Chapter 6

THE SYNCRETISTIC THEORY

1. Synopsis

In this chapter I present the general position defended by the syncretistic theory with respect to all sentences allegedly about fictional entities. The syncretistic theory is noncommittal as far as conniving uses of these sentences are concerned; but it parts company with antirealists when it is a question of nonconniving uses. In particular, it accepts the view that nonconniving uses of fictional sentences—and hence parafictional sentences—are equivalent to internal metafictional sentences in their absolutely nonconniving use. It also holds that this equivalence does not undermine the committal character of these sentences. Finally, the syncretistic theory maintains that, in the use that is the ground for (in the final analysis, erroneously) thinking that external metafictional sentences are a specific kind of sentence—that is their straightforwardly nonconniving use—such sentences are committal, as realists have traditionally asserted.

2. How to be Syncretistic not only in Ontology but also in Semantics

In the previous chapter I raised various objections to the pretense-theoretic approach. It is now time to emphasize that these objections concern only its claim that a treatment in terms of pretense covers *all* uses of sentences allegedly about *ficta*, both those involving fiction (directly or indirectly)—fictional, parafictional, and internal metafictional sentences—and those not involving fiction—external metafictional sentences. The reason for this is that as far as the *conniving* use of all those sentences is concerned, the pretense-theoretic approach is *entirely* correct. The conniving use does not commit us

to fictional entities for although it takes place actually—storytellers, actors, involved audiences as well as involved literary critics engage in it—no actual designation of fictional entities is realized through it. There is only make-believe designation of entities merely existing in the imaginary, in turn absolutely nonexistent, "world" mobilized by the relevant make-believe practice.

Regarding the pretense-theoretic approach, the syncretistic theory is, then, even more conciliatory than it has so far been shown to be. It not only maintains that in yielding one of the basic components of fictional entities, namely make-believe process-types, practices performed in the scope of a pretense play a decisive role in the constitution of fictional entities. It also acknowledges that make-believe practices characterize much of what interests us about fiction. Furthermore, it agrees with the pretense-theoretic approach that these practices are entirely noncommittal. In a possible world in which people were involved in only make-believe practices, there would be absolutely no fictional entities because engaging in such practices means acting as if one were departing from the world one really lives in. (*Just* acting as if for, unlike dreamers, ordinary performers of such practices are able to tell themselves (and others): "it's just make-believe.") So, whatever referential procedures one successfully performed within such practices, they would have no ontological import whatsoever as far as the world one really lives in is concerned.

Nevertheless, the syncretistic theory parts company with the pretense-theoretic approach in that it not only acknowledges that, over and above the conniving use, there is the *nonconniving* use of sentences allegedly about *ficta*, but it also holds that the real truth conditions of those sentences in this different use do involve such entities. We will now see how this works as far as fictional, internal metafictional, and external metafictional sentences (in their nonconniving use) are concerned.

3. Committal Internal Discourse

According to the syncretistic theory, fictional sentences in their nonconniving use have *committal* truth conditions. This is true also of parafictional sentences in general, both of those stipulatively identical with fictional sentences in their nonconniving use, those aiming to yield real explicit truths, and of the remaining parafictional sentences, those aiming to yield real implicit truths. Now we also need to see how this committal truthconditional account squares with the fact that a parafictional sentence is equivalent to an internal metafictional sentence (in its absolutely nonconniving use; from now on, I take this for granted). In the previous chapter, I indeed rejected not this equivalence but its intensionalist interpretation, namely the thesis that a

parafictional sentence is equivalent with an "in the story" sentence which is true iff its embedded sentence is true in the "world" of the story.

To see how this is possible, an alternative analysis of the above equivalence must be provided. In maintaining that a parafictional sentence is equivalent to the corresponding internal metafictional sentence, it has not generally been noted that a locution of the form "in the story S," like similar locutions ("in the fiction F," etc.), is ambiguous between at least two readings owing to the different interpretation of the noun "story" ("fiction," etc.), hence of the name "S" ("F," etc.) occurring in that locution. In one reading, the name "S" mock-designates an *imaginary* "world," the "world" that the story-tale mock-describes. This is the "world" postulated by means of the relevant make-believe practice and inhabited both by actual and by imaginary, typically concrete, individuals. Undoubtedly, this "world" exists within the scope of that make-believe practice, but in fact it does not exist at all and neither do its imaginary "inhabitants." As the reader will recall, moreover, it is only metaphorically a world since, unlike a possible world, it may fail to be consistent. Yet, there is a sense in which that "world" can still be regarded as a *bona fide* world given that it works as a circumstance of evaluation for (fictional) sentences in their conniving use. As stated in the previous chapter, when it is so used a sentence is fictionally true just in case in the imaginary "world" postulated in the relevant make-believe events unfold in the way that sentence mock-says they unfold.

In one sense, therefore, a story is precisely one such "world." In their attempt to supply parafictional sentences with real noncommittal truth conditions by identifying them with internal metafictional sentences, many intensionalists have actually appealed to this "world" for the very reason that it is an point of evaluation. As I tried to show in the previous chapter, this attempt has been unsuccessful.

However, there is another reading of the locution in question according to which the name "S" designates a *set of propositions*, the set corresponding to what pre-theoretically is taken to be the content of a story. This set is made up of *all* the propositions constituting that content, that is both the *explicit* propositions, the ones expressed by parafictional sentences that are explicitly true, and those propositions—definitely greater in number—expressed by parafictional sentences that are implicitly true, the *implicit* propositions. These are the propositions entailed by the explicit propositions.[1]

[1] Clearly, there are different ways in which such an entailment may be understood; see the texts quoted in Chapter 1, n. 43. Whatever way is chosen, it is important that this choice should rule out intuitively irrelevant propositions. To come back to an example dealt with in Chapter 1, the story of Manzoni's *The Betrothed* will have to contain the proposition to the effect that internally Gertrude has sexual intercourse with Egidio, but it will not have to contain the proposition to the effect that internally Gertrude is a chess player.

In another sense, therefore, a story is just one such set.[2] Unlike its imaginary counterpart, the imaginary "world," one such set does exist. *Qua* set, it is an abstract entity, hence a non-spatiotemporally existing item. Yet, like that imaginary counterpart, it should not be taken to be a genuine world, like a possible world. In fact, this set may well contain both a proposition to the effect that a certain *fictum F* is internally *P* and another to the effect that that *fictum* is internally *not-P*, and it may also fail to contain either of these propositions. Literally speaking, this does not make that set violate the constraints, consistency and maximality, which must complied with if something is legitimately to be a world. For, on the one hand, if it contains both the proposition to the effect that *F* is internally *P* and the proposition to the effect that *F* is internally *not-P*, that set does not contain the negations of those propositions. On the other hand, if it fails to contain both of those propositions, it does contain their negations. However, this situation entails that there is a *derivative* sense of the notions of consistency and maximality according to which this set may be regarded as both inconsistent and incomplete. So, to label it a "world" is simply a *façon de parler*. To distinguish it from the other pseudo world we have just considered, namely the imaginary "world" called upon within a certain make-believe game, let me call it a *fictional* "world."

Thus, the locution "in the story S" (as well as its cognate locutions) has different meanings according to the different meanings the noun "story," hence the name "S," may possess. In one reading, "story" means the imaginary "world" postulated by the storyteller; in another, it means the set of propositions that constitute the content of the relevant group of parafictional sentences. In fact, up until now I have tended to use the word "story" precisely in this second reading as meaning the story *content*, a certain set of propositions.[3] Incidentally, these meanings are not the only ones nouns such as "story" ("fiction," etc.) may receive. By "story" ("fiction"), one may also mean the mere collection of fictional sentences, the bunch of sentences that constitute the text which is mobilized in an entire make-believe game. Moreover, one may even mean the very storytelling practice that constitutes that game. I have so far tended to use the word "fiction" precisely in this reading; fiction as what

[2] See Phillips (1999: 274). A similar position on the identity of stories is held by Zalta. According to him, stories possess internally propositions taken as being 0-adic properties of the kind *being such that p*. Cf. (1983: 91), (1988: 124), (2000: 123). See also Reicher (1995: 108–9). Once internal possession is equated with set-membership, Zalta's position comes very close to the position I defend here.

[3] Close to this sense, there is at least another possible interpretation of the "in the story S" locution, deriving from an interpretation of "S" as designating a fictional *work*, namely a syntactical-semantic compound made up of both a (morpho-)syntactically individuated item—a text—and a semantic item—a set of propositions. On fictional works, see the next chapter.

people do in pretending something. Accordingly, locutions such as "in the story S" ("in the fiction F", etc.) may have the resulting different readings.

That the locution "in the story S" (as well as its cognates) has all of these readings is not surprising. Analogous locutions may have similar readings, and perhaps even more. Take for instance a locution of the form "in the book B." The definite description in this locution may single out at least i) a certain physical object; ii) a morphosyntactically individuated linguistic type; and iii) a semantically individuated entity as, respectively, the following sentences show:

(1) In this book there is a patch of oil.

(2) In this book there is a "ç" on page vii.

(3) In this book there is a tension between a realist and an antirealist position.[4]

Now, among all those readings of the noun "story" I will single out the second one, which as I said is the one I have actually privileged so far. For, while stories *qua* imaginary "worlds" typically concern imaginary "individuals"—that is we act as if there were such "worlds" involving such "individuals"—stories *qua* propositional sets involve fictional objects as constituents of their propositional members. Hence, in what follows I utilize stories in this sense in order to provide a truthconditional *committal* account of parafictional as well of internal metafictional sentences.

To begin with, I claim that a parafictional sentence is actually equivalent to an internal metafictional sentence in which, however, its "in the story" locution singles out a certain propositional set rather than (make-believedly) an imaginary "world" since both sentences are true iff a given proposition is in, belongs to, a certain propositional set, the set constituting the content of a story. That proposition is what both sentences explicitly express. Yet the second sentence makes explicit another truthconditional constituent which the first sentence leaves implicit. This is a certain propositional set, which is unarticulated in the first sentence but articulated in the second precisely by the locution of the form "in the story S."[5]

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[4] For similar remarks, see Recanati (2000: 96–7, 100). The meaning of the locution "in this book" occurring in (3) is similar to the one I am appealing to here as regards the second reading of the "in the story" locution.

[5] Properly speaking, one may see a sentence of the form "in the story S, p" as a sentence made up of a term ("S") and a sentence ("p") by means of a functor "in the story." The functor plus the first term yield a sentential operator, "in the story S," which applies to the sentence "p." This account basically goes back to Arthur Prior. Recanati (2000: 30) defends it for

This account holds for both explicit and implicit parafictional sentences: both are true iff the proposition they explicitly express belongs to a certain propositional set. On this basis one can take the fact that some propositions—those which the explicit parafictional sentences explicitly express—entail other propositions—those which the implicit parafictional sentences explicitly express—to be the fact that the fictional "world" in question contains not only the former (entailing) but also the latter (entailed) propositions as its members.

By saying that a certain propositional set figures as an unarticulated constituent of the truth conditions of a parafictional sentence, I mean what is normally meant in these cases: the set occurs in the truth conditions of the parafictional sentence even if no linguistic material in that sentence designates it. Think of the prototypical case of this situation. A certain location (say, Rome) occurs in the truth conditions of a particular token of the sentence:

(4) It is raining

even though nothing in (4) happens to designate that location, namely when this sentence is uttered in a particular context as meaning that (at a certain time) it is raining *in Rome*.[6] In such an utterance, (4) is indeed true iff it is raining in Rome (at a certain time). Moreover, just as a location can be transformed into an articulated truth conditional constituent by expanding a sentence such as (4) through an appropriate locution (for example, "in Rome"), the propositional set appears as an articulated truthconditional constituent in the internal metafictional sentence which is equivalent to a certain parafictional sentence.

Now, seeing the "in the story" locution as articulating a truthconditional constituent unarticulated in the corresponding parafictional sentence enables one *not* to take that locution as an *intensional*, hence as a circumstance-shifting, operator. One might think that the internal metafictional sentence is not a truth function of the sentence it embeds, the parafictional sentence. This

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sentences resulting from the saturation of epistemic contexts (that is, a sentence such as "S believes that p" is treated in the same way as "According to S, p"). I invoke it here because it invites us to put aside a possible-worlds, hence an intensionalist, interpretation of parafictional sentences. This interpretation would be suggested instead by taking those sentences to be equivalent to sentences such as "It is S-fictionally the case that p," in which the locution "that p" would be naturally read as a singular term standing for a proposition.

[6] Cf. notoriously Perry (1986: 138). In point of fact, the location case is not identical to the one we are dealing with here. For the location may well work as an evaluation point for a sentence such as (4)—the expansion of (4) articulating a certain spatial location is true iff (4) itself is true *in Rome* [cf. Recanati (2004: 5–6)]—whereas the propositional set designated by the description "the story S" never works as such.

would lead one to take the internal metafictional sentence as presenting an intensional context since, as far as a complex sentence resulting from filling a genuinely intensional context—for instance "it is possible that p"—and its embedded sentence—"p"—are concerned, the truth value of the former is independent of the truth value of the latter: the first may be true regardless of the truth value of the second. Yet once it is realized that the parafictional sentence is only elliptical for the internal metafictional sentence, it can be seen that the two sentences are such that they always coincide in their truth values! Therefore, the "in the story" locution hardly works as an intensional operator. It does not in fact shift the circumstance of evaluation of the sentence embedded in the internal metafictional sentence, the parafictional sentence. Both the parafictional sentence and the internal metafictional sentence are primarily evaluated at the same circumstance, that is the actual world.

This is a desirable result because it enables us to refrain from taking a fictional "world," admittedly not a genuine world due to its possible inconsistency and incompleteness (in their derivative sense), to be a still *bona fide* world. In other words, the fictional "world" is not a circumstance of evaluation for the sentence embedded in the internal metafictional sentence. In order for a fictional "world" to work as a circumstance of evaluation for such a sentence, the property predicated in that sentence has to be possessed by something *in* that circumstance. Yet, as I repeatedly stress below, fictional individuals possess those properties in the actual world, not in a fictional "world." According to the syncretistic theory, when predicated thus, properties are possessed by *ficta* in the internal way; and internal possession is *actual* possession, not possession in another world, let alone a fictional one.

Furnished with these reflections, let us now see how this truthconditional account of parafictional, hence of internal metafictional, sentences squares with a committal perspective on fictional entities.

I will start with the simplest of these sentences, namely those containing proper names. If we apply to these sentences the truthconditional account provided above, we find that a parafictional sentence of the kind "F is P" where "F" is a proper name (as well as its equivalent internal metafictional sentence) is true iff a given *singular proposition*, namely a proposition made by a certain fictional object *F* designated by "F" and by the property designated by the remaining term of the sentence, the predicate "_ is P," is a member of a certain propositional set, a certain fictional "world." Since the singular proposition mobilized in this truthconditional account is composed (*inter alia*) of a fictional entity, this account clearly commits us to fictional entities.

It is quite evident that this account also commits us to singular propositions. I will not deal here with a general defense of singular propositions, structured items constituted of at least an object and a property. Instead, I confine myself to saying that *if* we accepted such propositions when their

objectual constituents are concrete—or even abstract—individuals, it would be false ontological parsimony to reject those propositions when their objectual constituents are fictional entities. For these propositions are precisely entities of the same kind as the above, that is singular propositions. (Of course, one might reject singular propositions made out of fictional entities if one managed to dispense also with fictional entities. But in the next chapter I try to show why these entities are ontologically indispensable.)[7]

Before proceeding, let us examine in greater detail what such singular propositions consist of. As I have just said, these propositions are ordinarily considered to be not only *compound* entities made up of objects (at least one) and a property but also *structured* entities. A singular proposition is taken to be structured in that its objectual component(s) fill(s) a particular position within it. This may be shown by the following representation of a singular proposition: $<\{a,b, \ldots\}$, *being-P*$>$, where the inner brackets indicate the position that the objectual component(s) has (have) to fill in the singular proposition.[8] Yet, from the perspective of the syncretistic theory, we can see that such a proposition is even more structured than its usual supporters believe. Not only do(es) its objectual component(s) fill a specific position within it; its property component can also be related in two different ways to its objectual component(s), depending on whether it is internally or externally predicated of it (them): let me call these ways W_i and W_e respectively. This structural complication may be represented by specifying not only the position in the singular proposition to be filled by objectual components, but also the order this position assumes with respect to the predicative element in the proposition. Thus, we may see a singular proposition as having either the structure $<\{a,b, \ldots\}$, *being-P*$>$, where the property follows the position filled by the objectual component(s), or the structure $<$*being-P*, $\{a,b, \ldots\}>$, where the property precedes that position, depending on whether the property is internally or externally predicated of that (those) component(s).[9]

Once we have seen in more detail how one such singular proposition is structured, we are able to understand how the truthconditional account of parafictional sentences of the kind "F is P," where "F" is a proper name, is

[7] For this kind of "false parsimony" argument, see Thomasson (1999: 143). A general defense of singular propositions would involve a careful scrutiny of their nature, in which an ontological reduction of these entities to entities of a different kind—states of affairs made of objects and of modal properties of the kind *being possibly P*—is allowed. As the focus here is on fictional entities, I shall postpone this scrutiny for another time.

[8] Cf. Braun (1993: 462).

[9] For the thesis that sentences may also express singular propositions made by fictional objects and by properties internally predicated of them, see also Zalta (1989).

perfectly compatible with the account I sketched in Chapter 3. I said there that one such sentence is true iff the fictional object designated by "F" possesses internally the property designated by the predicate "_ is P." *Prima facie*, this may seem an altogether different truthconditional account. But to say that a parafictional sentence of the form "F is P" is true iff the fictional object designated by "F" possesses internally the property designated by the predicate "_ is P" *amounts to saying* that that sentence is true iff in a certain propositional set, the relevant fictional "world," there is a singular proposition whose structure is $<\{F\}$, *being-P*$>$. The same obviously holds of the internal metafictional equivalent of such a sentence since the fact that a *fictum F* possesses the property *P* internally and the fact that in a certain propositional set there is the proposition $<\{F\}$, *being-P*$>$ are precisely the same. As I have said above, a property is internally possessed by something in the actual world, not in a fictional "world." In any event, the fact that a *fictum* actually possesses a certain property internally is the same as the fact that, in a certain propositional set there is actually a singular proposition with the above-mentioned structure.

As the syncretistic theory holds that there are no concrete immigrants in fiction (see Chapter 4), it is, moreover, forced to provide such an analysis not only for parafictional sentences containing names such as "Hamlet" and "Holmes," which designate no actual concrete individual, but also for parafictional sentences containing names such as "Denmark" and "London," which elsewhere designate actual concrete individuals, and hence for *all* parafictional sentences, as well as their internal metafictional equivalents, containing names.

So, take:

(5) Hamlet is a prince.

(5) is true iff the *fictum* Hamlet possesses internally the property of *being a prince*, which the predicate "_ is a prince" designates. Yet this is to say that (5)—as well as its internal metafictional equivalent:

(5′) In *Hamlet*, Hamlet is prince

—is true iff in the fictional "world" of *Hamlet*, there is the singular proposition $<\{$Hamlet$\}$, *being-a-prince*$>$. But now take also:

(6) London is inhabited by a cocaine-addicted detective.

(6) is true iff the *fictum* London, the London of the Holmes stories (let me call it "London$_H$"), possesses internally the property of *being inhabited by a*

cocaine-addicted detective; that is, (6)—as well as its internal metafictional equivalent:

(6′) In the Holmes stories, London is inhabited by a cocaine-addicted detective

—is also true iff in the fictional "world" of Conan Doyle's stories, there is the singular proposition $<\{\text{London}_H\}$, *being-inhabited-by-a-cocaine-addicted-detective*$>$.

That the fact of a *fictum* actually possessing a certain property internally is the same as the fact of there actually being, in a given set, a certain singular proposition with the above-mentioned structure may clearly be seen if we go back to an example considered in the previous chapter. The truth of the sentence:

(7) In *Orlando Furioso*, Roland goes insane while in the *Chanson de Roland*, he is very wise

does not show that the (general) character Roland is insane *in* the epic poem *Orlando Furioso* but wise *in* the *Chanson de Roland*. If this were the case, *ficta* would possess certain properties *relatively*, that is in certain "worlds" only. But in saying that *ficta* possess those properties internally, the idea is that they possess them *absolutely*. (The general) Roland is internally both insane and very wise. Therefore, what (7) brings out is that the fact that Roland is such internally amounts to the fact that two singular propositions to the effect that Roland is internally insane and that Roland is internally wise, respectively, belong to different propositional sets, the story (the "world") of *Orlando Furioso* and the story (the "world") of the *Chanson de Roland*.

As a consequence, according to this account names directly refer to fictional entities in both parafictional and internal metafictional sentences. Both a parafictional sentence and its internal metafictional equivalent involving a proper name say that the singular proposition which both explicitly express belongs to the propositional set which the second sentence articulates. Now, if both explicitly express such a proposition, namely a structured entity consisting of (at least) an object and a property, then they contain (at least) a directly referential expression designating such an object, that is the name(s) occurring in them.

In Chapter 5, I put forward the hypothesis that even if one were forced to adopt descriptivism with regard to names in fiction, this would not strengthen the eliminativist position. As was seen there, a descriptive candidate for synonymy with a proper name involved in fiction can always be found, which allows that name to have a fictional entity as its genuinely Russellian

denotation. It is sufficient to take any description of the kind "the result of seeing the set of properties $\{P,Q,R \ldots\}$ as make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to those properties are instantiated by an individual."

Nevertheless, I do not think that one is obliged to endorse a descriptive theory of singular terms used to designate fictional entities. As we have just seen, we can adopt a directly referential approach for proper names used in this way. It would indeed be better not to adopt a descriptivist approach as far as genuine singular terms used to designate *ficta* are concerned. This is because, as I repeatedly stressed in Chapter 5, if one generally accepts the view that genuine singular terms directly refer to their *designata*, it is hardly justifiable to claim that they work in a semantically different way when they are used to designate fictional entities. If one is a realist about *ficta*, moreover, then that thesis is even less plausible. Why should a change in ontology—not only from concrete to abstract entities, but also from other kinds of *abstracta* to *ficta* themselves—prompt such a change in semantics?[10]

The thesis that names are directly referential expressions in fiction just as they are elsewhere is maintained by many antirealists.[11] Along with many others, however, I endorse it here from a committal point of view.[12]

Nevertheless, although this nondescriptivist yet fully referential approach to names in fiction yields a simple account of their semantic function, one might still think that it is genuinely problematic given that, one may suppose, it hardly accounts for the *mechanism* of reference. In other words, it does not seem to explain how it is that a proper name becomes tied to a certain fictional individual as its semantic value. Normally, one invokes some kind of causal link between an object and its name. But, since for the

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[10] Compared to what I claimed in Voltolini (1994: 97), I have here changed my position. In that work I thought that, with respect to singular terms used to designate *ficta*, the "analyticity" datum forced one to adopt a descriptivist theory of reference. For I believed that the Kantian idea that a sentence is analytically true iff the meaning of the predicate is contained in the meaning of the subject could be preserved only by saying that the property predicated in a parafictional sentence also figures in the truthconditional contribution which the description that the singular term of that sentence is synonymous with gives to the descriptive paraphrase of that sentence. But this is not true. According to the theory of direct reference, the meaning of a genuine singular term coincides with its referent. According to the syncretistic theory, a *fictum* is *inter alia* constituted by the properties belonging to its base set. As a result, when one such property is predicated of a *fictum* in a parafictional sentence having a genuine singular term referring to that *fictum*, that sentence is analytically true iff that property—the meaning of the predicate—is effectively contained in the *fictum*—the meaning of the subject. Surely, this is only a partial account of the "analyticity" datum. I give a more comprehensive account below.

[11] Cf. Adams-Stecker (1994), Everett (2000), Taylor (2000).

[12] Cf. Predelli (2002), Salmon (1998), Thomasson (1999), Zalta (2000), (2003).

syncretist a *fictum* is an abstract entity, there is definitely no causal link between a name and the fictional individual standing at the origin of the relevant referential chain for that name. Nor can there be.

Some abstractionists maintain that a causally indirect link between a name and the *fictum* it directly refers to can always be found. Undoubtedly, on behalf of the syncretistic theory one may suspect that this conviction is wrong since abstractionists rely on possibly inadequate mediators: texts or, even better, storytelling acts.[13] These mediators are possibly inadequate because, as was seen in Chapter 3, the fact that a text or a storytelling practice exists does not yet entail that the corresponding *fictum* also exists. Yet the failure of these alleged mediators is not problematic. We can surely rely on a description of the above-mentioned form, "the result of seeing the set of properties $\{P,Q,R \ldots\}$ as make-believedly$_n$ such that the properties corresponding to those properties are instantiated by an individual," in the context of a directly referential approach. The syncretist may say that such a description merely *fixes* the reference of any genuine singular term used to designate a fictional individual. Indeed, regardless of whether descriptivism is correct or not, such a description definitely has a certain fictional entity as its Russellian *denotatum*. Hence, it can be used to fix the reference of a certain nondescriptive singular term, such as a proper name, to that very object. It thus supplies that term with that object as its semantic value, precisely as the theory of direct reference predicts.[14]

However, the fact that proper names directly refer to *ficta* in parafictional sentences, hence also in internal metafictional sentences, does not mean than every directly referential expression does the same. Indexicals are unable to. Clearly, in a conniving use of a sentence, an indexical may well be employed to refer directly to an "individual" existing only in the imaginary "world" mobilized by the make-believe game corresponding to that use. In the example we already looked at in the previous chapter—there (17) and here renumbered:

(8) For a long time I used to go to bed early

"I" fictionally refers to the concrete "individual" narrating the events in the imaginary "world" of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. Yet there is no possibility that the fictional (and abstract) individual corresponding to that

[13] See Thomasson (1999: Chapter 4) and Zalta (2000: 143–4), (2003) respectively.

[14] Hunter (1981) rightly points out that many descriptive candidates would fail to fix the reference of a genuine singular term to a *fictum*. But those candidates fail for the same reason that would lead them to fail to have a fictional individual as a Russellian denotation: they do not fit either the existence or the uniqueness condition contained in Russell's analysis.

imaginary (and concrete) "narrator" could be referred to by the token of that indexical in:

(8′) In *In Search of Lost Time*, for a long time I used to go to bed early.

The reason is that in (8′) "I" cannot but refer to the utterer of (8′) itself, that is, me. So, if we want to refer to the relevant fictional character, we have to use another internal metafictional sentence (or correspondingly another parafictional one). And it is thus tempting to say that internal metafictional, hence parafictional, sentences do not contain indexicals referring to fictional characters.[15]

So, as far as directly referential expressions are concerned, we have a dual situation: names refer, indexicals do not, to fictional individuals in parafictional and fictional sentences. Now, what about indirectly referential expressions, above all definite descriptions?

To begin with, let me recall from the previous chapter that as far as parafictional sentences containing descriptions are concerned, if one tries to analyze those sentences in strictly Russellian terms, without equating them with internal metafictional sentences, one must expect them to be noncommittal. For on Russell's analysis, what we end up with are false sentences which fail to enable those descriptions to have a *fictum* as their denotation. Furthermore, if we superimpose on Russell's analysis the distinction between internal and external predication, this does not significantly change the situation. Take, for instance:

(9) The winged horse flies

and analyze it *à la* Russell, that is:

(9R) There is only one winged horse, and that individual flies.

Clearly, if we interpret the first predicate contained in the sentence ("_ is a winged horse") as used in *external* predication (as Russell himself would have done, if he had endorsed the "modes of predication" distinction), we obtain a false sentence as the existence condition is not satisfied: there is nothing that is externally a winged horse. But even if we interpret that predicate in *internal* predication, we risk having a false sentence. This is because even if the existence condition is complied with—there definitely is a fictional individual which is internally a winged horse, namely Pegasus, the

[15] For the thesis that indexicals in fiction do not refer to anything outside the fiction itself, see also Corazza-Whitsey (2003).

character in the Greek myth—the uniqueness condition may not be satisfied. Suffice it that, over and above the Greek myth, there is another story in which one of its characters shares with Pegasus the fact that it is internally a winged horse. As a result, the description "the winged horse" does not have an individual as its denotation, or a fictional character either.[16]

Now, when applied to definite descriptions, my general truthconditional account of parafictional sentences (hence of internal metafictional sentences) shares Russell's analysis of descriptions. Moreover, in itself it is also ontologically neutral as far as definite descriptions are concerned. Yet, unlike Russell's account, it saves the intuitive truth value of these sentences, namely the True. Let me explain.

In conformity with the case of a parafictional sentence involving proper names, we must expect that the mode of predication involved in both the parafictional sentence containing a definite description—"the F is G"—and its Russellian paraphrase is the internal one. Hence, when analyzed *à la* Russell, that parafictional sentence is true iff there is just one individual that is internally *F* and that individual is (again internally) *G*. Now, in general for the syncretistic theory a parafictional sentence is true iff, in the relevant fictional "world," there is a certain proposition, the proposition explicitly expressed by that sentence because this accounts for its equivalence to its internal metafictional correspondent. So, in such a case, saying that a parafictional sentence is true iff there is only one individual that is internally *F* and that individual is internally *G* is tantamount to saying that that sentence (or its internal metafictional equivalent) is true iff, in the relevant fictional "world," there is a certain proposition, which this time is no longer a singular but rather a *general* proposition, namely a proposition to the effect that there is only one individual which is internally *F* and that individual is internally *G*.

Since, in the case of (9), that general proposition really does belong to the propositional set constituting the content of the Greek myth, (9) is true as our intuition suggests it is. However, since that general proposition contains only

[16] One might think that, at least in cases where a fictional entity is composed of just one property *P*, a description of the form "the individual which has internally only P" would manage to denote that entity. Such a conviction might be ascribed to Zalta (1983: 47–8); see also Parsons (1980: 118–20) for an analogous view, expressed however in terms of nuclear properties rather than in terms of internal predication (that is, as regarding a description of the form "the individual which has only the nuclear property P"). But there are cases similar to that of Menard to show that even such a description may well denote nothing. For there may be two fictional characters which share their only internal property and yet are distinct in that the make-believe process-types leading to their generation are different. It must, however, be remembered that for Zalta a description successfully denoting a fictional individual such as "the winged horse" must actually be taken to be a shorthand for a description such as "the individual which is externally a winged horse in the Greek myth." See below.

properties but no individuals, the fact that it is a member of a propositional set does not entail that the description in (9), "the winged horse," has a Russellian denotation, in particular a fictional individual. So, even if the syncretist applies Russell's analysis to a parafictional sentence containing a definite description, that sentence may be true regardless of whether that description has a denotation.

Certainly, one might think that the fact that such a proposition belongs to a given propositional set shows that the relevant description has a denotation not in the actual world, but in that set itself. In other words, one might see no difference between my account of parafictional sentences containing definite descriptions and the intensionalist account, which gives a *de dicto* reading to the equivalent internal metafictional sentences. As we already know, this approach counts as eliminativist with respect to *ficta*: the relevant description has *no* actual denotation. Do I therefore share an eliminativist approach as far as those parafictional sentences are concerned?

As I have already observed, however, for the syncretist the propositional set in question is not a *bona fide* world; it is not a circumstance that enables one to evaluate whether properties are possessed by something in it, as the "world of the story" is for the intensionalist. In fact, such a set contains individuals, notably fictional individuals, only *derivatively*, that is, as constituents of singular propositions belonging to the set. As a result, the fact that a general proposition to the effect that there is only one individual which internally *F*-s and that individual internally *G*-s belongs to that set says nothing as to whether a fictional individual having these properties internally (the first moreover uniquely) is also in that set. This is corroborated by the fact that since there is a sense according to which the propositional set in question is incomplete, existence within it of such a general proposition need not be matched by the existence of any corresponding singular proposition to the effect that one such fictional individual is uniquely *F* internally and is also internally *G*, as would on the contrary be the case if the fictional "world" were a *bona fide* world.[17] Yet the fact that the belonging of a general proposition to a certain propositional set says nothing as to

[17] In a possible world, conceived as actualists see it either as a maximal consistent propositional set [cf., for example, Adams (1974)] or as a maximal consistent state of affairs [cf., for example, Plantinga (1974)], the existence of an existentially generalized proposition/state of affairs, at least when this involves an actually exemplified property, entails the existence of a corresponding singular proposition/state of affairs involving that property and a given actual individual. Yet most actualists would also say that when an existentially generalized proposition/state of affairs involves an actually unexemplified property, it entails the existence, in the possible world to which it belongs, of *no* singular proposition/state of affairs involving that property and a given possible individual. Most actualists believe that there are no *possibilia*. See, for example, Adams (1981), Plantinga (1974).

whether a certain fictional individual is (admittedly derivatively) in that set must be taken literally. In this respect, the syncretistic approach to parafictional sentences containing definite descriptions is not eliminativist, as the above intensionalist approach is.

Now, in my truthconditional analysis of sentences such as (9), such a sentence is equivalent to the corresponding internal metafictional sentence:

(10) In the Greek myth, the winged horse flies.

In virtue of this equivalence, unlike Russell I take (9) to be true. But this does not mean that "the winged horse" acquires a denotation. For to say, admittedly *à la* Russell, that (9) is true iff there is just one individual which is internally a winged horse and this individual internally flies *amounts to saying* that (9), like its equivalent (10), is true iff in the fictional "world" of the Greek myth, there is a general proposition to the effect that just one individual is internally a winged horse and that individual internally flies. In itself, as far as fictional entities are concerned, this way of stating the truth conditions of (9) or of (10) is ontologically neutral.[18]

Yet it is clear that, once we recognize an ontological commitment to such entities on the part of a sentence such as:

(11) Pegasus flies

where "Pegasus" directly refers to the fictional character Pegasus, it is hard not to acknowledge that we intend a sentence such as (9)—or (10) for that matter—where the name "Pegasus" is replaced by the description "the winged horse," as having the same commitment. So, in that case we intend (9)–(10) to say *more* than that in the fictional "world" of the Greek myth there is a general proposition to the effect that just one individual is internally a winged horse and that individual internally flies. Moreover, such a reading is required in cases in which we clearly use a definite description to speak of a fictional character because we do not have any other means of designating it (possibly because, in the make-believe game leading to the generation of that character, the storyteller has not provided a name).[19]

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[18] In this respect, I agree with the noncommittal analysis that Parsons gives of a sentence such as "In the story there was a unique chicken that laid the egg that Holmes ate". Cf. (1980: 181).

[19] Note, however, that the fact that no name is made available in that make-believe process does not mean that we cannot bestow a name on the character generated in virtue of (*inter alia*) that process. *Pace* Hunter (1981: 28), it is not the case that by means of a name a storyteller refers to the same character we refer by means of that (or even of another) name. For simply, as I have repeatedly stressed, within that process there is no such character, but at most an imaginary "individual" to which that character corresponds.

To return to an example discussed in Chapter 3, let us take the following sentence:

(12) The innkeeper whose inn looks like a castle was rather upset

where, not having any name for this particular individual, we want to talk about the host in Chapter XVI of *Don Quixote*. How then can we account for the fact that, in such cases at least, sentences such as (9)—as well as (10)—or even (12) have a stronger, committal, reading?

An easy solution would be to say that, in parafictional as well as in internal metafictional sentences, a definite description must not to be analyzed *à la* Russell since it is being used referentially to designate directly the same fictional character that a proper name (possibly) refers to. Hence, one might conclude that (9) and (10) have precisely the same content as (11); that is, they are true iff in the fictional "world" of the Greek myth, there is a singular proposition to the effect that the *fictum* Pegasus internally flies, namely the proposition $<\{\text{Pegasus}\}, \textit{being-a-flyer}>$.

Without doubt, this seems an appealing solution. Is it not the case that in parafictional sentences we tend to use descriptions not in order to denote the individuals, if any, that uniquely satisfy them, but merely to fix our attention on fictional individuals that we might directly name? But this solution sounds *ad hoc*. If we have rejected the idea that names work descriptively in parafictional and in internal metafictional sentences, why should we accept the idea that descriptions work referentially in such sentences? It is, then, better to look for another solution. Such a solution must both accept Russell's treatment of descriptions and account for the idea that in uttering sentences such as (9) and (10), we intend to have the same commitment to a *fictum* as in uttering sentences such as (11).

To begin with, if one wants to exploit Russell's analysis for committal purposes, as regards parafictional sentences one might say that (9) is a case of the same type as:

(13) The US President is a Republican.

In order to maintain the truth of (13) in Russellian terms, we have to take the description "the US President" as elliptical for another appropriately specified description, something like "the US President *in 2005*," which definitely has something—George W. Bush—as its denotation (for otherwise the second conjunct of the paraphrase analyzing (13), hence (13) itself, is obviously false since there have been many different US Presidents).[20] So, one might expect

[20] The elliptical analysis of so-called "incomplete" descriptions traces back to Bach (1987: Chapter 5). Another equivalent move is to take the domain over which the existential quantifier

that the description in (9) is elliptical for another opportunely specified description, something like "the [only thing which is internally a] winged horse *in the Greek myth*". In such a case, the committed Russellian would note that the truth of (9) is restored even in analyzing that sentence *à la* Russell, that is, as:

(9CR) There is only one thing which is internally a winged horse *in the Greek myth*, and that individual internally flies

$$[(\exists x)\,(x\mathrm{WHIGM}\ \&\ (y)\,(y\mathrm{WHIGM} \supset (y = x))\ \&\ xF)]$$

for not only its first, but also its second, conjunct would be true (its third conjunct being obviously true, once we again interpret the predicate "_ flies" in internal predication). As a result, the committed Russellian would say, the description "the winged horse in the Greek myth" has a Russellian denotation, precisely its intended denotation, namely Pegasus.

Can the syncretistic theory endorse the account of the committed Russellian? Well, the committed Russellian is overzealous in thinking that opportunely specified descriptions denote fictional entities. Yet, with some adjustments, his or her committal stance may be retained also within the framework of the syncretistic theory.

First of all, against the committed Russellian the syncretist has once again to stress that a fictional individual has internally a property not in a set of propositions, but *tout court* (that is, straightforwardly in the actual world). According to the syncretistic theory, it is having internally a property *tout court* on the part of a *fictum* that amounts to membership of a given proposition in a given propositional set. Thus, it may well be the case that there is just one thing that has a certain property, for example *being US President*, in some temporal fragment of the actual world. Hence, it may well be that a temporalized description has a denotation in the actual world *tout court*—as in the abovementioned case of "the US President in 2005." But it cannot be the case that there is just one thing that has internally a property in a set of propositions—literally, there is no such thing. Therefore, it cannot be that a set-relative description has a denotation in the actual world *tout court*—as in the case of "the [only thing which is internally a] winged horse in the Greek myth."[21]

Nevertheless, the syncretistic theory may well exploit for committal purposes the fact that, according to it, a fictional individual having internally

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ranges in the Russellian paraphrase of (13) to be contextually restricted, in such a case to the entities existing in 2005. Cf. Neale (1990).

[21] The same problem would arise if one appealed to restricted quantification rather than to ellipsis (cf. previous footnote).

some properties *tout court* is the same as the fact that, in a certain propositional set, there are propositions containing that individual as well as those properties. Indeed, for the syncretist in a first approximation (9) has to be read not as (9CR), but rather as:

(9SR) There is an individual such that in the Greek myth there are two singular propositions which are such that they are structured in way W_i and both contain that individual and, respectively, the property of *being a winged horse* and the property of *being identical with any other individual which is internally a winged horse*, and that individual internally flies

[(∃x) (IGM ((∃p,r) (p = <{x}, *being-WH*>) & (r = <{x}, *being-such-that-(y)-(yWH ⊃ (y = x))*>)) & xF)].

Although, if (9) is read as (9SR), the description "the winged horse" is without denotation, (9SR) still has committal import. For it quantifies over an individual, the same individual that "the [only thing which is internally a] winged horse in the Greek myth" was intended to denote in (9CR), namely the fictional character Pegasus, which figures within some propositions that belong to the fictional "world" of the Greek myth. Indeed, (9SR) is true iff there is an individual such that in the Greek myth there are the two propositions in question and, furthermore, such an individual internally flies. In fact, the propositions mobilized by (9SR) are to be ranked as *singular* propositions: they contain a given fictional individual, namely Pegasus. Yet they are *generically* described since that individual is not directly referred to in (9SR), as it is in (11), but merely quantified over. Now, (9SR) is true precisely because there is such an individual, namely Pegasus.

This reading is still Russellian in spirit as it is similar to, though not identical with, an intermediate Russellian reading of sentences containing both a description and an intensional operator IO. Let me now illustrate such a reading and then show why the present reading is only similar to but not identical with it.

As is well known, a sentence of the form "in IO an F is G," where "an F" is an indefinite description, may be read not only either in the *de re* form: "there is an F such that in IO it is G" or in the *de dicto* form: "in IO there is an F which is G," but also in an intermediate way such as: "there is something which in IO is an F and is G."[22] Yet the same may be said regarding an analogous sentence containing a definite rather than an indefinite description. "In IO, the F is G" may indeed be read not only either in the *de re* form: "there is only one individual that is F, and in IO that individual is G," or in

[22] This is the reading Bonomi labels "polarized+opaque." Cf. Bonomi (1995: 176–80).

the *de dicto* form: "in IO, there is only one individual that is F and that individual is G," but also in an intermediate way, such as: "There is an individual, which in IO is such, that it is uniquely F, and that individual is G."[23] Unlike the *de dicto* reading, the intermediate reading is committal because it quantifies over actual individuals. Unlike the *de re* reading, however, in the intermediate reading the description "the F" has no actual denotation, for the individual that the intermediate reading quantifies over uniquely possesses the property *F* not in the actual world, but in the unactual circumstance pointed to by the operator. In this respect, (9) might be given a Russellian intermediate reading by interpreting accordingly the scope of its implicit "in the story" locution:

(9IR^{I}) There is an individual such that *in the Greek myth* it uniquely is internally a winged horse and that individual internally flies

[(∃x) (IGM (xWH & (y) (xWH ⊃ (y = x)) & xF))].

Yet for the syncretistic theory this intermediate reading does not work. It reinterprets the "in the story" locution as an intensional, hence a circumstance-shifting operator. Indeed, it requires the linguistic material governed by that locution—what follows "in the Greek myth" in (9IR^{I})—to be evaluated from the point of view of an unactual *bona fide* world. As a result, it also requires that the individual that the quantifier actually quantifies over has internally properties in the fictional "world" of the story. But this raises again the same problem raised before by (9CR): an individual cannot possess internally a property in a fictional "world". In fact, this is not a *bona fide* world but just a set of propositions (possibly inconsistent and incomplete, in the derivative sense).

Instead of reading (9) as (9IR^{I}), therefore, the syncretistic theory proposes to read it as (9SR). This reading is as committal as (9IR^{I}) is since it still quantifies over fictional individuals, although the description "the F" occurring in it has no actual denotation. Yet this reading is only similar to, but not identical with, the intermediate reading presented by (9IR^{I}). Although in (9SR) an "in the story" locution occurs after the quantifier, it singles out a (possibly inconsistent and incomplete) set of propositions rather than a *bona fide* world working as a circumstance of evaluation for the linguistic material which that locution governs.

So, if (9) is properly to be read committally, an "in the story" locution must appear in it as controlled by the existential quantifier. Let us now see

[23] I guess that the intermediate reading is quite close to the reading of a sentence of the form "in IO, the F is G" which Recanati (1993: 390) labels "oblique-referential use."

more precisely how this reading of (9) squares with the general fact that a parafictional sentence is equivalent to an internal metafictional sentence, (10) in this case. If (9) is read as (9SR) and is moreover equivalent to (10), then (10) itself must be read as saying something more committal than that it is true iff there is in a certain fictional "world" a general proposition to the effect that there is something which uniquely is a winged horse internally and this something internally flies. Given what I stated previously, things can now be easily accounted for. (9SR) is true iff there is something which is not only such that, in the fictional "world" of the Greek myth, there are two singular propositions to the effect that that individual uniquely is a winged horse internally, but it is also such that it internally flies. But, as we have repeatedly seen, that a *fictum* is internally *F* is the same as that in the relevant set there is a singular proposition to the effect that that *fictum* is internally *F*. As a result, (9SR) is true iff there is something which is not only such that, in the fictional "world" of the Greek myth, there are two singular propositions to the effect that such an individual uniquely is internally a winged horse, but it is also such that in such a "world" there also is the singular proposition to the effect that that individual internally flies. Again, these three singular propositions are just generically described for their objectual component is merely quantified over. But this is just what (10) says in its stronger, committal, reading:

(10SR) There is an individual such that in the Greek myth there are three propositions which are such that they are structured in way W_i and contain both that individual and, respectively, the property of *being a winged horse*, the property of *being identical with any other individual which is internally a winged horse*, and the property of *being a flyer*

[(∃x) (IGM ((∃p,r,s) (p = <{x}, *being-WH*>) & (r = <{x}, *being-such-that-(y)-(yWH ⊃ (y = x))*>) & (s = <{x}, *being-F*>)))].

Thus, properly speaking for the syncretist a sentence such as (9) in its stronger, committal, reading, that is (9SR), is equivalent to a sentence such as (10) in its stronger, committal, reading, that is (10SR).

So, while in itself (9), *qua* equivalent to (10), has not for the syncretist to be truthconditionally accounted for in a committal way, nonetheless by means of (9SR), that is of (10SR), the syncretist may account for the fact that (9) and (10) are often *intended* to be about fictional entities.

At this point, one may wonder why one must appeal to such an admittedly complicated analysis of (9) and (10) in their stronger, committal, readings. Would it not be simpler to go back to *another* genuinely intermediate reading of (9), hence of (10), by accepting that the "in the story" locution is

a circumstance-shifting operator and thereby having a fictional "world" as a *bona fide* world? Let us see how this objection could be developed.

First of all, the objector may raise some general questions against the idea that a fictional "world" is not a *bona fide* world. He or she may wonder, apart from possible inconsistency and incompleteness (admittedly in their derivative sense), what makes a propositional set differ from the paradigm of a *bona fide* world, a possible world. Is not a possible world, as actualists maintain, if not identical with, at least in a one-one correlation with a complete and consistent propositional set?[24] Moreover, could not he or she suggest that the general truth conditions I have given for a parafictional, hence for an internal metafictional, sentence perfectly match this interpretation of a propositional set as a *bona fide* world? Indeed, he or she may go on to suggest that a sentence of the form "in the story S, p" is true iff the proposition *p* belongs to a propositional set *S* is the same as saying that such a sentence is true iff that proposition is true in *S*. And being true in *S* makes *S* a circumstance of evaluation for the sentence expressing that proposition, the sentence "p" embedded in the previous sentence, thereby making *S* a *bona fide* world.

Moreover, the objector may grant that, as I have repeatedly said, if a fictional object has a property internally, it has such a property *tout court* and not in a world, even a *bona fide* one. But if this is the problem, the objector may conclude, why not simply say that having a property internally is tantamount to having it *externally* in the fictional "world" taken as a *bona fide* world? As a result, it is true that the correct genuinely intermediate reading of (9), hence of (10), the reading that saves our intuitive commitment to a *fictum* in uttering (9), is not ($9IR^I$). However, the objector continues, why not take:

($9IR^E$) There is an individual such that *in the Greek myth* it uniquely is a winged horse externally and it externally flies

$[(\exists x)\ (IGM\ (WHx\ \&\ (y)\ (WHx \supset (y = x))\ \&\ Fx))]$

as such a reading? Indeed, as far as ($9IR^E$) is concerned, saying that this reading is true iff the general proposition expressed by its embedded material belongs to a certain propositional set, a certain fictional "world," that is, is true in it, is not the same as saying that that reading is true iff there is an individual, a fictional character, which in that world uniquely is a winged horse externally and moreover externally flies?[25]

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[24] Cf. n. 17.

[25] Many will recognize Zalta's position in this objection. Indeed, he says that a sentence of the form "(t)P," where "t" is a singular term designating a fictional individual and "(x)P" expresses internal predication of the property *P*, is tantamount to a sentence of the form "in

Tempting as it may be, I have to put this objection, and the related suggestion, to one side. The reason for this is that I want to adhere to an ontologically neutral truthconditional analysis not only of the parafictional—hence of the internal metafictional—sentences involving definite descriptions, but of *all* such sentences that contain no directly referential expression in subject position. This allows me to account for the fact that many such sentences are *not committal* at all. If I pursued the above suggestion, it would be hard to account for the problematic commitment to indeterminate entities that the acceptance of a fictional "world" as a *bona fide* world would force me to adopt. Let me explain.

Take for instance the following true sentence:

(14) In *The Lord of the Rings* many uruk-hai fight against Aragorn in the Battle of Helm's Deep.

It is hard to see how (14) could commit us to numerous fictional characters that are (internally) uruk-hai. The trouble is not that these characters are not individually named for it may well be the case that *within a fiction* many imaginary "individuals" that exist there and only there have no name. But if *outside that fiction* corresponding fictional characters were created, we might well give them names from the outside. In fact, even when names are already available in the fiction, there is no necessity for the actually existing abstract fictional characters to bear the same names as their imaginary concrete counterparts existing only in the fiction. Instead, the problem with the community of uruk-hai (as well as with that of dwarves, elves, hobbits, etc.) is that the identity of these alleged characters is totally indeterminate. How many uruk-hai are there in the fictional "world" of Tolkien? One might think that such a number could be obtained if the story make-believedly said or entailed something relevant about the corresponding imaginary "individuals" (for instance,

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the story S, P(t)," where "t" designates the same *fictum* and "P(x)" expresses external predication of the same property. Cf. (1983: 94), (1988: 125), (2000: 129). When the term in question is a definite description "the F," in the context of a sentence such as the above it is tantamount to "the only individual which in the story S is externally F," hence it may well be assigned a *fictum* as its Russellian denotation. Cf. Zalta (1983: 97–8), (1988: 126). So, as regards parafictional, hence internal metafictional, sentences of the form "(in the story S,) the F is G," an intermediate reading along the lines of ($9IR^E$) is available in Zalta's view. Moreover, for him inconsistency and incompleteness appear to be the only relevant differences between a fictional and a possible world. Cf. Zalta (1983: 91). Finally, he shares with others the idea that for a proposition to belong to a set is the same as to be true in it—see, for example, Deutsch (1985), Orilia (2002: 127), Zalta (1983: 91), (1988: 124), (2000: 122–3)—which is, precisely, exploited by the set-theoretical actualist conception of possible worlds [cf., for example, Adams (1974)].

if Tolkien's tale make-believedly said that in Middle-earth there are something like two million uruk-hai). Yet, even if there were such a number, it would be irrelevant as there would still be no way for one of these alleged entities to be distinct from another.

The syncretistic theory has to confirm this ontological skepticism because even within the framework of that theory, there would be no element by means of which one such would-be entity is distinguishable from another. Not only would these would-be entities allegedly share all their internally predicated properties, but the relevant make-believe process-type that should underlie their generation is just one and the same; in writing the relevant sentences, Tolkien only describes uruk-hai collectively.[26] So, it is hard to give (14) any committal reading in which fictional characters that are (internally) uruk-hai are quantified over.

Now, suppose we take a fictional "world" as a *bona fide* world. Clearly, given the above state of indeterminacy, a defender of the above-mentioned suggestion could not put forward a true intermediate reading for (14) of the same kind as the one he or she is ready to propose for (9) and (10), namely:

(14IR^{E}) There are many fictional characters such that in *The Lords of the Rings* they are externally uruk-hai and externally fight against Aragorn in the Battle of Helm's Deep.

So, a defender of this position would admit that (14) involves no commitment to actual fictional characters. Yet he or she might suppose that the following *de dicto* reading works:

(14DD^{E}) In *The Lords of the Rings* there are many fictional characters that are externally uruk-hai and externally fight against Aragorn in the Battle of Helm's Deep.

But even that reading would not work because it would again quantify over fictional entities existing in the *bona fide* world, even though (admittedly) only there. However, even this quantification is impossible since it is still indeterminate how many such entities there are.

[26] This is a very difficult problem for all realist theories. Parsons tries to solve it by saying that when individuals in fiction are spoken of collectively, the only fictional character referred to is the *group*. See Parsons (1980: 191). Yet implausibility aside, this proposal seems to me untenable. Suppose that (14) continued ". . . and some of them were seriously wounded." According to Parsons, we would have here two distinct fictional characters, a bigger group and a smaller group of uruk-hai. But this distinctness of the characters does not account for the fact that those uruk-hai that were seriously wounded belong to the bigger group. For ontological skepticism regarding such cases, see also Lamarque (2003: 43).

Nevertheless, with respect to (14) we can remain completely noncommittal if we refrain from taking a fictional "world" as a *bona fide* world and read (14) accordingly, as saying merely that in the fictional "world" of Tolkien there is a general proposition to the effect that many individuals which are internally uruk-hai internally fight against Aragorn in the Battle of Helm's Deep. Undoubtedly, its parafictional equivalent:

(14′) Many uruk-hai fight against Aragorn in the Battle of Helm's Deep

is true iff there are many individuals which are internally uruk-hai and those individuals internally fight against Aragorn in that battle. Yet again, this is tantamount to saying that (14′) is true iff in the fictional "world" of *The Lord of the Rings* there is a general proposition to the effect that many individuals are internally uruk-hai and those individuals internally fight against Aragorn in the battle. As with (9), this truthconditional analysis is ontologically neutral for, as regards *ficta*, simply admitting that a propositional set also contains one such proposition has no committal import at all. This is corroborated by the fact that because of the (derivative) incompleteness of the set in question, it may well be the case that the existence in it of a general proposition is not matched by the existence of any singular proposition to the effect that a certain fictional character is internally an uruk-hai and internally fights against Aragorn in the Battle of Helm's Deep.

To my mind, the syncretist account is faithful to the intuitions underlying the situation in question. Unlike (9), (14) has no reading expressing its being *intended* to be about fictional individuals. *Who* should these individuals be? Thus, whenever the subject terms embedded in an internal metafictional sentence are descriptive, it is enough for the syncretist to provide an ontologically neutral truthconditional account of that sentence.

Perhaps the objector might retort that indeterminacy of characters as in the uruk-hai case is precisely what prevents one from exporting the quantifier from (14DD^{E}) to (14IR^{E}).[27] So, he or she might simply discard the idea that (14DD^{E}) commits one to a definite number of individuals *in* the fictional "world" (which are uruk-hai there).

I am not sure whether this reply is viable. Can we accept *bona fide* worlds whose domains are indefinite? At any rate, I think that the objector's position betrays another, more general, problem. In accepting that a fictional "world" is a *bona fide* world in that fictional individuals have properties there *externally*, the objector implicitly assumes that *ficta* in that "world" are concrete

[27] As some have maintained for epistemic contexts, ontological indeterminacy in the reportee's intentions accounts for the *de dicto* reading of sentences filling such contexts. Cf. Smith-McIntyre (1982: 30–3).

entities as those individuals externally possess there the properties that actual concrete entities possess externally in the actual world. For instance, if Hamlet in *Hamlet* is a prince *externally*, then in that "world" Hamlet is a concrete entity just as Prince Charles is in the actual world, where he possesses externally the very same property of *being a prince*.[28]

Yet it is not the case that fictional individuals are concrete entities in the fictional "world". To be sure, there is a "world" which is inhabited by concrete entities: this is the imaginary "world" postulated via the relevant make-believe game. Moreover, although that "world" is not a genuine world, for it may well be inconsistent and perhaps also incomplete (in the primary sense of those notions), still it may be taken to be a *bona fide* world. For, as I have said before, it works as a circumstance of evaluation for (fictional) sentences in their conniving use. But this "world" is not an existing propositional set. For in actual fact it does not exist, in that many "individuals" that inhabit it—hence the propositions that include those "individuals" as the fictional truth conditions of sentences about "them" in their conniving use—do not exist either. Moreover, as we have seen in the previous chapter, there may well be immigrant entities in such a "world:" when this "world" is mobilized by the relevant existentially conservative make-believe game. This is the case of actual concrete—or even actual abstract (sometimes even fictional)—entities when those existentially conservative make-believe games are concerned by them. Yet the concrete "individuals" which names such as "Hamlet" or "Holmes" refer to in the scope of those "worlds" are not the fictional characters Hamlet and Holmes, but at most imaginary concrete counterparts of them which are postulated via the relevant existentially creative make-believe games. As a result, those fictional characters do not definitely migrate as concrete individuals in imaginary "worlds."

Let me summarize this point as follows. If "the story S" designates a propositional set, then the fictional individuals existing "in" this set possess the properties figuring in the propositions of this set internally, not externally. If the locution "the story S" (make-believedly) designates an imaginary "world," then its inhabitants are concrete entities that possess their properties externally. Therefore, they are not the entities that make internal metafictional (hence parafictional) sentences really true or false.

To be sure, rejecting the above suggestion proposed by the objector is not to say that the syncretist must also give up the definition advanced in it, according to which saying that the proposition explicitly expressed by a parafictional sentence belongs to a certain propositional set means that that proposition is true in that set. Provided that the relation of *being true in* is

[28] For similar remarks on Zalta's theory (cf. n. 25), see Landini (1990: 104).

not interpreted as holding between a proposition and a *bona fide* world, a circumstance of evaluation for that sentence *qua* linguistic material embedded in the internal metafictional sentence.[29]

Before leaving this section, let me note that this present way of interpreting nonintensionally the equivalence between parafictional and internal metafictional sentences permits the syncretistic theory to deal again with the "analyticity" datum presented in Chapter 1 and provisionally explained in Chapter 3. This time, however, the syncretistic theory can provide a more general account of that datum covering *all* parafictional sentences, both the committal and the noncommittal.

It was stated in those chapters that sentences such as (5) or (11) in this chapter:

(5) Hamlet is a prince

(11) Pegasus flies

are not found to be true through empirical discovery; inasmuch as the relevant stories unfold in a certain way, they are trivially and unrevisably true. This allows for an, at least, epistemic sense according to which these sentences are analytic. In Chapter 3, I claimed that the "analytic" character of their truth may be accounted for in a Kantian way. Insofar as the name occurring in them respectively ("Hamlet," "Pegasus") refers to a fictional individual one of whose components is a certain property set, the sentence is analytically true insofar as that individual—the "meaning" of the subject term—contains precisely the property designated by the respective predicate ("_ is a prince," "_ flies")—the "meaning" of the predicate—internally ascribed to it.

Now, we have seen that for a *fictum* to possess a property internally is the same as for a set of propositions to contain a proposition one of whose constituents is that *fictum* itself. Yet truly ascribing to a certain propositional set one of its members, namely a certain proposition, is trivial and unrevisable as much as truly ascribing a property internally to a given *fictum*. As a result, a parafictional sentence such as (5) or (11) remains analytically true even after it is seen as equivalent to the corresponding internal metafictional sentence. Once again, this fits the Kantian conception of analyticity: the "meaning" of the subject term—a certain propositional set—contains the "meaning" of the predicate—a certain proposition of that set. But this

[29] A similar position is found in Landini (1990) who, however, conceives of *ficta*, *qua* constituents of the propositions that belong to a story, as Russellian denoting concepts seen as second-order properties.

analysis is more general than the previous account because it allows us to consider as analytically true even parafictional sentences such as (9), or even better (14′), which for the above-mentioned reasons involve no commitment to *ficta* at all. Take precisely (14′), for which no true committal reading along the lines of (9SR), or better (10SR), is available. This sentence cannot be taken as analytically true insofar as the *fictum* it is about contains the property internally predicated of it, trivially because there is no such individual. Yet, (14′) remains analytically true insofar as it is equivalent to (14) and it therefore says that a certain propositional set has one of its members, namely a certain (general) proposition.

4. Committal External Discourse

Once a committal account has been provided for internal discourse purportedly about fictional entities, it remains to provide one for *external* discourse. In this case, thing should be easier since though not impossible, it is admittedly difficult to dispense with the apparent commitment to fictional entities transpiring from these sentences. I must however recall the fact that within the framework of the syncretistic theory, such a commitment really regards only the nonconniving uses of the external metafictional sentences. This is because such sentences may well occur within a piece of fiction and thus be used also connivingly, hence noncommittally.

Insofar as external metafictional sentences may also be used connivingly, however, a complication immediately arise since *two* distinct nonconniving uses are to be imagined for them. The first is that affecting all sentences which are used connivingly; as I have just said, also external metafictional sentences may be used both connivingly and nonconnivingly. The second is the use that, so to speak, features the *external* character of these sentences, namely the fact that such sentences are typically regarded as being employed in order to speak about a fictional individual without involving fiction either directly or indirectly. Let me call this use the *straightforwardly* nonconniving use of external metafictional sentences.

To illustrate what I have in mind, I will give an example. Suppose that in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, one of the most famous metafictional pieces of fiction, there is the following sentence:

(15) The Father[30] is a fictional character.

[30] The use of capital letters signifies that this is a name, not a definite description.

In playing Pirandello's *pièce* on stage, an actor uttering this sentence may well use it connivingly. Yet a student taking an exam on 20th-century Italian literature may well utter it nonconnivingly in the same way as he or she may, in the same circumstances, use nonconnivingly another sentence, admittedly from the same text, say:

(16) The Father almost has sex with his step-daughter.

But this nonconniving use is completely different from the nonconniving use of (15) pronounced by anyone who wanted to stress the feature that The Father shares with any other *ficta* such as Hamlet and Holmes, namely the fact that all of them are precisely fictional characters. This is the same kind of nonconniving use, the straightforwardly nonconniving use, in which someone may employ any other external metafictional sentence which is not affected by a conniving use in a metafictional bit of fiction, for instance:

(17) The Father was created by Pirandello.

Fortunately enough, the syncretistic theory is able to account for this duality of nonconniving uses affecting external metafictional sentences. In the first nonconniving use, the property of *being a fictional character* is predicated *internally* of The Father. As a result, the sentence explicitly expresses the W_i-structured singular proposition $<\{$The Father$\}$, *being-a-fictional-character*$>$. In addition, the sentence in such a use is equivalent to the internal metafictional sentence:

(18) In *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, The Father is a fictional character

so that, properly speaking, in such a use it is true iff in the fictional "world" of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, there is the above-mentioned singular proposition or, briefly, it is true iff *the fictum* The Father has internally the property of *being a fictional character*. However, in the second nonconniving use, the straightforwardly nonconniving use, the very same property is predicated externally of the Father. In fact, in this use the sentence expresses the different W_e-structured singular proposition $<$*being-a-fictional-character*, $\{$The Father$\}>$ and it is true iff the *fictum* in question has that very property externally.

In any event, if an external metafictional sentence is not affected by a conniving use, things are rather simple. That sentence is only straightforwardly used nonconnivingly; hence, it has only real truth conditions, and of one kind only, those involving external possession of a property.

Here, moreover, singular terms behave as normally as possible. To start with, in such sentences *all* directly referential terms, both names and indexicals, directly refer to a fictional entity and contribute to predicate of it a certain property externally. So, any such sentence involving those terms expresses a singular proposition of the W_e kind: $<$*being-P*, {F}$>$, where *F* is a given *fictum* and is true iff *F* is externally *P*. For instance, both:

(19) Robin Hood is a legendary character

and:

(20) That chap [uttered while effectively pointing to a statue of Robin Hood or to a page in a book on Saxon myths] is a legendary character

express the very same W_e-structured singular proposition $<$*being-a-legendary-character*, {Robin Hood}$>$ and are true iff Robin is externally such a character. Furthermore, in such sentences definite descriptions behave as they normally do; in other words, they have a fictional entity as their Russellian denotation just in case both the first and the second conjunct of Russell's paraphrases of sentences containing them are true. Indeed, we have to expect that an external metafictional sentence of the form "the F is G" expresses a general proposition to the effect that there is a unique individual which externally *F*-s, and that individual externally *G*-s, and is therefore true iff there really is only one individual that externally *F*-s and that individual externally *G*-s. For instance:

(21) The protagonist of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a model for tragic literature

is true iff there is just one individual who is externally the protagonist of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and that individual is externally a model for tragic literature. Now, there is indeed just an individual who is externally the protagonist of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; consequently, the description "the protagonist of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*" does have a denotation, namely the *fictum* Hamlet itself!

Here as previously, complications arise from the fact that in external metafictional sentences we may also use descriptions that have no denotation, not even a fictional character, and yet it is clear that we use them with a committal import. Take for instance:

(22) The winged horse is a mythical character

in which, as we already know, "the winged horse" has no denotation. However, we use it in (22) with committal import as is witnessed by the fact that we could have used the name "Pegasus" in its place.

Yet, if we reflect on the fact that the property of *being a winged horse* is in this context predicated internally, we then know how to deal with this case. Simply put, the truth conditions of (22) closely resemble those of (9) when read as (9SR), except for the fact that the relevant property, the property of *being a mythical character*, is here predicated externally and not internally. Indeed, we have to read (22) as:

(22SR) There is an individual such that in the Greek myth there are two propositions which are such that they are structured in way W_i and contain both that individual and, respectively, the property of *being a winged horse* and the property of *being identical with any other individual which is internally a winged horse*, and such an individual is externally a mythical character

$[(\exists x)\ (IGM\ ((\exists p,r)\ (p = <\{x\}, \textit{being-WH}>)\ \&\ (r = <\{x\}, \textit{being-such-that-(y)-(yWH} \supset \textit{(y = x)}>))\ \&\ MCx)]$

where the existential quantifier precisely commits us to the same fictional entity that the name "Pegasus" commits us to.

In such a case, therefore, we have to export the analysis of descriptions we used for internal metafictional sentences. But we would be forced to do the same if we were to consider a case of a mixed sentence, namely a complex sentence made up of both a parafictional, or an internal metafictional, and an external metafictional sentence, which contained a description as well as an anaphoric link to it, such as:

(23) Although Don Quixote's servant is married, he is a literary character.

This is because "he" in the second conjunct of (23) inherits its semantic value from the description it is anaphorically linked to, namely "Don Quixote's servant". This is the committal analysis of (23):

(23SR) There is an individual such that although in *Don Quixote* there are two propositions which are such that they are structured in way W_i and contain both that individual and, respectively, the property of *being Don Quixote's servant* and the property of *being identical with any other individual that is internally Don Quixote's servant*, and such an individual is internally married, it is externally a literary character

[(∃x) ((IDQ ((∃p,r) (p = <{x}, *being-DQS*>) & (r = <{x}, *being-such-that-(y)-(yDQS* ⊃ *(y = x))*>)) & xM) & LCx)].[31]

Before ending this section, I want to say a few words on what are probably the most complex kind of external metafictional sentences, namely singular negative existentials. Typically, in their straightforwardly nonconniving use we have many true negative existentials such as, for example:

(24) Santa Claus does not exist.

At this point, let me concede that this external metafictional sentence has a committal import, with the name "Santa Claus" referring to a certain fictional individual. Yet one may think that in the context of the syncretistic theory, which allows for *ficta* as *actual* abstract beings, that sentence is false rather than true. How, then, can the syncretistic theory accept the intuitive truth value of that sentence?

All the syncretist has to do here is to take up the answer already given to this problem by abstractionists. Theoretically speaking, the same problem arises for the corresponding general negative existential:

(25) There is no such thing as Santa Claus.

Intuitively, (25) is true; yet insofar as for the syncretistic theory the overall domain of individuals also contains fictional entities, it should be false. But we already know from Chapter 2 what the correct answer is to this problem in the light of the abstractionist theory. When the quantifier contained in (25) is contextually restricted to the sub-domain of spatiotemporal existents, an utterance of (25) is true. On the other hand, when the quantifier is taken as contextually unrestricted to all existents, spatiotemporal and non-spatiotemporal, an utterance of (25) is false.[32]

Now, an analogous contextual restriction holds not only for second-order, but also for first-order, predicates. When the extension of the first-order predicate "_ exists" is contextually restricted to the subset of

[31] Of course, the internal predication still contained in (23SR)—"xM"—may still be solved along the lines of (12SR) so as to get:

(23′SR) There is an individual such that although in *Don Quixote* there are three propositions which are such that they are structured in way W_i and contain both that individual and, respectively, the property of *being Don Quixote's servant*, the property of *being identical with any other individual which is internally Don Quixote's servant*, and the property of *being married*, it is externally a literary character.

[32] Cf. Chapter 2, n. 19.

spatiotemporal existents, an utterance of (24) is true. These are perhaps the proto-typical utterances of (22), which we use to tell someone—typically, a child—with a grossly false belief on the nature of a certain entity that such an entity does not exist spatiotemporally (or analogously, that it is not a concrete entity, that it cannot be encountered, etc.). Yet when no such a restriction obtains, an utterance of (24) is obviously false because a *fictum* definitely belongs to the general extension of that predicate.[33]

On behalf of the syncretistic theory, I simply have to add to this abstractionist approach that, whether restricted or not, in the above cases the predicate "_ exists" occurring in (24) is to be taken in external predication. For, as we have seen, external predication affects straightforwardly nonconniving uses of external metafictional sentences, which are our concern here.

This does not mean that one could not envisage cases in which that predicate, whether restricted or not, were taken in internal predication. Even (24) may be taken as exhibiting such a case. But in that case, the external metafictional sentence would precisely behave as a fictional sentence in its simple nonconniving use matching a corresponding conniving use. I might for instance tell a metafictional story, MF, in which I mock-assert (24).[34] In sitting an exam on that story, a student would instead seriously assert (24) in order to mean the internal metafictional sentence:

(26) In MF, Santa Claus does not exist.

Thus, he or she would be using the predicate "_ exists" restrictedly, but in order to predicate internally the property of *non-existence* to the *fictum* Santa Claus.

That the above is the correct way to interpret the situation in question is further shown by external metafictional sentences such that in their straightforward nonconniving use, though we quantify over fictional characters, we say of them that they do not exist:

(27) There is at least an individual that does not exist: namely, Santa Claus.

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[33] For this analysis, see Predelli (2002: 275–6). In (2003), Walton contests that this contextual analysis can be extended from general to singular (negative) existentials. Yet, as Predelli shows in the same paper, there are many other cases of contextual restrictions on predicate extensions that take place in non-quantified sentences. See again his (2002: 274).

[34] Though differently framed, a similar example also occurs in Predelli (2002: 270, 76).

On the one hand, in (27) we take the existential quantifier unrestrictedly, as ranging over all actual beings in general. On the other, we take the first-order predicate "_ exists" as restricted, as applied (in external predication) only to spatiotemporal existents, hence as being not true of the individual we quantify over, the fictional character Santa Claus.[35]

[35] This analysis of straightforward nonconniving uses of general negative existentials such as (27) does not prevent one from providing an, actually noncommittal, analysis for their conniving uses (typically, when one mock-asserts that there is a fictional individual). In these uses, these sentences are purportedly about would-be entities, imaginary "individuals"—in this case, imaginary abstract "individuals"—belonging to the imaginary "worlds" I have repeatedly spoken of in this book. For in ontology it can be shown independently that there really are no such would-be entities. As a result, in order to hold legitimately that as far as *ficta* are concerned, a both nonconniving and committal use of positive existentials, such as the one I have just presented, is possible, an ontological argument in favor of the existence of such entities must be provided. This is my aim in the next chapter.

In (2003: 158–64), Kroon suggests an analysis of sentences such as (27) according to which, in disavowing the pretense that there is a Clausian (fictional) individual that possesses a universal first-order property of existence, what is really being said is that there is a mode of presentation that does not present Clausian things possessing that first-order property. Other differences from the syncretist treatment of those sentences aside, with respect to this analysis I have to say that, although I am greatly in favor of adopting that universal first-order property [(as I explicitly maintain in (2006); see also Chapter 3, n. 51)], I think that in their nonconniving use, sentences such as (27) do not mobilize it but, rather, a *nonuniversal* first-order property such as *spatiotemporal* existence. If one expanded (27) into "There is at least an individual that, *unlike you and me*, does not exist: namely, Santa Claus," it would indeed be hard to interpret the predicate "_ exists" as meaning the universal first-order property. This suggests moreover that by means of the same predicate, the conniving use of the same sentence again mobilizes the nonuniversal, and not the universal, first-order property of existence. Imagine a conniving use of the expansion of (27) in order to underline, within the pretense, the non-spatiotemporal feature of its imaginary abstract "protagonists." As a further result, it can hardly be the case that when that sentence is used nonconnivingly, its truth conditions refer to the disavowing of a pretense that there is a certain individual (matching a certain mode of presentation) who exists universally, as Kroon instead claims.