well be the case that also external metafictional sentences are used connivingly, within make-believe games. Yet this does not totally rule out their also being used nonconnivingly, outside such games.[89] So once again, it is not doubted that conniving uses of such sentences are noncommittal. The real question is another: given that there are nonconniving uses of such sentences, are they committal or not? In other words, do the real truth conditions that also such sentences possess when they are used nonconnivingly involve fictional entities or not?

That this is the real question is acknowledged by the antirealists themselves when they at least admit that, by being used connivingly, these sentences receive not only fictional, but also real, truth conditions or, put alternatively, that in mock-asserting something, their utterers assert something else. These philosophers say that this is not a problem for antirealism since these real truth conditions do not involve fictional individuals either. Let us look at this in more detail.

According to Walton, external metafictional sentences are uttered within special games of make-believe, games that he labels unofficial. In his opinion, when the imaginary "world" postulated by an audience more or less conforms to the "world" postulated by the writer of a text because the text's

[89] There is a complication here that affects external metafictional sentences which are used connivingly. As regards these sentences, two kinds of nonconniving uses can be envisaged, one in which the sentence says the same as an internal metafictional sentence in its absolutely nonconniving use and another in which the sentence is used nonconnivingly in a straightforward manner. For how to deal with this complication, see the next chapter.

function is that of serving as a prop in the audience's make-believe game, then this game is an *authorized* one.[90] Yet no such conformity may subsist if the principles by means of which the audience "world" is generated are suitably modified. In such a case, the audience's game may well be classified as an *unofficial* one.[91] The consequence is that also external metafictional sentences have fictional truth conditions. As they have the latter, however, they may also have real truth conditions; but these real truth conditions are not committal. This is because to say that one such external metafictional sentence EMS is really true is to say that what is really true is a sentence of the form "One who engages in a pretense of a certain kind [that is, one fictionally asserts EMS] within an unofficial game of make-believe of a certain sort [that is, one in which certain principles of generation are operative] is fictionally speaking truly". Put more simply, this amounts to saying that an external metafictional sentence is really true iff it is fictionally true when mock-asserted, namely iff in the "world" postulated by the relevant unofficial make-believe game things stand as the sentence fictionally says they do.[92]

But if one has to envisage a noncommittal paraphrase of an external metafictional sentence along the above lines, then such a paraphrase does not work for the same reason that an analogous paraphrase did not work as regards parafictional sentences. When used connivingly, hence when taken as uttered in a fictional context, an external metafictional sentence may well be *fictionally* true only if it is correctly attributed truth within the relevant pretense, notably the relevant unofficial make-believe game. Yet such a correct attribution is not sufficient for that sentence to be *really* true when used nonconnivingly. No truth for a sentence *in* a "world" of fiction, so that the sentence is taken as having a certain meaning *in* that "world," can make that sentence true in the real world.

At this point, an eliminativist might simply retort that for nonconniving uses of external metafictional sentences one can simply provide other paraphrases, which are again noncommittal but not pretense-theoretic. This may be so and some such attempts have in fact been made.[93] But there is a constraint that all such attempts have to observe. As we have learned from Kripke, any paraphrase of a given sentence must share with it not only its actual, but also its *possible* truth evaluations: in order for a sentence to say the same as another sentence, these sentences must share their *modal content*, that is, they must obtain the same evaluation at all

[90] Cf. Walton (1990: 51).
[91] Cf. Walton (1990: 406).
[92] Cf. Walton (1990: 409).
[93] See the authors quoted in n. 35.

possible worlds.[94] Now, I claim that that constraint is hardly complied with by these eliminative strategies of paraphrase. Since the above-considered pretense-theoretic approach is by far the most elegant and systematic among all of them, I here focus on the problem of non-compliance with regard to this approach even though it is a general problem for all these strategies.

Take, for instance, (30) in its nonconniving use and its alleged pretense-theoretic paraphrase:

> (30′) One who engages in a pretense of a certain kind [that is one who fictionally asserts (30)] within an unofficial game of make-believe of a certain sort [that is one in which certain principles of generation are operative] is fictionally speaking truly.

Basically, (30′) tells us that a certain fictional truth subsists in virtue of engaging in a pretense of a certain kind. Yet imagine a possible world in which nobody notices the similarity between Geoffrey of Monmouth's original character and those of both Robert Wace and Walt Disney. Nobody would as a result of this engage in that world in the relevant pretense by fictionally asserting (30). Consequently, the fictional truth existing in the real world would not exist there and with respect to the possible world in question (30)'s proposed paraphrase, namely (30'), would be false. Nonetheless, (30) would be true with respect to that world if Geoffrey of Monmouth's King Arthur were also in that world the source for both Robert Wace's and Walt Disney's literary inventions.[95]

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[94] Cf. Kripke (1980: 6–7, 11–2). In (1973), Kripke has made this point precisely as regards external metafictional sentences. To be sure, one may doubt whether modal content and truth conditions of a sentence coincide: cf. Crimmins (1998: 26–7), Richard (2000: 232). Yet it remains that a sentence differing in modal content from another one can hardly be taken as a *paraphrase* of the latter.

[95] On similar criticisms regarding Walton's treatment of other external metafictional sentences, see Crimmins (1998: 34–5). Similar comments can thus be made in respect of other proposals quoted in n. 35, which in their alleged paraphrases of external metafictional sentences appeal to attempts-at-referring [Kroon (1996), (2000)], texts [Leonardi (2003)], works [Adams-Fuller-Stecker (1997)], simple expressions [Napoli (2000)], or even substitutional quantification [Künne (1995)]. In order to see that even the last attempt is affected by this problem, consider a case in which a given character is *arbitrarily* attributed a name in an external metafictional sentence such as (34) (for in the relevant fiction, neither a name nor a description designates the corresponding "individual" existing there). A substitutional paraphrase of this sentence would maintain the *actual* truth of that external metafictional sentence, in that the substitution with that name of the relevant variable in the open formula following the substitutional quantifier in that paraphrase would actually produce a truth. But that paraphrase would no longer retain the *possible* truth of that external metafictional sentence with

Regarding this example, Walton might immediately reply as follows. According to his own analysis of attitudes concerning *ficta*, there is nothing like a genuine inspiration from entities which, if there were any, would have the feature of not existing. Rather, one can only display make-believe inspiration.[96] Thus, with respect to the possible world taken above in consideration, the paraphrase (30') remains true, precisely as the original sentence (30) in its non-conniving use. For, although the pretense in which the mock-assertor of (30) is engaged in the actual world fail to exist in that world, at least Wace's and Disney's type-identical pretended inspirations still exist there.

But note that my reconstruction of the case here refrains from endorsing a particular analysis of what *prima facie* attitudes toward fictitious entities really are. Suppose even that Walton's analysis is correct so that inspiration from a fictional entity is just a certain (admittedly complex) kind of make-believe attitude. Thus, regarding the case of (30), one might accept that Robert Wace's and Walt Disney's pretended inspirations would suffice to make (30) true also with respect to a possible world where only the two men's pretenses existed. Nevertheless, suppose it turned out that (a very plausible conjecture indeed) Walt Disney merely noticed the similarity between his and Geoffrey of Monmouth's work, not between his and Robert Wace's on the one hand and Geoffrey's on the other. In that case, he certainly

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respect to a possible world in which the fiction in question still obtained and yet that very name were used to designate an individual existing in that world. In (2000: 115–6), Kroon appears to be well aware of this "modal content" problem. As far as singular negative existentials such as (34) are concerned, he indeed provides two distinct paraphrases of their modal positive correspondents, that is of sentences of the form "N might have existed," one true and the other false. These paraphrases differ in the scope of the involved particular quantifier: "Possibly, there is an *x* such that (actual) non-pretended referring attempts of the N-kind secure reference to *x* and *x* exists" (true) and "There is an *x* such that (actual) non-pretended referring attempts of the N-kind secure reference to *x* and *x* possibly exists" (false). Whatever the merits of this treatment of the modal singular positive existentials, however, this reply can hardly apply to *simple* singular negative existentials, which involve no modal operator and hence no scope ambiguity. In fact, Kroon addresses the "modal content" problem for simple singular negative existentials in (2004). He holds that in making a mock-assertion through a simple singular negative existential such as (34), one really asserts that attempts to refer using reference determiners fail to refer to any *actual* individual. Therefore, one asserts something which is as necessarily true as a simple singular negative existential such as (34) is supposed to be [cf. (2004: 19–20)]. Yet in saying that "Santa does not exist" and " 'Santa' does not refer" (or any other *lato sensu* metalinguistic paraphrase) do not have the same modal content, one is not relying on the (admittedly controversial) intuition that the former but not the latter sentence is necessarily true; one is simply saying that there is a possible world with respect to which these sentences are differently truth-evaluated. With respect to worlds where no Clausian myth subsisted, the first sentence would be false (or so artifactualists, and also syncretists, would hold) even if the second sentence remained true.

[96] Cf. Walton (1990: Chapter 7).

did not mock-assert any sentence analogous to (30) (such as, say, "King Arthur inspired both Robert Wace and me"). Thus, suppose that actually Walt Disney limited himself to mock-asserting:

(35) King Arthur inspired me

Even more surely, Robert Wace did not mock-assert anything like (30), leaving evident problems of translation aside. It is trivial to say that he could hardly refer to a person, Walt Disney, who lived eight centuries later. What he probably mock-asserted was the French:

(36) Le roi Artus m'a inspiré

Thus, whatever is the pretense actually exploited by Robert Wace and Walt Disney respectively, it is hardly typologically the same as that of the original mock-assertor of (30). The pretense that this latter subject actually exploits has the form (to use again Walton's original symbolism for indicating mock-assertions): *p & q*. Indeed, mock-asserting (30) is equivalent to:

(30″) *King Arthur inspired Robert Wace and King Arthur inspired Walt Disney*.

Disney and Wace on the contrary, while mock-asserting (35) and (36) respectively, exhibit two pretenses whose form is *p* and *q* respectively. For argument's sake, let me accept that whoever mock-asserts only the first conjunct of (30) expresses the same kind of pretense as the one expressed by Robert Wace in mock-asserting (36), and that the same holds true both of whoever mock-asserts the mere second conjunct of (30) and of Walt Disney in mock-asserting (35). Nevertheless, the mock-assertion of two conjuncts (*p & q*) expressed by mock-asserting (30) as a whole not only is patently not type-identical with either mock-assertion (*p*, *q*) expressed by mock-asserting (35) and (36) respectively, but also this mock-assertion is not type-identical with the conjunction of these mock-assertions (*p* & *q*):

(37) *King Arthur inspired Robert Wace* and *King Arthur inspired Walt Disney*.

If this is the case, we are once more in difficulty. Consider a possible world in which only those authors' respective pretended inspirations from Geoffrey of Monmouth, but not the pretense of the original mock-assertor of (30), subsist. As a result we find that, unlike in the real world, in this possible world a certain fictional truth does not subsist. Hence, with respect to

this world (30)'s alleged paraphrase, namely (30′), is false. In contrast, with respect to this world (30) in its nonconniving use is still true, for it allegedly refers to those authors' (type-distinct) pretenses. Therefore, in its nonconniving use (30) can hardly mean what (30′) means.

Thus, the modal content of an external metafictional sentence in its nonconniving use and that of its alleged pretense-theoretic paraphrase are different. Undoubtedly, the fact that a pretense-theoretic paraphrase of an external metafictional sentence in its nonconniving use is inadequate does not entail that no such paraphrase will work. Yet my line of criticism against the pretense-theoretic approach singles out a possible general drawback of the alternative antirealist strategies. In order for a paraphrase to fulfill an eliminative aim, the truth conditions of a paraphrase must involve an ontologically different item unconnected with the item which is *prima facie* invoked by the sentence to be paraphrased—in our case, the existence of a pretense of a certain kind rather than the existence of a certain fictional entity. Now, as we have seen above, in a possible world different from the actual world, things may well be different as far as this allegedly ontologically different item is concerned, so that the truth value of the paraphrase with respect to such a world may differ from its *actual* truth value. Yet this has hardly any impact on the truth value at that world of the sentence to be paraphrased.

Certainly, there is a way to rule out this mismatch in modal content between the paraphrase and the sentence to be paraphrased. Namely, it could be shown *independently* that the ontologically problematic entity allegedly involved by the latter sentence is *nothing but* the unproblematic entity appealed to by the truth conditions of the paraphrase. In that case, despite appearances, not only the actual but also the possible truth-evaluations of the two sentences in question would coincide. Thus, some preliminary ontological work would need to be done showing that discourse about the problematic entity amounts to discourse about the unproblematic entity since these two entities are identical. But in this way, ontological eliminativism gives way to ontological reductionism: in our case, the thesis that there are no such things as *ficta* would give way to the thesis that *ficta* are nothing but certain (other) kinds of entities. To my mind, this abundantly proves that the question of the existence of entities of a certain kind—*ficta* in our case—is not a matter of semantics but rather of ontology. I come back to this point in the last chapter.

7. Mixed Sentences

Let me conclude this chapter with a few words about mixed sentences. Mixed sentences are complex sentences whose members are a parafictional, hence an internal metafictional, sentence and an external metafictional

sentence respectively. One of their typical features is that they present anaphoric links, as in:

(38) Although Sancho Panza is married, he is a literary character.

Now, if in (38)'s first, parafictional, conjunct "Sancho Panza" did not refer to the famous fictional character created by Cervantes, it would be hard to explain how "he" can refer to the same character in its second, external metafictional, conjunct since "he" is anaphorically linked to "Sancho Panza." This is another way to remind us, against defenders of a twofold strategy—noncommittal vs. committal—toward parafictional (hence internal metafictional) and external metafictional sentences respectively, that in their nonconniving uses those conjuncts, the parafictional and the external metafictional sentence, match one another: either both are committal or both are noncommittal. Since as I see it, both are committal, mixed sentences seem to raise no particular problem for realism. Provided that they are a combination of parafictional, hence internal metafictional, and external metafictional sentences in their nonconniving use so that they are also used nonconnivingly, they are about *ficta* as much as their sentential components are. Accordingly, their anaphoric links seem to be referentially unproblematic: in (38), "he" seems to refer to Sancho as surely as "Sancho" does.

However, mixed sentences such as (38) raise a curious problem, which appears to give encouragement to antirealists or at least is something that all realist abstractionists have to face. Suppose one agrees that a fictional character is some kind of abstract entity. Now, if (38) were really about a fictional character, its second conjunct should contain the pronoun "it" for if a fictional character is an abstract entity, it is definitely not a person. Since the second conjunct contains instead the personal pronoun "he," does this not show that that pronoun merely mock-refers to a "person," as it would if it were used connivingly in a fictional sentence? Given, moreover, that "he" is anaphorically linked in (38) to "Sancho," does not that name also mock-refer to a "person" since, again, it would do so if it were used connivingly in a fictional sentence?[97]

This doubt would be grounded only if there were no other cases in which reference to a thing is made by means of the apparently wrong term. Yet

[97] For this doubt, see Yagisawa (2001: 165). In (1984: 444), Wettstein points out a similar problem, though in the reverse order: granted that a singular term is used connivingly, hence noncommittally, how can a pronoun anaphorically linked to it but occurring in an allegedly nonconnivingly used sentence be used committally?

there are plenty of such cases. Take for instance Gilles Fauconnier's famous example:

(39) Norman Mailer likes to read himself[98]

in which "himself" obviously does not refer to Mailer, as lexicon+syntax would require, but to his works. The point is that in (39) a referential transfer has occurred. Such a transfer makes it the case that a singular term normally designating a certain individual happens to designate another object, its *extended* referent. In order for such a transfer to take place, there must be a pragmatic function connecting these different objects of reference. Fauconnier remarks that for such a function to operate, the two objects must be linked on the basis of "psychological, cultural or locally pragmatic reasons" (Fauconnier (1985: 3)). In fact, that reference through "himself" to Mailer's works is not accidental. There is a metonymical link connecting an author with his or her works and, thereby, enabling "himself" to shift its reference from Mailer to his works in a context such as (39).

Now, take the imaginary, totally nonexistent, "person" Sancho Panza and the corresponding fictional character Sancho Panza, the individual existing *qua* abstract item. There definitely is an analogous link connecting the two Panzas; it is a link through similarity: the fictional character has many properties internally such that it is make-believedly the case that the imaginary "individual" has them externally. Among these resemblances, they share the same name. So, as regards (38) the situation is the following. In a *conniving* use of the first conjunct of (38), "Sancho Panza" mock-refers to the concrete "person" existing only in the imaginary "world" mock-described by Cervantes. Furthermore, in that use "Sancho Panza" may well initiate an anaphoric chain that might be continued by a conniving use of the personal pronoun "he," that would mock-refer to that "person" as well. Yet, in virtue of the similarity link between the two Panzas—the imaginary "person" and the abstract fictional character—in the second conjunct of (38), by being used *nonconnivingly* "he" shifts from its mock-reference to that imaginary "person" to a real reference to the fictional character that is connected by similarity to that imaginary "person." In a nutshell, the pronoun "he," which in a conniving use is anaphorically linked to that name, in a nonconniving use such as that actually presented by (38) shifts its reference to that character.[99]

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[98] Cf. Fauconnier (1985: 7).

[99] To this account one might object that referential transfer is a pragmatic process that does not affect a sentence's real truth conditions. Yet here I follow Recanati's view of referential transfer as a primary pragmatic process that occurs locally, that is, before the truth conditions of a sentence are (admittedly contextually) computed [cf. Recanati (1993), (2003)].

However, an antirealist might reply that appealing to referential transfer is not enough. For we supposed before that in the first conjunct of (38) "Sancho Panza" is, rather, used *nonconnivingly* to refer to the fictional character, admittedly as a result of a transfer by similarity from the mock-reference to a "person" to a reference to a real reference to a fictional character. Thus, in the second, also nonconnivingly used, conjunct of (38) the pronoun anaphorically linked to "Sancho Panza" would keep its reference to the fictional character. Yet that pronoun should be the inanimate "it," not the masculine "he!" Exactly as it happens with Fauconnier in the following sentence, where the referential transfer from an author to a book he authored occurs in the first conjunct and that transfer is anaphorically preserved through the inanimate pronoun in the second conjunct:

(40) Plato is on the top shelf. It is bound in leather.[100]

Yet, since syncretists also endorse the distinction between external and internal possession of a property by a fictional entity, it may well be the case that nonconniving uses of (38) poses no genuine problem for them. This is because they may put in question one of the premises leading to the problem, namely that a personal pronoun such as "he" cannot refer to a fictional abstract entity. In fact, although it is true that Sancho Panza is not a person *externally*, it is also true that it is a person *internally*. As a result, it is not at all unwarranted that a personal pronoun such as "he" be (nonconnivingly) used to refer to such a character.

[100] Cf. Fauconnier (1985: 5, 7).

Chapter 6

THE SYNCRETISTIC THEORY

1. Synopsis

In this chapter I present the general position defended by the syncretistic theory with respect to all sentences allegedly about fictional entities. The syncretistic theory is noncommittal as far as conniving uses of these sentences are concerned; but it parts company with antirealists when it is a question of nonconniving uses. In particular, it accepts the view that nonconniving uses of fictional sentences—and hence parafictional sentences—are equivalent to internal metafictional sentences in their absolutely nonconniving use. It also holds that this equivalence does not undermine the committal character of these sentences. Finally, the syncretistic theory maintains that, in the use that is the ground for (in the final analysis, erroneously) thinking that external metafictional sentences are a specific kind of sentence—that is their straightforwardly nonconniving use—such sentences are committal, as realists have traditionally asserted.

2. How to be Syncretistic not only in Ontology but also in Semantics

In the previous chapter I raised various objections to the pretense-theoretic approach. It is now time to emphasize that these objections concern only its claim that a treatment in terms of pretense covers *all* uses of sentences allegedly about *ficta*, both those involving fiction (directly or indirectly)—fictional, parafictional, and internal metafictional sentences—and those not involving fiction—external metafictional sentences. The reason for this is that as far as the *conniving* use of all those sentences is concerned, the pretense-theoretic approach is *entirely* correct. The conniving use does not commit us

to fictional entities for although it takes place actually—storytellers, actors, involved audiences as well as involved literary critics engage in it—no actual designation of fictional entities is realized through it. There is only make-believe designation of entities merely existing in the imaginary, in turn absolutely nonexistent, "world" mobilized by the relevant make-believe practice.

Regarding the pretense-theoretic approach, the syncretistic theory is, then, even more conciliatory than it has so far been shown to be. It not only maintains that in yielding one of the basic components of fictional entities, namely make-believe process-types, practices performed in the scope of a pretense play a decisive role in the constitution of fictional entities. It also acknowledges that make-believe practices characterize much of what interests us about fiction. Furthermore, it agrees with the pretense-theoretic approach that these practices are entirely noncommittal. In a possible world in which people were involved in only make-believe practices, there would be absolutely no fictional entities because engaging in such practices means acting as if one were departing from the world one really lives in. (*Just* acting as if for, unlike dreamers, ordinary performers of such practices are able to tell themselves (and others): "it's just make-believe.") So, whatever referential procedures one successfully performed within such practices, they would have no ontological import whatsoever as far as the world one really lives in is concerned.

Nevertheless, the syncretistic theory parts company with the pretense-theoretic approach in that it not only acknowledges that, over and above the conniving use, there is the *nonconniving* use of sentences allegedly about *ficta*, but it also holds that the real truth conditions of those sentences in this different use do involve such entities. We will now see how this works as far as fictional, internal metafictional, and external metafictional sentences (in their nonconniving use) are concerned.

3. Committal Internal Discourse

According to the syncretistic theory, fictional sentences in their nonconniving use have *committal* truth conditions. This is true also of parafictional sentences in general, both of those stipulatively identical with fictional sentences in their nonconniving use, those aiming to yield real explicit truths, and of the remaining parafictional sentences, those aiming to yield real implicit truths. Now we also need to see how this committal truthconditional account squares with the fact that a parafictional sentence is equivalent to an internal metafictional sentence (in its absolutely nonconniving use; from now on, I take this for granted). In the previous chapter, I indeed rejected not this equivalence but its intensionalist interpretation, namely the thesis that a

parafictional sentence is equivalent with an "in the story" sentence which is true iff its embedded sentence is true in the "world" of the story.

To see how this is possible, an alternative analysis of the above equivalence must be provided. In maintaining that a parafictional sentence is equivalent to the corresponding internal metafictional sentence, it has not generally been noted that a locution of the form "in the story S," like similar locutions ("in the fiction F," etc.), is ambiguous between at least two readings owing to the different interpretation of the noun "story" ("fiction," etc.), hence of the name "S" ("F," etc.) occurring in that locution. In one reading, the name "S" mock-designates an *imaginary* "world," the "world" that the story-tale mock-describes. This is the "world" postulated by means of the relevant make-believe practice and inhabited both by actual and by imaginary, typically concrete, individuals. Undoubtedly, this "world" exists within the scope of that make-believe practice, but in fact it does not exist at all and neither do its imaginary "inhabitants." As the reader will recall, moreover, it is only metaphorically a world since, unlike a possible world, it may fail to be consistent. Yet, there is a sense in which that "world" can still be regarded as a *bona fide* world given that it works as a circumstance of evaluation for (fictional) sentences in their conniving use. As stated in the previous chapter, when it is so used a sentence is fictionally true just in case in the imaginary "world" postulated in the relevant make-believe events unfold in the way that sentence mock-says they unfold.

In one sense, therefore, a story is precisely one such "world." In their attempt to supply parafictional sentences with real noncommittal truth conditions by identifying them with internal metafictional sentences, many intensionalists have actually appealed to this "world" for the very reason that it is an point of evaluation. As I tried to show in the previous chapter, this attempt has been unsuccessful.

However, there is another reading of the locution in question according to which the name "S" designates a *set of propositions*, the set corresponding to what pre-theoretically is taken to be the content of a story. This set is made up of *all* the propositions constituting that content, that is both the *explicit* propositions, the ones expressed by parafictional sentences that are explicitly true, and those propositions—definitely greater in number—expressed by parafictional sentences that are implicitly true, the *implicit* propositions. These are the propositions entailed by the explicit propositions.[1]

[1] Clearly, there are different ways in which such an entailment may be understood; see the texts quoted in Chapter 1, n. 43. Whatever way is chosen, it is important that this choice should rule out intuitively irrelevant propositions. To come back to an example dealt with in Chapter 1, the story of Manzoni's *The Betrothed* will have to contain the proposition to the effect that internally Gertrude has sexual intercourse with Egidio, but it will not have to contain the proposition to the effect that internally Gertrude is a chess player.

In another sense, therefore, a story is just one such set.[2] Unlike its imaginary counterpart, the imaginary "world," one such set does exist. *Qua* set, it is an abstract entity, hence a non-spatiotemporally existing item. Yet, like that imaginary counterpart, it should not be taken to be a genuine world, like a possible world. In fact, this set may well contain both a proposition to the effect that a certain *fictum F* is internally *P* and another to the effect that that *fictum* is internally *not-P*, and it may also fail to contain either of these propositions. Literally speaking, this does not make that set violate the constraints, consistency and maximality, which must complied with if something is legitimately to be a world. For, on the one hand, if it contains both the proposition to the effect that *F* is internally *P* and the proposition to the effect that *F* is internally *not-P*, that set does not contain the negations of those propositions. On the other hand, if it fails to contain both of those propositions, it does contain their negations. However, this situation entails that there is a *derivative* sense of the notions of consistency and maximality according to which this set may be regarded as both inconsistent and incomplete. So, to label it a "world" is simply a *façon de parler*. To distinguish it from the other pseudo world we have just considered, namely the imaginary "world" called upon within a certain make-believe game, let me call it a *fictional* "world."

Thus, the locution "in the story S" (as well as its cognate locutions) has different meanings according to the different meanings the noun "story," hence the name "S," may possess. In one reading, "story" means the imaginary "world" postulated by the storyteller; in another, it means the set of propositions that constitute the content of the relevant group of parafictional sentences. In fact, up until now I have tended to use the word "story" precisely in this second reading as meaning the story *content*, a certain set of propositions.[3] Incidentally, these meanings are not the only ones nouns such as "story" ("fiction," etc.) may receive. By "story" ("fiction"), one may also mean the mere collection of fictional sentences, the bunch of sentences that constitute the text which is mobilized in an entire make-believe game. Moreover, one may even mean the very storytelling practice that constitutes that game. I have so far tended to use the word "fiction" precisely in this reading; fiction as what

[2] See Phillips (1999: 274). A similar position on the identity of stories is held by Zalta. According to him, stories possess internally propositions taken as being 0-adic properties of the kind *being such that p*. Cf. (1983: 91), (1988: 124), (2000: 123). See also Reicher (1995: 108–9). Once internal possession is equated with set-membership, Zalta's position comes very close to the position I defend here.

[3] Close to this sense, there is at least another possible interpretation of the "in the story S" locution, deriving from an interpretation of "S" as designating a fictional *work*, namely a syntactical-semantic compound made up of both a (morpho-)syntactically individuated item—a text—and a semantic item—a set of propositions. On fictional works, see the next chapter.

people do in pretending something. Accordingly, locutions such as "in the story S" ("in the fiction F", etc.) may have the resulting different readings.

That the locution "in the story S" (as well as its cognates) has all of these readings is not surprising. Analogous locutions may have similar readings, and perhaps even more. Take for instance a locution of the form "in the book B." The definite description in this locution may single out at least i) a certain physical object; ii) a morphosyntactically individuated linguistic type; and iii) a semantically individuated entity as, respectively, the following sentences show:

(1) In this book there is a patch of oil.

(2) In this book there is a "ç" on page vii.

(3) In this book there is a tension between a realist and an antirealist position.[4]

Now, among all those readings of the noun "story" I will single out the second one, which as I said is the one I have actually privileged so far. For, while stories *qua* imaginary "worlds" typically concern imaginary "individuals"—that is we act as if there were such "worlds" involving such "individuals"—stories *qua* propositional sets involve fictional objects as constituents of their propositional members. Hence, in what follows I utilize stories in this sense in order to provide a truthconditional *committal* account of parafictional as well of internal metafictional sentences.

To begin with, I claim that a parafictional sentence is actually equivalent to an internal metafictional sentence in which, however, its "in the story" locution singles out a certain propositional set rather than (make-believedly) an imaginary "world" since both sentences are true iff a given proposition is in, belongs to, a certain propositional set, the set constituting the content of a story. That proposition is what both sentences explicitly express. Yet the second sentence makes explicit another truthconditional constituent which the first sentence leaves implicit. This is a certain propositional set, which is unarticulated in the first sentence but articulated in the second precisely by the locution of the form "in the story S."[5]

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[4] For similar remarks, see Recanati (2000: 96–7, 100). The meaning of the locution "in this book" occurring in (3) is similar to the one I am appealing to here as regards the second reading of the "in the story" locution.

[5] Properly speaking, one may see a sentence of the form "in the story S, p" as a sentence made up of a term ("S") and a sentence ("p") by means of a functor "in the story." The functor plus the first term yield a sentential operator, "in the story S," which applies to the sentence "p." This account basically goes back to Arthur Prior. Recanati (2000: 30) defends it for

This account holds for both explicit and implicit parafictional sentences: both are true iff the proposition they explicitly express belongs to a certain propositional set. On this basis one can take the fact that some propositions—those which the explicit parafictional sentences explicitly express—entail other propositions—those which the implicit parafictional sentences explicitly express—to be the fact that the fictional "world" in question contains not only the former (entailing) but also the latter (entailed) propositions as its members.

By saying that a certain propositional set figures as an unarticulated constituent of the truth conditions of a parafictional sentence, I mean what is normally meant in these cases: the set occurs in the truth conditions of the parafictional sentence even if no linguistic material in that sentence designates it. Think of the prototypical case of this situation. A certain location (say, Rome) occurs in the truth conditions of a particular token of the sentence:

(4) It is raining

even though nothing in (4) happens to designate that location, namely when this sentence is uttered in a particular context as meaning that (at a certain time) it is raining *in Rome*.[6] In such an utterance, (4) is indeed true iff it is raining in Rome (at a certain time). Moreover, just as a location can be transformed into an articulated truth conditional constituent by expanding a sentence such as (4) through an appropriate locution (for example, "in Rome"), the propositional set appears as an articulated truthconditional constituent in the internal metafictional sentence which is equivalent to a certain parafictional sentence.

Now, seeing the "in the story" locution as articulating a truthconditional constituent unarticulated in the corresponding parafictional sentence enables one *not* to take that locution as an *intensional*, hence as a circumstance-shifting, operator. One might think that the internal metafictional sentence is not a truth function of the sentence it embeds, the parafictional sentence. This

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sentences resulting from the saturation of epistemic contexts (that is, a sentence such as "S believes that p" is treated in the same way as "According to S, p"). I invoke it here because it invites us to put aside a possible-worlds, hence an intensionalist, interpretation of parafictional sentences. This interpretation would be suggested instead by taking those sentences to be equivalent to sentences such as "It is S-fictionally the case that p," in which the locution "that p" would be naturally read as a singular term standing for a proposition.

[6] Cf. notoriously Perry (1986: 138). In point of fact, the location case is not identical to the one we are dealing with here. For the location may well work as an evaluation point for a sentence such as (4)—the expansion of (4) articulating a certain spatial location is true iff (4) itself is true *in Rome* [cf. Recanati (2004: 5–6)]—whereas the propositional set designated by the description "the story S" never works as such.

would lead one to take the internal metafictional sentence as presenting an intensional context since, as far as a complex sentence resulting from filling a genuinely intensional context—for instance "it is possible that p"—and its embedded sentence—"p"—are concerned, the truth value of the former is independent of the truth value of the latter: the first may be true regardless of the truth value of the second. Yet once it is realized that the parafictional sentence is only elliptical for the internal metafictional sentence, it can be seen that the two sentences are such that they always coincide in their truth values! Therefore, the "in the story" locution hardly works as an intensional operator. It does not in fact shift the circumstance of evaluation of the sentence embedded in the internal metafictional sentence, the parafictional sentence. Both the parafictional sentence and the internal metafictional sentence are primarily evaluated at the same circumstance, that is the actual world.

This is a desirable result because it enables us to refrain from taking a fictional "world," admittedly not a genuine world due to its possible inconsistency and incompleteness (in their derivative sense), to be a still *bona fide* world. In other words, the fictional "world" is not a circumstance of evaluation for the sentence embedded in the internal metafictional sentence. In order for a fictional "world" to work as a circumstance of evaluation for such a sentence, the property predicated in that sentence has to be possessed by something *in* that circumstance. Yet, as I repeatedly stress below, fictional individuals possess those properties in the actual world, not in a fictional "world." According to the syncretistic theory, when predicated thus, properties are possessed by *ficta* in the internal way; and internal possession is *actual* possession, not possession in another world, let alone a fictional one.

Furnished with these reflections, let us now see how this truthconditional account of parafictional, hence of internal metafictional, sentences squares with a committal perspective on fictional entities.

I will start with the simplest of these sentences, namely those containing proper names. If we apply to these sentences the truthconditional account provided above, we find that a parafictional sentence of the kind "F is P" where "F" is a proper name (as well as its equivalent internal metafictional sentence) is true iff a given *singular proposition*, namely a proposition made by a certain fictional object *F* designated by "F" and by the property designated by the remaining term of the sentence, the predicate "_ is P," is a member of a certain propositional set, a certain fictional "world." Since the singular proposition mobilized in this truthconditional account is composed (*inter alia*) of a fictional entity, this account clearly commits us to fictional entities.

It is quite evident that this account also commits us to singular propositions. I will not deal here with a general defense of singular propositions, structured items constituted of at least an object and a property. Instead, I confine myself to saying that *if* we accepted such propositions when their

objectual constituents are concrete—or even abstract—individuals, it would be false ontological parsimony to reject those propositions when their objectual constituents are fictional entities. For these propositions are precisely entities of the same kind as the above, that is singular propositions. (Of course, one might reject singular propositions made out of fictional entities if one managed to dispense also with fictional entities. But in the next chapter I try to show why these entities are ontologically indispensable.)[7]

Before proceeding, let us examine in greater detail what such singular propositions consist of. As I have just said, these propositions are ordinarily considered to be not only *compound* entities made up of objects (at least one) and a property but also *structured* entities. A singular proposition is taken to be structured in that its objectual component(s) fill(s) a particular position within it. This may be shown by the following representation of a singular proposition: $<\{a,b, \ldots\}$, *being-P*$>$, where the inner brackets indicate the position that the objectual component(s) has (have) to fill in the singular proposition.[8] Yet, from the perspective of the syncretistic theory, we can see that such a proposition is even more structured than its usual supporters believe. Not only do(es) its objectual component(s) fill a specific position within it; its property component can also be related in two different ways to its objectual component(s), depending on whether it is internally or externally predicated of it (them): let me call these ways W_i and W_e respectively. This structural complication may be represented by specifying not only the position in the singular proposition to be filled by objectual components, but also the order this position assumes with respect to the predicative element in the proposition. Thus, we may see a singular proposition as having either the structure $<\{a,b, \ldots\}$, *being-P*$>$, where the property follows the position filled by the objectual component(s), or the structure $<$*being-P*, $\{a,b, \ldots\}>$, where the property precedes that position, depending on whether the property is internally or externally predicated of that (those) component(s).[9]

Once we have seen in more detail how one such singular proposition is structured, we are able to understand how the truthconditional account of parafictional sentences of the kind "F is P," where "F" is a proper name, is

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[7] For this kind of "false parsimony" argument, see Thomasson (1999: 143). A general defense of singular propositions would involve a careful scrutiny of their nature, in which an ontological reduction of these entities to entities of a different kind—states of affairs made of objects and of modal properties of the kind *being possibly P*—is allowed. As the focus here is on fictional entities, I shall postpone this scrutiny for another time.

[8] Cf. Braun (1993: 462).

[9] For the thesis that sentences may also express singular propositions made by fictional objects and by properties internally predicated of them, see also Zalta (1989).

perfectly compatible with the account I sketched in Chapter 3. I said there that one such sentence is true iff the fictional object designated by "F" possesses internally the property designated by the predicate "_ is P." *Prima facie*, this may seem an altogether different truthconditional account. But to say that a parafictional sentence of the form "F is P" is true iff the fictional object designated by "F" possesses internally the property designated by the predicate "_ is P" *amounts to saying* that that sentence is true iff in a certain propositional set, the relevant fictional "world," there is a singular proposition whose structure is $<\{F\}$, *being-P*$>$. The same obviously holds of the internal metafictional equivalent of such a sentence since the fact that a *fictum F* possesses the property *P* internally and the fact that in a certain propositional set there is the proposition $<\{F\}$, *being-P*$>$ are precisely the same. As I have said above, a property is internally possessed by something in the actual world, not in a fictional "world." In any event, the fact that a *fictum* actually possesses a certain property internally is the same as the fact that, in a certain propositional set there is actually a singular proposition with the above-mentioned structure.

As the syncretistic theory holds that there are no concrete immigrants in fiction (see Chapter 4), it is, moreover, forced to provide such an analysis not only for parafictional sentences containing names such as "Hamlet" and "Holmes," which designate no actual concrete individual, but also for parafictional sentences containing names such as "Denmark" and "London," which elsewhere designate actual concrete individuals, and hence for *all* parafictional sentences, as well as their internal metafictional equivalents, containing names.

So, take:

(5) Hamlet is a prince.

(5) is true iff the *fictum* Hamlet possesses internally the property of *being a prince*, which the predicate "_ is a prince" designates. Yet this is to say that (5)—as well as its internal metafictional equivalent:

(5′) In *Hamlet*, Hamlet is prince

—is true iff in the fictional "world" of *Hamlet*, there is the singular proposition $<\{$Hamlet$\}$, *being-a-prince*$>$. But now take also:

(6) London is inhabited by a cocaine-addicted detective.

(6) is true iff the *fictum* London, the London of the Holmes stories (let me call it "London$_{H}$"), possesses internally the property of *being inhabited by a*

cocaine-addicted detective; that is, (6)—as well as its internal metafictional equivalent:

(6′) In the Holmes stories, London is inhabited by a cocaine-addicted detective

—is also true iff in the fictional "world" of Conan Doyle's stories, there is the singular proposition $<\{\text{London}_H\}$, *being-inhabited-by-a-cocaine-addicted-detective*$>$.

That the fact of a *fictum* actually possessing a certain property internally is the same as the fact of there actually being, in a given set, a certain singular proposition with the above-mentioned structure may clearly be seen if we go back to an example considered in the previous chapter. The truth of the sentence:

(7) In *Orlando Furioso*, Roland goes insane while in the *Chanson de Roland*, he is very wise

does not show that the (general) character Roland is insane *in* the epic poem *Orlando Furioso* but wise *in* the *Chanson de Roland*. If this were the case, *ficta* would possess certain properties *relatively*, that is in certain "worlds" only. But in saying that *ficta* possess those properties internally, the idea is that they possess them *absolutely*. (The general) Roland is internally both insane and very wise. Therefore, what (7) brings out is that the fact that Roland is such internally amounts to the fact that two singular propositions to the effect that Roland is internally insane and that Roland is internally wise, respectively, belong to different propositional sets, the story (the "world") of *Orlando Furioso* and the story (the "world") of the *Chanson de Roland*.

As a consequence, according to this account names directly refer to fictional entities in both parafictional and internal metafictional sentences. Both a parafictional sentence and its internal metafictional equivalent involving a proper name say that the singular proposition which both explicitly express belongs to the propositional set which the second sentence articulates. Now, if both explicitly express such a proposition, namely a structured entity consisting of (at least) an object and a property, then they contain (at least) a directly referential expression designating such an object, that is the name(s) occurring in them.

In Chapter 5, I put forward the hypothesis that even if one were forced to adopt descriptivism with regard to names in fiction, this would not strengthen the eliminativist position. As was seen there, a descriptive candidate for synonymy with a proper name involved in fiction can always be found, which allows that name to have a fictional entity as its genuinely Russellian

denotation. It is sufficient to take any description of the kind "the result of seeing the set of properties $\{P,Q,R \ldots\}$ as make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to those properties are instantiated by an individual."

Nevertheless, I do not think that one is obliged to endorse a descriptive theory of singular terms used to designate fictional entities. As we have just seen, we can adopt a directly referential approach for proper names used in this way. It would indeed be better not to adopt a descriptivist approach as far as genuine singular terms used to designate *ficta* are concerned. This is because, as I repeatedly stressed in Chapter 5, if one generally accepts the view that genuine singular terms directly refer to their *designata*, it is hardly justifiable to claim that they work in a semantically different way when they are used to designate fictional entities. If one is a realist about *ficta*, moreover, then that thesis is even less plausible. Why should a change in ontology—not only from concrete to abstract entities, but also from other kinds of *abstracta* to *ficta* themselves—prompt such a change in semantics?[10]

The thesis that names are directly referential expressions in fiction just as they are elsewhere is maintained by many antirealists.[11] Along with many others, however, I endorse it here from a committal point of view.[12]

Nevertheless, although this nondescriptivist yet fully referential approach to names in fiction yields a simple account of their semantic function, one might still think that it is genuinely problematic given that, one may suppose, it hardly accounts for the *mechanism* of reference. In other words, it does not seem to explain how it is that a proper name becomes tied to a certain fictional individual as its semantic value. Normally, one invokes some kind of causal link between an object and its name. But, since for the

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[10] Compared to what I claimed in Voltolini (1994: 97), I have here changed my position. In that work I thought that, with respect to singular terms used to designate *ficta*, the "analyticity" datum forced one to adopt a descriptivist theory of reference. For I believed that the Kantian idea that a sentence is analytically true iff the meaning of the predicate is contained in the meaning of the subject could be preserved only by saying that the property predicated in a parafictional sentence also figures in the truthconditional contribution which the description that the singular term of that sentence is synonymous with gives to the descriptive paraphrase of that sentence. But this is not true. According to the theory of direct reference, the meaning of a genuine singular term coincides with its referent. According to the syncretistic theory, a *fictum* is *inter alia* constituted by the properties belonging to its base set. As a result, when one such property is predicated of a *fictum* in a parafictional sentence having a genuine singular term referring to that *fictum*, that sentence is analytically true iff that property—the meaning of the predicate—is effectively contained in the *fictum*—the meaning of the subject. Surely, this is only a partial account of the "analyticity" datum. I give a more comprehensive account below.

[11] Cf. Adams-Stecker (1994), Everett (2000), Taylor (2000).

[12] Cf. Predelli (2002), Salmon (1998), Thomasson (1999), Zalta (2000), (2003).

syncretist a *fictum* is an abstract entity, there is definitely no causal link between a name and the fictional individual standing at the origin of the relevant referential chain for that name. Nor can there be.

Some abstractionists maintain that a causally indirect link between a name and the *fictum* it directly refers to can always be found. Undoubtedly, on behalf of the syncretistic theory one may suspect that this conviction is wrong since abstractionists rely on possibly inadequate mediators: texts or, even better, storytelling acts.[13] These mediators are possibly inadequate because, as was seen in Chapter 3, the fact that a text or a storytelling practice exists does not yet entail that the corresponding *fictum* also exists. Yet the failure of these alleged mediators is not problematic. We can surely rely on a description of the above-mentioned form, "the result of seeing the set of properties {*P*,*Q*,*R* . . .} as make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to those properties are instantiated by an individual," in the context of a directly referential approach. The syncretist may say that such a description merely *fixes* the reference of any genuine singular term used to designate a fictional individual. Indeed, regardless of whether descriptivism is correct or not, such a description definitely has a certain fictional entity as its Russellian *denotatum*. Hence, it can be used to fix the reference of a certain nondescriptive singular term, such as a proper name, to that very object. It thus supplies that term with that object as its semantic value, precisely as the theory of direct reference predicts.[14]

However, the fact that proper names directly refer to *ficta* in parafictional sentences, hence also in internal metafictional sentences, does not mean than every directly referential expression does the same. Indexicals are unable to. Clearly, in a conniving use of a sentence, an indexical may well be employed to refer directly to an "individual" existing only in the imaginary "world" mobilized by the make-believe game corresponding to that use. In the example we already looked at in the previous chapter—there (17) and here renumbered:

(8) For a long time I used to go to bed early

"I" fictionally refers to the concrete "individual" narrating the events in the imaginary "world" of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. Yet there is no possibility that the fictional (and abstract) individual corresponding to that

[13] See Thomasson (1999: Chapter 4) and Zalta (2000: 143–4), (2003) respectively.

[14] Hunter (1981) rightly points out that many descriptive candidates would fail to fix the reference of a genuine singular term to a *fictum*. But those candidates fail for the same reason that would lead them to fail to have a fictional individual as a Russellian denotation: they do not fit either the existence or the uniqueness condition contained in Russell's analysis.

imaginary (and concrete) "narrator" could be referred to by the token of that indexical in:

(8′) In *In Search of Lost Time*, for a long time I used to go to bed early.

The reason is that in (8′) "I" cannot but refer to the utterer of (8′) itself, that is, me. So, if we want to refer to the relevant fictional character, we have to use another internal metafictional sentence (or correspondingly another parafictional one). And it is thus tempting to say that internal metafictional, hence parafictional, sentences do not contain indexicals referring to fictional characters.[15]

So, as far as directly referential expressions are concerned, we have a dual situation: names refer, indexicals do not, to fictional individuals in parafictional and fictional sentences. Now, what about indirectly referential expressions, above all definite descriptions?

To begin with, let me recall from the previous chapter that as far as parafictional sentences containing descriptions are concerned, if one tries to analyze those sentences in strictly Russellian terms, without equating them with internal metafictional sentences, one must expect them to be noncommittal. For on Russell's analysis, what we end up with are false sentences which fail to enable those descriptions to have a *fictum* as their denotation. Furthermore, if we superimpose on Russell's analysis the distinction between internal and external predication, this does not significantly change the situation. Take, for instance:

(9) The winged horse flies

and analyze it *à la* Russell, that is:

(9R) There is only one winged horse, and that individual flies.

Clearly, if we interpret the first predicate contained in the sentence ("_ is a winged horse") as used in *external* predication (as Russell himself would have done, if he had endorsed the "modes of predication" distinction), we obtain a false sentence as the existence condition is not satisfied: there is nothing that is externally a winged horse. But even if we interpret that predicate in *internal* predication, we risk having a false sentence. This is because even if the existence condition is complied with—there definitely is a fictional individual which is internally a winged horse, namely Pegasus, the

[15] For the thesis that indexicals in fiction do not refer to anything outside the fiction itself, see also Corazza-Whitsey (2003).

character in the Greek myth—the uniqueness condition may not be satisfied. Suffice it that, over and above the Greek myth, there is another story in which one of its characters shares with Pegasus the fact that it is internally a winged horse. As a result, the description "the winged horse" does not have an individual as its denotation, or a fictional character either.[16]

Now, when applied to definite descriptions, my general truthconditional account of parafictional sentences (hence of internal metafictional sentences) shares Russell's analysis of descriptions. Moreover, in itself it is also ontologically neutral as far as definite descriptions are concerned. Yet, unlike Russell's account, it saves the intuitive truth value of these sentences, namely the True. Let me explain.

In conformity with the case of a parafictional sentence involving proper names, we must expect that the mode of predication involved in both the parafictional sentence containing a definite description—"the F is G"—and its Russellian paraphrase is the internal one. Hence, when analyzed *à la* Russell, that parafictional sentence is true iff there is just one individual that is internally *F* and that individual is (again internally) *G*. Now, in general for the syncretistic theory a parafictional sentence is true iff, in the relevant fictional "world," there is a certain proposition, the proposition explicitly expressed by that sentence because this accounts for its equivalence to its internal metafictional correspondent. So, in such a case, saying that a parafictional sentence is true iff there is only one individual that is internally *F* and that individual is internally *G* is tantamount to saying that that sentence (or its internal metafictional equivalent) is true iff, in the relevant fictional "world," there is a certain proposition, which this time is no longer a singular but rather a *general* proposition, namely a proposition to the effect that there is only one individual which is internally *F* and that individual is internally *G*.

Since, in the case of (9), that general proposition really does belong to the propositional set constituting the content of the Greek myth, (9) is true as our intuition suggests it is. However, since that general proposition contains only

[16] One might think that, at least in cases where a fictional entity is composed of just one property *P*, a description of the form "the individual which has internally only P" would manage to denote that entity. Such a conviction might be ascribed to Zalta (1983: 47–8); see also Parsons (1980: 118–20) for an analogous view, expressed however in terms of nuclear properties rather than in terms of internal predication (that is, as regarding a description of the form "the individual which has only the nuclear property P"). But there are cases similar to that of Menard to show that even such a description may well denote nothing. For there may be two fictional characters which share their only internal property and yet are distinct in that the make-believe process-types leading to their generation are different. It must, however, be remembered that for Zalta a description successfully denoting a fictional individual such as "the winged horse" must actually be taken to be a shorthand for a description such as "the individual which is externally a winged horse in the Greek myth." See below.

properties but no individuals, the fact that it is a member of a propositional set does not entail that the description in (9), "the winged horse," has a Russellian denotation, in particular a fictional individual. So, even if the syncretist applies Russell's analysis to a parafictional sentence containing a definite description, that sentence may be true regardless of whether that description has a denotation.

Certainly, one might think that the fact that such a proposition belongs to a given propositional set shows that the relevant description has a denotation not in the actual world, but in that set itself. In other words, one might see no difference between my account of parafictional sentences containing definite descriptions and the intensionalist account, which gives a *de dicto* reading to the equivalent internal metafictional sentences. As we already know, this approach counts as eliminativist with respect to *ficta*: the relevant description has *no* actual denotation. Do I therefore share an eliminativist approach as far as those parafictional sentences are concerned?

As I have already observed, however, for the syncretist the propositional set in question is not a *bona fide* world; it is not a circumstance that enables one to evaluate whether properties are possessed by something in it, as the "world of the story" is for the intensionalist. In fact, such a set contains individuals, notably fictional individuals, only *derivatively*, that is, as constituents of singular propositions belonging to the set. As a result, the fact that a general proposition to the effect that there is only one individual which internally *F*-s and that individual internally *G*-s belongs to that set says nothing as to whether a fictional individual having these properties internally (the first moreover uniquely) is also in that set. This is corroborated by the fact that since there is a sense according to which the propositional set in question is incomplete, existence within it of such a general proposition need not be matched by the existence of any corresponding singular proposition to the effect that one such fictional individual is uniquely *F* internally and is also internally *G*, as would on the contrary be the case if the fictional "world" were a *bona fide* world.[17] Yet the fact that the belonging of a general proposition to a certain propositional set says nothing as to

[17] In a possible world, conceived as actualists see it either as a maximal consistent propositional set [cf., for example, Adams (1974)] or as a maximal consistent state of affairs [cf., for example, Plantinga (1974)], the existence of an existentially generalized proposition/state of affairs, at least when this involves an actually exemplified property, entails the existence of a corresponding singular proposition/state of affairs involving that property and a given actual individual. Yet most actualists would also say that when an existentially generalized proposition/state of affairs involves an actually unexemplified property, it entails the existence, in the possible world to which it belongs, of *no* singular proposition/state of affairs involving that property and a given possible individual. Most actualists believe that there are no *possibilia*. See, for example, Adams (1981), Plantinga (1974).

whether a certain fictional individual is (admittedly derivatively) in that set must be taken literally. In this respect, the syncretistic approach to parafictional sentences containing definite descriptions is not eliminativist, as the above intensionalist approach is.

Now, in my truthconditional analysis of sentences such as (9), such a sentence is equivalent to the corresponding internal metafictional sentence:

(10) In the Greek myth, the winged horse flies.

In virtue of this equivalence, unlike Russell I take (9) to be true. But this does not mean that "the winged horse" acquires a denotation. For to say, admittedly *à la* Russell, that (9) is true iff there is just one individual which is internally a winged horse and this individual internally flies *amounts to saying* that (9), like its equivalent (10), is true iff in the fictional "world" of the Greek myth, there is a general proposition to the effect that just one individual is internally a winged horse and that individual internally flies. In itself, as far as fictional entities are concerned, this way of stating the truth conditions of (9) or of (10) is ontologically neutral.[18]

Yet it is clear that, once we recognize an ontological commitment to such entities on the part of a sentence such as:

(11) Pegasus flies

where "Pegasus" directly refers to the fictional character Pegasus, it is hard not to acknowledge that we intend a sentence such as (9)—or (10) for that matter—where the name "Pegasus" is replaced by the description "the winged horse," as having the same commitment. So, in that case we intend (9)–(10) to say *more* than that in the fictional "world" of the Greek myth there is a general proposition to the effect that just one individual is internally a winged horse and that individual internally flies. Moreover, such a reading is required in cases in which we clearly use a definite description to speak of a fictional character because we do not have any other means of designating it (possibly because, in the make-believe game leading to the generation of that character, the storyteller has not provided a name).[19]

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[18] In this respect, I agree with the noncommittal analysis that Parsons gives of a sentence such as "In the story there was a unique chicken that laid the egg that Holmes ate". Cf. (1980: 181).

[19] Note, however, that the fact that no name is made available in that make-believe process does not mean that we cannot bestow a name on the character generated in virtue of (*inter alia*) that process. *Pace* Hunter (1981: 28), it is not the case that by means of a name a storyteller refers to the same character we refer by means of that (or even of another) name. For simply, as I have repeatedly stressed, within that process there is no such character, but at most an imaginary "individual" to which that character corresponds.

To return to an example discussed in Chapter 3, let us take the following sentence:

(12) The innkeeper whose inn looks like a castle was rather upset

where, not having any name for this particular individual, we want to talk about the host in Chapter XVI of *Don Quixote*. How then can we account for the fact that, in such cases at least, sentences such as (9)—as well as (10)—or even (12) have a stronger, committal, reading?

An easy solution would be to say that, in parafictional as well as in internal metafictional sentences, a definite description must not to be analyzed *à la* Russell since it is being used referentially to designate directly the same fictional character that a proper name (possibly) refers to. Hence, one might conclude that (9) and (10) have precisely the same content as (11); that is, they are true iff in the fictional "world" of the Greek myth, there is a singular proposition to the effect that the *fictum* Pegasus internally flies, namely the proposition $<\{\text{Pegasus}\}, \textit{being-a-flyer}>$.

Without doubt, this seems an appealing solution. Is it not the case that in parafictional sentences we tend to use descriptions not in order to denote the individuals, if any, that uniquely satisfy them, but merely to fix our attention on fictional individuals that we might directly name? But this solution sounds *ad hoc*. If we have rejected the idea that names work descriptively in parafictional and in internal metafictional sentences, why should we accept the idea that descriptions work referentially in such sentences? It is, then, better to look for another solution. Such a solution must both accept Russell's treatment of descriptions and account for the idea that in uttering sentences such as (9) and (10), we intend to have the same commitment to a *fictum* as in uttering sentences such as (11).

To begin with, if one wants to exploit Russell's analysis for committal purposes, as regards parafictional sentences one might say that (9) is a case of the same type as:

(13) The US President is a Republican.

In order to maintain the truth of (13) in Russellian terms, we have to take the description "the US President" as elliptical for another appropriately specified description, something like "the US President *in 2005*," which definitely has something—George W. Bush—as its denotation (for otherwise the second conjunct of the paraphrase analyzing (13), hence (13) itself, is obviously false since there have been many different US Presidents).[20] So, one might expect

[20] The elliptical analysis of so-called "incomplete" descriptions traces back to Bach (1987: Chapter 5). Another equivalent move is to take the domain over which the existential quantifier

that the description in (9) is elliptical for another opportunely specified description, something like "the [only thing which is internally a] winged horse *in the Greek myth*". In such a case, the committed Russellian would note that the truth of (9) is restored even in analyzing that sentence *à la* Russell, that is, as:

(9CR) There is only one thing which is internally a winged horse *in the Greek myth*, and that individual internally flies

$[(\exists x)\ (x\text{WHIGM} \ \&\ (y)\ (y\text{WHIGM} \supset (y = x)) \ \&\ xF)]$

for not only its first, but also its second, conjunct would be true (its third conjunct being obviously true, once we again interpret the predicate "_ flies" in internal predication). As a result, the committed Russellian would say, the description "the winged horse in the Greek myth" has a Russellian denotation, precisely its intended denotation, namely Pegasus.

Can the syncretistic theory endorse the account of the committed Russellian? Well, the committed Russellian is overzealous in thinking that opportunely specified descriptions denote fictional entities. Yet, with some adjustments, his or her committal stance may be retained also within the framework of the syncretistic theory.

First of all, against the committed Russellian the syncretist has once again to stress that a fictional individual has internally a property not in a set of propositions, but *tout court* (that is, straightforwardly in the actual world). According to the syncretistic theory, it is having internally a property *tout court* on the part of a *fictum* that amounts to membership of a given proposition in a given propositional set. Thus, it may well be the case that there is just one thing that has a certain property, for example *being US President*, in some temporal fragment of the actual world. Hence, it may well be that a temporalized description has a denotation in the actual world *tout court*—as in the above-mentioned case of "the US President in 2005." But it cannot be the case that there is just one thing that has internally a property in a set of propositions—literally, there is no such thing. Therefore, it cannot be that a set-relative description has a denotation in the actual world *tout court*—as in the case of "the [only thing which is internally a] winged horse in the Greek myth."[21]

Nevertheless, the syncretistic theory may well exploit for committal purposes the fact that, according to it, a fictional individual having internally

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ranges in the Russellian paraphrase of (13) to be contextually restricted, in such a case to the entities existing in 2005. Cf. Neale (1990).

[21] The same problem would arise if one appealed to restricted quantification rather than to ellipsis (cf. previous footnote).

some properties *tout court* is the same as the fact that, in a certain propositional set, there are propositions containing that individual as well as those properties. Indeed, for the syncretist in a first approximation (9) has to be read not as (9CR), but rather as:

(9SR) There is an individual such that in the Greek myth there are two singular propositions which are such that they are structured in way W_i and both contain that individual and, respectively, the property of *being a winged horse* and the property of *being identical with any other individual which is internally a winged horse*, and that individual internally flies

[(∃x) (IGM ((∃p,r) (p = <{x}, *being-WH*>) & (r = <{x}, *being-such-that-(y)-(yWH* ⊃ *(y = x))*>)) & xF)].

Although, if (9) is read as (9SR), the description "the winged horse" is without denotation, (9SR) still has committal import. For it quantifies over an individual, the same individual that "the [only thing which is internally a] winged horse in the Greek myth" was intended to denote in (9CR), namely the fictional character Pegasus, which figures within some propositions that belong to the fictional "world" of the Greek myth. Indeed, (9SR) is true iff there is an individual such that in the Greek myth there are the two propositions in question and, furthermore, such an individual internally flies. In fact, the propositions mobilized by (9SR) are to be ranked as *singular* propositions: they contain a given fictional individual, namely Pegasus. Yet they are *generically* described since that individual is not directly referred to in (9SR), as it is in (11), but merely quantified over. Now, (9SR) is true precisely because there is such an individual, namely Pegasus.

This reading is still Russellian in spirit as it is similar to, though not identical with, an intermediate Russellian reading of sentences containing both a description and an intensional operator IO. Let me now illustrate such a reading and then show why the present reading is only similar to but not identical with it.

As is well known, a sentence of the form "in IO an F is G," where "an F" is an indefinite description, may be read not only either in the *de re* form: "there is an F such that in IO it is G" or in the *de dicto* form: "in IO there is an F which is G," but also in an intermediate way such as: "there is something which in IO is an F and is G."[22] Yet the same may be said regarding an analogous sentence containing a definite rather than an indefinite description. "In IO, the F is G" may indeed be read not only either in the *de re* form: "there is only one individual that is F, and in IO that individual is G," or in

[22] This is the reading Bonomi labels "polarized+opaque." Cf. Bonomi (1995: 176–80).

the *de dicto* form: "in IO, there is only one individual that is F and that individual is G," but also in an intermediate way, such as: "There is an individual, which in IO is such, that it is uniquely F, and that individual is G."[23] Unlike the *de dicto* reading, the intermediate reading is committal because it quantifies over actual individuals. Unlike the *de re* reading, however, in the intermediate reading the description "the F" has no actual denotation, for the individual that the intermediate reading quantifies over uniquely possesses the property *F* not in the actual world, but in the unactual circumstance pointed to by the operator. In this respect, (9) might be given a Russellian intermediate reading by interpreting accordingly the scope of its implicit "in the story" locution:

(9IR^{I}) There is an individual such that *in the Greek myth* it uniquely is internally a winged horse and that individual internally flies

$[(\exists x)\,(\mathrm{IGM}\,(x\mathrm{WH}\ \&\ (y)\,(x\mathrm{WH} \supset (y = x))\ \&\ x\mathrm{F}))]$.

Yet for the syncretistic theory this intermediate reading does not work. It reinterprets the "in the story" locution as an intensional, hence a circumstance-shifting operator. Indeed, it requires the linguistic material governed by that locution—what follows "in the Greek myth" in (9IR^{I})—to be evaluated from the point of view of an unactual *bona fide* world. As a result, it also requires that the individual that the quantifier actually quantifies over has internally properties in the fictional "world" of the story. But this raises again the same problem raised before by (9CR): an individual cannot possess internally a property in a fictional "world". In fact, this is not a *bona fide* world but just a set of propositions (possibly inconsistent and incomplete, in the derivative sense).

Instead of reading (9) as (9IR^{I}), therefore, the syncretistic theory proposes to read it as (9SR). This reading is as committal as (9IR^{I}) is since it still quantifies over fictional individuals, although the description "the F" occurring in it has no actual denotation. Yet this reading is only similar to, but not identical with, the intermediate reading presented by (9IR^{I}). Although in (9SR) an "in the story" locution occurs after the quantifier, it singles out a (possibly inconsistent and incomplete) set of propositions rather than a *bona fide* world working as a circumstance of evaluation for the linguistic material which that locution governs.

So, if (9) is properly to be read committally, an "in the story" locution must appear in it as controlled by the existential quantifier. Let us now see

[23] I guess that the intermediate reading is quite close to the reading of a sentence of the form "in IO, the F is G" which Recanati (1993: 390) labels "oblique-referential use."

more precisely how this reading of (9) squares with the general fact that a parafictional sentence is equivalent to an internal metafictional sentence, (10) in this case. If (9) is read as (9SR) and is moreover equivalent to (10), then (10) itself must be read as saying something more committal than that it is true iff there is in a certain fictional "world" a general proposition to the effect that there is something which uniquely is a winged horse internally and this something internally flies. Given what I stated previously, things can now be easily accounted for. (9SR) is true iff there is something which is not only such that, in the fictional "world" of the Greek myth, there are two singular propositions to the effect that that individual uniquely is a winged horse internally, but it is also such that it internally flies. But, as we have repeatedly seen, that a *fictum* is internally *F* is the same as that in the relevant set there is a singular proposition to the effect that that *fictum* is internally *F*. As a result, (9SR) is true iff there is something which is not only such that, in the fictional "world" of the Greek myth, there are two singular propositions to the effect that such an individual uniquely is internally a winged horse, but it is also such that in such a "world" there also is the singular proposition to the effect that that individual internally flies. Again, these three singular propositions are just generically described for their objectual component is merely quantified over. But this is just what (10) says in its stronger, committal, reading:

(10SR) There is an individual such that in the Greek myth there are three propositions which are such that they are structured in way W_i and contain both that individual and, respectively, the property of *being a winged horse*, the property of *being identical with any other individual which is internally a winged horse*, and the property of *being a flyer*

[(∃x) (IGM ((∃p,r,s) (p = <{x}, *being-WH*>) & (r = <{x}, *being-such-that-(y)-(yWH ⊃ (y = x))*>) & (s = <{x}, *being-F*>)))].

Thus, properly speaking for the syncretist a sentence such as (9) in its stronger, committal, reading, that is (9SR), is equivalent to a sentence such as (10) in its stronger, committal, reading, that is (10SR).

So, while in itself (9), *qua* equivalent to (10), has not for the syncretist to be truthconditionally accounted for in a committal way, nonetheless by means of (9SR), that is of (10SR), the syncretist may account for the fact that (9) and (10) are often *intended* to be about fictional entities.

At this point, one may wonder why one must appeal to such an admittedly complicated analysis of (9) and (10) in their stronger, committal, readings. Would it not be simpler to go back to *another* genuinely intermediate reading of (9), hence of (10), by accepting that the "in the story" locution is

a circumstance-shifting operator and thereby having a fictional "world" as a *bona fide* world? Let us see how this objection could be developed.

First of all, the objector may raise some general questions against the idea that a fictional "world" is not a *bona fide* world. He or she may wonder, apart from possible inconsistency and incompleteness (admittedly in their derivative sense), what makes a propositional set differ from the paradigm of a *bona fide* world, a possible world. Is not a possible world, as actualists maintain, if not identical with, at least in a one-one correlation with a complete and consistent propositional set?[24] Moreover, could not he or she suggest that the general truth conditions I have given for a parafictional, hence for an internal metafictional, sentence perfectly match this interpretation of a propositional set as a *bona fide* world? Indeed, he or she may go on to suggest that a sentence of the form "in the story S, p" is true iff the proposition *p* belongs to a propositional set *S* is the same as saying that such a sentence is true iff that proposition is true in *S*. And being true in *S* makes *S* a circumstance of evaluation for the sentence expressing that proposition, the sentence "p" embedded in the previous sentence, thereby making *S* a *bona fide* world.

Moreover, the objector may grant that, as I have repeatedly said, if a fictional object has a property internally, it has such a property *tout court* and not in a world, even a *bona fide* one. But if this is the problem, the objector may conclude, why not simply say that having a property internally is tantamount to having it *externally* in the fictional "world" taken as a *bona fide* world? As a result, it is true that the correct genuinely intermediate reading of (9), hence of (10), the reading that saves our intuitive commitment to a *fictum* in uttering (9), is not ($9IR^I$). However, the objector continues, why not take:

($9IR^E$) There is an individual such that *in the Greek myth* it uniquely is a winged horse externally and it externally flies

$[(\exists x)\ (IGM\ (WHx\ \&\ (y)\ (WHx \supset (y = x))\ \&\ Fx))]$

as such a reading? Indeed, as far as ($9IR^E$) is concerned, saying that this reading is true iff the general proposition expressed by its embedded material belongs to a certain propositional set, a certain fictional "world," that is, is true in it, is not the same as saying that that reading is true iff there is an individual, a fictional character, which in that world uniquely is a winged horse externally and moreover externally flies?[25]

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[24] Cf. n. 17.

[25] Many will recognize Zalta's position in this objection. Indeed, he says that a sentence of the form "(t)P," where "t" is a singular term designating a fictional individual and "(x)P" expresses internal predication of the property *P*, is tantamount to a sentence of the form "in

Tempting as it may be, I have to put this objection, and the related suggestion, to one side. The reason for this is that I want to adhere to an ontologically neutral truthconditional analysis not only of the parafictional—hence of the internal metafictional—sentences involving definite descriptions, but of *all* such sentences that contain no directly referential expression in subject position. This allows me to account for the fact that many such sentences are *not committal* at all. If I pursued the above suggestion, it would be hard to account for the problematic commitment to indeterminate entities that the acceptance of a fictional "world" as a *bona fide* world would force me to adopt. Let me explain.

Take for instance the following true sentence:

(14) In *The Lord of the Rings* many uruk-hai fight against Aragorn in the Battle of Helm's Deep.

It is hard to see how (14) could commit us to numerous fictional characters that are (internally) uruk-hai. The trouble is not that these characters are not individually named for it may well be the case that *within a fiction* many imaginary "individuals" that exist there and only there have no name. But if *outside that fiction* corresponding fictional characters were created, we might well give them names from the outside. In fact, even when names are already available in the fiction, there is no necessity for the actually existing abstract fictional characters to bear the same names as their imaginary concrete counterparts existing only in the fiction. Instead, the problem with the community of uruk-hai (as well as with that of dwarves, elves, hobbits, etc.) is that the identity of these alleged characters is totally indeterminate. How many uruk-hai are there in the fictional "world" of Tolkien? One might think that such a number could be obtained if the story make-believedly said or entailed something relevant about the corresponding imaginary "individuals" (for instance,

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the story S, P(t)," where "t" designates the same *fictum* and "P(x)" expresses external predication of the same property. Cf. (1983: 94), (1988: 125), (2000: 129). When the term in question is a definite description "the F," in the context of a sentence such as the above it is tantamount to "the only individual which in the story S is externally F," hence it may well be assigned a *fictum* as its Russellian denotation. Cf. Zalta (1983: 97–8), (1988: 126). So, as regards parafictional, hence internal metafictional, sentences of the form "(in the story S,) the F is G," an intermediate reading along the lines of ($9IR^E$) is available in Zalta's view. Moreover, for him inconsistency and incompleteness appear to be the only relevant differences between a fictional and a possible world. Cf. Zalta (1983: 91). Finally, he shares with others the idea that for a proposition to belong to a set is the same as to be true in it—see, for example, Deutsch (1985), Orilia (2002: 127), Zalta (1983: 91), (1988: 124), (2000: 122–3)—which is, precisely, exploited by the set-theoretical actualist conception of possible worlds [cf., for example, Adams (1974)].

if Tolkien's tale make-believedly said that in Middle-earth there are something like two million uruk-hai). Yet, even if there were such a number, it would be irrelevant as there would still be no way for one of these alleged entities to be distinct from another.

The syncretistic theory has to confirm this ontological skepticism because even within the framework of that theory, there would be no element by means of which one such would-be entity is distinguishable from another. Not only would these would-be entities allegedly share all their internally predicated properties, but the relevant make-believe process-type that should underlie their generation is just one and the same; in writing the relevant sentences, Tolkien only describes uruk-hai collectively.[26] So, it is hard to give (14) any committal reading in which fictional characters that are (internally) uruk-hai are quantified over.

Now, suppose we take a fictional "world" as a *bona fide* world. Clearly, given the above state of indeterminacy, a defender of the above-mentioned suggestion could not put forward a true intermediate reading for (14) of the same kind as the one he or she is ready to propose for (9) and (10), namely:

(14IR^{E}) There are many fictional characters such that in *The Lords of the Rings* they are externally uruk-hai and externally fight against Aragorn in the Battle of Helm's Deep.

So, a defender of this position would admit that (14) involves no commitment to actual fictional characters. Yet he or she might suppose that the following *de dicto* reading works:

(14DD^{E}) In *The Lords of the Rings* there are many fictional characters that are externally uruk-hai and externally fight against Aragorn in the Battle of Helm's Deep.

But even that reading would not work because it would again quantify over fictional entities existing in the *bona fide* world, even though (admittedly) only there. However, even this quantification is impossible since it is still indeterminate how many such entities there are.

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[26] This is a very difficult problem for all realist theories. Parsons tries to solve it by saying that when individuals in fiction are spoken of collectively, the only fictional character referred to is the *group*. See Parsons (1980: 191). Yet implausibility aside, this proposal seems to me untenable. Suppose that (14) continued ". . . and some of them were seriously wounded." According to Parsons, we would have here two distinct fictional characters, a bigger group and a smaller group of uruk-hai. But this distinctness of the characters does not account for the fact that those uruk-hai that were seriously wounded belong to the bigger group. For ontological skepticism regarding such cases, see also Lamarque (2003: 43).

Nevertheless, with respect to (14) we can remain completely noncommittal if we refrain from taking a fictional "world" as a *bona fide* world and read (14) accordingly, as saying merely that in the fictional "world" of Tolkien there is a general proposition to the effect that many individuals which are internally uruk-hai internally fight against Aragorn in the Battle of Helm's Deep. Undoubtedly, its parafictional equivalent:

(14′) Many uruk-hai fight against Aragorn in the Battle of Helm's Deep

is true iff there are many individuals which are internally uruk-hai and those individuals internally fight against Aragorn in that battle. Yet again, this is tantamount to saying that (14′) is true iff in the fictional "world" of *The Lord of the Rings* there is a general proposition to the effect that many individuals are internally uruk-hai and those individuals internally fight against Aragorn in the battle. As with (9), this truthconditional analysis is ontologically neutral for, as regards *ficta*, simply admitting that a propositional set also contains one such proposition has no committal import at all. This is corroborated by the fact that because of the (derivative) incompleteness of the set in question, it may well be the case that the existence in it of a general proposition is not matched by the existence of any singular proposition to the effect that a certain fictional character is internally an uruk-hai and internally fights against Aragorn in the Battle of Helm's Deep.

To my mind, the syncretist account is faithful to the intuitions underlying the situation in question. Unlike (9), (14) has no reading expressing its being *intended* to be about fictional individuals. *Who* should these individuals be? Thus, whenever the subject terms embedded in an internal metafictional sentence are descriptive, it is enough for the syncretist to provide an ontologically neutral truthconditional account of that sentence.

Perhaps the objector might retort that indeterminacy of characters as in the uruk-hai case is precisely what prevents one from exporting the quantifier from (14DD^{E}) to (14IR^{E}).[27] So, he or she might simply discard the idea that (14DD^{E}) commits one to a definite number of individuals *in* the fictional "world" (which are uruk-hai there).

I am not sure whether this reply is viable. Can we accept *bona fide* worlds whose domains are indefinite? At any rate, I think that the objector's position betrays another, more general, problem. In accepting that a fictional "world" is a *bona fide* world in that fictional individuals have properties there *externally*, the objector implicitly assumes that *ficta* in that "world" are concrete

[27] As some have maintained for epistemic contexts, ontological indeterminacy in the reportee's intentions accounts for the *de dicto* reading of sentences filling such contexts. Cf. Smith-McIntyre (1982: 30–3).

entities as those individuals externally possess there the properties that actual concrete entities possess externally in the actual world. For instance, if Hamlet in *Hamlet* is a prince *externally*, then in that "world" Hamlet is a concrete entity just as Prince Charles is in the actual world, where he possesses externally the very same property of *being a prince*.[28]

Yet it is not the case that fictional individuals are concrete entities in the fictional "world". To be sure, there is a "world" which is inhabited by concrete entities: this is the imaginary "world" postulated via the relevant make-believe game. Moreover, although that "world" is not a genuine world, for it may well be inconsistent and perhaps also incomplete (in the primary sense of those notions), still it may be taken to be a *bona fide* world. For, as I have said before, it works as a circumstance of evaluation for (fictional) sentences in their conniving use. But this "world" is not an existing propositional set. For in actual fact it does not exist, in that many "individuals" that inhabit it—hence the propositions that include those "individuals" as the fictional truth conditions of sentences about "them" in their conniving use—do not exist either. Moreover, as we have seen in the previous chapter, there may well be immigrant entities in such a "world:" when this "world" is mobilized by the relevant existentially conservative make-believe game. This is the case of actual concrete—or even actual abstract (sometimes even fictional)—entities when those existentially conservative make-believe games are concerned by them. Yet the concrete "individuals" which names such as "Hamlet" or "Holmes" refer to in the scope of those "worlds" are not the fictional characters Hamlet and Holmes, but at most imaginary concrete counterparts of them which are postulated via the relevant existentially creative make-believe games. As a result, those fictional characters do not definitely migrate as concrete individuals in imaginary "worlds."

Let me summarize this point as follows. If "the story S" designates a propositional set, then the fictional individuals existing "in" this set possess the properties figuring in the propositions of this set internally, not externally. If the locution "the story S" (make-believedly) designates an imaginary "world," then its inhabitants are concrete entities that possess their properties externally. Therefore, they are not the entities that make internal metafictional (hence parafictional) sentences really true or false.

To be sure, rejecting the above suggestion proposed by the objector is not to say that the syncretist must also give up the definition advanced in it, according to which saying that the proposition explicitly expressed by a parafictional sentence belongs to a certain propositional set means that that proposition is true in that set. Provided that the relation of *being true in* is

[28] For similar remarks on Zalta's theory (cf. n. 25), see Landini (1990: 104).

not interpreted as holding between a proposition and a *bona fide* world, a circumstance of evaluation for that sentence *qua* linguistic material embedded in the internal metafictional sentence.[29]

Before leaving this section, let me note that this present way of interpreting nonintensionally the equivalence between parafictional and internal metafictional sentences permits the syncretistic theory to deal again with the "analyticity" datum presented in Chapter 1 and provisionally explained in Chapter 3. This time, however, the syncretistic theory can provide a more general account of that datum covering *all* parafictional sentences, both the committal and the noncommittal.

It was stated in those chapters that sentences such as (5) or (11) in this chapter:

(5) Hamlet is a prince

(11) Pegasus flies

are not found to be true through empirical discovery; inasmuch as the relevant stories unfold in a certain way, they are trivially and unrevisably true. This allows for an, at least, epistemic sense according to which these sentences are analytic. In Chapter 3, I claimed that the "analytic" character of their truth may be accounted for in a Kantian way. Insofar as the name occurring in them respectively ("Hamlet," "Pegasus") refers to a fictional individual one of whose components is a certain property set, the sentence is analytically true insofar as that individual—the "meaning" of the subject term—contains precisely the property designated by the respective predicate ("_ is a prince," "_ flies")—the "meaning" of the predicate—internally ascribed to it.

Now, we have seen that for a *fictum* to possess a property internally is the same as for a set of propositions to contain a proposition one of whose constituents is that *fictum* itself. Yet truly ascribing to a certain propositional set one of its members, namely a certain proposition, is trivial and unrevisable as much as truly ascribing a property internally to a given *fictum*. As a result, a parafictional sentence such as (5) or (11) remains analytically true even after it is seen as equivalent to the corresponding internal metafictional sentence. Once again, this fits the Kantian conception of analyticity: the "meaning" of the subject term—a certain propositional set—contains the "meaning" of the predicate—a certain proposition of that set. But this

[29] A similar position is found in Landini (1990) who, however, conceives of *ficta*, *qua* constituents of the propositions that belong to a story, as Russellian denoting concepts seen as second-order properties.

analysis is more general than the previous account because it allows us to consider as analytically true even parafictional sentences such as (9), or even better (14′), which for the above-mentioned reasons involve no commitment to *ficta* at all. Take precisely (14′), for which no true committal reading along the lines of (9SR), or better (10SR), is available. This sentence cannot be taken as analytically true insofar as the *fictum* it is about contains the property internally predicated of it, trivially because there is no such individual. Yet, (14′) remains analytically true insofar as it is equivalent to (14) and it therefore says that a certain propositional set has one of its members, namely a certain (general) proposition.

4. Committal External Discourse

Once a committal account has been provided for internal discourse purportedly about fictional entities, it remains to provide one for *external* discourse. In this case, thing should be easier since though not impossible, it is admittedly difficult to dispense with the apparent commitment to fictional entities transpiring from these sentences. I must however recall the fact that within the framework of the syncretistic theory, such a commitment really regards only the nonconniving uses of the external metafictional sentences. This is because such sentences may well occur within a piece of fiction and thus be used also connivingly, hence noncommittally.

Insofar as external metafictional sentences may also be used connivingly, however, a complication immediately arise since *two* distinct nonconniving uses are to be imagined for them. The first is that affecting all sentences which are used connivingly; as I have just said, also external metafictional sentences may be used both connivingly and nonconnivingly. The second is the use that, so to speak, features the *external* character of these sentences, namely the fact that such sentences are typically regarded as being employed in order to speak about a fictional individual without involving fiction either directly or indirectly. Let me call this use the *straightforwardly* nonconniving use of external metafictional sentences.

To illustrate what I have in mind, I will give an example. Suppose that in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, one of the most famous metafictional pieces of fiction, there is the following sentence:

(15) The Father[30] is a fictional character.

[30] The use of capital letters signifies that this is a name, not a definite description.

In playing Pirandello's *pièce* on stage, an actor uttering this sentence may well use it connivingly. Yet a student taking an exam on 20th-century Italian literature may well utter it nonconnivingly in the same way as he or she may, in the same circumstances, use nonconnivingly another sentence, admittedly from the same text, say:

(16) The Father almost has sex with his step-daughter.

But this nonconniving use is completely different from the nonconniving use of (15) pronounced by anyone who wanted to stress the feature that The Father shares with any other *ficta* such as Hamlet and Holmes, namely the fact that all of them are precisely fictional characters. This is the same kind of nonconniving use, the straightforwardly nonconniving use, in which someone may employ any other external metafictional sentence which is not affected by a conniving use in a metafictional bit of fiction, for instance:

(17) The Father was created by Pirandello.

Fortunately enough, the syncretistic theory is able to account for this duality of nonconniving uses affecting external metafictional sentences. In the first nonconniving use, the property of *being a fictional character* is predicated *internally* of The Father. As a result, the sentence explicitly expresses the W_i-structured singular proposition $<$\{The Father\}, *being-a-fictional-character*$>$. In addition, the sentence in such a use is equivalent to the internal metafictional sentence:

(18) In *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, The Father is a fictional character

so that, properly speaking, in such a use it is true iff in the fictional "world" of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, there is the above-mentioned singular proposition or, briefly, it is true iff *the fictum* The Father has internally the property of *being a fictional character*. However, in the second nonconniving use, the straightforwardly nonconniving use, the very same property is predicated externally of the Father. In fact, in this use the sentence expresses the different W_e-structured singular proposition $<$*being-a-fictional-character*, \{The Father\}$>$ and it is true iff the *fictum* in question has that very property externally.

In any event, if an external metafictional sentence is not affected by a conniving use, things are rather simple. That sentence is only straightforwardly used nonconnivingly; hence, it has only real truth conditions, and of one kind only, those involving external possession of a property.

Here, moreover, singular terms behave as normally as possible. To start with, in such sentences *all* directly referential terms, both names and indexicals, directly refer to a fictional entity and contribute to predicate of it a certain property externally. So, any such sentence involving those terms expresses a singular proposition of the W_e kind: $<$*being-P*, {F}$>$, where *F* is a given *fictum* and is true iff *F* is externally *P*. For instance, both:

(19) Robin Hood is a legendary character

and:

(20) That chap [uttered while effectively pointing to a statue of Robin Hood or to a page in a book on Saxon myths] is a legendary character

express the very same W_e-structured singular proposition $<$*being-a-legendary-character*, {Robin Hood}$>$ and are true iff Robin is externally such a character. Furthermore, in such sentences definite descriptions behave as they normally do; in other words, they have a fictional entity as their Russellian denotation just in case both the first and the second conjunct of Russell's paraphrases of sentences containing them are true. Indeed, we have to expect that an external metafictional sentence of the form "the F is G" expresses a general proposition to the effect that there is a unique individual which externally *F*-s, and that individual externally *G*-s, and is therefore true iff there really is only one individual that externally *F*-s and that individual externally *G*-s. For instance:

(21) The protagonist of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a model for tragic literature

is true iff there is just one individual who is externally the protagonist of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and that individual is externally a model for tragic literature. Now, there is indeed just an individual who is externally the protagonist of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; consequently, the description "the protagonist of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*" does have a denotation, namely the *fictum* Hamlet itself!

Here as previously, complications arise from the fact that in external metafictional sentences we may also use descriptions that have no denotation, not even a fictional character, and yet it is clear that we use them with a committal import. Take for instance:

(22) The winged horse is a mythical character

in which, as we already know, "the winged horse" has no denotation. However, we use it in (22) with committal import as is witnessed by the fact that we could have used the name "Pegasus" in its place.

Yet, if we reflect on the fact that the property of *being a winged horse* is in this context predicated internally, we then know how to deal with this case. Simply put, the truth conditions of (22) closely resemble those of (9) when read as (9SR), except for the fact that the relevant property, the property of *being a mythical character*, is here predicated externally and not internally. Indeed, we have to read (22) as:

(22SR) There is an individual such that in the Greek myth there are two propositions which are such that they are structured in way W_i and contain both that individual and, respectively, the property of *being a winged horse* and the property of *being identical with any other individual which is internally a winged horse*, and such an individual is externally a mythical character

$[(\exists x)\ (IGM\ ((\exists p,r)\ (p = <\{x\}, \textit{being-WH}>)\ \&\ (r = <\{x\}, \textit{being-such-that-(y)-(yWH} \supset \textit{(y = x))}>))\ \&\ MCx)]$

where the existential quantifier precisely commits us to the same fictional entity that the name "Pegasus" commits us to.

In such a case, therefore, we have to export the analysis of descriptions we used for internal metafictional sentences. But we would be forced to do the same if we were to consider a case of a mixed sentence, namely a complex sentence made up of both a parafictional, or an internal metafictional, and an external metafictional sentence, which contained a description as well as an anaphoric link to it, such as:

(23) Although Don Quixote's servant is married, he is a literary character.

This is because "he" in the second conjunct of (23) inherits its semantic value from the description it is anaphorically linked to, namely "Don Quixote's servant". This is the committal analysis of (23):

(23SR) There is an individual such that although in *Don Quixote* there are two propositions which are such that they are structured in way W_i and contain both that individual and, respectively, the property of *being Don Quixote's servant* and the property of *being identical with any other individual that is internally Don Quixote's servant*, and such an individual is internally married, it is externally a literary character

[(∃x) ((IDQ ((∃p,r) (p = <{x}, *being-DQS*>) & (r = <{x}, *being-such-that-(y)-(yDQS* ⊃ *(y = x))*>)) & xM) & LCx)].[31]

Before ending this section, I want to say a few words on what are probably the most complex kind of external metafictional sentences, namely singular negative existentials. Typically, in their straightforwardly nonconniving use we have many true negative existentials such as, for example:

(24) Santa Claus does not exist.

At this point, let me concede that this external metafictional sentence has a committal import, with the name "Santa Claus" referring to a certain fictional individual. Yet one may think that in the context of the syncretistic theory, which allows for *ficta* as *actual* abstract beings, that sentence is false rather than true. How, then, can the syncretistic theory accept the intuitive truth value of that sentence?

All the syncretist has to do here is to take up the answer already given to this problem by abstractionists. Theoretically speaking, the same problem arises for the corresponding general negative existential:

(25) There is no such thing as Santa Claus.

Intuitively, (25) is true; yet insofar as for the syncretistic theory the overall domain of individuals also contains fictional entities, it should be false. But we already know from Chapter 2 what the correct answer is to this problem in the light of the abstractionist theory. When the quantifier contained in (25) is contextually restricted to the sub-domain of spatiotemporal existents, an utterance of (25) is true. On the other hand, when the quantifier is taken as contextually unrestricted to all existents, spatiotemporal and non-spatiotemporal, an utterance of (25) is false.[32]

Now, an analogous contextual restriction holds not only for second-order, but also for first-order, predicates. When the extension of the first-order predicate "_ exists" is contextually restricted to the subset of

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[31] Of course, the internal predication still contained in (23SR)—"xM"—may still be solved along the lines of (12SR) so as to get:

(23′SR) There is an individual such that although in *Don Quixote* there are three propositions which are such that they are structured in way W_i and contain both that individual and, respectively, the property of *being Don Quixote's servant*, the property of *being identical with any other individual which is internally Don Quixote's servant*, and the property of *being married*, it is externally a literary character.

[32] Cf. Chapter 2, n. 19.

spatiotemporal existents, an utterance of (24) is true. These are perhaps the proto-typical utterances of (22), which we use to tell someone—typically, a child—with a grossly false belief on the nature of a certain entity that such an entity does not exist spatiotemporally (or analogously, that it is not a concrete entity, that it cannot be encountered, etc.). Yet when no such a restriction obtains, an utterance of (24) is obviously false because a *fictum* definitely belongs to the general extension of that predicate.[33]

On behalf of the syncretistic theory, I simply have to add to this abstractionist approach that, whether restricted or not, in the above cases the predicate "_ exists" occurring in (24) is to be taken in external predication. For, as we have seen, external predication affects straightforwardly nonconniving uses of external metafictional sentences, which are our concern here.

This does not mean that one could not envisage cases in which that predicate, whether restricted or not, were taken in internal predication. Even (24) may be taken as exhibiting such a case. But in that case, the external metafictional sentence would precisely behave as a fictional sentence in its simple nonconniving use matching a corresponding conniving use. I might for instance tell a metafictional story, MF, in which I mock-assert (24).[34] In sitting an exam on that story, a student would instead seriously assert (24) in order to mean the internal metafictional sentence:

(26) In MF, Santa Claus does not exist.

Thus, he or she would be using the predicate "_ exists" restrictedly, but in order to predicate internally the property of *non-existence* to the *fictum* Santa Claus.

That the above is the correct way to interpret the situation in question is further shown by external metafictional sentences such that in their straightforward nonconniving use, though we quantify over fictional characters, we say of them that they do not exist:

(27) There is at least an individual that does not exist: namely, Santa Claus.

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[33] For this analysis, see Predelli (2002: 275–6). In (2003), Walton contests that this contextual analysis can be extended from general to singular (negative) existentials. Yet, as Predelli shows in the same paper, there are many other cases of contextual restrictions on predicate extensions that take place in non-quantified sentences. See again his (2002: 274).

[34] Though differently framed, a similar example also occurs in Predelli (2002: 270, 76).

On the one hand, in (27) we take the existential quantifier unrestrictedly, as ranging over all actual beings in general. On the other, we take the first-order predicate "_ exists" as restricted, as applied (in external predication) only to spatiotemporal existents, hence as being not true of the individual we quantify over, the fictional character Santa Claus.[35]

[35] This analysis of straightforward nonconniving uses of general negative existentials such as (27) does not prevent one from providing an, actually noncommittal, analysis for their conniving uses (typically, when one mock-asserts that there is a fictional individual). In these uses, these sentences are purportedly about would-be entities, imaginary "individuals"—in this case, imaginary abstract "individuals"—belonging to the imaginary "worlds" I have repeatedly spoken of in this book. For in ontology it can be shown independently that there really are no such would-be entities. As a result, in order to hold legitimately that as far as *ficta* are concerned, a both nonconniving and committal use of positive existentials, such as the one I have just presented, is possible, an ontological argument in favor of the existence of such entities must be provided. This is my aim in the next chapter.

In (2003: 158–64), Kroon suggests an analysis of sentences such as (27) according to which, in disavowing the pretense that there is a Clausian (fictional) individual that possesses a universal first-order property of existence, what is really being said is that there is a mode of presentation that does not present Clausian things possessing that first-order property. Other differences from the syncretist treatment of those sentences aside, with respect to this analysis I have to say that, although I am greatly in favor of adopting that universal first-order property [(as I explicitly maintain in (2006); see also Chapter 3, n. 51)], I think that in their nonconniving use, sentences such as (27) do not mobilize it but, rather, a *nonuniversal* first-order property such as *spatiotemporal* existence. If one expanded (27) into "There is at least an individual that, *unlike you and me*, does not exist: namely, Santa Claus," it would indeed be hard to interpret the predicate "_ exists" as meaning the universal first-order property. This suggests moreover that by means of the same predicate, the conniving use of the same sentence again mobilizes the nonuniversal, and not the universal, first-order property of existence. Imagine a conniving use of the expansion of (27) in order to underline, within the pretense, the non-spatiotemporal feature of its imaginary abstract "protagonists." As a further result, it can hardly be the case that when that sentence is used nonconnivingly, its truth conditions refer to the disavowing of a pretense that there is a certain individual (matching a certain mode of presentation) who exists universally, as Kroon instead claims.

PART III THE ONTOLOGICAL SIDE

Chapter 7

AN ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF THE EXISTENCE OF FICTIONAL ENTITIES

1. Synopsis

In this chapter I present a genuinely ontological argument in favor of fictional entities. According to this argument, we have to accept fictional entities because they figure in the identity conditions of other entities that are already accepted, namely fictional works. I also evaluate the extent to which this argument is similar to other arguments recently provided for the same purpose.

2. Why Go from Semantics to Ontology?

In the previous two chapters I pointed out that in a long-established and venerable tradition arguments both in favor of and against fictional objects have been put in *semantic* terms. On the one hand, in arguing for *ficta* it is usually claimed that there is a portion of language, notably sentences either involving fiction (directly or indirectly) or alluding to it, the semantic account of which cannot dispense with fictional objects since at least some singular terms in that portion of language designate precisely those entities. Some realists say—optimistically—that whenever language appears to be about *ficta*, then this is really the case. More cautiously, others limit themselves to finding a rampart behind which to organize the defense of a committal approach to *ficta*. As was seen in those chapters, external metafictional sentences have been conceived as such a rampart.

On the other hand, in arguing against *ficta* antirealists have traditionally held that a semantic account of language can ultimately dispense with a commitment to *ficta*. Whenever language seems to speak about them, it can be shown that this is not really the case. This is typically done by replacing

the apparently committal sentences with antirealist paraphrases whose truth conditions are found—or simply declared—to be identical with those of the sentences replaced.[1]

Now, optimistic realists think that whenever language appears to be about *ficta*, paraphrases always fail to provide a plausible antirealist truthconditional alternative to the committal truthconditional approach. Cautious realists instead accept that, as far as some portions of language apparently about *ficta* are concerned, antirealist paraphrases actually work. Yet they retort that, for some other linguistic fragments apparently about *ficta*, no such paraphrase is really available.

When the syncretist emerges in this debate, he or she starts by asserting that insofar as the debate concerns *sentences*, it is basically misleading. The most fundamental distinction is not between committal and noncommittal *sentences* but, rather, between committal and noncommittal *uses* of sentences. The former is the nonconniving use and the latter the conniving use of all sentences apparently involving fictional entities: fictional, internal metafictional, and external metafictional sentences.[2] The syncretist agrees with the antirealist that, in their conniving use, such sentences are not really concerned with fictional entities. Clearly, if their use is conniving no antirealist paraphrase is needed. In such a use, these sentences may indeed be taken at face value provided that one remembers that used in this way, they have merely *fictional* truth conditions. Yet, as far as the nonconniving use of these sentences is concerned, the syncretist agrees with the realist that the truthconditional account of these sentences in such a use is committal. As a result, he or she shares the conviction that optimistic realists apply to all these sentences but which prudent realists apply only to external metafictional sentences, namely that no antirealist paraphrase is really available for these sentences in such a use.[3]

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[1] The distinction between found and declared truthconditional identity between a paraphrase and the sentence it paraphrases roughly corresponds to the distinction between a hermeneutical and a revolutionary way of intending the paraphrase strategy. On this distinction, see Burgess-Rosen (1997), Varzi (2001).

[2] Remember that a parafictional sentence is *stipulated* as having the very same real truth conditions that a fictional sentence has, or would have, in its nonconniving use.

[3] Sometimes, antirealists appear to put forward a subtler position. They seem to admit that the semantics of fictional contexts (at least when they contain allegedly empty names) presupposes an ontology of fictional beings. Yet they specify that since there are really no such entities, this is just a provisional presupposition, which is removed in language itself when we say things such as "there is Santa Claus, but he is just a myth." See Reimer (2001a). Nevertheless, once we draw a distinction between conniving and nonconniving uses of all sentences apparently involving fictional entities, there is no longer any need to assign a "default" committal ontology to semantics. This because, theoretically speaking,

Now in order for this to be a *principled* thesis, it is clearly not sufficient for the syncretist to be able to show that none of the antirealist paraphrases of those sentences in nonconniving uses which have *hitherto* been provided actually work. It cannot be excluded that in the future a new antirealist paraphrase will be thought up that overcomes all the putative counterexamples which previous antirealist paraphrases allegedly failed to deal with. Therefore, what the syncretist needs is an argument showing that any *possible* paraphrase will be unable to resolve the controversy in favor of the antirealist.

In this respect, the syncretist must focus on what a paraphrase is in itself, to see whether it can really be exploited for antirealist purposes. First of all, as many have remarked, a paraphrase is not ontologically eliminative *in itself*. Certainly, many paraphrases are intended to be ontologically eliminative. Russellian paraphrases of sentences containing definite descriptions are often meant to be paradigmatic examples of paraphrases of this kind. For they dispel the ontological commitment to often problematic entities that sentences containing descriptions seem to have. Yet other paraphrases are ontologically *introductive*. Davidson's analysis of action sentences is a typical example. The paraphrase of an action sentence such as:

(1) Luke kissed Lara

as:

(1′) There is something which is identical with a kiss and which Luke gave to Lara

does introduce a commitment to events that (1) does not apparently possess.[4]

This already shows that pursuing a paraphrase in either eliminative or introductive terms has to do with one's prior ontological convictions.[5] Russell is paradigmatic in this sense for he proposed eliminative paraphrases of sentences apparently involving bizarre, Meinong-like, objects; this was basically

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although conniving uses appear to commit one to imaginary "entities," an antirealist may well free semantics from an ontological engagement by providing a *noncommittal* interpretation of nonconniving uses. In fact, even the subtler antirealists are forced to defend a similar position as they claim that sentences apparently involving fictional entities merely express "gappy" propositions, that is propositions whose objectual position is unfilled. See Reimer (2001b). In my terms, this is what an antirealist might appropriately say of nonconniving uses of the above sentences.

[4] Cf. Davidson (1967). For this example and the lesson to be drawn from it, see Varzi (2001: 34).

[5] Cf. Varzi (2001: 37), (2002b).

because he believes that such objects infringe upon "our robust sense of reality" (Russell (1919: 170)).[6]

However, the fact that a paraphrase is in itself ontologically neutral reveals even more than its being guided by one's prior ontological convictions. It also shows that the ontological problem of whether there are entities of a certain kind cannot ultimately be solved by the linguistic method of paraphrase. The ontological neutrality of the method enables us to underline that a paraphrase and the sentence it paraphrases are *merely same-sayers*. Insofar as this is the case, the sentence to be paraphrased can be read in terms of its paraphrase as well as *the other way round*. So, if one paraphrases a sentence in apparently noncommittal terms, it is also true that one can *vice versa* read the paraphrase in terms of the apparently committal sentence.[7]

Thus, if one really wants to dispense with a certain kind of entity, there is no semantic shortcut. Genuinely ontological reasons have to be found in order to claim legitimately that there really are no entities of that kind.[8] Without doubt, as a consequence of this ontological position, an ontologically committal semantics will no longer be sustainable: a sentence apparently "about" the entity in question will turn out really to have ontologically noncommittal truth conditions.[9] Yet this is a consequence, not a starting point. Once again, Russell is a case in point. For in saying that bizarre entities violate logical laws such as the Principle of Noncontradiction and that of Excluded Middle, Russell's polemical argument against these would-be entities was expressed precisely in terms of genuinely ontological reasons. Moreover, what holds on the noncommittal side also holds on the committal side. In other words, one has to find genuinely ontological reasons if one is to claim legitimately that there really are entities of a certain kind.

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[6] Cf. Marconi (1979: 273–4).

[7] As Thomasson emphatically points out, "[it does not] follow that, if we have a statement that appears to commit us to entities of a certain kind K, if it has the same meaning as a paraphrase that does not involve quantifying over Ks, we need not accept that there are Ks. If the two really have the same meaning, then the apparently less committing paraphrase can be transformed back into the original committing sentence, and as long as these connections of meaning are preserved, we have not thereby avoided commitment to any entities" (2003a: 152 n. 30). Cf. also Varzi (2001: 174).

[8] As Schiffer rightly points out, only terms whose purported referents fail to exist for some genuinely ontological reasons have " 'algorithms for elimination' built into them" (1996: 152).

[9] I thus part company with Fine, who apparently maintains that both realists and antirealists about entities of a certain kind must share a semantics committed to such entities. Cf. Fine (1982: 99–100).

If we apply this moral to the present case, we can conclude that detractors of *ficta* have to find genuinely ontological reasons for dismissing such entities. By the same token, supporters of *ficta* have to appeal to genuinely ontological reasons showing why there really are such entities.

In this vein, the simplest argument for a detractor of *ficta* is to appeal to Ockham's razor and say that such entities are superfluous. Given what I said above, such an appeal must be ontologically genuine. That is, the detractor cannot just say that *ficta* are superfluous since he or she can provide ontologically noncommittal *paraphrases* of discourses purportedly about such entities. Instead, a genuine ontological explanation of such superfluity must be given. In any case, such an appeal forces the believer to give a reply to the contrary. Indeed, what the believer must argue is that we have to commit ourselves to such entities because, despite the detractor's opinion to the contrary, such entities really are indispensable.

In the same vein, the believer cannot limit him- or herself to providing an ontological argument that merely stems from language considerations. For instance, it cannot be said that there are sentences that have a direct ontological commitment to *ficta* or that at least imply other sentences that have such a commitment.[10] For we have to be open to the possibility that not only the first sentences, but also the inferential link between these sentences and the second sentences, are ultimately explained by an antirealistically regarded paraphrase.[11]

Thus, in what follows I try to give a language-independent argument in favor of such entities, that is, an argument providing a genuinely ontological reason in favor of *ficta*. As I already said in Chapter 5, an answer to this problem is completely independent of the answer to the metaphysical question regarding the nature of these entities. Suppose I were right in holding that a *fictum* is a compound made of a make-believe process-type and a property set. Yet this would not address the further question: are there really entities of this kind? In order to answer this further question positively, the genuinely ontological argument is required.

If this attempt is successful, moreover, only the existence of *ficta* will turn out to have been proved. This is to say that since the argument I present is *specifically* aimed at proving the existence of *ficta*, it does not prove *too much*—that is, it does not prove the existence of other problematic entities of different kinds, above all *intentionalia*. This naturally strengthens the force of the argument for, as has been shown by some, an argument which proves the

[10] As Van Inwagen (1979) originally attempted. For a very recent attempt to revive Van Invagen's approach, see Goodman (2004).

[11] As Walton (2000) has replied to Van Inwagen (2000).

existence of *too many entities* is irremediably suspect: the greater the number of entities to be introduced by it, the more it risks being flawed or trivial.[12]

So, as a brief anticipation of the argument below, I can say here that *ficta* are indispensable because they are involved in the identity conditions of semantically-based entities that we normally accept, that is fictional works. In order to get to the heart of this argument, one must first assess its main premise, namely that *ficta* are involved in the identity conditions of fictional works. I will now proceed with this assessment.

3. Fictional Objects as Constituents of Fictional Works

Let me start by distinguishing clearly between fictional *texts*, fictional *works*, and fictional "*worlds*." Fictional *texts* are syntactical items.[13] More precisely, they are collections of syntactically individuated sentences, *fictional* sentences, that is (as we already know from Chapter 5) the sentences that are used *connivingly* to make believe that something is the case. Hence, they are not fictional *per se*.[14] They are called "fictional" *derivatively* since the sentences they collect are used in a *fictional* way; namely, in order to make believe that something is the case. As a consequence of this definition, fictional texts do not coincide with *literary* texts. Literary texts may also contain sentences that are not used for purposes of make-believe but merely to make genuine assertions.[15]

In being so used, fictional sentences, the sentences constituting fictional texts, have fictional truth conditions: that is, conditions for their fictional truth. Certainly, as seen above, such use is real, not fictional: there is someone who actually employs them in this way. Yet this use amounts to their being regarded as uttered in a fictional context, so to speak, by an imaginary agent or narrator. This fictional context is relevant for assigning them a truthconditional content. Yet such a content is only fictional, not real; that is, in such a use they have no real truth conditions.

Nonetheless, as I have repeatedly stressed, the very same sentences may be used not only *as if* they had truth conditions, but also as having *real* truth

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[12] On this point, see Kroon (1996), (2003), Caplan (2004). It may not be by chance that the ontological arguments which prove too much are typically the linguistically-based ones I criticized above.

[13] I do not take (fictional) texts to be *morpho*syntactical items in order to accept entities that contain differently written expressions as tokens of one and the same fictional text.

[14] As is known from Searle (1979) onwards.

[15] Typically, these are the sentences used to make *completely universal* assertions, hence to express universal propositions whose components are only general items: "men are egoists" or "war is terrible." See Searle (1979: 242).

conditions. In such a case, these sentences are used *nonconnivingly*; in other words, they are used not as if they were uttered in fictional contexts, but normally, that is as uttered in their real contexts.

On the basis of such use, we can introduce the notion of a fictional *work*. Whereas fictional texts are collections of sentences that may be used as having not only fictional but also real truth conditions, fictional *works* are syntactical-semantic entities. Indeed, they are made up of both nonconnivingly used sentences—those composing fictional texts—and of the real truthconditional interpretations of those sentences. These interpretations constitute the set of the *explicit* propositions for those sentences: that is, the set of propositions that are explicitly expressed by those sentences in this use or, what amounts to the same thing, by the explicit parafictional sentences.

However, insofar as they are nonconnivingly used, the sentences of a fictional work are not confined to saying something effectively. In doing so, those sentences may also *imply* something. So, as we already know, over and above the propositions *explicitly* expressed by those sentences in such a use—the explicit propositions—there are also those propositions *implicitly* conveyed by them in that use—the implicit propositions—which are also those propositions explicitly expressed by the implicit parafictional sentences. The former (explicit) propositions entail the latter (implicit) propositions.

Discussion of implicit propositions obliges me to introduce another notion I appealed to several times in the previous chapter, namely the notion of a fictional "*world*." As we already know, a fictional "world" is the set of both the explicit and the implicit propositions for the sentences of a fictional work. In fact, it is only a pseudo world. For, as we saw in the previous chapters, such a "world" not only need not be either consistent or maximal (in the derivative sense of these notions), but also does not function as a circumstance of evaluation for the parafictional sentences, hence for the fictional sentences in their nonconniving use. The fact that it is a set of propositions, nevertheless, legitimizes us in taking it to be a thoroughly semantic entity.

For the time being, however, fictional "worlds" may be put aside. In order to obtain the elements that enable me to introduce an argument in favor of the existence of fictional entities, fictional works suffice. Let me therefore focus on fictional works.

On the basis of the above characterizations, it turns out that syntactical structure plus semantic content provide both necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for the identity of a fictional work. This is to say that two fictional works x and y are identical iff they share both their syntactical structure and their semantic content.

As a result, two syntactically identical fictional works may differ if their sets of explicit propositions are different. A particularly vivid example of such a situation is the idealized reconstruction of the "Menard" case undertaken

from Chapter 1 onwards. In this reconstruction, Menard writes a text that is word for word identical with the text written by Cervantes. Yet such a syntactic coincidence is purely accidental: Menard is imagined to be completely unconnected with Cervantes.[16] In so doing, Menard happens to compose a fictional work that is different from Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Given their syntactical identity, their difference must lie in their different semantic contents,[17] hence in their respective sets of explicit propositions.

Now a question immediately arises: in the "Menard" case, what makes those sets differ? The answer can only be: these sets can differ only in that they contain different *singular* propositions, that is, different syntactically structured entities composed of at least an object and a property. Admittedly, they do not differ in their *general universal* propositions, in the propositions of the kind that everything, or every *F*, is *G* since the content of the general terms involved in the sentences constituting the ones they allegedly share is the same. As a result, these fictional works do not even differ in their *general existential propositions*, in the propositions of the kind that there is (uniquely) something, or some *F*, which is *G*. Thus, they cannot but differ in their singular propositions or, at least, in propositions that include not only properties but also individuals among their constituents.[18]

Of course, one could object that general terms of syntactically identical items might well receive different semantic readings. Yet this objection is ruled out by the fact that since fictional texts are collections of *connivingly used* sentences, one and the same text is used by Cervantes and by Menard, respectively, to make *de dicto* identical pretenses. Indeed, the conniving uses Cervantes and Menard make of the same sentences do not differ as far as the general terms occurring in these sentences are concerned. In their so using those sentences, both authors indeed *de dicto* pretend that *there is a strange man named "Don Quixote," imbued with bizarre ideas about chivalry, wanting to become a knight*, and so on.[19] As a result, in such uses each general term means the same for in both uses, to pretend *de dicto* that there is an individual having such and such properties is the same as pretending *of* these properties—the properties designated by the general terms in question—that there is an individual instantiating them. Hence, we

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[16] As I said in Chapter 1 n. 75, this is different from the case suggested by Borges, where Menard is well aware of what Cervantes has written. In Borges' narration, Menard intentionally tries to compose the very same work as Cervantes.

[17] This reconstruction of the case originally appears in Savile (1971).

[18] Indeed those fictional works, for instance, differ in the propositions explicitly expressed by a sentence such as "ordinary people make fun of Don Quixote," which allegedly occurs in both.

[19] As we already know from Chapter 3, these conniving uses are still different in type for they are causally-intentionally disconnected. Cf. Evans (1982: 362, 368) and Walton (1990: 403).

cannot expect the fictional works in question to differ in the meaning of their general terms—as would be the case if the *de dicto* pretenses in the conniving uses of the relevant sentences were different.

Now, general terms occur not only in sentences expressing general propositions, but also as predicates in sentences expressing singular propositions. So, if those two fictional works differ only in their singular propositions and, furthermore, if all their general terms are semantically identical, those works cannot but differ in the objectual component(s) of such singular propositions.

Theoretically speaking, two options are available here: these works may differ either in their *real* or in *fictional* objectual components. *Prima facie*, one would be tempted by the first alternative: the two works in question differ because their respective singular propositions are constituted by different actual concrete individuals. This indeed is the account we would give if we had two syntactically identical *non-fictional* works, syntactical-semantic entities whose textual components are made up of sentences only about real individuals, which also share all their general meaning constituents. Imagine two such works both consisting of the sole sentence:

(2) Paris is ugly

which in the first work says that the capital of France is (externally) ugly, thus expressing the singular proposition $<$*being-ugly*, $\{\text{Paris}_{\text{France}}\}>$, but which in the second work says that a certain city in Texas is (externally) ugly, thus expressing the singular proposition $<$*being-ugly*, $\{\text{Paris}_{\text{Texas}}\}>$. In fact, following on from what I said in Chapter 4, I believe that fictional works are only about fictional individuals. But even if we accept the view that fictional works may be composed also of real individuals, we could then imagine that in the "Menard" case the two fictional works by Cervantes and by Menard share all their real individuals: both are about, for example, La Mancha, the Sierra Morena, and Andalusia. As a result, those fictional works cannot but differ *in their fictional characters* since there is no other candidate to account for the objectual components that make the respective singular propositions different.[20]

[20] I here speak of different fictional components of singular propositions rather than of different fictional *referents* for the directly referential terms involved in the sentences that express those propositions respectively. Without doubt, as seen in the previous chapter, if there are singular propositions about fictional characters, then the singular terms involved in the sentences expressing those propositions directly refer to fictional characters. This is because the existence of singular propositions plus the existence of language entails the

In the end, therefore, what makes two syntactically identical fictional works differ may well be the different fictional characters they contain.[21] Difference in fictional objects suffices for difference in fictional works: if in a work *a* appears a *fictum F* which does not appear in a work *b*, where another *fictum F′* appears instead, then $a \neq b$. Now, to say that having different *ficta* suffices for the distinctness of fictional works is tantamount to saying that the identity of *ficta* is a necessary condition for the identity of those works: *a* and *b* are the same fictional work only if they contain the same *ficta*. Thus, fictional characters provide necessary identity conditions of fictional works.

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existence of directly referential terms. However, I here put to one side the issue of direct reference to fictional characters. I do not want my argument in favor of fictional characters to rely on the semantic thesis that such terms directly refer to such characters. So, for the time being, I intend to focus on the fact that the semantic difference between syntactically identical fictional works may well lie in the ontological difference between the individuals that make up their different singular propositions.

Yet it is very important for me to obtain the result that different fictional individuals account for the semantic difference between the syntactically identical fictional works in question by first supposing that that difference lies in a difference between singular propositions. For then one can hardly claim that that difference lies in the different general contents which names such as "Don Quixote" respectively yield to such works. (This approach may be traced back to Currie (1990: 160–3).) Even other reasons against this claim aside (such as the idea argued for above that the two works have to coincide in *all* their general contents), the point is that, once one admits that names such as "Andalusia" would make those works semantically different if they respectively provided such works with different singular propositions, claiming that names such as "Don Quixote" supply those works with different general contents seems rather *ad hoc*.

[21] One might observe that I could have also obtained this result by immediately focusing on general propositions. Is it not indeed the case that a general parafictional sentence such as "There were only windmills in the distance" quantifies over certain fictional windmills in Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and over certain other fictional windmills in Menard's *Don Quixote*? Yet, as will be remembered from the previous chapter, I want to adhere to an ontologically neutral truthconditional account of the truth conditions of a general parafictional sentence, according to which such a sentence is true iff a certain set contains the general proposition that sentence explicitly expresses. As a consequence, I am not entitled to draw the conclusion that such a sentence quantifies over different *ficta* in the respective works. All I can say is that both works contain the very same general proposition, the proposition that sentence explicitly expresses. Certainly, a general parafictional sentence may be read as having a committal import. Yet in this case it explicitly expresses a singular proposition, albeit generically described (see again the previous chapter). Therefore, two fictional works sharing that parafictional sentence may contain different singular propositions constituted by different *ficta*, that is, the different singular propositions that sentence explicitly expresses in those works respectively. Hence, once again, to account for the semantic difference between two fictional works we have to rely on the different singular propositions they involve.

This is what we would expect: if a work contained no fictional character, it would not be at all *fictional*.[22] Since fictional "worlds," moreover, contain the sets of explicit propositions that compose fictional works, fictional characters provide necessary identity conditions also of fictional "worlds."

One might of course be surprised to hear that *ficta* provide necessary identity conditions of fictional works. Should not the reverse be the case? As one could put it, *x* and *y* are the same *fictum* only if they appear in the same fictional work(s).[23] Yet if we appeal to the aspect of constitution, it is clear that works depend for their identity on *ficta* for in constituting propositions that in their turn constitute fictional works, *ficta* are among the building blocks also of fictional works.

Let me now reinforce this result. Suppose that we were forced to admit that Cervantes' and Menard's works differ in their real objectual components. It is granted that this difference would make them different works. Yet, it would hardly suffice to make them different *fictional* works. Let us go back to the case of the two one-sentence works that differ in that the first is about Paris in France, whereas the second is about Paris in Texas. It is plainly true that this difference would make them differ as works. However, they would not yet differ as fictional works.[24] In order to differ in this sense, they must be about different fictional constituents.[25] This again meets our expectations: if a work contained *no* real individual, it might nonetheless be fictional.

To avoid this result—that fictional characters provide necessary identity conditions of fictional works—various approaches are available. One might deny that there are fictional works conceived as syntactical-semantic entities, hence that there can be a semantic difference in fictional works. Or one might admit that there are fictional works so conceived, yet insist that they do not differ in their fictional characters; either because their alleged semantic difference is actually to be located in fictional, if not in imaginary, "worlds," or because there is another constitutive element for such works which makes them differ, or even, finally and most radically, because there is no semantic difference between them to be accounted for. But I do not think that these approaches are convincing. I will now assess each one in turn.

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[22] As Sutrop (2002: 332) notes, a work concerning only imaginary events about real individuals would count merely as a false factual narrative work, not as a fictional one.

[23] Cf. Thomasson (1994: 86), (1999: 63).

[24] They would not so differ even if their shared sentence were involved in (type-)different conniving uses. For when used nonconnivingly, that sentence still (allegedly) expresses different singular propositions about real individuals.

[25] As a consequence, works that shared all their fictional characters but differed in their real individuals would certainly differ as works, but would not differ as fictional works. *Pace* Sutrop (2002: 332).

According to the first, there are no distinct fictional works such as Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and Menard's *Don Quixote*. There is indeed a one-one correspondence between the fictional works and the fictional texts, conceived precisely as syntactical items. Thus, if the texts coincide, so do the works.[26]

In such an approach, all the semantic import of a text concerns the distinct possible interpretations of one and the same text/work. Accordingly, if there is a distinction between Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and Menard's *Don Quixote*, it should be located here. Within my framework, this amounts to saying that distinct fictional "worlds" may correspond to one and the same text/work. Yet it also follows that one is not entitled to make any distinction between what a fictional text/work says and what it implies. Either one has a theoretical motivation to do so—for instance, one is able to show that such a distinction does not hold *in general*[27] and not just with regard to only fictional texts/works—or it is a completely *ad hoc* step.

The second approach does what the first leaves implicit. It explicitly locates the difference between the *Don Quixote* of Cervantes and that of Menard in their respective fictional "worlds." There are indeed semantically individuated fictional works, yet the difference between their syntactically identical texts is not in what they say, hence in their fictional works, but rather in their "background assumptions," that is in what those texts imply, hence in their fictional "worlds."[28]

I admit that according to the "Menard" story as it is normally told, the "world" of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and the "world" of Menard's *Don Quixote* may differ because the subset of the implicit propositions of the former includes propositions that are not included in the subset of the implicit propositions of the latter; for example, regarding seventeenth-century Spain. However, in order to present again a case of two syntactically identical, yet semantically distinct, fictional works, it suffices to conceive of the "Menard" case in the same radical way as it was described in Chapter 1. Suppose that Cervantes and Menard are two next-door neighbors who throughout their lives have lived totally unaware of the other's existence. As a result, the background assumptions of their respective *Don Quixotes* coincide: as far as the subsets of the implied propositions of the respective fictional "worlds" are concerned, no difference in these assumptions can be found. Nevertheless, it

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[26] See Goodman-Elgin (1988: 59–63).

[27] Of course, one thing is to say that such a distinction does not hold in general, another that it must be suitably accommodated as to include in the domain of *what is said* a lot of things that were traditionally included in the domain of *what is implied*. For the second position (which I favor: cf. Chapter 5, n. 99), cf. Recanati (2003).

[28] Cf. Currie (1990: 77–8, 178).

remains true that the respective fictional works, hence also the respective fictional "worlds," are different. Unless the objector can prove that there are principled reasons showing that the radicalized case is impossible, how is he or she to account for such a difference if not by admitting that those works differ in their respective singular propositions since these propositions are about distinct fictional individuals? Yet I do not see how the radicalized case can turn out to be impossible. Take a very short story such as Giuseppe Ungaretti's famous hermetic one-sentence poem *Mattina*,

(3) I flood myself with the light of the immense [M'illumino/d'immenso].

Why should it be impossible that, completely unaware of Ungaretti composing *Mattina*, at the very same moment his neighbor was writing a syntactically identical poem? Since these writings are so rarefied, they share their implicit truths. Yet they definitely differ in their explicit truths: the first says that *a certain individual* (internally)_floods himself with the light of the immense, the second that *another individual* (internally) does the same. So, here we would certainly have two syntactically identical fictional works consisting, however, of two distinct singular propositions.[29]

In a variant of this objection, what may make two fictional works differ is not what surrounds them—the fictional "worlds"—but rather what lies behind them, two distinct imaginary "worlds." These two "worlds," moreover, differ insofar as the make-believe process-types respectively postulating them also differ since the practices respectively tokening them are causally-intentionally unconnected (see Chapter 3). Suppose that those two process-types merged into a single one because people continued to make believe that there is a strange man named "Don Quixote," etc. while being unaware, or totally oblivious, of whether it was Cervantes or Menard who originated this make-believe practice. Would we not be disposed to say that there is just one fictional work?[30]

First of all, let me admit that, given my *metaphysical* framework together with my present claim that differences in *ficta* suffice for differences in fictional works, differences in make-believe process-types lead to differences in fictional works. Since within that framework *ficta* are compounds of make-believe process-types and property sets, differences in those process-types

[29] This has to be conceded by those who, unlike myself, take the two tokens of "I" occurring in those writings as referring not to *fictional narrators*, but to real writers. The reason being that the first token would refer to *Ungaretti*, the second to *Ungaretti's neighbor*. However, in that case we would not be allowed to regard the works in question as different *fictional* works.

[30] I owe this objection (in this variant) to Fred Kroon.

are already sufficient for differences in *ficta*; insofar as fictional works are made up of fictional entities, moreover, those differences in *ficta* lead precisely to differences in these works. Yet firstly, the idea that differences in fictional works depend on differences in make-believe process-types is intended to be an objection to my present claim that differences in *ficta* suffice for differences in fictional works; therefore that idea cannot be based on this claim. Secondly, the idea must be evaluated independently of the above metaphysical assumption. In fact, that assumption is not relevant here as the reason why we are appealing to fictional works is to see whether *ficta* exist, whatever their nature.

Now, in itself the idea that differences in make-believe process-types lead to differences in fictional works seems to me incorrect. Differences in those types mean that, when used connivingly in those distinct process-types respectively, one and the same sentence has different *fictional* truth conditions. But, as stated in Chapter 5, that a sentence has fictional truth conditions says nothing about its *real* truth conditions. And what is at stake here are its real truth conditions for they are the building blocks of a fictional work, insofar as a fictional work is a structured entity made up of fictional sentences together with their truthconditional interpretation. Thus, differences in make-believe process-types do not lead in themselves to differences in fictional works.

Let me concede, then, that in the hypothetical situation the two make-believe process-types would merge.[31] Yet this would not force two fictional works to become one and the same; at most, it would lead to the constitution of a third syntactically identical work.[32]

As a third approach that goes against my claim that *ficta* provide necessary conditions for the identity of fictional works, one may admit that the difference in question concerns the syntactically identical fictional works. Yet one may hold that fictional works are not merely syntactical-semantic entities but more complex compound entities. If so, one can claim that their

[31] This is in fact controversial: since the link between distinct tokens of one and the same make-believe procedure is basically causal, unaware or totally oblivious people making believe that there is a strange man named "Don Quixote" etc. would still be connected to the pretending practice of either Cervantes or Menard.

[32] Given her thesis of a constant dependence of a work on its copies (see Chapter 2), Thomasson might be disposed to say that in such a situation, the two previous fictional works perish and a new one comes into being. As I now explicitly see fictional works as depending for their identity on *ficta* and since I moreover believe that *ficta* are everlasting entities (see Chapter 3), I would reject the first part of Thomasson's claim. Perhaps a new fictional work comes into being insofar as a new Don Quixote also comes into being; but the two previous fictional works would continue to exist, exactly as the two previous Don Quixotes. Simply speaking, people would then be unaware of any of them.

difference is located in the further element respectively contributing to the identity of these works.

It is possible to proceed along these lines by holding that entities-*cum*-meaning in general do not involve only (syntactical) form and (semantic) content, but also people's intentions. For instance, one may conceive such entities in terms of Kaplan's "common currency" conception of expressions according to which, words *qua* entities-*cum*-meaning are historical items protracting their existence through people's intentions to use their form with a constant meaning.[33] As a result, one may say that the two syntactically identical fictional works in question differ simply in that their authors had different intentions to use the expressions contained in the works with certain meanings.

However, this is no more successful than the other approaches. Even supposing that entities-*cum*-meaning contain one such further element, this cannot account for the difference between syntactically identical fictional works. For either such a meaning intention is fulfilled or it is not. If not, this may be because there is no meaning for the expression to which it applies. Hence, contrary to the hypothesis, there are no (different) entities-*cum*-meaning to appeal to in order to account for the difference between syntactically identical fictional works. Or it may be because the work actually has a meaning different from the one it was intended to have.[34] This can happen in two ways: either the actual meaning of two syntactically identical works is the same or it is not. But since these two options occur also if the meaning intention *is* fulfilled, let us proceed directly to consider this case. So, if that intention is fulfilled, then either the meanings of two syntactically identical yet intentionally different entities-*cum*-meaning are identical or they are not. Yet this first option hardly seems sufficient to account for difference in works: how can two (type-)different intentions to use an expression with the very same actual meaning make two works different? Think of the case of a non-fictional work. The fact that in reading *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* by William Prescott, I intended to designate by, say, "Mexico" the very same item that Prescott did, yet via a different referential chain (leading back to that item via a different act of naming) would definitely make my meaning intention typologically different from that of people joining the traditional chain. But it would not bring into existence a historical work different from the one authored by Prescott.

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[33] Cf. Kaplan (1990).

[34] This admittedly is a strange hypothesis—insofar as a work has the meaning it has for an author pairs its expressions with certain meaning constituents, some would straightforwardly reject it [for example Goodman (2005)]—yet this is irrelevant, for this hypothesis actually makes no difference from the case in which the meaning intention is fulfilled. See immediately later in the text.

The second option, however, makes such a difference in intentions superfluous. For the difference between syntactically identical fictional works may then be entirely accounted for by appealing to this meaning difference between the corresponding entities-*cum*-meaning.[35] To sum up, the appeal to intentions as a way to explain the difference between syntactically identical fictional works (syntactical-semantically individuated) is either inappropriate or useless.

Alternatively, one can proceed along these same lines by saying that, over and above syntax and semantics, fictional works are also made up of their creators. Consequently, difference in creators, as in the "Menard" case, suffices for difference in such works.

First of all, however, authors scarcely figure in the identity of *non*-fictional works. If the same proposition, say the singular proposition <*being-ugly*, $\{\text{Paris}_{\text{France}}\}$>, is expressed by two unconnected people writing the same sentence, for example (2), we would hardly say that such people mobilize different non-fictional works. Why should things be different as far as *fictional* works are concerned? Undoubtedly, authors may well figure in the *existence* conditions of fictional works in a generic form: if a fictional work exists, then it is necessarily authored by someone.[36] Yet it is definitely the case that this does not entail that, if fictional work *a* is composed by author *A* and fictional work *b* by a different author *B*, then $a \neq b$. For it may well turn out to be the case that *A* and *B* co-author the same fictional work. As with biological creatures, being generated by different agents does not yet make them different, unless there is no relevant causal connection between such agents.

Suppose nevertheless that authors really figured in the identity conditions of a work.[37] Nonetheless, difference in authorship would hardly suf-

[35] As Goodman, who appears to defend the idea that a work is syntax + semantics + author's intentions, is forced to say. Cf. (2004: 151–4).

[36] As we know from Chapters 2 and 3, in that authors are temporally bounded entities, not only generic, but also historical, dependence of fictional works on authors holds: necessarily, if such a work exists, its author exists at some time prior or coincident with every time at which that work exists. *Pace* Yagisawa (2001: 168), works are therefore not sempiternal entities because of their abstractness. For this opinion cf. also Reicher (1995: 108–9), and Goodman (2005), who however propends for the stronger claim that that historical dependence is rigid: the existence of a certain author is a necessary condition for the existence of a certain fictional work. Since talking of authors here means talking, as Goodman himself admits, talking of mental activities, this seems to me problematic for the same reasons that led me to question in Chapters 2–3 the analogous claim with respect to fictional entities. If one holds that *Hamlet* could not have been written by Marlowe, one must also hold that *it* could not have been written by Shakespeare himself in a later phase of his life. Is this really credible?

[37] One might try to obtain this result precisely by replacing generic with *specific* dependence of works on authors: necessarily, if a certain work exists, then its particular author also exists.

fice to make two works differ as *fictional* works. Let us assume that the reply to this is that fictional works individuated in terms of syntax+semantics+authorship are fictional in that their syntactical components, their texts, are also fictional. Yet, as we have seen above, for a text to be fictional is a *relative* property: a text is fictional not in itself but in that it is used connivingly. If a work were fictional because of its text, it would then be fictional also in a relative way: namely, depending on how its text is used. This seems unacceptable. Clearly, this relative description of fictionality does not apply to a thoroughly semantic entity such as a fictional "world." In such a case, fictionality is an absolute feature as it entirely depends on the semantic properties of a "world." Now, why should adding syntax to semantics in order to get a fictional work alter the nature of the fictional feature of this resulting entity?[38] Again, appealing to authors is no more successful than appealing to meaning intentions to account for difference in syntactically identical fictional works.[39]

As a final approach, one may deny altogether that there are syntactically identical but semantically different fictional works. The difference that in the "Menard" case allegedly exists between fictional works is either to be totally rejected or at most located elsewhere, for example in (type-)different acts of storytelling.[40]

I have little to say about the "positive" side of this denial, that is about the idea that syntactically identical fictional works *are* also semantically

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In fact, Thomasson suggests that authorship provides a necessary identity condition of a *composition*, that is, a (syntactically individuated) text "as created by a certain author in certain historical circumstances" (1999: 64). Yet, as I said in the previous footnote, I feel uncertain as to whether this further dependence of works on authors really holds. To repeat, if the real grounding factor in question were a certain thought *token* of its author, I would find it implausible to hold that a work depends specifically on such a factor.

[38] We would basically obtain the same result if we appealed to authors' intentions. For we would have to show how such intentions differ from the intentions that would analogously figure in the identity conditions of nonfictional works. Yet, whatever we obtained, we could hardly appeal to it as being what makes a *work* fictional. Some would say that such a factor would be relevant for qualifying a *text* as fictional. But, as we have just seen, whatever makes a text fictional does not explain what makes a work fictional.

[39] Perhaps authors (or, better, their conceptions) provide necessary identity conditions for the conniving use of sentences belonging to fictional texts: two conniving uses of the same sentences are type-identical only if these sentences are intended as if they were uttered in a context where they had certain truth conditions. So, a desert storm assembling words into a text, or a monkey accidentally typing it, would not count as making the resulting sentences connivingly used, precisely because the textual instance produced would not be intended as if it were uttered in a context where it has a certain truthconditional content.

[40] Cf. Lewis (1978: 39), Parsons (1980: 188). Curiously enough, both Lewis and Parsons believe in *ficta*.

such. The intuition that in the "Menard" case two works are at stake is sound. It is precisely the fact that we have such an intuition in the case of a *fictional* work but that we would not have it in a parallel case involving, say, a *mathematical* work, which prompts us to account for it in some way or other. Thus, explaining the difference in question in terms of a difference in storytelling processes seems too weak. Undoubtedly, as I said before, such a distinction explains the distinct fictionality of *texts*, but the fact that the *works* in question are different remains unexplained.

I prefer to focus on the "negative" side of this denial, that is on the idea that syntactically identically fictional works are *not* semantically different. To begin with, it could pursue the line which grants that if in the "Menard" case there were a meaning difference, it should be located in singular propositions. But, it would then go on to say that there are no such things.

This "negative" side is, however, utterly inadequate. Firstly, this negation is surprising for in the above-mentioned case of two syntactically identical *non*-fictional works, there was no doubt about viewing them as different because of the difference in their singular propositions. Moreover, it must be stressed that it is not the *existence* of singular propositions that is at stake here; we are simply relying on such propositions in order to account for the *identity* conditions of fictional works. Generally speaking, one may provide identity conditions for an item x in terms of another item y even before assessing the existence of such items. It is granted that there is no entity without identity; yet it is precisely so that identity comes first.[41] Rather, one might reasonably question an attempt to provide identity conditions for x in terms of y if one were able to show that the notion of a y is in some way inconsistent. But there is no such inconsistency in the notion of an entity consisting of (an) object(s), a property, plus a certain (ordered) structure, that is in the notion of a singular proposition. This is why in the case of two syntactically identical non-fictional works, there is no conceptual problem in accounting for their difference in terms of their different singular propositions.

Nevertheless, the defender of this approach might retort that *in the present case* one cannot account for the alleged difference in fictional works as a difference in singular propositions. In other words, according to him or her *in the "Menard" case* there are no different singular propositions since those propositions would have to be different as a result of differences in their fictional components. Yet one may well deny that there are such things.

[41] In general, I am here following Thomasson's (1999) methodology according to which we must first ask ourselves what nature an entity of a certain kind would have if there were such an entity and, only secondly, whether there really are such entities.

However, to deny the semantic account of the "Menard" case in such a way seems arbitrary. As seen above, if real rather than fictional objects were involved, we would have no doubt in accepting a *meaning* difference between syntactically identical works. Moreover, once again, since the issue concerns the *identity* conditions of singular propositions, the existence of the entities invoked to account for such conditions, that is fictional objects, is irrelevant.[42] What might be relevant would be some inconsistency in the *notion* of a fictional object. Yet again, there seems to be no such inconsistency. This is demonstrated by the fact that one can provide identity conditions also for fictional objects. An example is the path followed by the syncretist.

4. The Argument

At this point, the way is finally open to move onto the ontological argument in favor of fictional objects. It is quite a simple argument. If we admit a certain kind of entity, we cannot but admit all the other kinds of entities that figure in the identity conditions of such an entity. We admit fictional works; so we cannot but also admit fictional objects because they figure in the identity conditions of fictional works.

This argument resembles another argument in favor of *ficta* recently presented by Thomasson. Her argument again mobilizes fictional works and says that we cannot reject fictional objects if we admit fictional works. For, given that fictional objects and fictional works belong to the same kind of entity it would be false parsimony to accept the one and reject the other.[43]

First of all, however, Thomasson's argument is disputable since it assumes that fictional objects and fictional works are entities of the same kind.[44] Even admitting that both fictional objects and fictional works are abstract entities sharing the same type of dependence relations on other entities, as Thomasson claims, it remains that they differ in kind. As indeed Thomasson herself seems to maintain,[45] while fictional works are syntactical-semantic entities, fictional entities are not.

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[42] Once I am able to prove the existence of fictional objects, I will be entitled to hold not only that the *identity* of singular propositions having *ficta* as constituents presupposes the identity of such objects, but also that the *existence* of such propositions presupposes the existence of those objects, as I maintained in the previous chapter.

[43] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 143). Thomasson actually speaks of literary works, but this is irrelevant for my present purposes.

[44] Cf. Iacona-Voltolini (2002: 286–7).

[45] Cf. Thomasson (1999: 65).

Furthermore, the present argument is more compelling than Thomasson's since it does not rely on a parallelism between fictional works and fictional characters as entities of the same kind, but on the fact that the identity conditions of the fictional works refer to fictional characters.

In actual fact, Thomasson has recently strengthened her argument. It would be false parsimony, she now says, to reject entities of a given kind while admitting other entities that are logically sufficient for their existence. In her view, this is the case as far as fictional entities and literary (fictional) works are concerned: the latter are logically (that is, conceptually) sufficient for the existence of the former.[46]

To begin with, I take her reinforced argument in a purely ontological form and not in the hidden semantic form which she sometimes gives it. In this hidden semantic form, using a sentence such as:

(4) Author A wrote a fictional work pretending to refer to an individual named "FC"

logically suffices to ensure reference is made to the fictional character *FC*—alternatively stated, accepting (4) makes it redundant to say the sentence:

(5) The fictional character FC appears in a fictional work by A.

This is because in this form the argument leads directly to a semantic conclusion I want to set aside, namely the existence of (direct) reference to fictional characters.

Yet the hidden semantic form is important for it reveals a flaw in Thomasson's argument as it stands. By pretending to refer to something, one writes a fictional work only in the sense that one writes a set of fictional sentences taken in their conniving use, hence as having merely *fictional* truth conditions. Insofar as this is the case, one does not write a fictional work in *my* present sense, which, as I said before, Thomasson apparently shares. According to this sense, a fictional work is a syntactical-semantic entity made up of both a syntactically individuated text and a set of propositions, the explicit propositions, which are the *real* truthconditional contribution explicitly expressed by the sentences composing that text in their nonconniving use. As a result, it is not the case that, in the sense of a fictional work that appeals to pretense, the writing of such a work is a sufficient condition, let alone logically (or conceptually) sufficient, for the existence of a fictional entity.

[46] Cf. Thomasson (2003a: 147–151), (2003b).

As we already saw in Chapter 3, this is the creationist fallacy.[47] Creationists think that if, in the imaginary "world" determined by a fictional context, connivingly used sentences are fictionally true, then *eo ipso* a fictional individual actually exists *qua* abstract entity. But as I repeatedly stressed in that chapter, what concerns an imaginary "world" can have no ontological import with respect to the actual world. If the imaginary "world" were a genuine world, a possible world, we would not be disposed to say that the fact that an object exists in that world has any import for the fact that other entities exist in the actual world. Why should things be different in the present case? Perhaps the fact that one makes believe that there is an individual suffices for there actually to be a certain *intentional* object. Yet it definitely does not suffice for the fact that there actually is a certain *fictional* object because, in turn, the existence of an *intentionale* is not *sufficient* at all for the existence of a *fictum*.

Naturally, if by "fictional work" Thomasson really means a syntactical-semantic entity of the kind I have already illustrated, then her argument can be recuperated by means of the argument I am presently proposing and defending. For then her premise on the logical sufficiency of fictional works for fictional entities turns out to be an intermediate conclusion in the present argument. If (i) fictional objects provide necessary identity conditions for fictional works and (ii) fictional works exist, then of course the existence of fictional works is logically sufficient for the existence of fictional objects; hence once again, fictional objects also exist.

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[47] Thomasson explicitly relies on Schiffer's (1996) conviction—further bolstered in (2003)—that the pretending use of language is metaphysically sufficient for the existence of *ficta*, insofar as there is a "something from nothing" entailment leading from a connivingly used sentence to an external metafictional sentence used in a straightforward nonconniving, committal way (a use which Schiffer labels "hypostatizing" use). I have criticized this conviction, both in its weaker and stronger forms, in Chapter 3 n. 23–4. In fact, there definitely seems to be a tension in Schiffer's 1996 paper which is apparently reflected in Thomasson's 2003 papers. On the one hand, Schiffer says that the pretending use of language is metaphysically sufficient for the existence of *ficta*, so that *ficta* exist even in worlds in which people have at their disposal merely the pretending but not the hypostatizing use (in those worlds, people are simply not aware that *ficta* exist, nor do they know their essence). On the other hand, in order for those entities to exist—actually as well as possibly—it seems that actually using a sentence in the hypostatizing mode is required. See Schiffer (1996: 156–60). Incidentally, one may note that Thomasson might theoretically acknowledge that conniving uses of sentences are not sufficient in themselves, let alone from a logical or conceptual standpoint, for the existence of *ficta*. In (2001: 325) she compares the introduction of fictional entities to the introduction of illocutionary acts through sentential uses. Yet in the second case it is the *serious* use of a sentence that allows for the existence of the corresponding illocutionary act. It is when *non*-serious sentential uses are concerned (as is the case with conniving uses) that ontological introductions are at risk.

So, it seems to me that neither in its original nor in its reinforced form can Thomasson's argument in favor of the existence of fictional entities enable us to dispense with the present argument. Nonetheless, Thomasson's appeal to false parsimony, which occurs in the original version of her argument, remains an important move. The reason is that a supplementary argument based on a claim of "false parsimony" may well be called upon in support of the present argument.

Up to now, we have only focused on the identity conditions—and not the existence conditions—of fictional works as syntactical-semantic entities. Yet one might be tempted to put into question also that entities so individuated exist. Can an entity whose identity appeals to propositions, specifically singular ones, really exist? Hence, one might be tempted to question the second premise of the present argument, the admittance of fictional works.[48]

Against such a temptation, it may well be claimed that it is false parsimony to dispense with fictional works while retaining *non*-fictional works, which we admit without question. As we have already seen, fictional and non-fictional works are actually entities of the same kind: syntactical-semantic entities, entities-*cum*-meaning, possibly also entities-*cum*-singular propositions.

In this respect, note that I could have put forward a quite similar argument by relying on fictional "worlds" rather than on fictional works. As we have seen, fictional "worlds" share with fictional works the subset of the explicit propositions. Moreover, in such a subset there may well be singular propositions whose objectual constituents are fictional entities. Or, better, there have to be these singular propositions. Insofar as the idealized "Menard" case may prompt us to recognize that two fictional "worlds" may differ with respect to their fictional entities, *ficta* are indeed also involved in the identity conditions also of those "worlds." As a result, one may say that, insofar as this is the case and we accept fictional "worlds," we also have to accept fictional entities.

However, the reason that I have not taken this step is precisely that if I did I could not automatically rely on a "false parsimony" claim to argue for the existence of fictional "worlds." As we already know, fictional "worlds" are possibly inconsistent and incomplete (in the derivative sense) propositional sets. Furthermore, the borderlines of these sets may well be indefinite; it may

[48] Thomasson (2003a: 149) surmises that the existence of fictional works might be doubted only if one appealed to an (admittedly, unlikely) conspiracy theory holding that no one ever really wrote fictional stories. Yet note that such a theory might question the existence of a fictional work only when this was seen as indistinguishable from the storytelling practice that originates it. Since this is not the conception of a fictional work I am appealing to, one has to figure out different reasons in order to cast doubt on the existence of such a work. For example, as I suggest in the text, one might hold that entities individuated in terms of singular propositions and fictional individuals cannot exist.

be indeterminate whether or not a certain proposition belongs in the subset of the implicit propositions. Turning again to our example from Manzoni's *The Betrothed*, it is definitely the case that the proposition that Gertrude, the Nun of Monza, had sexual intercourse with Egidio belongs to the fictional "world" of *The Betrothed*, for it belongs to its subset of the implicit propositions, but the proposition that Gertrude was a chess player does not belong to that "world" since it does *not* occur in that subset either. Yet what about the proposition that Gertrude's gestation in her mother's womb lasted nine months? Is this a proposition entailed by a proposition that definitely figures in such a "world," namely that Gertrude is a human being, or not? By means of a "false parsimony" argument we might well admit the existence of a fictional "world" only if there definitely were *another* case in which we admitted without question a possibly both inconsistent and incomplete (in the above sense) and even possibly indefinite set. Can we find such a case?

5. Conclusion

Let me now take stock. In doing metaphysics, I have tried to show that *if* there are fictional entities, they are abstract compounds of a certain kind, that is, non-spatiotemporal entities each consisting of both a pretense-theoretical and a set-theoretical element. In semantics, I have tried to show that there are no reasons that force us, in many cases at least, to reject the intuitive conviction that our discourse allegedly about *ficta* is really about such entities. Therefore, I have provided a committal analysis of the nonconniving use of that fragment of language. Finally, in ontology, I have tried to present a genuine ontological argument to show that there really are such entities, that the overall inventory of what there is cannot rule out such things as *ficta*.

At this point, there remain many other questions to be discussed. Above all, that regarding the relationship between fictional entities that stem from fictional *linguistic* works, *syntactical*-semantic entities, and fictional entities that stem from fictional *non*-linguistic works, that is, works that have to do not with language but with various kinds of vehicles for expression, primarily fictional iconic works (cartoon, cinema, painting, sculpture). Certainly, we may well expect that such a relationship amounts to (type-)identity.[49] Fictional charac-

[49] I speak of *type*-, not of *token*-, identity not only because within the framework of the syncretistic theory a *fictum* generated by means of a storytelling practice is numerically not the same as a *fictum* generated by means of a non-linguistic vehicle, in the same sense in which it is not identical with a *fictum* generated by means of *another* storytelling practice (at most, they contribute to constituting the same general character; think of the general figure of Othello that emerged (*inter alia*) from both Shakespeare's play and Orson Welles' movie).

ters generated through images, whether two-dimensional or three-dimensional, should have the same essence as fictional characters generated through storytelling: in other words, they should be the same combination of appropriate make-believe process-type and a property set. However, proving the existence of fictional characters through the existence of fictional linguistic works still does not establish the existence of fictional characters that do not dwell in such works. To do this, a general overview of all types of (fictional) works needs to be undertaken. This is the subject for another (philosophical) work.

The other reason is that non-linguistic vehicles may display more characters than storytelling practices do [as Lamarque (2003: 44 n. 21) suggests, characters that are ontologically indeterminate in the latter may well be matched by ontologically determinate characters in the former].

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