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

[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]

[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).