Fictional Names.
A critical study of some theories not committed to the existence of fictional entities.

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Abstract

Fictional names such as Sherlock Holmes, Tom Sawyer or Superman originate in fiction. We also employ them in ordinary conversations. However, when we ask what these terms refer to and what speakers think when they employ them, a host of problems arise. Whilst an anti-realist perspective will assimilate them to the broader category of *empty-names*; a realistic perspective, articulable in different ways, argues for the existence of fictional entities as their referents. Each stance faces puzzles which are difficult to resolve.

Generally speaking, if we think or talk about something when we use fictional names, what is it we are thinking or talking about? How do referential relations work in this context? If, on the other hand, we speak about nothing when we use a fictional name, how do we understand the linguistic processes which go on and which give us the impression of speaking about something?

I will provide an overview of both theoretical stances and the different problems they face; however, my focus will be on the anti-realistic perspective. Specifically, I will discuss two main ways of treating the supposed emptiness of fictional names: I will argue against the employment of the notion of 'gappy propositions' and in favour of Gareth Evans' and Kendall Walton's idea that speakers' utterances which appear to make reference to fictional entities can be understood as acts of pretence of a certain sort.

I will in particular discuss the many objections to David Braun's anti-realist proposal. I will consider the weaknesses of the pragmatic account built by Fred Adams, Gary Fuller and Robert Stecker around the key notion of 'gappy propositions'. Finally, I will present Kendall Walton's view and answer the objection of implausibility which is often aimed at it, providing an understanding of acts of pretence in terms of acts of communication.

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

The study of the connection between language and reality provides an insight into our ability to express thoughts about the world. Words, terms and other expressions contribute to the building of such a connection. Through their analysis and through the study of the patterns of sentence structures we have reached a deeper insight into the relation between language and reality. Within this field of research my interest will be focused on some terms that look like names but seem to lack any referential connection with the world. I will call them fictional names and I will define them as a class of terms included in the broader class of empty names. The problem of empty names is a long standing one in the history of philosophy in general and in philosophy of language in particular.

At times, the study of the reference of fictional names has benefited from the light shed on it by investigations carried out within the field of theories of fiction and the nature of fictional characters. At other times it has been of interest to the ontological debate on the existence of abstract objects and the nature of quantifiers. Moreover, a related debate has been developed in philosophy of language. If we think or talk about something when we use fictional names, what is it we are addressing and how do the referential relations work? Contrariwise, if we speak about nothing when we use a fictional name, how do we understand the linguistic process which gives us the impression of speaking about something? While all these areas of study are of interest to me, the emphasis will be placed on the semantics of fictional names: what do fictional names refer to if they refer to anything? Which problems do

fictional names pose to the theories of reference? Which solutions have been elaborated? Which problems do they still face?

In the next section I will explain what a fictional name is and identify the peculiarities of these terms.

0.1   Empty Names, Fictional Names, Mythical Names

What are empty names? The label "empty names" is sometimes considered a tendentious way to talk about the problem of terms that seem to lack a referent; it seems tendentious because it implies that these terms do not pick out any referent.

It is likely that this approach has been inherited by the debates that in the course of history have been developed regarding the problem of terms which allegedly lack a referent. A first version of a paradox related to non-referring terms dates back to Greek philosophy. The following is Bertrand Russell's illustration of what has become known as Parmenides' paradox:

"When you think, you think *of* something; when you use a name, it must be the name *of* something. Therefore both thought and language require objects outside themselves. And since you can think of a thing or speak of it at one time as well as another, whatever can be thought of or spoken of must exist at all times."[1]

However, we predicate the non-existence of something, for example uttering "Pegasus does not exist", when the use of a name requires the existence of an

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[1] Russell, B., (1956), *A History of Western Philosophy*, edited by Marsh, R.C., ed. New York: The Macmillian Company, p. 49. In this study I will not discuss the problem of *eternal existence*, mentioned by Russell in this paragraph.

object. This puzzle, known nowadays as the puzzle of non-existential statements, is still today the object of debate in ontological, linguistic and cognitive investigation.

In the early sixteenth century the debate on the reference of terms that allegedly lack a reference found new life thanks to the contribution by a group of logicians at the University of Paris.[2]

The epistemological supposition in post-medieval semantics was that the ability to speak a language depended on the possession of concepts derived by the appropriate experience of objects external to speakers. The reference of the term "Chimera" is assumed to be an impossible object; and, if a speaker's ability to use language relies on the possession of concepts derived by the experience of external objects, given that a speaker cannot have experience of a chimera nor can they have a concept of it, ultimately, they shouldn't be able to understand or use the term "Chimera". However, sentences such as "I imagine a chimera" seem to be meaningful and no difficulties seem to arise in understanding it.

At the beginning of last century the work of Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell posed the basis for the contemporary debate in analytical philosophy. They inherited the puzzle as concerning terms which lack a referent or bearerless names and this was of particular interest both within the study of the reference of proper names, and in the metaphysical debate. In the former debate, these logicians elaborated different proposals; in the latter debate

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[2] For appreciating the shape and the main lines of the arguments available at the time see Ashworth, E. Jennifer, (1985) Chimeras and Imaginary Objects: A Study in the Post-Medieval Theory of Signification. *Studies in Post-Medieval Semantics*, ed. London: Variorum. The main references were medieval authors (Robert Holkot, John Buridan and Marsilius of Inghen) and the discussion was centred on their proposals.

Russell rejected the Meinongian thesis of an ontology comprising non-existent objects, as did Frege, though Frege did not explicitly refer to Meinong.

Although Frege's and Russell's analyses of the reference of proper names led to two very different proposals, they both endorsed the view that terms which allegedly lack reference are empty names, i.e. names without a referent. However, nowadays, the fact that these terms are bearerless is not taken for granted any longer. In fact, in the contemporary debate it is possible to recognise two main standpoints: those theories which state the emptiness of terms which seem to lack a referent in contrast to those theories which state that empty names are not empty, but rather refer to something. Therefore, before taking one or the other stance it seems appropriate to avoid any bias by starting with the question: are there any such things as empty names?

When thinking about which individuals names such as 'Vulcan', 'Sherlock Holmes', 'Papa Goriot', 'Pegasus' etc., would pick out, we may not find any. Consequently we would legitimately conclude that they are all empty, i.e. they do not refer to anything. This conclusion is well supported by common sense, for example, if I were in the unfortunate circumstance of needing to go to the police to ask for a detective, I would not ask for Sherlock Holmes because there is no Sherlock Holmes. Although these terms are empty, they seem to cover the same syntactic role as proper names but rather than semantically contributing an individual they would not contribute anything to the proposition expressed.

Notwithstanding the apparent conclusiveness of such arguments, the study of how and in which context these terms originated have provided, according to

some philosophers, more elements for the understanding of their semantics[3] and for answering the question about their alleged emptiness. For example, Nathan Salmon puts forward the distinction between terms that have been introduced within a fiction, rather than names that derive from a mythological story or names that allegedly refer on the basis of an erroneous theory or an act of misperception. I will adopt this distinction which seems to me to be a more detailed systematisation of the problem in contrast to an underspecified category such as *empty names*.

It is possible to distinguish between *fictional names*, names that originate in works of fiction; *mythical names*, names that originate within a story such as a myth or an erroneous theory; and merely *non-referring names*, terms introduced by stipulation with awareness that they are lacking a referent. For example, 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'Papa Goriot' are names which originated from works of fiction. Doyle and Balzac introduced these terms in their novels and they are employed as proper names in the fiction. By reading the relevant books and talking or writing about them, the use of these terms might have spread outside of the fiction in assertive utterances about the novels or in general statements such as 'Sherlock Holmes is more famous than any real detective'. Because of their origin, we may call this type of term *fictional names*.

'Vulcan' has been brought into use in cosmology with the purpose of naming a planet between Mercury and the Sun whose existence has been later denied by

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[3] See Kripke, S. (1973) *John Locke's Lectures*, unpublished; Thomasson, A. (1999) *Fiction and Metaphysics*, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Salmon, N. (1998) Nonexistence. *Noûs,* Vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 277-319; Braun D. (2002) Cognitive Significance, Attitude Ascriptions and way of believing propositions. *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, Vol. 108, no. 1/2, pp.65-81.

further studies. The name has come into use through a false story about the universe. These types of story are *myths*, and we may call these names *mythological names*[4]. A *myth* may also have been the origin of the use of 'Pegasus' and therefore it may be considered a mythological name as well.

A different case of non-referring names may be provided by the following example. Consider that Claire, walking back from the library one wintery evening, wonders whether someone is waiting at the campus bus stop that is currently out-of-use. Though she does not think that there is a person who is waiting, she stipulates the name 'Molly' for the person that is waiting at the out-of-use bus stop. According to some philosophers[5], the name 'Molly' is genuinely a non-referring name but is also neither fictional nor mythical. Claire does not believe that there was someone at the bus stop (unlike Le Verrier who believed in the existence of Vulcan) and she does not pretend to use the name for a person (unlike Doyle with 'Holmes'). According to Salmon, who considers cases similar to this one, this would be a case of a *genuine non-referring name*.

Make no mistake though; I am not stating that genuine non-referring names are the only example of empty names – as some philosophers propose[6]. We may come to the conclusion that *fictional*, *mythical* and *genuine non-referring names* all lack a referent or contrariwise they do not. I am only pointing out that for each one of these types of terms we can recognise its own specificity.

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[4] I adopt here for *myths* and mythical *names* the terminology introduced in Salmon N. (1998) Nonexistence. *Noûs,* Vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 277-319. Adopted also in Braun, D. (2005) Empty Names, Fictional Names, Mythical Names. *Noûs*, Vol. 39, pp. 596-631.
[5] Salmon, N. (1998) discusses the example of the term "Nappy", pp. 305-307.
[6] This view is suggested in Salmon, N. (1988) in Nonexistence. *Noûs,* Vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 277-319.

Whichever will be our conclusion, taking into account the different context in which these terms originate and are employed provides elements for a better understanding of their semantic role.

A new systematisation of the problem does not mean that we have found an answer to it. The problem of the alleged reference without referents is still to be faced. The focus of this study will be on *fictional names*. I will discuss different theoretical views selecting and applying their proposals to the problem of the reference of these terms and, addressing the specificity of *fictional names*, I will provide an insight into what is fiction, what is a fictional context and how it works.

0.2   Let Us Start From Frege and Russell

At the origin of the contemporary debate on terms that allegedly lack a referent, Frege's and Russell's proposals stand out as our starting points. Despite the fact that their contributions on the theory of reference of proper names are only a small part of their own work as philosophers and logicians, these proposals have become part of the common background in this domain.

According to Frege, a proper name refers to an object[7] and conveys a sense that, at least partly, can be associated to a descriptive mode of presentation of the object. For Frege, the meaning of a name cannot be reduced to its referent, but instead it consists of a layered notion of meaning, one which involves recognition of its 'reference' and 'sense'. Employing the notion of sense, a descriptive mode of presentation of the object designated, Frege provided an

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[7] 'Object' is here intended in its most comprehensive use, comprising individual as well.

answer to many of the Millianist's problems. Mill's theory of the reference of proper names was at the time the leading one. It states that proper names function as tags; their meaning is the object to which names are *allocated*. As Frege pointed out, this theory was encountering various difficulties, for example in the case of the problem of bearerless or empty names, the problem of informativeness or cognitive significance and the problem of substitution into belief contexts.

For example, many people may not know that names such as 'Mark Twain' and 'Samuel Clemens' have the same referent, however they may still be able to understand the identity statement 'Mark Twain is Samuel Clemens'. If the only contribution of a proper name were to be its referent, to understand the above identity statement one should already know the reference of the names and at that point 'Mark Twain is Samuel Clemens' would be tantamount to 'Mark Twain is Mark Twain'. However, whilst the former is informative the second is not and we can understand the former one even without being aware that the two names designate the same individual.

Furthermore, let us consider the case in which Claire, a young literature student, does not know anything about Mark Twain apart from the fact that he is the author of *Huckleberry Finn.* It would not be difficult to state that 'Claire believes that Mark Twain is Mark Twain' is true, given that the that-clause is a tautology. However, the truth of 'Claire believes that Mark Twain is Samuel Clemens' cannot be taken for granted in the same way; in fact it is false, given that Claire does not know that Mark Twain is Samuel Clemens. The assumption that the meaning of a proper name is constituted only by its

designatum would lead us to the wrong conclusion, namely that the sentences 'Claire believes that Mark Twain is Mark Twain' and 'Claire believes that Mark Twain is Samuel Clemens' have the same truth-value conditions.

Finally consider the following example as an illustration of the problem of bearerless names. For Mill the explanation of a sentence such as 'Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep' would have been problematic. To what does 'Odysseus' refer? Allegedly, to nothing at all, but if the referent is the only semantic property that the proper name contributes to the proposition then that sentence does not express any proposition and is thus, meaningless. However, this does not seem to be the correct conclusion, given that everyone can grasp the meaning expressed by that sentence. For Frege, given that he introduced a two-layered notion of meaning distinguishing between reference (Bedeutung) and sense (Sinn), a sentence such as 'Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep' would have expressed a thought while it lacked a truth-value. For thoughts have components that are senses, but there is no referent of which the predication is true or false.

The problem of bearerless or empty names, the problem of informativeness and the problem of substitution into belief contexts all seemed to find a resolution through Frege's move.

According to Bertrand Russell, ordinary proper names such as "Socrates", "Bertrand", but also including fictional names such as "Odysseus" or "Sherlock Holmes" and so on, are not genuine names. Proper names are disguised definite descriptions, for example 'Socrates' or 'Odysseus' are disguised descriptions such as respectively 'the teacher of Plato and husband of

Xanthippe', 'the Theban king who set out to conquer Troy'. In contrast with a Fregean view that would assume that they contribute a sense to the thought expressed, Russell said they are on a par with definite descriptions; incomplete symbols that are eliminable under analysis.

They are incomplete symbols whose semantic contribution to the proposition expressed may be understood only by virtue of a deeper analysis of the sentence beyond its grammatical surface into its logical form. According to this view, they semantically behave as quantificational expressions and sentences involving fictional names express a proposition that can be caught analysing the logical form of the sentence. Consider the following analysis:

(a)   Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep.

'Odysseus' being a disguised definite description may be substituted in (a) for example with 'the hero of Homer's Odyssey' in (b).

(b)   The hero of Homer's Odyssey was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep.

An analysis of (b) may be provided accordingly with Russell's analysis of definite descriptions. Let us employ 'N' to translate the predicate '... is a hero of Homer's *Odyssey*' and 'M' to translate the predicate '... was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep' in representing the proposition expressed by (b) in its logical form (b'):

(b') $(\exists x) (Nx \wedge (\forall y) (Ny \equiv x=y) \wedge Mx)$

As displayed in (b') Russell assimilates definite descriptions to quantificational expressions, which can be understood, roughly speaking, as an existential

statement (where existence is thought of as a second order property of properties) which state the existence of a certain x, the uniqueness of x and the fact that x bears the properties expressed in the sentence. Given that 'The hero of Homer's Odyssey' does not satisfy the first requirement of the conjunction expressed in (b'), (b') is false.

Frege's and Russell's analyses of the problem of empty names were very different, yet notwithstanding those differences, for both of them the problem was a problem of emptiness. Terms such as 'Odysseus' were, for both logicians, names which lack a referent.

The idea of a descriptive content that names were to contribute to the proposition expressed was taken up by logicians and philosophers in the first half of the last century, and was developed into different versions of what has been called *Descriptivism*. Proper names have come to be understood as clusters of descriptions attributable to an individual[8]. As a result of this move, philosophers have included within the view that part of the meaning of a proper name corresponds to a descriptive content, the idea that the reference of proper names is also fixed by the description associated with the name. This has made the theory vulnerable to strong objections and therefore far from conclusive. In fact, since the 1970s the descriptivist stance has been effectively rejected.

Different versions of the direct reference theory have been elaborated by logicians and philosophers within their area of research[9]. The so-called "new

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[8] See Searle, J. (1958) Proper Names. *Mind*, Vol. 67, pp. 166-173.
[9] See Kripke, S. (1980) *Naming and Necessity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Donnellan, K. (1972) Proper Names and Identifying Descriptions, in D. Davidson and G. Harman, eds., *Semantics of Natural Language*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel, pp. 356–79; Kaplan, D. (1989) Demonstratives/Afterthoughts, in J. Almog, J. Perry and H. Wettstein, eds., *Themes from Kaplan*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 481–614.

theory of reference" deposed the descriptivist view on the basis of very strong arguments, often referred to as the semantic, epistemic and modal arguments.

The crux of the semantic argument is that there is a semantic aspect of descriptions that seems not to fit with the semantic function of proper names. Descriptions do not uniquely designate a referent[10] since more than one object may have the same attribute, therefore if the reference of a proper name were fixed via the description associated with it, the proper name might fail to designate a specific individual. Moreover, the argument has been further developed in light of the case of descriptions that are erroneously associated with a certain individual. For example, someone may think that Albert Einstein is the inventor of the atomic bomb and she may associate this description with that name. However, that use of the name would not designate the individual picked out through the description, the actual inventor of the atomic bomb being Oppenheimer. But surely the person still refers to Einstein when she uses the name "Einstein".

The core of the epistemic argument is the following: if the meaning of a proper name is given by its associated description, the proposition expressed by a sentence that contains a proper name would have the same epistemic profile as the sentence where that proper name is replaced with its associated description. However, this is not the case. Consider the two following sentences: (i) if the mentor of Alexander the Great exists, then Aristotle is the mentor of Alexander the Great; (ii) if the mentor of Alexander the Great exists, then the mentor of Alexander the Great is the mentor of Alexander the Great. It is possible to

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[10] There are some exceptions for example in descriptions such as "the successor of 2", but for the moment I do not consider these particular cases.

associate the description 'the mentor of Alexander the Great' with the name 'Aristotle', it being the case that the Greek philosopher was indeed Alexander's mentor. However, if the description associated with the proper name were the meaning of the name, we may replace the name 'Aristotle' with the description 'the mentor of Alexander the Great' without altering the epistemic profile from (i) to (ii). Therefore, given that it is knowable a priori that if the mentor of Alexander the Great exists, then the mentor of Alexander the Great is the mentor of Alexander the Great; it would be knowable a priori that if the mentor of Alexander the Great exists, then Aristotle is the mentor of Alexander the Great. However, the truth of (i) is a posteriori not a priori, in fact one may gain that knowledge studying Alexander or Aristotle's life, but not as a self-evident truth.

The modal argument has a similar structure to the epistemic argument. If the meaning of 'Aristotle' is given by the associated description 'the mentor of Alexander the Great', replacing the former in (i) with its associated description in (ii), (i) should have the same modal profile as (ii). However, this is not the case. In fact, (ii) is necessarily true, namely it is true in every possible world; while (i) is not. There may well be some possible world in which Aristotle is not the mentor of Alexander the Great.

On the basis of these arguments, there has been a radical turn back towards the idea that the meaning of a proper name is its referent. One of the core features of Descriptivism, the idea that the reference of a name may be fixed through a description, has been overturned by what has been called the "new theory of reference". This collates different versions of the direct reference theory and,

notwithstanding the popularity it gained since the 1970s, still faces some old problems: the same ones Frege tried to solve by introducing the notion of 'sense'.

In conclusion, on the one hand, if fictional names contribute a descriptive content to the proposition expressed they do not behave as proper names, e.g. rigid designators, although they cover the same syntactic role. We would need then to explain on which grounds fictional names are an autonomous syntactic category assimilated to quantified expressions[11]. On the other hand, it may be held that fictional names behave exactly as proper names. One of the main challenges in the contemporary debate consists in reconciling the idea that fictional names are proper names with either the idea that they refer to something or that, although they are names, they lack a referent.

0.3   Realism vs. Anti-Realism

Anti-realism or Irrealism, in this context, is the theoretical stance that does not recognise fictional characters as having any ontological status; according to this view, fictional names are genuine non-referring terms. In contrast, a realistic perspective on fictional objects will endorse the general view that there is something designated by fictional names.

Philosophers such as D. Braun, R. Stecker, F. Adams and G. Fuller try to reconcile the role of fictional names as proper names with their supposed emptiness. All these philosophers accept and employ the notion of 'gappy propositions'; a substitute for a "full-fledged" proposition, which corresponds

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[11] G. Currie puts forward a proposal on these lines in *The Nature of Fiction*, 1990.

to the content expressed by sentences containing fictional names, where those names are considered to be empty [12]. A different proposal which endorses the emptiness of fictional names has been developed within theories of fiction. The idea, sketched by G. Evans and developed by K. Walton[13], consists in understanding fictional names within a broader understanding of our participation in the pretence; a pretence in which we for the first time engage with these terms and with their use.

Both realistic and anti-realistic views will face problems concerning the relation between language and thought and language and reality. In fact, if when we think we think of something and when we use a name, it must be the name of something, fictional names become an interesting case to investigate from both perspectives. What is it we think about and what do we name – if we name anything – when employing fictional names? A realistic and an anti-realistic perspective will face different difficulties in providing coherent answers to these fundamental questions.

Let us start from the problems met endorsing an anti-realist perspective; we can then see which are the answers provided by different realistic proposals and consider which questions are in need of an answer assuming this latter point of view.

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[12] K. Taylor endorses a solution which supposes the emptiness of empty-names in a proposal which resembles the one developed by Adams, Stecker and Fuller. See Taylor, K. (2000) Emptiness without compromise. *Empty Names, Fiction and the Puzzles of Non-*Existence edited by Everett, A. & Hofweber, T., ed. Stanford: CSLI Publications. See also Taylor, K. (2009) The Things We Do With Empty Names. Presented at the BW6 conference in Barcelona on Reference and Non-Existence.

[13] See Evans, G. (1982) *The Varieties of Reference*. ed. Oxford: Blackwell. For a semantics of fictional names developed on these lines see Walton, K. (1990) *Mimesis and Make-Believe*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, part 4.

0.4   Language and Thought, Language and Reality

The proposal according to which fictional names are empty names and have the same semantic role as proper names gives rise to a variety of problems. One problematic conclusion is that fictional names do not contribute anything to the proposition and therefore no proposition is expressed by sentences containing fictional names. Let us label this, "the problem of nonsense". Given that a sentence containing fictional names does not express any proposition, that sentence would not have propositional sense. Formulated in this way the problem concerns the connection between language and thought, as in order for a sentence to be understood one grasps the thought expressed. If no proposition is expressed no thought is expressed either, therefore that sentence is not understandable. Yet a sentence such as 'Sherlock Holmes is a detective' is, or seems to be, completely understandable.

A second problem is "the problem of different cognitive values"; this concerns the difference, in what Frege called "cognitive value"[14], between sentences containing different fictional names. Since these types of sentences would fail in expressing any proposition, we would not notice any difference in the content expressed by sentences such as 'Macbeth loves Desdemona' rather than 'Desdemona loves Iago'. However, not only do these sentences have meaning and if meaning is the proposition expressed, then they express a proposition, but the propositions expressed also seem to differ in cognitive value, as regards to who loves whom. This problem ultimately seems to pertain

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[14] Frege, G. (1952) On Sense and Reference. *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege* edited by P. Geach and M. Black, ed. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 56–79.

to the connection between language and thoughts, for two sentences which differ in cognitive value seem to be related, at least in part, to the thoughts one grasps in using them.

A third problem is the "problem of the proposition believed". This concerns the belief one may state when uttering a sentence containing a fictional name. For example, if no proposition is expressed by a sentence such as 'It is not the case that Sherlock Holmes exists', no one could use this sentence to communicate something that she believes. In fact, one may indeed believe that it is not the case that Sherlock Holmes exists. Thus, this problem ultimately concerns the relation between language and thought, for the proposition one believes and expresses using a sentence is the thought that one grasps.

A final problem is "the problem of truth". This concerns the truth values of the sentence containing fictional names. In fact, it being the case that the truth value of a sentence derives from the proposition that it expresses, if no proposition is expressed then no truth value can be assigned to the sentence. However, it seems that for a sentence such as 'Sherlock Holmes is a detective' it is possible to assign a truth value. The assignment of truth values to sentences institutes the connection between language and reality, therefore 'the problem of truth' ultimately concerns this connection.

0.5   When Fictional Characters Do Exist...

A realistic stance will be able to offer a straightforward solution to some of the foregoing problems. Firstly, if fictional characters do exist, sentences containing fictional names will express a proposition, namely the one in which

the fictional name names the appropriate fictional character. Secondly, the matter of who loves whom will be soon sorted out given that Macbeth, Desdemona and Iago are three different characters, therefore the problem of different cognitive values would not arise given that each fictional name would refer to a different fictional character. Thirdly, the problem of the proposition believed would not be a problem, in fact the belief that it is not the case that Sherlock Holmes exists is just a false belief. Finally, we would be able to assign a truth value to sentences containing fictional names, given that they express a proposition, even if it may not be what we expected it to be. For example we may think that it is true that Sherlock Holmes is a detective, but if we think that fictional characters are abstract artefacts we will conclude that Sherlock Holmes is not a detective, given that abstract artefacts are not detectives.

New puzzles arise for a realistic stance with the same directness with which answers are provided to the problems faced by anti-realistic views. First of all, on which grounds can we justify the importation in the ontology of a new type of entity? Secondly, what sort of things are fictional characters? To what ontological category do they belong? Thirdly, whilst we may say that from a realistic point of view "It is not the case that Sherlock Holmes exists" is false, the interpretation of a negative existential statement, such as "Sherlock Holmes does not exist" is problematic. Finally, does a fictional character bear properties such as 'being a detective' or 'being in love with someone' or 'being a person' at the same time as 'being abstract' or 'being non-existent'?

The variety of questions to ask the realistic scholar reveals in itself the variety of approaches in which a realistic stance can be articulated. A categorisation of a realistic stance will inevitably overlook important differences between different proposals and it can only be a temporary one, considering that the area of study concerning fictional characters seems to be in rapid development. However, to give a general outline, we can differentiate between four approaches: a creationist, a cognitive, a possibilistic and a Meinongian one.

0.5.1 Creationistic Views

Creationists are all those scholars who believe that fictional characters are abstract artefacts created by authors in the process of the creations of their stories[15]. The introduction into our ontology of such abstract cultural entities is based on the fact that characters are creatures of fiction bearing the same status as novels, plots or symphonies and so on. Moreover, Peter Van Inwagen offers an argument in which a statement such as "There are fictional characters in some 19th century novels who are presented with a greater wealth of physical detail than is any character in any 18th century novel"[16] translated into the idiom of formal logic shows that a quantification occurs over fictional characters and, according to Van Inwagen, in order for something to be bound to a quantification its existence is required.

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[15] Philosophers such as S. Kripke, P. Van Inwhagen, S. Schiffer, A. Thomasson, N. Salmon would probably all agree with this very general statement, even though each account presents different tenets.

[16] Van Inwagen, P. (1979) Creatures of Fiction. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 299–308.

Once it is accepted that fictional characters are objects of our ontology, their nature may be then defined in terms of abstract entities, abstract cultural artefacts or roles, whose names are introduced by authors in the relative fictions and from the works of fiction the use of their name is exported to talk about the fictions, to compare different characters, to speculate in literary criticism about the moral or aesthetic values those works and those characters bring forward. A fictional character is then abstract, can be representative of a certain set of values or maybe a historical period or a way of thinking, is created by a certain author in a certain story, and yet often fictional characters are in love, live somewhere, seek something and sometimes they die - they can even die many times. In fact, for the existence of a character to cease once and for all, not one trace, be it written, oral or in anyone's memories about *its* story, needs to be found. The use of the impersonal pronoun 'its' is yet more evidence of the shift from the reference to an abstract object and a *fictional persona* for whom we would use a personal pronoun such as 'he' or 'she'. For example: "Ophelia loves Hamlet, but her love is unrequited", it would not sound correct to say "Ophelia loves Hamlet, but its love is unrequited". To make the point straightforwardly, the ascription of certain types of properties to fictional characters which the author ascribes to the *fictional persona* within the story can be problematic from a creationist point of view. If fictional names refer to abstract entities, how can we explain speakers' uses of these names to ascribe properties to fictional characters which they normally would predicate of people? To reformulate the point consider Reina Hayaki's example: the corpus of Sherlock Holmes' stories is (partly) about the friendship between

Holmes and Watson and Holmes and Watson are actual abstract objects; but, the Canon is not about the friendship between two abstract objects.[17]

A widespread strategy in answer to this problem consists in supposing that fictional names are ambiguous which requires us to distinguish between the way they work within the fiction or outside the fiction. Whilst fictional names within the fiction are non-referring terms, outside the fiction they name abstract objects. In the literature developed in this domain, it is quite common to find a threefold distinction between conniving, metafictional and nonfictional uses[18]. Fictional names are non-referring terms in their uses within the fiction, there is no intention to refer or commitment to the truth in writing fiction, thereby we talk here of conniving uses. Fictional names are employed in talk about fiction, hence metafictional uses in which the fictional name contributes a descriptive content to the proposition expressed and the proposition expressed is evaluated within the fictional context. Therefore, "Sherlock Holmes is a detective" is interpreted as "In Doyle's stories, Sherlock Holmes is a detective", where 'Sherlock Holmes' can be replaced by a set of properties predicated of the *fictional persona* within the story[19]. Finally, fictional names are employed in non-fictional uses[20], sentences such as "Sherlock Holmes is smarter than Poirot" or "Sherlock Holmes is smarter than any real detective" or "Sherlock

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[17] I found this way of reformulating the problem very effective. See Hayaki, R. (2009) Fictional characters as abstract objects: some questions. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 141-149.

[18] I adopt here the classification developed in Everett A. (2000) Referentialism and Empty Names. *Empty Names, Fiction and the Puzzles of Non-Existence* edited by Everett, A. & Hofweber, T., ed. Stanford: CSLI Publications. The idea of a three-fold distinction is already presented in Currie G. (1990) ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[19] This idea is developed in D. Lewis (1978). A more articulated account of metafictional uses of fictional names can be found in G. Currie (1990), where fictional names are associated to theoretical terms. See Currie, G. (1990), pp. 158-171.

[20] I am borrowing here the terminology proposed by A. Everett (2000a). Different terminologies are available in the literature on fictional names, G. Currie distinguishes between *fictive*, *metafictive* and *transfictive uses*; see G. Currie (1990).

Holmes does not exist". In these cases, fictional names are supposed to refer to fictional characters, these being different sorts of abstract entities; abstract cultural artefacts, roles or creatures of fiction. However, any creationist who supposes a reference to a fictional character will have to provide an explanation of how to read a negative existential statement, such as "Sherlock Holmes does not exist"[21].

Amie Thomasson[22] adopts Donellan's[23] solution of a *metalinguistic* reading of the negative existential statement. Generally speaking, a fictional name N refers to a prior use of N that the speaker intends to be wrong. The speaker suspects that some mistake has been made, e.g. where past speakers have intended to use the name to refer to a person, as when a child has exclaimed "Santa Claus is coming tonight!" and we correct him by saying "Santa Claus doesn't exist". In making a nonexistence claim, the speaker does not herself intend to use the name "Santa Claus" to refer to a person; rather she exploits prior uses of it that (she thinks) were made with that intention.

Nathan Salmon suggests that in a negative existential statement the use of the fictional name is not literal, and although in his view fictional names are non-ambiguous names for fictional characters, in this case speakers use the name as they sometimes use ordinary names in various descriptive ways so as to

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[21] A broad literature has been produced about the puzzle of negative existential statements, I report only two representative strategies of answering the problem from a creationistic point of view. A more complete account of the different approaches to this puzzle is provided in Sainsbury, R. M. (2010), *Fiction and Fictionalism*. ed. London: Routledge.

[22] The work of A. Thomasson is a crucial reading for the understanding of the idea of fictional characters as abstract cultural artefacts. See Thomasson, A. (1999) *Fiction and Metaphysics*. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[23] Donnellan, K. S. (1974) Speaking of Nothing. *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 83, no. 1, pp. 3-31.

express a proposition "as when it is said that so-and so is a Napoleon, or a Nixon [..] or even a Romeo, an uncle Tom, etc.. [..] we may use 'Sherlock Holmes', for example, to mean something like: *Holmes more or less as he is actually depicted in the stories*[..]"[24] It is then completely acceptable to state that Holmes as he is actually depicted does not exist.

In contrast to the wider approach, according to which fictional names are ambiguous, Salmon argues for the non-ambiguity of these names. According to his view, fictional names name fictional characters and this is true regardless of whether they are employed within or outside the fiction. One main objection to this view is that it misunderstands the nature of fiction which is not a collection of untrue propositions about abstract entities. Salmon recognises that Doyle's writing does not consist in asserting false propositions about fictional objects, but rather he is writing with the intention that his readers pretend that what he has written is true. However, according to Salmon, within this process the author builds a fictional character which is a constitutive part of the fiction and what is said to happen in the fiction is a constitutive part of the fictional character. On this basis, according to Salmon, we can explain the apparent truth of sentences of the Sherlock Holmes stories when "they literally make reference (although the author may not) to the fictional character, and literally express things about that character (mostly false)[...]"[25].

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[24] See Salmon N. (1998).
[25] See Salmon N. (1998), pg. 302

0.5.2 A Cognitive Approach

Finally, I would consider Anthony Everett's proposal as representative of a cognitive approach to the reference of fictional names. This proposal collates different elements and it is a starting point for a cognitive approach to fictional characters in terms of mental representations. Everett, adopting a cognitive background theory developed by Perry and Crimmins, develops a referential framework where the use of fictional names is meaningful given that it harks back not to an object but to an object-type, what technically is called an o-notion, derivable by the participation in the pretence, in which the name is used to refer to that object.

Consider for example the fictional name 'Sherlock Holmes'. The referential framework provided for 'Sherlock Holmes' lacks a referential source, but it supplies a reference-fixing source. Consider how the Sherlock Holmes-notion has been introduced. Readers, engaging with the fiction, imagine that someone is telling them a story about a certain individual called Sherlock Holmes in relation to whom they introduce a notion. Reading the name 'Sherlock Holmes', they introduce a notion of an individual that will be developed according to the set of descriptive conditions provided by the story. Therefore, SH-notion will be a mediated notion introduced on the basis of a set of descriptive conditions that will count as a reference-fixing source. Mediators, these descriptive conditions, will take the place of the reference source in fixing the reference of the fictional name.

- 'Sherlock Holmes' reference-fixing source[26]:

'Sherlock Holmes'

o-notion
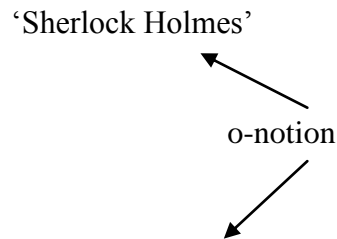
reference-fixing source = mediators (the story, the descriptions such as "the detective who lives in Baker street, and smokes a pipe, " etc..)

?? Sherlock Holmes as an actual individual (source of reference)

This set of descriptive conditions provides an object-type, which may be called the concept of Sherlock Holmes. Could this concept of Sherlock Holmes be associated with the idea of a fictional character?

0.5.3 Possibilism

Possibilism is the view according to which fictional characters are not actual objects but possible objects. Sherlock Holmes is not an actual individual or entity but is rather a possible individual. This view is based on a possible-worlds metaphysics in which we can contemplate the existence of infinite possible worlds along with the actual one[27]. Some of these worlds are story-worlds, namely worlds in which a given story is told as a true fact[28]. Fictional names will then refer to those individuals, in those story-worlds, who are and

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[26] The arrows represent the relations between the elements of a sort of causal chain that explains how the name originates.
[27] This could be a controversial supposition, but I am assuming a realistic stance toward possible worlds.
[28] For an articulated definition of story-worlds see Currie G. (1990).

do what is said of them in the story. Therefore, the fact that we ascribe to Sherlock Holmes the property of being a detective is not problematic from a possibilistic point of view, given that the possible Sherlock Holmes is a detective in that world. However, this view faces two main serious problems. Firstly, we can have examples or contemplate impossible stories, stories in which contradictions intentionally or unintentionally are part of the story-content. In this case possible worlds by definition are not suitable candidates as story-worlds[29]. Secondly, even if the problem of impossible stories can be overcome, the identification of fictional characters with possible individuals faces the problem of transworld identity. In fact, in different story-worlds we may have different Sherlock Holmes who are all alike for what has been predicated about Holmes in the story, but they may differ for what has not been specified in the story. Which one of these would the name "Sherlock Holmes" pick out?

0.5.4   Meinongian Views[30]

For a Meinongian scholar the ascription of properties such as 'being a detective' to a fictional object is also unproblematic. In fact, although different scholars have developed different versions of what has been labelled

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[29] An answer to the problem of impossible fiction can be found in Lewis, D. (1983) Postscripts to "Truth in Fiction", in Lewis, *Philosophical Papers*, vol.1, pp. 276-280.

[30] I am talking of Meinongian views because there are different versions of Meinongianism. See Routley, R. (1980) *Exploring Meinong's Jungle and Beyond, Departmental Monograph #3.* Canberra:Philosophy Department, RSSS, Australian National University. Parsons, T. (1980) *Nonexistent Objects.* ed. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press. Priest, G. (2005) *Towards Non-Being: The Logic and Metaphysics of Intentionality*. ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Meinongianism, generally I think that they would all agree that Sherlock Holmes is a non-existent object who bears the property of being a detective.

Terence Parsons in *Non-Existent Objects[31]*, illustrates an ontology comprising different types of properties, *nuclear and extranuclear properties*. The property of 'being a detective" belong to the former type, whereas properties such as "being non-existent", "being possible", "being impossible", "being fictional" comprise the latter. Therefore, in this ontological framework, *there are[32]* existent objects just as there are non-existent ones and Sherlock Holmes is a non-existent object and is a detective. Peter van Inwagen poses an interesting question for this Meinongian stance. Consider two different definite descriptions: "The main satiric villainess of Martin Chuzzlewit" and "the character in Martin Chuzzlewit who appears in every chapter." Since no character in Martin Chuzzlewit appears in every chapter, there seems to be an important difference between these two descriptions. The first one may denote a fictional character the second one not; we may say that a character who appears in every chapter in Martin Chuzzlewit does not exist.

Will a Meinongian want to say that each of these descriptions denotes something, and that what each denotes fails to exist? In that case a Meinongian will need to account for a clear important ontological difference between the ways in which these two descriptions relate to the world.

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[31] See Parsons, T. (1980).

[32] I am using the italics to recall the Meinongian distinction between 'there are' and 'exists'. Only the former covers a similar function to the existential quantificator adopted in classical logic, whilst the 'exist' as well as 'non-exist' expresses a first level property of objects.

Conclusion

The study of the reference of fictional names seems to gather together the interest of different domains. From a metaphysical point of view the puzzle can be interesting in terms of what, if anything, can be designated by a fictional name. From a cognitive point of view, it can be interesting to enquire how we can understand and classify our thought about fiction and fictional entities, if there are such things as fictional entities. Linguistics provides part of the technical apparatus with which we may aim to formulate the most economical and convincing explanation of how the reference works in this case. Theories of pretence offer a distinct understanding of the reference of fictional names and introduce pretence as an important element in the study of the relation between Language and Reality.

In this study I am offering a criticism of those theories which endorse a complete emptiness of fictional names. In part 1, I will discuss David Braun's proposal and, in part 2, I will discuss the work developed by Stecker, Adams and Fuller. Whilst both of these proposals make use of the notion of 'gappy propositions', they develop two very different frameworks. I will discuss which solutions they can offer in solving the different puzzles which arise in supposing that fictional names are proper names whilst being empty. In part 3, I will consider the view developed within the theories of pretence. I will present an analysis of fiction mainly based on Walton's work and discuss his proposal on the reference of fictional names.

In the analysis I develop, I will delineate some problems that each one of the proposals under discussion faces.

This study has led me to the conclusion that Walton's proposal is the most explanatory of the anti-realistic views. In fact, I will show that it is able to account for the whole range of examples that I have submitted to each theoretical stance, whereas the others examined include the possibility of one or more counterexamples which remain outside of their explanatory framework. I will reply to the criticism of implausibility, often directed to Walton's proposal, not only by delineating a clear and simplified account of Walton's complex point of view but also by offering an interpretation in which acts of pretence can be read as acts of communication. My contribution will consist of providing an understanding of speakers' participation in game of make-believe as part of the communicational exchange in conversations. In the same way as metaphors or figurative language, acts of pretence can be included as constitutive parts of speakers' communication process.

However, although I think that this study will offer a more accessible reading of Walton's proposal on the reference of fictional names and the opportunity to go beyond the criticism of implausibility, I still believe that more work is needed on the notion of 'make-believe'. Make no mistake, I do not think that without a philosophical analysis of 'make-believe' Walton's view loses its strength: I do not believe such an analysis is essential, even if it may be desirable. I rather believe that Walton's work serves as a basis for a deeper insight into 'make-believe' and points to new directions of research in different fields, for example in psychological studies pertaining to imaginative activities and participation in make-believe.

PART I

In this first part, I will consider two answers to the problem of fictional names. In the first chapter I will discuss a quite radical view; one which has been elaborated by David Braun. Originally, it was thought as a semantic answer to the problem in which the notion of 'gappy proposition' was introduced as a remedy to the puzzles engendered by maintaining a direct referential approach to the reference of names and the emptiness of fictional names. I will show which problems this view has faced and how the attempt to find a solution has led Braun to mix a radical semantic view with a cognitive understanding of the uses of fictional names and endorsement of the distinction between different uses of these terms.

In the second chapter I will discuss the framework developed by F. Adams, G. Fuller and R. Stecker. This is a result of a long term collaboration that is still today an important contribution to the debate on fictional names. Although in this proposal the notion of 'gappy proposition' is central, as the independent semantic content expressed by sentences containing fictional names, the need to complete the unfilled semantic content is supplied by considering the pragmatic content imparted into the conversation. Namely, a descriptive content will replace the vacuous fictional name on a pragmatic level imparting a full proposition within the conversation. I will show that Adams, Fuller and Stecker's work will provide an answer to many of the problems raised against Braun's one. The discussion will lead on to consider broader philosophical questions such the nature of 'gappy propositions' and the semantics framework in which such a notion can be endorsed as a primitive notion.

Introduction

There is only one world, the "real" world: Shakespeare's imagination is part of it, and the thoughts that he had in writing Hamlet are real. So are the thoughts that we have in reading the play. But it is of the very essence of fiction that only the thoughts, feelings, etc.., in Shakespeare and his readers are real, and there is not, in addition to them, an objective Hamlet.

Bertrand Russell

The spirit of the gappy proposition view seems to flow from the Russellian sense of reality in an attempt to extend a Russellian semantic framework to the analysis of nonreferring terms. Nowadays, David Braun can be seen as a sort of paladin of the gappy proposition view in the literature on empty names; his work in developing and defending the notion of gappy propositions is well known in the field. I will assume Braun's view as a starting point for the semantic analysis of fictional names, given that my intuitions are close to the Russellian sense of reality for what concerns the objectivity of any *fictional persona*. I will discuss the solutions and problems of Braun's view and how it deals with the puzzles that emerge from the *no proposition view*. Let us outline it in the four following points:

(a)   If a proposition P is expressed by a sentence S, the constituents of P correspond to the contents of the words contained in S.

(b)   The content of a name is the individual it refers to.

(c)   Fictional names do not refer to anything.

(d)   If a component of a sentence has no content, the sentence does not express a proposition.

Therefore:

(e) A sentence containing a fictional name does not express any proposition.

Accepting (d) would entail that the utterance of "Sherlock Holmes is a detective" would not express a proposition, engendering *the problem of nonsense*, *the problem of cognitive values*, *the problem of the proposition believed* and *the problem of truth* introduced in the previous chapter. Different strategies may be employed and I will discuss some of them in the following chapters. (a) can be abandoned by adopting a different semantic framework, (b) can be denied by refuting a directly referential account of the reference of proper names, and (c) can be refuted by adopting the view that fictional names contribute a semantic content. Braun's challenge consists of maintaining what he calls a Naïve Russellianist semantic framework sketched in (a), with (b): a direct referential account of the reference of proper names; in conjunction with (c): the emptiness of fictional names. In doing so he employs the notion of *unfilled* or *gappy propositions*. The idea of an *incomplete proposition* is mentioned originally in Kaplan[33], but it finds its proper development in Braun's work.[34] Gappy propositions are structured entities that are like propositions in some respects but not in others. For example, they display the same structure of propositions even if some of the positions composing the propositional structure can remain unfilled. On the one hand they seem to be a straightforward answer to the case of empty names. Sentences express propositions, where each component of the sentence contributes a content to the proposition expressed and sentences containing empty names will express

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[33] Kaplan, D. (1989), pg. 496 fn. 23.
[34] Braun, D. (1993) Empty Names. *Noûs*, Vol. 27, no. 4, pp. 449-469.

gappy propositions where the position covered by the nonreferring term will remain unfilled. On the other hand, gappy propositions may appear to be a technical expedient that lacks any metaphysical justification and would find its legitimation in offering solutions to the puzzle of empty names. Moreover, gappy propositions seem to almost betray that original Russellian spirit from which the notion of a 'proposition', as it has been treated so far, has sprung. In fact, if propositions are representations of a state of affairs, how can they be incomplete?

In section 1, I will provide an overview of the notion of 'gappy propositions' providing the technical details employed by Braun in elaborating such a notion. In section 2, I will discuss Braun's most recent acceptance of the existence of fictional characters and the consequences that this move entails for the analysis of sentences containing fictional names. In section 3, I will discuss the solutions Braun offers to the *problem of nonsense*, *the problem of cognitive values*, *the problem of the proposition believed*, and *the problem of truth*. I will treat the first three problems as pertaining to the relation between language and thought and the last problem as concerning the connection between language and reality. Although Braun's attempt to assimilate the notion of 'gappy proposition' takes place within a cognitive account, I will show that counterintuitive consequences may issue forth assuming his proposal. Furthermore, I will provide strong evidence that Braun's assumption that gappy propositions bear truth values is wrong.

In conclusion, the notion of 'gappy proposition' seems to be a valid tool for pursuing our intuitions about the fact that in creating fiction or in talking about

fiction, there is no actual individual that we are talking about. Without doubt Braun has recognized and developed this idea, making it available for different proposals. I will suggest that Braun's employment is susceptible to strong objections. However, in the following chapters I will show how different replies to the problem of empty names have stemmed from the idea of gappy propositions.

1.1   Gappy Propositions

What are "gappy-propositions"? They are special types of propositions. "Neo-Russellianism" or "Naive-Russellianism" is usually the favoured semantic framework adopted in treating these *special* propositions. The appellation "naïve" comes from the attempt of employing and developing Frege and Russell's initial views on the notion of 'proposition' to these special cases. Here is an outline of the core features of "Naïve Russellianism":

(a)   Words have contents. The content of a name is the object the name refers to; the content of a predicate is the property it expresses.

(b)   Sentences have contents. The content of a sentence is a proposition that is what the sentence semantically expresses.

(c)   Propositions have constituents. When a proposition P is expressed by a sentence S, the constituents of P correspond to the contents of the words contained in S.

As a result of the view that I am assuming here, propositions are not thought of as sets of possible worlds, but are instead structured entities and can be

represented by adopting different conventions[35]. Consider the following sentence:

1.   Obama is the American President.

Constituents of (1) are the individual Obama and the property of 'being the American President'. By convention, (1) can be represented through an ordered pair:

P₁   < Obama, being the American President>

Let us label this Convention 1, and consider that according to it, the ordered pair represents a proposition whose constituents are its constitutive 1-place relation 'being the American President' and its constitutive subject Obama.

An alternative convention, say Convention 2, represents the proposition expressed by (1) by an ordered pair of sets.

P₂   <{Obama},{being the American President}>

According to Convention 2 each object that is a constituent of the proposition expressed is either the member of a singleton set or is the empty set and the constitutive n-place relation of the proposition will be the member of a set. In the example above, the proposition is represented as an ordered pair whose constituents are sets. In the first position there is a singleton set whose member is Obama and the second position is filled by a second set whose member is the 1-place relation, 'being the American President'.

Finally, propositions may be represented through trees. Let us call this Convention 3:

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[35] I adopt here a distinction between different conventions employed in the representation of propositions delineated in Braun (2005).

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                    P₁                      PROPOSITION

                            ╱‾‾‾‾╲
                    Argument    1-place Property

                       │              │

                    Obama      being-the-American President
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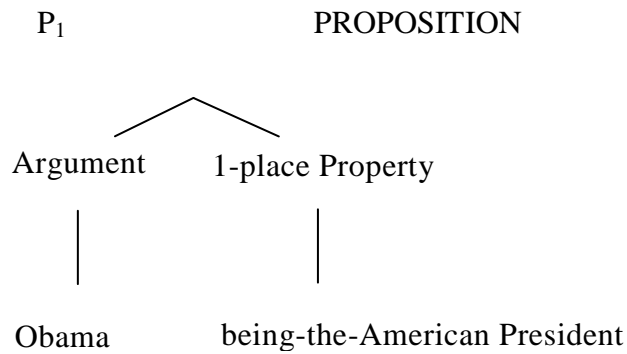
As Braun explicitly states[36] in presenting the different foregoing conventions, these conventions are ways to model propositions and their use bears no implications about the nature of propositions. That is, n-tuples or sets or trees are not thought of as constituents of propositional structures.

These solutions have become helpful in supporting the idea of structured entities which are proposition-like, where one of the positions is *unfilled*. This idea, allegedly presented by David Kaplan in an unpublished lecture and of which we can find some trace in *Demonstratives*[37], has been developed and adopted in the literature discussing the case of empty names. Consider the following example:

2.   Sherlock Holmes is a detective.

Under the assumption that 'Sherlock Holmes' is an empty name, what Kaplan would call more precisely a *nondenoting directly referential term*, the propositional structure would present a "gap", hence the label *gappy*

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[36] Braun, D. (2005), pg.621, fn.6.

[37] See D. Kaplan (1989), pg 496, fn.23: "[…] we need only add {…} to mark the places in a singular proposition which correspond to directly referential terms. […] This technique can also be used to resolve another confusion in Russell. He argued that a sentence containing a nondenoting referential term (he would have called it a nondenoting 'logically proper name') would be meaningless, presumably because the purported singular proposition would be incomplete. But the braces themselves can fill out the singular proposition, and if they contain nothing, no more anomalies need result than what the development of Free Logic has already inured us to."

proposition. Modelling it by means of a tree convention we would find a *block* in one of the branches.
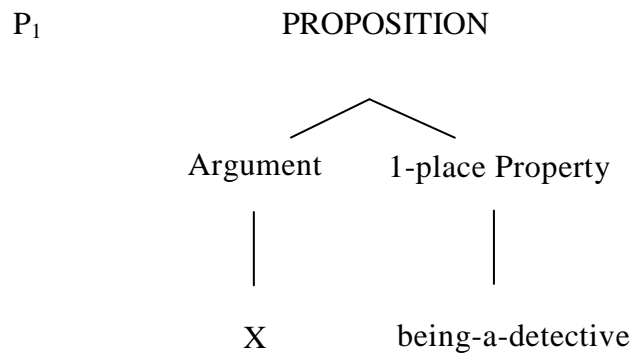
P$_1$ PROPOSITION

Alternatively, it may be thought that (2) expresses a proposition representable by an ordered pair:

   P$_2$ <{…}, {being a detective}>

P$_2$ represents the atomic gappy proposition whose constitutive relation is the property of 'being a detective' and which has no subject constituent. The uses of brackets do not imply that the subject constituent is the empty-set; in that case it would be represented as <{{}}, {being a detective}>.

More commonly, the notation adopted in the literature concerning gappy propositions, is the underline notation:

   P$_3$ <__ , {being a detective}>

Braun suggests that the underline notation works as a place holder for a future set-theoretical representation. The elaboration of the more convenient notations for gappy propositions reposes on the theoretical point that propositional structures may have unfilled positions and notwithstanding them being incomplete, may still be treated as propositions.

Braun's view on gappy propositions has been adopted as a benchmark for any non realistic position and for the avoidance of any compromise with the attempt to find an existent or non-existent referent for empty names. However, the recent ontological turn toward the existence of fictional characters seems to have softened Braun's positions about the emptiness of fictional names. At the least, it seems that Braun considers paring down the types of terms that can be considered as nondenoting directly referential terms. In fact, he distinguishes between different uses of fictional names[38] and endorses the view of gappy proposition for one of these.

In the following section I will present some arguments in favour of the existence of fictional characters and consider to what extent the notion of 'gappy proposition' is deemed helpful in the study of fictional names. Furthermore, I will discuss the idea that even in those cases where gappy propositions play a role, their application is very controversial. Can gappy propositions be asserted or believed? Do they bear truth values? In the rest of the chapter I will discuss Braun's view and and I will present some of the problems that it faces.

1.2   Gappy Propositions and Fictional Characters

Surprisingly enough for the pioneer of the gappy propositions, Braun has come to countenance the existence of fictional characters: "I think we should accept the existence of fictional characters, even if we have questions about their

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[38] See Braun (2005).

exact nature."[39] However, this does not relieve semanticists from the problems engendered by fictional names. In fact, the metaphysical claim that fictional characters exist leaves open many semantic issues. For example, do all inscriptions of fictional names refer to fictional characters? Surely, there are examples in support of a realistic stance. Consider the following example:

3.　　There are fictional characters that appear in more than one of Conan Doyle's stories.

Philosophers such as Saul Kripke (1973), Peter van Inwagen (1978), Nathan Salmon (1999) and Amie Thomasson (1999) would agree that an utterance of (3) entails the existence of such things as fictional characters. The adoption of such things in our ontology would come very handy when dealing with the semantics of sentences such as (4) and (5):

4.　　 Sherlock Holmes was created by Conan Doyle.

5.　　 Sherlock Holmes is more famous than any real detective.

The semantics of (4) and (5) would be, under this hypothesis, as straightforward as the semantics for a subject-predicate sentence. In this case the subject position would be filled by the fictional character Sherlock Holmes.

It is possible to find different views on this in each one of the theoretical pictures of the philosophers mentioned above, here I will discuss Braun's view. Braun adopts an account initially illustrated by Kripke and then carried out by Amie Thomasson. Fictional characters are thought of as having originated in works of fiction, created by the authors of the story they belong to. Readers competently learn the use of the name through reading the stories and talk of

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[39] Braun, D. (2005), pg. 609.

the fiction spreads the use of the name to non-competent users who have not read the story and who may not know the characteristics of the character. So far it seems we are able to reinstate the idea of a causal chain of the use of a name that harks back to the origin of its use, even for the case of fictional names. Some philosophers would be satisfied by such an explanation: fictional names refer to fictional characters; the problems which arise from here are then delegated to a pragmatic explanation of the use of the name[40]. However, Braun follows the view that not all the inscriptions of fictional names have reference. Therefore, there are inscriptions that refer to fictional characters and others that are empty. The question is then when a fictional name acquires a reference. Braun disagrees with the view that fictional names refer to fictional characters once the story has terminated[41], instead he thinks that the referential process is established gradually in concomitance with the gradual clarification of the author's thoughts and intentions when writing the story. Consequently, Braun chooses a middle way between the two extreme views according to which, for example, on the one hand all of Doyle's inscriptions of 'Sherlock Holmes' are empty and on the other hand, all of the inscriptions refer to the fictional character Holmes. "Conan Doyle might […] gradually have started to have singular thoughts and intentions regarding the character as he wrote his story. Then his first inscriptions in writing the story would have failed to refer, while his later inscriptions would have referred to the fictional character – and there may be some indeterminacy regarding some inscriptions in between."[42]

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[40] Salmon, N. (1998).
[41] Kripke S., Van Inwagen P. and Thomasson A. hold this view.
[42] Braun, D. (2005), p. 611.

Braun aligns himself with the idea that 'Sherlock Holmes' is ambiguous, given that one use lacks any reference and the other designates a fictional character. It would then be recommendable, from his point of view, to study its semantics replacing 'Holmes' with 'Holmes$_1$' or 'Holmes$_2$' in accordance with the different semantic properties of the fictional name.

According to Braun, this ambiguity is also reflected in the speaker's use of 'Holmes', given that our way of employing the fictional name harks back through causal relations to Doyle's use. Therefore, even if not consciously, speakers' employment of 'Holmes' is in turn susceptible to the distinction between 'Holmes$_1$' and 'Holmes$_2$'. "We have a standing intention to use the name in the same way that those around us do, and those people intend to use the name in the same way as those from whom they got the name did, and so on, until we reach Conan Doyle."[43]

The content and reference of speakers' utterances and inscriptions of 'Holmes' are determined in part by Doyle's utterances and inscriptions, moreover speakers' thoughts about fictional characters also seem to play a role in determining the reference of their use of 'Holmes'. Therefore, Braun considers the possibility of a certain degree of indeterminacy between 'Holmes$_1$' and 'Holmes$_2$' in the speakers' use of the fictional name as well as for the author's employment of it.

A sentence such as (2) may be semantically analysed in terms of (2$_i$) and (2$_{ii}$) in relation to the semantic content contributed by the fictional name:

2.   Sherlock Holmes is a detective.

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[43] Braun, D. (2005), p.612.

2_i.   Sherlock Holmes$_1$ is a detective.

2_{ii}.   Sherlock Holmes$_2$ is a detective.

There is room to cast some doubts on Braun's strategy. Firstly, the assumption of the ambiguity of fictional names from a methodological point of view should not be taken for granted. According to Braun, (6) illustrates how the employment of different uses of 'Holmes' is particularly recommendable.

6.   There is no Sherlock Holmes. Sherlock Holmes does not exist. Sherlock Holmes is just a fictional character.

Braun considers this a good example to see how the name can be used when contributing different semantic contents, or more precisely when it does not contribute a semantic content in certain occurrences while contributing it in others. In fact, Braun suggests a reading of the first and second conjunct in which 'Sherlock Holmes' should be read as 'Holmes$_1$', while in the third conjunct as 'Holmes$_2$'. Casting aside for the moment the problems related to the truth values of the first and second conjuncts, there are cases where this methodological choice does not seem appropriate. Consider (7):

7.   Sherlock Holmes is a detective and was created by Conan Doyle.

It is difficult to see how the single occurrence of 'Holmes' in (7) can be read in terms of two different occurrences, each one with a different semantic specification.

Secondly, the extension of causal relations from the author's use of 'Holmes' to the speakers' use of 'Holmes' should not receive blind consent. In fact, it is difficult to understand how speakers' use of 'Holmes' is related to Doyle's

employment of 'Holmes' as an empty fictional name or to Doyle's intention to refer to a fictional character. To illustrate this point, consider the difference between an anecdote and the narration of a story. For example, Claire may share with me the achievements of her rowing crew and tell me about her project, with her pair mate Maria, to race in a double at the next regatta. When talking with my pair mate at the rowing club about Claire and Maria's project to race in the double, my use of 'Maria' can be traced back to Claire's use of that name, that in turn is based on Claire's acquaintance with Maria. The different uses of 'Maria' by different people are connected causally, Claire knows Maria, she talks to me intending to refer to her, and I intend to talk about the person Claire intended to refer to. My use of 'Maria' is then causally related to Claire's one. For anecdotes, the idea of causal relation in the use of the name between the person who tells the story and the one who talks about it afterwards seems to work. However, in fiction, things seem to work quite differently. While we are reading one of Doyle's stories, does it really matter to us if Doyle, up to a certain point, did not use 'Holmes' to refer to the fictional character because he had not completely shaped it in his mind but after a certain point, uses 'Holmes' to refer to the character he bore in mind? In writing the stories, Doyle does not seem interested in sharing the process of creation of the fictional character with the reader. There is no causal relation between Doyle's prior empty use of 'Holmes' or Doyle's later use of 'Holmes' referring to a fictional character and speakers' use of 'Holmes'. Doyle intends readers to make believe what is narrated. He uses 'Holmes' with the intention that readers make believe that there is a certain Watson who wrote about a detective called Sherlock Holmes, independently of whether Doyle is actually

referring to a fictional character or not. Speakers' use of 'Holmes' does not seem to be causally related to Doyle's use, but rather to how the name is employed in the story. It seems plausible then to think that once the story has terminated it is possible to *abstract* the role of Holmes from the whole story, referring in this way to the fictional character.

In the next two sections I will discuss Braun's analysis of sentences that contain those uses of fictional names that lack any reference.

1.3   Gappy Propositions and Fictional Names

According to Braun, not all occurrences of fictional names refer to fictional characters. There are some uses of fictional names that still fail to contribute any semantic content, even when fictional characters are accepted as part of our ontology. For these cases Braun advocates the employment of 'gappy propositions'. In this section I will introduce Braun's view, illustrating the types of solutions which he elaborates adopting the notion of 'gappy propositions'. I do not endorse his strategy and I believe it is susceptible to different objections. I will present them in reply to Braun's arguments.

The "unfilled propositions view"[44] seems to provide an answer to many of the problems encountered by Millianism by adopting the notion of 'gappy propositions'.

The *problem of the proposition expressed* is one of the consequences of assuming a "Neo-Russellian" semantic framework. In fact, given that the constituents of the proposition P expressed by the sentence S correspond to the

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[44] See Braun, D. (1993).

contents of the word contained in S, if one of the constituents of S lack the semantic content, then S does not express any proposition. However, according to Braun, sentences containing occurrences of fictional names that lack a semantic content still express a proposition. For instance, sentence (2) expresses the unfilled or gappy proposition (2_g):

2.   Sherlock Holmes is a detective.

2_g.   <__ , being-a-detective>

Therefore, Braun offers a very straightforward, even if purely technical, answer to the problem. A second consequence of assuming that S does not express a proposition P if one of the words composing it lacks semantic content, is that S would be nonsense. For the *problem of nonsense*, as Russell stated it, a sentence that contains an empty name would be "nonsense, because you cannot have a constituent of a proposition which is nothing at all."[45] However, there is a clear difference between (2) and a string of grammatically unrelated sounds, for example: "bla bla bloo sister". According to Braun, it is possible to catch this intuitive difference by considering the cognitive relations that speakers entertain with a sentence like (2). The solution to the *problem of nonsense* is that (2) will make sense because speakers, in uttering (2), express a gappy proposition. According to Braun the relation between speakers and the gappy proposition expressed is on a cognitive level. Speakers believe (2) and they relate to the gappy proposition expressed by (2) because this is the object of their belief. Braun adopts an account of the notion of 'belief' according to which speakers' beliefs are mental representations and in general, within this

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[45] Russell, B. (1918).

account, mental representations are understood as composed of two entities: a certain mental state and a proposition. According to Braun, gappy propositions can be the object of these intrinsic mental states. This solution deals with the problem of nonsense when this is understood with regard to the connection between language and thought. Contrariwise, adopting gappy propositions does not seem to offer a solution to the *problem of nonsense* as this is understood to be concerning the connection between language and reality; when one aims to ascertain which object in the world the subject of the sentence refers to. Likewise, Braun's view does not offer a solution to the problem when this concerns the connection between thought and reality; it does not offer an explanation as to what the thought grasped by the speaker in using (2) is about.

According to Braun, gappy proposisitions also play an crucial role in offering a solution to other problems faced by a Millianist stance which pertain to the connection between language and thought. As I illustrated in the Introduction both the *problem of the proposition believed* and the *problem of cognitive significance* concern this connection. I present Braun's solution for these and the objections to his proposal in the following section.

1.3.1 Braun's View on the Problem of Cognitive Significance and the Problem of the Proposition Believed

Consider the classic example introduced by Frege to illustrate the problem of significance.

8. Hesperus is identical with Hesperus.

9. Hesperus is identical with Phosphorus.

This is the example which put a strain on Naïve Russellianism. According to this semantic framework outlined above, (8) and (9) express the same proposition, the content of 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' being one and the same: Venus. However, one may believe that (8) is true while holding that (9) is false. For instance, Claire may not know that 'Hesperus' and 'Phosporus' refer to the same object and she recognises (8) as necessarily true while she deems (9) false, given that she believes 'Hesperus' to refer to the morning star and 'Phosphorus' to the evening star; Claire is unaware that the morning and the evening star are the very same object. Consequently, Claire believes that (8) and the negation of (9) are true. However, according to the Naïve Russellian account (8) and (9) express the same proposition, as a result Claire believes both a proposition and its negation. But no rational agent believes a proposition and its negation, therefore the Naïve Russellian account of meaning must be wrong.

The gappy proposition view inherits some of the problems met by the Naïve Russellian account. Consider the following version of the problem of cognitive significance for sentences containing empty names.

   10.   Superman is in love.

   11.   Clark Kent is in love.

   12.   Romeo is in love.

Adopting the gappy proposition view (10), (11) and (12) express the same proposition, in fact, according to Braun, utterances of atomic subject-predicate sentences which differ only in the empty name they involve will count as

expressing the same gappy proposition. Therefore, (10)-(11) all express the proposition P_4:

P_4 <__ , being-in-love>

However, intuitively there is a sense in which (12) has a different propositional content in respect to (10) and (11). Yet, the gappy proposition view is unable to provide an explanation of these intuitions.

Moreover, consider the following example as a parallel of the one above, illustrated with (8) and (9), for the case of fictional names:

13.   Superman is Superman.

14.   Clark Kent is Superman.

According to the gappy proposition view (8) and (9) express the same proposition:

P_5 <__ , identity,__>

However, consider the case in which Claire has never read or watched any of the Superman's stories and she does not know that 'Clark Kent' is, in the fiction, the name for Superman in his ordinary life. Consequently, Claire may believe that (13) is a necessary truth while believing that (14) is false. As a result Claire may believe (13) and the negation of (14). But given that according to the gappy proposition view (13) and (14) express the same proposition, Claire believes a proposition and its very negation. However, as before, no rational agent believes a proposition and its negation, therefore the gappy proposition view must be wrong.

The same argument may be restated considering sentences that express attributions of beliefs, for example:

15. Claire believes that Superman is Superman.

16. Claire believes that Clark Kent is Superman.

The that-clauses embedded in (15) and (16) are the sentences (13) and (14) above, which express the same gappy proposition P_5, therefore (15) and (16), by composition, express in turn the same gappy proposition:

P_6. <Claire believes that <__ , identity, __>>

Hence the same argument stated above can be restated for (15) and (16).

Applying Braun's outline of the problem of cognitive significance for the Naïve Russellian view to what pertains to the gappy proposition view, we can delineate the argument by means of the following structure:

a. There is a rational agent who understands (13) and (14) and believes that (13) is true and (14) is false.

b. If a rational agent understands (13) and (14), and believes that (13) is true and (14) is false, then she believes the proposition expressed by (13) and the negation of (14).

c. If the gappy proposition view is true, (13) and (14) express the same proposition.

d. Therefore, there is a rational agent who believes the proposition expressed by (13) and the negation of that very same proposition.

e. No rational agent believes a proposition and its negation.

f.　　　Therefore, the gappy proposition view is wrong.

Braun's reply to this argument is centred on refuting (e). According to Braun a rational agent may believe a proposition and its negation. This is possible in Braun's view if the attitude of believing a certain propositional content means for an agent to be in a certain belief state. Adopting Perry's proposal[46], Braun individuates a belief state in a more articulated way than its propositional content.

"I use the term 'belief' as a term for a mental state. A belief (or belief state, we might call it) is an enduring event-like entity that occurs in a brain (or mind). It is what "happens" in one's head when one believes a proposition. […] The content of a belief is a proposition. […] So beliefs and propositions are distinct entities. But beliefs express propositions, in much the same way that sentences express propositions. A person believes a proposition by having a belief (state) that expresses that proposition."[47]

Under this hypothesis, (13) and (14) express the same propositional content, namely the same gappy proposition, and yet their being believed occurs within different belief states. To exemplify this view, Braun compares it to assertive utterances such as:

　　　(i)　　　Fred: "I am hungry".

　　　(ii)　　　Wilma: "You are hungry" [addressing Fred].

Fred and Wilma express the same proposition, even if they use different sentences in doing so. Therefore, they express the same proposition in different

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[46] Perry, J. (1979) The Problem of the Essential Indexical. *Noûs*, Vol. 13, pp. 3-2 1.
[47] Braun, D. (1993), pg. 457.

ways. Moreover, Fred and Wilma believe that proposition in different ways. In fact, this difference may be understood by considering the causal role of Fred and Wilma's belief states in their behaviour: Fred will look for food, while Wilma will not. Braun labels this answer to the problem the "*many ways of believing reply* " and it "will appear especially plausible if one thinks that belief states involve tokenings of sentence-like mental representations, for there might be distinct mental sentences that have the same propositional content. If so, then a person might rationally believe both a proposition and its negation by having suitably different sentences in his belief box."[48]

According to this view, two different belief states are involved in believing the single proposition expressed by (13) or (14) and this belief state may be thought of as having (13) or (14) in one belief box. Consequently, one can be in one of these belief states without being in the other; one can have (13) in her belief box without having (14). According to Braun this would cause one to believe that (13) is true and have no opinion about (14). Alternatively, one can also be in a different belief state while believing that (13) is true, so she will have (13) together with the negation of (14) in her belief box.

For Braun[49] belief states are intrinsic mental states and as such, an agent may not realise that the content of her belief is a gappy proposition. 'Superman', 'Clark Kent' and 'Romeo' are meaningful for speakers, even if they have no semantic content, because, according to Braun, speakers "bear cognitive relations to these names that are importantly similar to the cognitive relations

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[48] Braun, D. (2002), pp. 69-70.

[49] Braun, D. (2005).

they bear to referring names."[50] Therefore the ways in which a person believes that (13) is true and (14) is false differ in the same way in which she may believe that (17) is true and (18) is false:

17.   Mark Twain is Mark Twain.

18.   Samuel L. Clemens is Mark Twain.

Furthermore, the ways in which a person believes (10)-(12) differ in the same way in which a person may believe (19)-(21):

19.   Mark Twain is an author.

20.   Samuel L. Clemens is an author.

21.   Conan Doyle is an author.

The cognitive difference between (10)-(12) is a difference in the ways in which a person believes (10)-(12). Braun would say, probably in an attempt to simplify his view, that one believes (10) in a "Superman-ish" way, (11) in a "Clark Kent-ish" way and (12) in a "Romeo-ish" way.

However, if we investigate this proposal further we shall see unsatisfactory consequences. Consider the explanation that can be derived by Braun's view on why we have the intuitions that we do concerning (10)-(12), despite the fact that we may assume that the fictional names they contain are empty.

It would seem that, according to Braun, utterances of sentences which are associated to different mental states would differ in what is said, for example (10)-(12) may be associated to different belief states and therefore their utterances express different propositional contents. It may be that (10) and (11)

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[50] Ib., pg. 600.

are associated to the same mental state, let us say that the speaker has the same cognitive relations with the fictional names 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent'. This would justify our intuitions according to which the utterance of (10) and (11), to a certain extent, say the same thing while (12) has a completely different content; the cognitive relations entertained with the fictional name 'Romeo' are at the basis of a completely different mental state.

It is possible to grant that sometimes we may judge an utterance "*a* is *F*" and one "*b* is F" as expressing different propositions because these two utterances are associated to different mental states. However, ultimately, our judgements concerning the propositional content of (19) and (20) will be sensitive to the semantic values we take "a" and "b" to have. Take as examples (19) and (20), when we come to learn that Samuel L. Clemens is the pen name for Mark Twain we will recognise that there is some sense in which utterances of (19) and (20) say the same thing but say something different from "Conan Doyle is an author". This does not seem to be the case with (10)-(12). 'Superman', 'Clark Kent', and 'Romeo' are all fictional names and the way in which they are employed should all have the same semantic value, according to Braun; nonetheless, utterances of (10)-(12) are not understood as saying the same thing at all.

In conclusion, Braun's response to the problem of cognitive significance is not satisfactory, as the problem of our different understanding between utterances of (10), (11), (12) highlights, and this lack of resolution replicates in the problem of the proposition believed. As Ben Caplan notes, the gappy proposition view can be seen as an attempt to extend the direct reference theory

to the cases of non-referring terms. As a natural extension, it is problem-preserving and therefore we should not expect a solution to the problem of the difference in cognitive values in (10)-(12).

Moreover, Braun's *many ways of believing reply* seems to be somewhat out of focus for that which aims to resolve the problem of cognitive significance for fictional names. The problem of the difference in cognitive values of fictional empty names does not pertain to a belief state, but rather to the imaginative processes which relate speakers to these terms. Braun accepts the thesis of different semantic contents for different uses of fictional names: the same fictional name can be empty or have a referent. The case of fictional empty names is for Braun mainly related to some of the author's uses in writing the story, and some speakers' uses that seem to find a causal connection to those original authorial uses. Therefore, if the majority of gappy propositions are expressed by sentences containing fictional empty names, then the cognitive relations that connect us with the uses of these fictional names are not a belief state but rather a mental state that we may call a *make-belief state*. Braun maintains that the difference in ways of believing shows up in the difference in the behaviour engendered in the speaker. But for a speaker who says "Sherlock Holmes is a detective", if she should find herself in the unfortunate situation of looking for a detective, she would not ask for Sherlock Holmes, because she does not believe that Sherlock Holmes is a detective. She is not engaged in any belief state towards that utterance. Speakers may rather have make-believed that someone had written a story about a detective called Sherlock Holmes while they were reading Doyle's stories. The question is whether the cognitive relations we entertain with the fiction provide a basis for an understanding of

the different cognitive values of various fictional empty names. In this case adopting the notion of 'belief' does not seem pertinent and taking for granted the relation between mental states such as between a belief and a pretence is not a proper way of facing the problem at hand. Therefore, an essential ingredient that is missing in Braun's reply is *how* the cognitive relations that speakers entertain with the fiction play a role in their uses of fictional empty names.

Finally, as Everett points out[51], Braun's solution to the problem of cognitive significance seems to naturally merge into the pragmatic answer to the problem. Utterance of (10)-(12) may pragmatically convey different descriptive propositions. If this solution were to be adopted in the discussion of different cognitive values of fictional names, it would be likely to assume this view in discussing also the truth values of sentences containing such names, yet this is in tension with Braun's view. I will present Braun's view on the problem of truth for sentences containing fictional empty names in the next section.

1.3.2   Braun's View on the Problem of Truth

The *problem of truth* concerns the connection between language and reality. Adopting the simplest explanation, a sentence derives its truth values from the proposition it expresses, if the proposition expressed is true, i.e. it corresponds to a state of affairs in the world, then the sentence that expresses that proposition is true; otherwise it is false. But from a point of view of a Naïve

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[51] Everett, A. (2003) Empty names and 'Gappy' propositions. *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, Vol. 116, no. 1, pp. 1-36.

Russellianist, when a proposition P is expressed by a sentence S, the constituents of P correspond to the contents of the words contained in S. Consequently, given that in terms of the semantic content of its constituents a sentence containing fictional empty names would be incomplete it would not express any proposition and therefore it would not be possible to assign to it a truth value.

In contrast, for Braun, when one of the constituents of sentence S lacks any content, S will not fail to express a proposition but will express an unfilled or gappy proposition. Generally speaking, Braun holds that gappy propositions can be believed, asserted and bear truth values. In doing so they follow a general principle that is valid for any other proposition. Braun introduces this as the principle R[52]:

R*: If P is a proposition having a single subject position and a one-place property position, then P is true iff the subject position is filled by one, and only one, object, and it exemplifies the property filling the property position. If P is not true then it is false.*

According to Braun, the adequacy of his view seem to be confirmed by the delivering of the correct predictions for what concern the truth values that we would intuitively assign to existential and negative existential statements. Consider the following examples:

22.   Sherlock Holmes exists.

23.   Sherlock Holmes does not exist.

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[52] Braun (1993), pg. 464.

Under the assumption that 'Sherlock Holmes' is used in these sentences as a fictional empty name, for Braun (17) and (18) express the proposition (17_g) and (18_g):

22$_g$. < __ , existing>

23$_g$. < < __ , existing> NEG>

In accordance with principle R, (22_g) is false, given that the subject position is unfilled and therefore there is no object which exemplifies the property 'existing'[53]. As a result, its negation (23_g) is true.

The gappy proposition view seems thus able to predict truth-values conditions for (22) and (23) which completely match our intuitions. There is not such an individual as Sherlock Holmes and we would not look for a certain Sherlock Holmes if in need of a good detective.

Having said that, let us consider the case of a sentence with predicate or property negation. Our interpretation of (23) corresponds to the application of the negation to the whole sentence, as tantamount to "It is not the case that Sherlock Holmes exists". However this approach should not be taken for granted. Consider (2) and (2_n):

2. Sherlock Holmes is a detective.

2$_n$. Sherlock Holmes is not a detective.

According to Braun, (2) and (2_n) are semantically analogous. In both cases we have a simple subject-predicate sentence in which the predicate contributes

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[53] I am assuming here, as Braun does, that 'to exist' expresses a property. This is controversial as shown by the broad debate on the notion of 'existence'. In this chapter I will not discuss the problem of existential or negative existential statements, but I will reserve this topic for a further chapter.

some property to the proposition expressed by the sentence. In fact, Braun suggests that an object satisfies the property expressed by a negated predicate just in case it does not satisfy the property expressed by the un-negated predicate. Therefore, "Sherlock Holmes is F" and "Sherlock Holmes is not-F" are treated semantically in the same way: by principle R, they are both false given that the subject position is unfilled.

Extending this argument to (22) and (23), and assuming, as Braun does, that 'existing' is a property, (22) and (23) express the proposition (22_g) and (23_{g1}):

22_g.　　< __ , existing>

23_{g1}.　　< __ , not-existing>

Both (22_g) and (23_{g1}) are false according to Braun's account and would produce a counterintuitive result, namely the truth of (24), which expresses the negation of (23_{g1}):

(24)　　It is not the case that Sherlock Holmes does not exist.

24_g.　　< __ , not-existing> NEG>

It seems possible to derive more counterintuitive consequences adopting Braun's view than the intuitive ones that initially seemed to support it. Consider (25) and (26):

25.　　Clark Kent is Superman.

26.　　Sherlock Holmes is Superman.

25. appears to be true while (26) appears to be false. However, according to Braun both sentences express the same proposition (25_g):

25_g.   < __ , identity relation , __ >

Notwithstanding the semantics provided for (25$_g$), it will nevertheless offer counterintuitive predictions. On the one hand, if (25$_g$) is evaluated as true we would conclude that (25) and (26) are both true. On the other hand if the semantics provided lead to evaluate (25$_g$) as false, then both (25) and (26) will be false. Consequently, the predictions derived by adopting Braun's view do not match our intuitions. Consider another example:

27.   Sherlock Holmes is self-identical.

In this case the gappy proposition expressed by (27$_g$) would be false according to Braun, while intuitively (27) is true.

27_g.   < __ , being self-identical>

In fact, (27$_g$) is false under the application of principle R. The intuitions on many of the examples considered so far are incongruous with the predictions offered by Braun's gappy proposition view and in order to justify this incongruence one should explain why our intuitions are wrong. Alternatively, Braun may argue that (25)-(27) seem not to be appropriate for subjection to the gappy proposition view in respect to speakers' intuitions because in these examples the fictional names seemed to be used with the intention to refer to a fictional character and they are not empty. Therefore we should not expect to employ the gappy proposition view for these cases.

Let us consider then examples in which one can assume, more easily than for the previous sentences, that there is no intention to refer to a fictional character.

Consider (2) and (28):

2. Sherlock Holmes is a detective.

28. Superman is a detective.

Both sentences can be understood as reports about fictions and intuitively (2) is true while (28) is false. Once again the gappy proposition view predictions do not match with our intuitions; in fact (2) and (28) would express the same gappy proposition (2_g):

2_g. $< \_\_ , \text{being-a-detective} >$

(2_g) as we saw above is false in Braun's account, by principle R; it being the case that the subject position is unfilled. Even granting that (2) and (28) are understood as relative to Sherlock Holmes' stories or Superman's stories Braun's view does not provide semantic predictions that would match our intuitions. Consider these sentences evaluated within the fictional context, we may represent the propositions expressed as (P_f) and (P_{f1}):

P_f. $< F < \_\_ , \text{being-a-detective}>>$

P_{f1}. $< F_1 < \_\_ , \text{being-a-detective}>>$

Here F stands for Sherlock Holmes' stories and F_1 for Superman's stories. Both (P_f) and (P_{f1}) would turn out to be false while we would expect the former to be true and the latter false, given that Sherlock Holmes is a detective in Doyle's stories while Superman is not in all the stories pertaining to this character.

Braun tries to cope with the numerous counterintuitive consequences of his view by moving the problem to a cognitive level. Speakers "believe the sentence 'Sherlock Holmes is a grapefruit' is false because they believe the

gappy proposition that Sherlock Holmes is not a grapefruit."[54] Even for this case, as it was for the problem of cognitive significance, Braun has recourse to the distinction between a belief state and the believed propositional content. Therefore, one could be in an intrinsic mental state believing that Sherlock Holmes is F, while the content of one's belief is a gappy proposition.

This solution could maybe be developed for *mythical names* such as 'Vulcan', where a false story may be at the origin of a false belief; however, it is not pertinent to fictional contexts. For appreciators of work of arts do not entertain beliefs towards the content of fictional stories, rather they are engaged in imaginative attitudes, in make-believe, in pretence.

In conclusion, The *problem of truth* seems to persist adopting Braun's view, given the numerous counterintuitive consequences that his solution engenders and the fact that it yields a lack of a proper understanding of truth in fiction.

Conclusion

Braun's view is a pioneering one in the application of the notion of 'gappy proposition' to the case of non-referring terms. The important contribution consists in the introduction and defence of such a notion. This idea may undoubtedly be of particular interest for those who are not comfortable with the assumption of fictional characters within the ontology. Moreover, it can be employed in a general understanding of our engagement with fictional works and the semantics of fictional names within the story or in speakers' talk about it. The adoption of gappy propositions is restricted to some occurrences of

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[54] Braun (2005), pg. 608.

fictional names by virtue of Braun's latest acceptance of the existence of fictional characters. As I have shown, the solutions developed in his work give rise to strongly counterintuitive consequences and no reasons are provided for why we should not trust our intuitions. The attempt to adjust the notion of structured propositions and the direct reference view in order to be conjunctively applicable to the problem of non-referring terms reveals a strong faith in these notions, yet adopting Braun's view does not seem to offer viable solutions. Other accounts do use gappy propositions, combining them with a pragmatic reading of the problem. I will discuss the solutions and problems of these different proposals in the next chapter.

PART 2

Introduction

Adams, Fuller and Stecker, in collaboration with other scholars, have worked consistently on the reference of empty names[55], developing a research project which aims towards a unified account of this type of term. Gappy propositions, as in Braun's view, form a central role in their work and are considered as a primitive notion or the best explanatory tool available so far.

In this chapter I will present their account illustrating their framework, the key notion and the framework they refer to in developing their proposal. In section 1 I will illustrate in what sense their project aims at a unified account and the core elements contained in it. The idea that in our understanding of sentences containing fictional names a descriptive content conveyed on a pragmatic level plays a crucial role, will lead me to introduce a brief picture of the Gricean pragmatic framework and discuss how the notion of sense has been articulated by direct reference theorists. In section 2 I will compare the different speakers' attitudes towards sentences containing fictional names. Finally, this proposal assuming: (i) a direct reference account of names; (ii) that fictional names are names; (iii) fictional names are empty; will face those problems pertaining to

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[55] Adams, Fuller and Stecker have published works on this topic since the beginning of the Nineties, with publications such as "Thoughts Without Objects" in 1993 in *Mind &Language* or "Vacuous Singular Terms" in 1994 again in *Mind & Language*. Their work has been a significant contribution on the literature pertaining to empty names, engendering a debate which has involved different scholars up to more recent publications, for example A. Everett "Empty names and 'Gappy' Propositions" in 2003 or M. Green "Direct reference, Empty names and Implicatures" in 2007. The framework which they have developed has been the result of a collaborative work involving mainly Adams, Fuller and Stecker but also with contribution of other researcher such as Laura A. Dietrich in "What is in a (n empty) name?" in 2004. In the literature about empty names their proposal is referred to as the one developed by Adams et al., I suppose for the purpose of speeding the writing process and to make the reader aware that the framework is the result of a long term collaboration. I will conform to this way of referring to their work.

the relation between language and thought and between language and reality that I have discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore, in section 3 and 4 I will discuss how it answers *the problem of nonsense, the problem of difference in cognitive values, the problem of the proposition believed* and *the problem of truth*. I will consider which objections have been put forward and which replies have been developed. I will take this discussion as an opportunity also for reasoning on some of the central notions of this framework, trying to reach a deeper understanding of the notion of gappy proposition and the notion of *lore*. In this way we will see which answers this framework may provide and which are the questions that can be posed.

2.1   A Unified Pragmatic Account for Vacuous Names

Adams, Fuller and Stecker aim to provide a unified account of names which would comprise proper names as well as what they term *vacuous singular terms* or *unfilled* names. They propose such an account within a theory of direct reference; on this view the meaning of a name is its bearer, if it has one.

 It is possible to talk of a unified account under different respects. Firstly, proper names and empty names receive the same semantic treatment. Secondly, the distinction between empty names, fictional names and mythical names becomes superfluous given a comprehensive unified account for vacuous singular terms. Thirdly, Adams et al. offer a unified account of fictional names according to which these terms are not ambiguous, but rather, speakers entertain different attitudes towards sentences containing fictional names.

They assume that empty names are semantically homogeneous in the sense that empty names do not contribute anything to the propositions expressed by the sentences containing them, although they may display a different syntax, e.g. "Superman" rather than "Santa Claus". Propositions containing empty names are gappy propositions and, as such, are neither true nor false. How would we then understand the intuitive difference between "Santa is F" as opposed to "Superman is F" or "Vulcan is F"? According to Adams et al. what is analysed as semantically isomorphic will require a differentiated understanding on a pragmatic level. Every name is associated with a set of descriptions, something they label the *lore* associated with the name; this association is made independently of the fact of the name being a *filled* or an *unfilled* one. Make no mistake though, the associated set of descriptions is not the meaning of the name, this being its bearer, if there is one. Generally speaking Adams et al. suggest that speakers express gappy propositions when employing any empty names but according to some pragmatic mechanisms, they imply a complete proposition where the empty name is replaced with the descriptive content associated to it. The fact that speakers can evaluate the pragmatically implied proposition as false or true is, according to Adams et al., what misled them into thinking that the proposition expressed by the sentence containing the empty name is false or true; but gappy propositions are devoid of truth values according to this account.

Let us consider the following example: "Santa Claus loves children". There are stories that are part of the Western cultural background, they are sorts of myths that date back to old folk stories which probably constituted the corpus of an ancient oral culture. The lore related to these stories is of common background

and everyone in the Western world is familiar with the lore associated with the Santa Claus story. For instance, 'Santa Claus' may be associated with the description: "The jolly, plump person who brings presents to everyone at Christmas and lives in the North Pole and so on". 'Santa Claus' is an empty name; it does not pick out any individual. Therefore, speakers uttering "Santa Claus loves children" literally express the gappy proposition < __ , loving-children >, however, they imply a complete proposition where the empty name is substituted by the descriptive content associated with it. For example, speakers pragmatically imply that the jolly, plump person who brings presents to everyone at Christmas loves children.

The first core element of the account developed by Adams et al. is the idea that there is a lore associated with every name, this being the case for empty names and proper names. For instance, after the 2008 American Presidential election everyone could have been informed about Barack Obama's biography. It was information to which all have public access that Barack Obama was born in Hawaii, his mother was of a mixed European heritage and his father a foreign student from Kenya granted with a scholarship and that he has become the first Afro-American President of the United States. Adams et al. propose that speakers associate 'being born in Hawaii from a mother of a mixed-European heritage and a Kenyan father, being the first Afro-American President' with 'Barack Obama' as in a sort of stimulus-response. The idea of a descriptive content associated with a name may appear in contrast with a direct reference account of the meaning of proper names, but the distinction between a descriptivist account versus a referentialist one is not so categorical. In fact, since the first elaborations of what has been called *the direct reference theory*

there has been an articulated analysis that has separated a descriptive content associated with a name from the alleged function attributed to this descriptive content in determining the meaning of a name. A direct reference theorist would refute this latter function while accepting the former. This distinction has been clearly outlined by Nathan Salmon[56] in his discussion of Burge's trifurcation of the different functions that Frege's notion of sense was designed to fill. Consider it in what follows[57]:

"*Sense$_1$*. The purely conceptual representation of an object which a fully competent speaker associates in a particular way with his or her use of the term. Sense$_1$ is a psychological or conceptual notion. […]

Sense$_2$. The mechanism by which the reference of the term is secured and semantically determined. Sense$_2$ is a semantic notion.

Sense$_3$. The information value of the term; the contribution made by the term to the information content of sentences containing the term. Sense$_3$ is a cognitive or epistemic notion."

In contrast to any descriptivist account of names, Adam et al. would reject Sense$_2$, but would probably recognise in Sense$_3$ the descriptive content that speakers can derive from the *lore* associated with names. It should be clearer now that although this descriptive content does not play any role in terms of the individuation of the designatum, it is still part of what is associated with the use of the name and it may play a role in a communicative context.

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[56] Salmon, N. (1982) *Reference and Essence*. ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
[57] Ibid., pg. 12.

The second core element of the proposal put forward by Adams et al. consists in the inclusion of pragmatic mechanisms in an account of the meaningfulness of sentences containing empty names. In fact, although such sentences literally express gappy propositions, they pragmatically impart the complete proposition that would be expressed by substituting the name with the description associated with it. Adams et al. adopt a Gricean account of the interpretation of an utterance. According to Grice, the literal meaning encoded in a sentence is only one of the elements to take into consideration when analysing a communicative process. Conversations take place in contexts made up of verbal and non-verbal communication, comprising utterances, speakers' intentions, body language, physical environment, etc., and therefore the interpretation of what the speaker means is an inference to the best explanation by way of intelligent guesswork, rather than by decoding signals. The best explanation is derived on the basis of the principle which, according to Grice, governs conversation; one that he himself labelled the *Co-operative principle*.

"Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged."[58]

The Co-operative Principle is itself rather general and vague. How can speakers make sure they are obeying it? Here, Grice lists a number of more specific conversational maxims, the idea being that by obeying them, a speaker will automatically be obeying the Co-operative Principle. Grice called these the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner; they are often called the

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[58] Grice, H.P. (1975) Logic and Conversation. *Syntax and Semantics*, Vol. 3, pp. 41-58.

maxims of *informativeness*, *truthfulness*, *relevance* and *clarity*. These conversational maxims are outlined as follows:

Quantity:

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).

2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality:

Supermaxim: Try to make your contribution one that is true.

1. Do not say what you believe to be false. ('maxim of truthfulness')

2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation:

1. Be relevant.

Manner:

Supermaxim: Be perspicuous

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.

2. Avoid ambiguity.

3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)

4. Be orderly.

Notice that Grice is not claiming that all conversations actually are co-operative, or that the maxims are invariably obeyed. Any speaker can opt out of the Co-operative Principle, tacitly or overtly. Grice's basic claim is that in interpreting an utterance, hearers assume that the Co-operative Principle and maxims have been obeyed, and look for an interpretation that satisfies this assumption. Oftentimes, in order to find such an interpretation, they will have

to assume that the speaker believes, and was trying to communicate, something more than was strictly being said. These extra bits of information are conversational implicatures (intended implications). The Co-operative Principle and maxims guide the inference process by allowing the hearer to eliminate any interpretation that is inconsistent with the assumption that the speaker, in saying what she said, was obeying the Co-operative Principle and maxims (or at least the Co-operative Principle). The conversational implicatures of an utterance can be seen as those propositions that have to be added to the speaker's meaning in order to preserve the assumption that she was obeying the Co-operative Principle and maxims (or at least the Co-operative Principle) in saying what she said.

While providing the nutshell of Grice's pragmatic theory, I am not discussing questions about the source of the Co-operative maxims or the degree of vagueness of the maxims, although I find that these and others are legitimate doubts about Grice's approach. My intent is rather to provide a clear picture of the pragmatic element assumed in the framework outlined by Adams et al. so as to competently unravel it and acknowledge its virtues and its problems.

The basic idea in Adams et al.'s work would be then that speakers, in order to make a co-operative contribution to the conversation and meanwhile adhering to the co-operative principle and the maxims which rule it, use a singular term, even if this is empty, in order to pragmatically convey a certain lore they are addressing rather than employ a prolix list of descriptions. Adams and Fuller also consider the idea that a conversational rule according to which speakers use "singular terms associated with a lore that is relevant to the current purpose

or purposes of the conversation(s) in which you are participating" may be at work in cases involving empty names[59]. The general point suggested by Adams and Fuller, apart from whether such a conversational rule applies or not in the case of empty names, is that speakers conforming their contribution to the conversation to the maxims of Relation (Be Relevant) and Manner (Be brief, avoid unnecessary prolixity) would adopt an empty name. We may also think of a slightly more articulated story to justify the alleged implication that an empty name carries with itself. An initial moment can be thought of when the prolixity of a certain amount of descriptions has led to the postulation of a term (an empty name) as a placeholder for the lore, otherwise conveyable through the explicit, extensive amount of information which would be, at least in part, non-necessary. However, there are some difficulties in fitting Adam et al.'s proposal within Grice's framework. In fact, generally, an implicated content is inferred when one or more maxims are not obeyed, whereas, for what has been said so far, it seems that empty names are employed to obey the maxims of Relation (Be Relevant) and Manner (Be brief, avoid unnecessary prolixity). A more congruous account to the Gricean framework may simply state that the employment of empty names does not obey the maxim of Manner (be perspicuous) given that the empty name does not denote any individual, thereby, speakers' interlocutors, not identifying any referent picked out by the empty name, will infer that the use of the term implicates the relevant lore associated with it. The fact that there is a lack of clarity in how inferences of the relevant lore associated with an empty name are explained employing

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[59]In Adams and Fuller (2007) they reply to some objections raised in Green (2007) on the employment of Gricean mechanisms in explaining the substitutability of an empty name with a description associated to it.

Grice's framework, seems to me a weakness in the proposal advanced by Adams et al. Let us consider some examples:

1.   Santa Claus does not exist.

The utterance of (1) would imply (1a)

1a.   The jolly, fat person who owns reindeer, lives at the North Pole, gives presents to kids on Christmas day, is called "Santa Claus" by many English speakers in the Christmas folkloric stories and so on, does not exist.

(1a) is therefore what is meant by the speaker and it replaces within the communicative process the literal meaning expressed by the gappy proposition < __ , non-existence>. According to Adams et al., the solution of a pragmatically imparted proposition also provides an explanation of why we have misleading intuitions concerning the truth of (1). In fact, speakers may feel supported by strong intuitions concerning the truth of (1) rather than deeming it neither true nor false, as it expresses a gappy proposition. These misleading intuitions, according to Adams et al., can be explained considering that what speakers infer from the utterance of (1) is not the literal meaning expressed by the sentence but the pragmatically imparted proposition (1a). (1a) is a complete proposition and when it is glossed in the familiar Russellian way (in which existence is not a first order property of objects but something like a second-order property of properties), such as in (1b):

1b. It is not the case that there is an unique, jolly, fat person who owns reindeer, lives at the North Pole, gives presents to kids on Christmas

day, is called "Santa Claus" by many English speakers in the Christmas folkloric stories and so on.

Then (1a) is clearly true.

I will now have a closer look at how a pragmatic account based on Adams and al. proposal deals with the case of fictional names.

2.2   Speakers' Attitudes and Different Uses of Fictional Names

Different attitudes may be entertained when engaging with fiction. We may make-believe the content of a work of fiction or we may assert about it, for example when discussing the features of a work of art or comparing it to a different one. Therefore a sentence such as (2):

2.   Sherlock Holmes is a detective.

can be penned by Conan Doyle in writing Sherlock Holmes stories, can be the object of readers' pretence in their reading of the story or can be the object of speakers' belief whenever they are talking about Doyle's stories. Moreover, the proposition expressed by a sentence such as (3):

3.   Sherlock Holmes is a smarter detective than Poirot.

would again be the object of speakers' belief; it being a comparison between different works of fiction. The idea of recognising different attitudes in our utterances of sentences containing fictional names fits quite well within a unified account of these terms, especially if compared with the widespread assumption that there are different uses of fictional names; these being *conniving*, *metafictional* and *non-fictional* uses. On the one hand this latter one

is a useful way of categorising and distinguishing between sentences evaluated with respect to the fictional context rather than the actual world; but, on the other hand, this categorisation is sometimes adopted with the implication that fictional names are ambiguous terms. Such terms will be vacuous in speakers' engagement with the fiction (conniving uses), for example in the reading of a novel; whereas they may provide a content (this being different with regard to different cases) to the proposition in the talk about fiction or in the comparison of one work of fiction to another. Contrariwise, fictional names are not ambiguous in a unified account. According to Adams et al., a fictional name plays the role of a name. It supports inferences and predications and other logical relations played by names. Therefore, its semantics will be determined in the same way as for any other name. Generally speaking, if a name has a meaning this will be its bearer, if it is vacuous it will lack meaning, however, it may be embedded in a sentence with meaningful parts or associated with other sentences that have meaning.

Consider, as an example, sentence (2). 'Sherlock Holmes' is a vacuous term, it does not designate any individual. The proposition expressed is tantamount to $< x,$ being-a-detective $>$, where 'x' is a placeholder for a referent in a structured entity that is an incomplete proposition. 'Sherlock Holmes' plays the grammatical role of a name and it functions within the fiction as a proper name. The idea is that Doyle makes believe or intends his readers to make believe that he is referring to a certain individual who is a detective, or, in other words, he is fictionally asserting that Sherlock Holmes is a detective. In reading the story therefore, readers pretend that there is an individual called Sherlock Holmes and they associate to the term whatever the author explicitly

or implicitly fictionally asserts about Holmes. Although 'Sherlock Holmes' is a vacuous term, it pragmatically imparts the descriptive connotation assumed in the course of the story.

Let us now examine a different attitude that speakers may entertain employing the term 'Sherlock Holmes'. Consider (4):

4.   In Doyle's stories, Sherlock Holmes is a detective.

The assertion of (4) is not fictionally asserted. Speakers are not pretending that in Sherlock Holmes stories, Conan Doyle using the term 'Holmes' fictionally asserted the unfilled proposition < x, being-a-detective >. In the same way speakers are committed in what they say when talking about what is implied in Doyle's stories. Consider (5):

5.   In Doyle's stories, Sherlock Holmes is an empiricist.

Although it would be very unlikely to find a sentence such as (5) explicitly stated in one of Doyle's stories, we may think (5) as implied in the stories. We may infer it from Doyle's narrative; Holmes seems always to keep in direct observational touch with what the world has to offer, his starting point is the collation of details combined with his ability to elicit from a person's garment, perhaps a hat, a complete picture of that person's age, socio-economic background, present financial status, psychological predispositions, and so forth. More precisely we may say that it is true that Doyle, using the term 'Sherlock Homes', fictionally implies the unfilled proposition <x, being-an-empiricist> where 'x' is a placeholder for a name.

Adam et al. highlight the difference between on the one hand (3) and on the other (4) and (5) recalling Fodor's language of thought metaphor; a token of a

sentence 'φ' can be in someone's belief box or make believe box. This different location of a token of 'φ' in two different *cognitive boxes* is a way of representing speakers' different attitudes towards what they say. A sentence such as (2) would be in speakers' make believe box whereas (4) and (5) would be in speakers' belief box.

Furthermore, we may contemplate the case in which speakers entertain different attitudes towards the very same sentence in different conversational contexts. Consider (6):

6.   Holmes is smarter than Poirot.

A first case may be the one in which speakers are imagining something about Conan Doyle's Holmes and Agatha Christie's Poirot. In that conversation one would be pretending that there is an individual whom Conan Doyle wrote about (using the name 'Holmes') who is smart to a degree *n*, and that there is an individual whom Agatha Christie wrote about (using the name 'Poirot') who is smart to a degree *n'*, and independently of one's pretence $n > n'$.

Alternatively, an utterance of (6) may occur in a context in which one is talking about Conan Doyle's and Agatha Christie's works. In this case, one is asserting that in Doyle's stories it is fictionally implied that 'x' is smart to a degree *n* (using the name 'Holmes' for x) and in Agatha Christie's stories it is fictionally implied that 'y' is smart to a degree *n'* (using the name 'Poirot' for y) and $n > n'$.

In the next session I will consider the answers that the pragmatic account put forward by Adams et al. provides to the *problem of nonsense, problem of different cognitive values, problem of truth, problem of the proposition*

believed; issues faced by any view which assumes the emptiness of fictional names and adopts a direct reference approach for names. Moreover, I will discuss the respect with which scepticism has been raised towards assuming this theoretical stance.

2.3   Language and Thought

As I showed previously, any theoretical proposal which endorses a directly referential account of names combined with the thesis that empty names are vacuous, encounters some problems concerning the connection between language and thought or the connection between language and reality. Such tension engenders what have been called the *problem of nonsense, problem of different cognitive values, problem of truth, problem of the proposition believed* and our interest in these puzzles pertains to the answers that a pragmatic account of fictional names, such as the one developed by Adams et al., can provide to them.

The *problem of nonsense*, at least in part, concerns the relation between language and thought. In fact, considering its simplest version, if a fictional name is an empty term a sentence containing it would not express any proposition. So, to utter "Sherlock Holmes is a detective" is tantamount to expressing nonsense insofar as no thought would be expressed. However, this is a strongly counterintuitive consequence given that such a sentence is clearly understandable and the question is then what it is and how we can account for the thought expressed by sentences containing fictional names. For Adams et al. the sentence would express the gappy proposition < x, being a detective>,

where x is a placeholder for a name. I have already expounded on the proposal of Adams et al. in the previous sections. I now aim to fathom the key notions employed in it in order to have a better idea of its strengths and weaknesses.

To this purpose let us try to place the notion of 'gappy proposition' within a broader understanding of the nature of propositions. Without any ambition to develop an overview or undertaking an exhaustive discussion on this complex topic, I think, however, it could be fruitful to have a closer look at the notion of 'gappy proposition' without taking it as a granted primitive notion. What is a gappy proposition? Where does this notion come from? How does it match the understanding and use of the notion of 'proposition' developed in philosophy of language, linguistics and cognitive sciences? In the account developed by Adams et al. a gappy proposition is something that looks like a proposition but is not, given that it is incomplete.

Recalling a Fregean definition of the predicate within a subject-predicate sentence, one may create a parallel between this and the notion of gappy proposition we have been dealing with so far. In fact, for Frege a subject-predicate statement " [...] can be imagined to be split up into two parts; one complete in itself, and the other in need of supplementation, or unsaturated. [...] The second part is unsaturated – it contains an empty place; only when this place is filled up with a proper name, or with an expression that replaces a proper name, does a complete sense appear."[60]

Notwithstanding the superficial similarities between the Fregean definition of the predicate clause and the notion of 'gappy proposition', many differences

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[60] Frege G. (1891) Function and Concept., in *The Frege Reader*, (1997) edited by Beaney M., ed. Oxford, MA: Blackwell Publisher, pg. 139.

may be found in the theoretical accounts on which such definitions rely. A whole dissertation could be written on what Frege meant in employing 'sense' at the end of the above paragraph. I will rather, more purposefully in regard to this section, focus on the account of the nature of propositions developed from Frege's treatment of semantic composition as functional application within a metaphysics of possible worlds. Furthermore, I will compare the Fregean framework to what has been called a neo-Russellian approach. In fact the fundamental difference between the Fregean definition of a predicate clause versus the notion of 'gappy proposition' resides in the distinction between these two theoretical frameworks. In the possible world semantics, linguistic expressions are assigned extensions at possible worlds. Thus, for example, names, n-place predicates and sentences are assigned individuals, sets of *n*-tuples of individuals, and truth values respectively, at different possible worlds. Thus names are associated with functions from possible worlds to individuals; n-place predicates with functions from possible worlds to sets of *n*-tuples; and sentences with functions from possible worlds to truth values. Such functions from possible worlds to extensions of the appropriate sort are also called intensions of the expressions in question. The "complete sense" Frege mentioned above has then been reinterpreted as the sentential intension, namely as a function from possible worlds to truth values that semanticists, working within this framework, identified with the notion of 'proposition'.

The challenge to this semantic framework is raised as a convenient theoretical picture, rather than a proper theory, in Kaplan's work. In fact, in

Demonstratives[61], Kaplan attributes to Russell the framework of structured proposition:

"Don't think of propositions as sets of possible worlds, but rather as structured entities looking something like the sentences which express them. For each occurrence of a singular term in a sentence there will be a corresponding constituent in the proposition expressed. The constituent of the proposition determines, for each circumstance of evaluation, the object relevant to evaluating the proposition in that circumstance. In general the constituent of the proposition will be some sort of complex, constructed from various attributes by logical composition. But in the case of a singular term which is directly referential, the constituent of the proposition is just the object itself. Thus it is that it does not just turn out that the constituent determines the same object in every circumstance, the constituent (corresponding to a rigid designator) just is the object. There is no determining to do at all."[62]

This account of structured propositions made the distinction between directly referential expressions and other expressions, rigid or not, more vivid. Directly referential expressions contribute their referents (in a context) to the propositions expressed (in that context) by the sentences containing them. Non-directly referential expressions contribute some complexities that may or may not determine the same individual in all possible circumstances. The difference between a possible worlds semantics and an account of structured proposition becomes evident when comparing the analysis of a rigid definite description and directly referential expressions. On the one hand, a possible world

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[61] Kaplan D. (1989).
[62] Ibid., pg. 494.

semantics will deliver the same semantics for a description such as "The successor of 1" and the expression "this table", this being a constant function from possible worlds to the same object: '2' and the object referred to in the context of utterance respectively. On the other hand, when propositions are thought of as structured entities, with individuals, properties and relations as constituents, a rigid definite description such as "The successor of 1" will contribute to the proposition a logical complexity that will designate '2' in every possible world, whereas the expression "this table" will contribute to the proposition expressed (in that context) the object pointed out in that context.

We can then see that a radical difference between the Fregean notion of predicate-clause and the notion of 'gappy-proposition' can be found in the two different frameworks in which these notions reside. In the former, the semantic composition involves a self-independent notion of thought; in the latter, propositions as structured entities are symbolic representations which may subsume the objective world, as in the case of the directly referential expression[63].

Apart from suggesting the basic picture of what has been developed into a proper theory concerning structured propositions, Kaplan also gave some hints about the idea of a 'gappy proposition'. Kaplan does not discard the idea of a

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[63] I think that it may be possible to stretch the comparison to a metaphysical level, between a possible worlds metaphysics and a Russellian metaphysics framed not only on *particulars* but also on *facts*. Facts are explained as "the kind of thing that makes a proposition true or false, [...] is expressed by a whole sentence [...], that belongs the objective world. They are not created by our thoughts or beliefs [...]" (see B. Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, in *Logic and Knowledge. Essay 1901-1950*. edited by Marsh, R.C., (1956), pp. 182-185). In this picture a proposition is a symbol. Recalling this latter metaphysical background, the relation between language and thought may be understood as a symbolisation of objective facts. It may make sense then to see how an expression can contribute an object to the proposition expressed in a context in terms of directly anchoring the output of the symbolic representation of a fact to a specific object. This is also a way to offer an understanding of the notion of what has been called a *singular proposition*, or at least it is a way in which I can understand it.

proposition in which the object place can be unfilled. In fact, discussing the technical apparatus for a *singular* proposition, Kaplan opts for a singleton, a set containing a single member as the symbolic representation of the contribution of a directly referential term '{...}' as opposed to a logical complex for the symbolization of the contribution of a definite description. Moreover, according to Kaplan :

" this technique can also be used to resolve another confusion in Russell. He argued that a sentence containing a non-denoting directly referential term (he would have called it a non-denoting 'logically proper name') would be meaningless, presumably because the purported singular proposition would be incomplete. But the braces themselves can fill out the singular proposition, and if they contain nothing, no more anomalies need result than what the development of Free Logic has already inured us to."[64]

It is likely that all the ideas and notions of gappy propositions originated from the above lines, although Kaplan himself never employed such a notion and in elaborating a formal semantics he worked within a possible world semantics framework.

The challenge of the study of meaning in terms of formal representations can be seen as the attempt to equip philosophical studies with the same rigour and the purposefulness that has characterized the development of scientific subjects. At the same time it required considering the notion of 'meaning' and 'thought' as external to the human mind through symbolic representations in the same way as in many scientific fields the rules governing different aspects

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[64] See Kaplan D. (1989), fn. 23, pg 496.

of nature are represented formally in languages that adopt mathematical structures. A possible world semantics and a structured proposition approach are different apparatuses within a symbolic representation of meaning.

Adams et al. adopt the latter approach, and they answer many of the problems raised to their solution by integrating their framework with a pragmatic element. The *problem of different cognitive values* also concerns the connection between language and thought; speakers seem to express different thoughts when uttering sentences containing different fictional names. However, according to the account developed by Adams et al., all these sentences express the same gappy proposition. Consider the following examples:

7.   Superman is in love.

8.   Clark Kent is in love.

9.   Romeo is in love.

There is a sense in which (7) and (8) express something similar while (9) does not. Although these sentences would all express the same gappy proposition < x, being-in-love >, Adams et al. account for the intuitive difference between them by having recourse to the information imparted on a pragmatic level. There are a few elements to take into consideration. What is pragmatically imparted will depend on the causal history, origin of the name and the lore associated with it. Every fictional name harks back to its introduction on behalf of the author, furthermore what is implied will depend on the way it is employed throughout the story. The author will use the name with the intention that her readers or hearers pretend that she is referring to someone or

something in employing that name. Using a different string of letters, the author of a story may intend her readers or hearers to pretend that she is referring to different individuals or make it explicit that in the fiction the same individual will bear two different names. Therefore the use of 'Superman' will appear within a set of stories where the superhero is called "Clark Kent" during his ordinary life as a human. Adhering to the author's intentions we will associate with the name 'Clark Kent' the descriptions that in the story are predicated of Superman and vice versa. It is, in fact, explicit that in the stories, Superman and Clark Kent are the same person. In this way we can justify the intuition that there is a sense in which (7) and (8) are about the same thing. These two fictional names are associated with the same lore, on the basis of their origin in the same stories and on what is fictionally asserted in them. Contrariwise, the term 'Romeo', apart from displaying a different syntax, harks back to a different story where a different author fictionally asserts a completely different set of descriptions about Romeo. According to Adams et al., this difference is reflected in the pragmatically imparted content associated with 'Romeo' in the utterance of (9) and is the reason why we would be inclined to say that there is a sense in which (7) and (8) seem to express something similar in contrast to (9), rather than saying that they express gappy propositions.

But are there any criteria for discerning which part of the lore is associated with a fictional name? This may correspond to what is predicated in the story about the fictional persona, but may it also include speculations made by appreciators or critics about a certain character? As we saw above, Sherlock Holmes may be seen as emblematic of an empiricist view, or we may easily

read analysis about how a certain character is representative of certain values. Are these comments about the character part of the lore conveyed on a pragmatic level? And what would happen if speakers were to find themselves in the position of what Gareth Evans would have called *incompetent speakers*? Namely, they do not know anything about a possible background associated with a certain name. Consider the example in which Claire finds herself in a discussion about the Indian Sanskrit epic Mahabharata. She has grown up in a Western cultural background and she is not familiar with the topic. She lets her mind wander and only overhears the name 'Satyavati' mentioned during the conversation without acquiring any of the lore which was spun during the conversation. Later, Claire offhandedly says to her friend "Satyavati does not exist" in answer to her friend's curiosity about Satyavati. It may seem that, lacking any lore associated with the fictional name, Claire would not be able to pragmatically impart any meaning by employing the term 'Satyavati'. Therefore, as Anthony Everett points out, the pragmatic account developed by Adams et al. would not work in this case.

Furthermore, we may consider that speakers may associate all sorts of descriptive content with a fictional name. For example, Claire may associate with 'Sherlock Holmes' the description 'the one that in Conan Doyle stories writes some diaries about his investigative enterprises' and in saying "Sherlock Holmes is the narrator of Conan Doyle's stories" she may be pragmatically imparting that 'In Conan Doyle's stories, the man who writes some diaries about his investigative enterprises is the narrator of those stories'.

The answer provided by Adams et al. to these two cases not only shows that they are not problematic in their account but also provide us with a better understanding of the notion of *lore* associated with fictional names. In the case in which Claire is an incompetent speaker of the use of 'Satyavati', Adams et al. believe that "when one acquires a name, to the best of one's abilities, one keeps a file of particulars: where, when, from whom one heard the name"[65]. If Claire knows the name of the person who was talking about Satyavati, let us say Mark, she may associate with the fictional name the description 'the one Mark was talking about'. Therefore, according to Adams et al., in saying "Satyavati does not exist" she would have pragmatically imparted that there is no one named 'Satyavati' whom Mark was talking about. In the case that Claire didn't know the name of the people involved in the conversation she may more generally imply that there is no one named 'Satyavati' about whom she was hearing, from whomever was speaking.

Not only does it seem plausible to shrink the lore associated with a fictional name to a minimum of information provided by the context of utterance - when, where and from whom one heard the name - but it also seems possible to expand it to include any personal association made to the name, even if this does not correspond with what is actually the case.

Consider the case of Claire believing that in Doyle's stories Sherlock Holmes writes diaries about his own detective enterprise. Let us also consider this case as an exemplification of the *problem of the proposition believed* apart from an example of how the lore can be inclusive of any personal association held with

[65] Adams, F., Dietrich, L. A (2004), pg. 131.

a fictional name in the account proposed by Adams et al. The *problem of the proposition believed* concerns the relation between language and thought. To put it simply, if a sentence containing a fictional name does not express any proposition, when a speaker expresses her belief by employing that sentence it is not clear what she is actually believing. Let us consider sentence (10):

10.   Claire believes that in Doyle's stories Sherlock Holmes writes diaries about his detective enterprise.

Under the assumption that 'Sherlock Holmes' is a vacuous term, the sentence (10_a):

10_a.   In Doyle's stories Sherlock Holmes writes diaries about his detective enterprise.

would not express any proposition. According to Adams et al., in uttering (10_a) we would be saying something false. In fact, the speaker is saying that Doyle, employing the name 'Sherlock Holmes', fictionally asserts or implies the unfilled proposition $<$ x, writes diaries about his detective enterprises $>$ where 'x' is a placeholder for a name. Given that Doyle does not fictionally assert or imply such an unfilled proposition (10_a), it is false. However, Claire may maintain in her idiosyncratic lore the description 'the one who writes diaries about his detective enterprises' in association with 'Sherlock Holmes', and the fact that pragmatically she can replace the fictional name with that description is what, according to Adams et al., allows her to believe (10_a). For everyone else whose lore correctly includes what is fictionally asserted or implied in the Doyle's stories, (10_a) is false. But this is not a problem for Adams et al. given

that, as is well known, someone may hold a false belief, for when we assess someone's beliefs we consider intensional contexts.

Previously in this chapter I built a parallel between the notion of *lore* and a certain notion of *sense* intended as a cognitive and epistemic notion. Now, we may reach a broader understanding of the lore associated with a fictional name. This looks very different from the contextual operator F that David Lewis[66] used in order to make explicit, in the logical form, the context of evaluation of sentences about fiction. In a sentence such as "Sherlock Holmes writes diaries about his detective enterprise" the fictional operator may be understood as implicit and the sentence can be interpreted as "F, φ" in the same way that "In Doyle's stories, Sherlock Holmes writes diaries about his detective enterprise" would be. In comparison, firstly, the lore associated with a fictional name does not strictly correspond to the fictional context provided by the stories in which the fictional name appears. In fact, it seems adaptable to the knowledge that the speaker has of the use of the name including, for example, the criticism developed towards a certain character. Or, as we saw in the discussion of (10), the lore can go far beyond the fictional context even including some mistaken descriptive content. Secondly, the notion of *lore* becomes relevant on a pragmatic level within the communication process and in what Adams et al. develop there is no trace of it in the sentences' logical form, not even when being thought of as an unarticulated element (I will discuss later in more detail how the account of Adams et al. may be related to the contemporary debate on the pragmatics/semantics divide).

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[66] See Lewis, D. (1978) Truth in fiction. In *Philosophical Papers*, vol.1, (1983) ed. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Moreover, the notion of *lore* is very different from the proposal of Kendall Walton and Gareth Evans who suggest that speakers are engaged in a game of make-believe when they utter sentences containing fictional names. Their idea is that the meaning of a sentence containing a fictional name and the reference of this are secured by the speakers through being engaged in a certain attitude, namely they pretend that a fictional name refers to a certain individual[67] and their utterance is part of a game of make-believe. This idea finds its logical representation in 'P(φ)', where 'P' is an operator that marks the speakers' attitude and shifts the context of evaluation from the actual world to the intensional context individuated by the worlds of the speakers' pretence. In contrast, the lore associated with a name is independent of the speakers' attitudes; there will be a lore associated with the name employed, both in the case of speakers being engaged in a pretence or of speakers asserting a sentence about a work of art. Moreover, according to Adams et al., a lore is associated with fictional names as well as genuine proper names; there are no special mechanisms that are triggered whenever fictional names are employed.

Although Adams et al. do not suggest it, the notion of *lore* can be assimilated to the idea of a shared informational space. I would like to suggest this interpretation to create an effective parallel with the physical space, the surroundings in which the conversation takes place. In fact, the environment in which the conversation takes place is a common background that can provide elements which may enrich or complete the meaning of speakers' utterances on a pragmatic level, or at times it may be the object of misperception

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[67] Walton provides a more complex explanation of the reference of fictional names, working on each of the uses in which they can be employed. However, it is not pertinent to the purposes of this chapter, therefore I am not going into details here.

engendering false beliefs. In a similar way, a lore understood as an informational space may provide a shared background to the conversation which speakers can adopt to pragmatically impart a complete proposition whenever they express an incomplete one with a sentence containing a fictional name. The idea of a lore as informational space will certainly require discussion and it is in need of development. For the time being and from what is discussed in Adams et al., we may consider that the lore is part of the presuppositions that speakers take to be the common ground of the participants in the conversation[68].

As we saw in the previous example, the lore associated with a name can be very variable and can be expanded and shrunk without many regulations. Hence, Anthony Everett[69] considers the case in which different speakers associate a different descriptive content to the fictional name in use, or the case when the same speaker associates with the same fictional names different descriptive contents at different times.

For example, two speakers may associate a different descriptive content with the term 'Faust' or the same speaker may associate a different descriptive content with the name at different times. Speakers may associate different descriptions with 'Faust'; for example, 'doctor in Goethe's play', 'seducer of a young girl depicted in Goethe's play', 'maker of a pact with the devil from Goethe's play' or 'personification of evil in Goethe's play', and so on. It may well happen then, that at different times a speaker may pragmatically impart a

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[68] I am here adopting the notion of 'presupposition' as it is discussed and employed in R. C. Stalnaker. See Stalnaker "Pragmatic Presupposition" and "Assertion" reprinted in Stalnaker's *Content and Context*, (1999).
[69] See Everett, A. (2003).

different descriptive content when employing the fictional name 'Faust' or that in a conversation two speakers impart a different pragmatic implication when employing that term.

It might be thought that the different associations made by speakers to 'Faust' would lead to such different implications that there would be nothing in common implied in uttering the same sentence over different times or by different speakers. For example, would different descriptions associated to 'Faust' in the utterance of "Faust does not exist" entail that there is nothing in common implied in the speakers' cross-temporal utterances or in the utterances of two different speakers? This is not the case according to Adams et al.; in fact, what is pragmatically imparted depends also on the causal history and origin of the name. The fact that the use of 'Faust' harks back to the same story and finds its origin in Goethe's stories guarantees that what is implied is something about the same lore associated with 'Faust' in the story, even if the descriptions associated with the term on a particular occasion may vary in time and among speakers. What is pragmatically imparted would not be part of the same lore associated with 'Faust' (even if speakers employed the same name, e.g. 'Faust') in the case in which the origin of the name can be traced back to different stories written by different authors with different intentions in the writing of the stories and who associate a different descriptive content with 'Faust'.

According to Adams et al. the semantic content expressed by a sentence containing a fictional name is stable; for example, a different utterance of the sentence "Faust does not exist" expresses the unfilled proposition $< \_ \,$, non-

existence >. The concern about the seeming stability of content in utterances containing empty names across times and speakers does not show that the theory is incorrect, but rather "correctly points to the flexible nature of the pragmatic dimension of language and thought (as opposed to the somewhat less flexible nature of the semantic dimension of language and thought)."[70]

How to discern what goes into pragmatics and what goes into semantics is part of a contemporary and animated debate in the philosophy of language. Different proposals reinterpret in different ways the pragmatics/semantics divide. There are theories that have no use for any kind of contextual information, not even indexicality, and make "what is said" the same as "literal meaning". Others that recognise, through contextually sensitive expressions, that pragmatic elements may affect the meaning expressed by sentences and may be traceable in the logical form. Finally, we may think of other radical ones, for example the one that Recanati calls "meaning eliminativism", in which "what is said" is entirely a matter of context with no contribution of the "literal meaning". [71]

Adams et al. do not enter into this debate; in their proposal there is a very clear distinction between the semantic content expressed, i.e. a gappy proposition that is neither true nor false, and the pragmatically imparted content associated with the fictional name. Fictional names do not seem to be context-sensitive

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[70] See Adams et al. (2004), pg. 136.

[71] Consider the literature on different expressions that have received a contextualist analysis: personal pronouns (in their various grammatical forms), demonstratives, the adverbs 'here', 'there', 'now', 'today', yesterday', 'tomorrow', '. . . ago', 'hence(forth)', the adjectives 'actual' and 'present', tense and aspect indicators generally, common nouns like 'enemy' and 'foreigner', and adjectives like 'foreign' and 'imported'. Moreover, 'every' (contextual quantifier domain restriction), 'know' (contextual standards of knowledge) or 'happy' (contextual comparison class). For an introduction to this debate see Cappelen H. & Lepore E. (2005), Predelli S. (2005), Recanati, F. (1993), Stanley, J. (2007).

expressions; in fact the variation of lore associated with them is related to the speaker's knowledge about the use of the name - it is not, in itself, variable in relation to different contexts. However, the debate on the semantics/pragmatics divide may lead Adams et al. to a revision of their theory. For the time being, in their proposal, there may always be a minimum of information that can be pragmatically imparted when employing a fictional name, e.g. "the one my interlocutor is talking about", engendering the feeling that a complete proposition has been expressed whereas what has been said is an incomplete one.

2.4   Language and Reality

The *problem of truth* concerns the relation between language and reality, for the truth or falsehood of a proposition establishes the connection between what is said and how the facts are. A sentence's truth values are derivative from the truth values of the proposition expressed; however, according to the account endorsed by Adams et al., a sentence containing a fictional name expresses a gappy proposition and a gappy proposition, in their view, is neither true nor false. Therefore, we are led to the conclusion that sentences such as "Sherlock Holmes is a detective" or "Sherlock Holmes does not exist" are neither true nor false, although we have strong intuitions about their truth.

According to Adams et al. our intuitions are misleading. In fact, speakers associate with a fictional name a lore and pragmatically employ this lore to implicate a proposition that is true. The gappy proposition is replaced with pragmatically imparted propositions, e.g. "the detective Conan Doyle writes

about is a detective" or "the detective Conan Doyle writes about does not exist". The truth of the pragmatically imparted content misleads us such that we consider the semantic content expressed by sentences containing a fictional name to be true, when in fact they express gappy propositions that are truth valueless.

Everett[72] puts forward an argument against this solution that, if correct, would undermine the entire account developed by Adams et al. Consider the following example:

11. Superman is identical to John Perry.

According to Everett (11) is necessarily false; there are no possible worlds in which John Perry is Superman. In contrast, the modal profile of the descriptive claim that, according to Everett (11) pragmatically conveys, differs from the modal profile of (11). Consider (11_a):

11_a. The superhero who flies over the city saving lives in danger is identical to John Perry.

The proposition expressed by (11_a) is contingently false; we can imagine possible worlds where John Perry is a superhero who flies over the city to save endangered lives. Everett's argument can be outlined as follow:

(a) The modal profile of (11) cannot be accounted for by appealing to the profile of the gappy proposition expressed by (11), in fact, this lacks truth values in every world.

(b)   The modal profile of (11) cannot be accounted for by appealing to the modal profile of (11$_a$) the descriptive claim that (11) is taken to convey pragmatically.

(c)   The way of explaining our intuitions concerning the modal profile of a sentence should conform to the way we explain our intuitions concerning its propositional content and actual truth value.

Therefore,

(d)   If we cannot explain our intuitions about the modal profile of (11) in terms of the descriptive claim that (11) is taken to convey pragmatically, then we should not rely on the descriptive content conveyed pragmatically to explain our intuitions about the sentence's propositional content and truth value.

(e)   In conclusion, an account that explains the intuitions about the truth values of sentences containing fictional names by resorting to the pragmatically conveyed descriptive content is incorrect.

Adams et al. reply to this argument rejecting (c). In fact, they argue that in general the intuitions concerning the modal profile of a sentence come from the sentence's logical form, whereas the intuitions of truth or falsehood come from the facts evaluated. For what concerns (11), the intuition of necessity comes from the logical form of the expression that can be reduced to the sentence schema 'a = a', which is necessarily true. If we consider the variation 'a = b' this will be necessarily true or necessarily false depending on the 'a' and 'b' referents. (11) can be formalised in terms of 'a = b' and is necessarily false given that 'a' and 'b' have different referents. It is not surprising that we

cannot explain the modal intuitions we maintain for (11) through the modal intuitions we have about (11_a) – which is, according to Everett, the descriptive claim for (11). In conclusion, the explanation of the intuitions of the truth values of sentences containing fictional names employing the descriptive claim that they are supposed to convey is not proven wrong by the fact that the intuitions of the modal profile of such sentences cannot be explained by the modal intuitions about the descriptive claim they are taken to convey pragmatically. The reason for this is that the intuitions of truth come from the evaluations of facts, whereas the intuitions concerning the modal profile come from the logical form of the sentence.

In my opinion the argument put forward by Everett does not show that the account developed by Adams et al. is incorrect. I also believe that the reply to his argument can be better articulated than the one provided by Adams et al.; moreover, discussing the different reasons why Everett's argument is not a definitive one may be a chance to reach a deeper understanding of the reference of fictional names.

I will discuss a few points of Everett's argument that seem to me controversial. In doing so, I am going to introduce and take for granted two notions which are 'truth in fiction' and 'story-worlds'. Furthermore, I will make four simplifying assumptions in discussing (11). First, I will assume that Superman stories, from the first story which ever appeared in 1938 to the contemporary adaptations, are parts of a single comprehensive story, which adopt different media – comics, movies, books – but which all concern the same fictional character. Second, that the whole of Superman's story is a consistent one and is therefore

ontologically presentable through the set of the story-worlds – possible worlds where everything that is true in the stories is true. Third, that Superman is the only fictional character in the work. Fourth, that the stories' contents are entirely devoted to telling us things about Superman. [73]

The utterance of (11) is susceptible to two interpretations. We can imagine a context of utterance in which the speakers' utterance implies the implicit operator "In the fiction" and (11) can be made explicit as (11b):

11b.   In Superman's stories, Superman is identical to John Perry.

or a different context in which there is no such implication. (11b) and (11) will be assessed differently, the context of evaluation of the former will consist of the set of the story-worlds – those possible worlds in which everything true in the stories is true – whilst the context of evaluation of the latter will correspond to the actual world. Story-worlds are not worlds in which only things true in the story are true, because stories leave much undetermined, therefore they differ in various ways from one another. For example, in our imaginative engagement to the work we are invited to pretend that there is an individual called Superman that does all the things Superman is said to do in the story; however, a different individual may be picked out in each story-world as long as the one designated satisfies the qualitative conditions predicated of Superman in the story. It follows that if w_1 and w_2 are story-worlds, "Superman" designates the individual A in w_1 and the individual B in w_2.

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[73] The notion of truth in fiction, story-worlds, the idea that a set of different stories can be treated as a unique, broader story about the same fictional character and the representation of the story adopting possible worlds can be put under discussion. I postpone a deeper analysis of these notions to a different time when I will develop a study of fictional contexts. Although the third and fourth assumptions are not realistic they allow us to avoid complication in the exposition while not affecting the point I shall be making.

The ambiguity of the utterance of (11) resides in the fact that we may be talking within the scope of the set of the story-worlds or we may not. To represent this ambiguity I will adopt a two-dimensional semantic framework.[74] In w_1, this being a story-world, "Superman" serves as a rigid designator, it is then possible to represent the intension of "Superman" in the following way:

$$\begin{array}{cccc} & w_1 & w_2 & w_3 \\ w_1 & A & A & A \end{array}$$

w_1 appears twice, on the left in its role of world of utterance and above in its role as world of evaluation. Being employed as a rigid designator in w_1, "Superman" will designate A in all worlds, irrespective of whether the other worlds are story-worlds or not. Let us assume now that w_2 is a story-world and w_3 is the actual world, we can construct the two dimensional concept K for "Superman" as follows:

$$\begin{array}{cccc} K & w_1 & w_2 & w_3 \\ w_1 & A & A & A \\ w_2 & B & B & B \\ w_3 & x & x & x \end{array}$$

Here "x" indicates no value. In line with the proposal advanced by Adams et al., "Superman" is used as a rigid designator in all these worlds, hence in relation to each world of utterance there is uniformity of designation in each

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[74] This framework has been clearly stated by Robert Stalnaker in a classic paper called "Assertion". Gregory Currie employs this framework in a paper called "Characters and Contingency" (2003) discussing the modal profile of sentences containing fictional names, such as: (i) Necessarily, someone who did not fall for Vronsky would not be Anna Karenina; (ii) Someone who necessarily fell for Vronsky would not be Anna Karenina. Although I don't discuss here the interesting analysis developed by Currie in his paper, I borrow from it the idea of employing a two-dimensional semantic to discuss (11) and the reference of fictional names in general.

world of evaluation, so in row 1 "Superman" uniformly designates A, in row 2 it uniformly designates B and in row 3 it uniformly fails to pick out any individual at all. The difference between row 1 and 2 reveals the fact that, as employed in different story-worlds, "Superman" may designate different individuals. In fact, A and B may differ from each other for what concerns all the attributes not specified in the story.

Everett claims that the utterance of (11) expresses a necessarily false proposition. However, constructing a two dimensional concept for (11) I will show that Everett's intuitions would be correct only in the case where (11) is interpreted as "In the fiction, Superman is identical to John Perry". In fact, considering the different interpretations of (11), this is not false in every possible world. For example, (11) expresses a truth-valueless gappy proposition, selecting the actual world w_3. Let us consider K' as the two dimensional concept for (11):

K'	w_1	w_2	w_3
w_1	F	F	F
w_2	F	F	F
w_3	x	x	x

Maintaining the assumption held by Adams et al. that fictional names are proper names although *unfilled*, (11) as uttered in w_1 and w_2 is false in every possible world of evaluation. w_1 and w_2 are story-worlds, in these worlds we are interpreting (11) as implicitly tantamount to "In the fiction, Superman is identical to John Perry". w_3 is the actual world and given that in the actual world "Superman" does not pick out any individual, (11), as uttered in w_3, will

lack any truth value. The proposition expressed by (11) is therefore not false for every possible world, but is rather, either false or truth-valueless.

A second claim in Everett's argument that is controversial is his interpretation of (11a) as the alleged descriptive content pragmatically conveyed by the utterance of (11).

11.   Superman is identical to John Perry.

11_a.   The superhero who flies over the city saving lives in danger is identical to John Perry.

In accordance with the framework put forward by Adams et al., "Superman" and "the superhero who flies over the city saving endangered lives" have very different semantic properties; the former being a proper name, the latter a definitive description. Therefore, the former will be treated as a rigid designator which designates the same individual in any possible world, if any; the latter will pick out the individual who in each world bears the properties expressed in the description. For this reason (11) and (11a) will have a different modal profile and, on this basis, Everett argues that the modal profile of (11) cannot be accounted for by appealing to the modal profile of (11_a). However, the way in which Adams et al. render the descriptive content pragmatically conveyed by a sentence containing a fictional name includes an important element that is missing from Everett's rendering of it. Consider one of the examples employed by Adams et al.:

12.   Pegasus flies.

According to Adams et al., when one utters (12), although literally expressing the gappy proposition $<$ __ , flies $>$, one pragmatically implies a full proposition, for example:

12$_a$. The winged horse of Greek mythology flies.

(12$_a$) includes the specification to the origin of the name: "of Greek mythology". The relevant descriptive content is the one concerning the myth, and the description will designate an individual in the worlds where the myth is true, otherwise it will not pick out any individual. Taking into account this element we may consider that (11$_c$) is more coherent to the proposal advanced by Adams et al. in rendering the content implied by (11) than (11$_a$) is.

11$_c$. The superhero who flies over the city saving lives in danger in the Superhero stories is identical to John Perry.[75]

(11$_c$) will be false in all the story-worlds where what is said to happen in Superman stories is true. In all the other worlds (11$_c$) lacks a true value. Therefore, in answer to the argument put forward by Everett, the proposition expressed replacing the fictional name with descriptive content pragmatically implied has the same modal profile of the proposition expressed by the sentence containing the fictional name. In conclusion, Everett's argument does not show that the framework developed by Adams et al. is incorrect.

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[75] I am using the expression "In the superhero stories", intended as a genre, to include all the different stories and adaptations involving Superman as a character. Remember that I am building my argument under the simplifying assumption that all the different stories and adaptations in the various media concerning Superman pertain to the same character. I am discussing this example as I would discuss simpler examples, as, for instance, one concerning Anna Karenina that appears in a Tolstoy's novel and would not bring any complication about whether different appearances are ones of the same character or not.

This framework developed by Adams et al. does present some explanatory strengths in respect to other frameworks that adopt the notion of gappy proposition as central to the understanding of sentences containing fictional names. For example, this framework would be able to provide an understanding of sentences that were putting strain on a proposal such as the one advanced by David Braun. Consider (13):

13.   Superman is Clark Kent.

The utterance of (13) literally expresses the gappy proposition $<$ __ , identity, __ $>$; however, one uttering (13) pragmatically implies something along the lines of (13_a):

(13_a) The superhero who flies over the city saving lives in danger in the Superhero stories is the disguised superhero who works as a reporter for the Daily Planet in those very Superhero stories.

When interpreted as implicitly having the prefix "In the fiction", (13) is evaluated in the story-worlds where those Superhero stories are true and in those worlds of evaluation (13) is true. When interpreted without the prefix "In the fiction", (13) expresses the above gappy proposition that is neither true nor false. In this latter case speaker intuitions that (13) is true is explained through the proposition expressing the pragmatic implications that I have simplified in (13_a).

In my opinion the answer provided to Everett's objection is satisfactory and the framework developed by Adams et al. provides an explanation for cases that are problematic for other accounts, such as Braun's one. Notwithstanding,

I find that there is still one case in which analysis would be problematic if adopting the proposal advanced by Adams and al. Consider (14):

14. Sherlock Holmes was created by Conan Doyle.

Although we have strong intuitions about the truth of (14), when interpreted as implicitly prefixed by "In the fiction", (14) would be false given that in Doyle's stories Sherlock Holmes is not created by anyone. When interpreted without any prefix (14) expresses the gappy proposition < __ , being created by Conan Doyle >, which is neither true nor false. When understood as pragmatically implicating a proposition in which the fictional name is replaced by a descriptive content associated with it, (14) may be understood as implying (14$_a$):

14$_a$. The detective who smokes the pipe and lives in Baker street in Doyle's stories was created by Conan Doyle.

The definite description in (14a) which replaces the fictional name in (14) picks out an individual in the story-worlds identifiable with Doyle's stories and otherwise lacks a designatum. In the story-worlds identifiable in Doyle's stories, the detective who smokes the pipe and lives in Baker street does not bear the property of 'being created by Conan Doyle', therefore we cannot account for the intuitions of the truth of (14) by appealing to the alleged pragmatic implications conveyed by it.

The fact that this last case falls outside the explanatory abilities of the framework developed by Adams et al. may not mean that the overall proposal is incorrect; however, if left unanswered it would, at least, cast doubts on this

account in terms of it being an unitary account for the meaning of fictional names.

Conclusion

The work developed provides many answers to the many problems faced by Braun's proposal. The study of their framework leads to general philosophical questions. These concern the nature of 'gappy propositions' as a question for the metaphysics of propositions. I had the opportunity to address this point comparing a possible worlds semantics with a semantics which employs the notion of structured propositions that is the only notion of proposition that would be able to be considered as an unfilled structure or 'gappy proposition'.

Moreover, the idea that the incomplete semantic content is completed on a pragmatic level within the conversation may lead them to revise their framework by taking into account the contemporary debate about the semantics/pragmatics divide. For the time being there is a clear distinction between the semantic content expressed by a sentence containing fictional names, which correspond to a truth-valueless gappy proposition, and what is communicated on a pragmatic level by replacing the fictional name with the lore associated with it. However, it may be interesting to wonder how the framework elaborated by Adams et al. may take into account the proposal that the pragmatic contribution may enrich the semantic content and therefore affects its truth values.

Finally, as I noted in the last section of this chapter, our intuitions about a sentence such as "Sherlock Holmes was created by Conan Doyle" would not be

explained by considering the pragmatically imparted content in the conversation. Examples of this type, even if they would not show that the proposal put forward by Adams et al. is incorrect, cast doubts on the main aim of their work, namely providing a unitary account for vacuous names.

PART 3

"If Donald Duck is anything he is a *duck* (a talking duck); not an invention or a cultural artefact. Some concepts may be "empty;" the concept of Donald Duck (if there is such a thing) is one of them. But *Donald Duck* himself is not a concept."

K. Walton (2000)

Introduction

What is 'make-believe'? Why and how does this notion become central in the discussion of the reference of fictional names? These are some of the questions I will broach in the following sections. As we saw in the previous chapters, the case of fictional names, within the broader category of empty names, raises interesting puzzles in the understanding of the relations between Language and Thought and between Language and Reality. As we said, if when we think we think of something and when we use a name we name something, the contrasting intuitions about the reference of fictional names are at the origin of ontological and semantic debates pertaining to the existence or the reference to fictional characters rather than to the employment of terms which lack a referent. According to some philosophers though, such as Gareth Evans and Kendall Walton, debating on an alleged ontological puzzle on the basis of those contrasting intuitions means to overlook an important and crucial element in the understanding of fictional names. Fictional names are employed in fiction and our understanding of their function requires an understanding of what fiction is and of the nature of the appreciators' engagement in them. In the most general terms I will talk of fiction employing examples of works of representational art and as such I will define them as artefacts shaped with the

intention of representing something. Appreciators' engagement in works of art has been understood in Walton's work as participation in a game of make-believe in which the work of art serves as a prop.

Both in Evans' and Walton's work, speakers' employment of fictional names outside the fiction is understood as a sort of participation in a game of make-believe, either as an extension of the game in which speakers were involved in the appreciation of the work of art or as a different type of pretence[76].

In the discussion of this approach to the puzzle of fictional names, it seems then essential to have a proper understanding of what Walton intends for make-believe and for participation in a game of make-believe. Furthermore, these topics go hand in hand with a general understanding of the nature of works of representational art; here not including the aesthetic value of the work, but rather its constitutive elements and how these contribute to its intended function to serve as a prop in a game of make-believe. Drawing an overview on the nature of a work of representational art may lead us to consider that different art forms have their own specificity and a differentiated analysis may be required dependent upon whether we are talking of a painting, a narrative or a piece of music. I have then chosen narratives as an exemplification and I will draw, in the following sections, an outline of the constitutive elements of narratives combined with an overview of the notion of make-believe and Walton's account on participating in a game of make-believe.

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[76] The type of pretence will depend on the type of sentence, I will discuss this point in detail presenting Walton's proposal.

This background being provided, we have what Evans and Walton would consider the essential elements with which to discuss the case of fictional names. Thereby, Walton's proposal moves the focus onto some elements belonging to our aesthetic experience and onto how these elements can be central for the discussion of the reference of fictional names. To hail the problem as the ontological problem is, for Walton, the wrong approach. In his view, the puzzles posed by fictional names are ones which pertain to the understanding of make-believe and our participation in pretence.

Generally, semanticists find Walton's solutions unclear or they consider the use of the notion of 'make-believe' unnecessary. This is not surprising if we consider that Walton's proposal is not a semantic one. In fact, Walton offers a very straightforward answer to the semantic puzzle: sentences containing fictional names do not express any proposition. The problem does not reside in the semantic analysis we can provide of these sentences but in the cognitive understanding of speakers' attitudes in uttering sentences containing fictional names.

In conclusion, Walton's proposal seems to point toward a different direction of research in facing this problem, shifting it from a semantic to a cognitive domain. Although in doing so 'make-believe' could be adopted as a primitive notion, I believe, a deeper and more articulated understanding of what the experience of make-believe involves would strengthen the explanatory quality of this proposal and may help to solve the complications that we will meet in studying Walton's solutions case by case.

3.1 Fictionality and the Imagination

Imaginations take different forms and may develop in different ways. Imaginings can be spontaneous or deliberate, can consist of occurent or non-occurent mental events and our imaginative activities can be solitary rather than social. Consider for example Claire's imaginings triggered by some shade in the trees which resembles, to her eyes, the face of an Asiatic man she saw the evening before in a Manga; in this case, Claire's imaginings are spontaneous. In contrast, let us suppose that Claire could not go out on the river and, as she is waiting onshore in front of her boathouse for her rowing mates, she imagines her ideal rowing session. She is imagining herself in her favourite boat delivering perfect strokes one after another, leaving on the water the recognisable circle of her rowing and passing by the boathouse looking as if she were sliding on the water. In this case her imagining is deliberate and consists of the occurrent mental event of rowing in a certain boat but also of other non-occurrent ones; while she is imagining rowing in a certain boat she is also implicitly imagining being on a very flat water in a lovely sunny warm morning without wind. Walton would loosely define these thoughts as part of her "mental furniture" during the daydream.[77] Moreover, consider the scenario in which Claire and her rowing mate are working on the rowing technique, training indoors on the rowing machine (also called erg). They make-believe that the rowing machine is their boat and that they are on the water. They both imagine their pushing on the erg to be their delivering the strokes on the water, their controlling the slide to be controlling the seat while the boat is running on the water, their raising the handle of the erg to be their raising the handles of

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[77] See Walton, K. (1990), pg. 17.

the blades for the "catch". They imagine this together because they are in the same boat and everything must be done in synchrony. This case is an example of a social rather than a solitary imaginative activity.

There are studies that show how our abilities to participate in imaginary activities and the kind of imagination we participate in evolve as we grow up. In Dorothy and Jerome Singer's work[78] a thorough account is provided on how imagination develops from our first months as infants to our time as adolescents. It is interesting to note that for each phase of their early years children may experience a solitary and a social play. However, according to the Singers, within the first two years the child seems happy in her private playful world, exploring the environment around herself, toddling around, tasting the most attractive object she finds. Although she is happy to participate in games with her sister or an adult in this period she will mainly experience a solitary dimension of the game. From the 12th-13th month children's play may assume a symbolic character, for example the child can make-believe to feed her doll, or mimic the rumble of a car engine while playing with a toy truck, or put a teddy bear to bed. During their second year children acquire a broader social awareness and this becomes part of their games. In the second year social games become more frequent, children recognise the role of other children with whom they are playing, for example following each other in turn. It is from their third year that children start playing a collaborative game of make-believe. They employ their social awareness in the game and choose and recognise each other's role, e.g. stipulating each other's part in the game:

[78] Singer, D. Singer J. (1992) *The House of Make-Believe: Children's Play and the Developing Imagination*. ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

"Let's say I am the doctor and you are the patient". They are aware that each other is pretending within a game.

The understanding of children's games of make-believe is crucial for the understanding of Walton's theoretical work. Let us highlight the main elements of a game of make-believe with an example. Luc and Annabel are playing as pirates. They stipulate their game explicitly: "Let us be pirates, the small blue sofa is our boat, the white one is the one we want to board" says Annabel. "Ok, but mind the little boat with the backup troops over there" adds Luc pointing at the armchair. One of the essential features of Luc and Annabel's game of make-believe is the use of props. In their game the blue sofa is a ship as well as the white one and the armchair. Luc and Annabel are themselves props in their game. They make-believe of themselves that they are pirate and that their attempt to move the blue sofa closer to the white sofa is, in the game, an attempt to board another ship - always keeping an eye on the backup troops. Their jumping from one sofa to the other one is, in their game, their jumping from one ship to the other one, hiding in the sofa checking the armchair is, in the game, hiding from and checking the backup troops.

Annabel and Luc do not merely imagine five-masted ships, they imagine those two sofas to be five-masted ships. They do not imagine pirates boarding a ship, they imagine themselves being pirates and they imagine themselves boarding the ship jumping and fighting and hiding in the sofa. It is their doing certain things that is a prop for their imagining. Luc and Annabel imagining the blue sofa being a ship can be classified as an act of imagining *de re*, while their imagining of themselves as pirates and of their jumping from one sofa to the

other as boarding the other ship as an act of imagining *de se* - they themselves are objects of their imaginings. Walton suggests a classification slightly more articulated adding to the previous distinction the notion of imagining *de se "from the inside"*. The difference between an act of imagination *de se* and an act of imagination *de se "from the inside"* resides in how we experience our imagining. Luc entertaining the imagining of himself being a pirate while in bed after the exciting playful afternoon, or Clare imagining herself rowing while onshore are acts of imagining *de se*; both Luc and Clare are objects of their own imaginative activities. However, Luc imagining he himself boarding the white ship or Clare imagining she herself rowing while practising on the rowing machine is an act of imagining *de se "from the inside"*. In these latter scenarios Luc and Clare are not entertaining an imagining of themselves but their imagination is prompted by their acting in a certain way, their rehearsing in reality what is true of them in the game of make-believe. Let us consider a schematic version of this classification.

Acts of imaginings:

Imagining *De Re*	Imagining *De Se*	Imagining *De Se* "From the Inside"
Use of a specific prop in a game of make-believe.	One uses oneself as prop in a game of make-believe.	One imagines behaving and acting in a certain way.
The sofa is the prop for a ship in Annabel and Luc's game of make-believe.	Clara entertains an imagining of herself rowing, while she is waiting onshore.	Luc and Annabel imagine boarding a ship, jumping from one sofa to another.

What Annabel and Luc imagine is fictional but not everything that is fictional in Annabel and Luc's game is imagined by them. Let us say that they start the game on the stipulation that the living room is the sea and any furniture is a ship or a boat in relation to its size. According to this *principle of generation*, it is fictional in their game that the china cabinet in the corner of the living room is a big ship, yet they are not imagining it – fortunately for the family treasure. Thereby, sofas have the function to serve as props on the particular occasion of Annabel and Luc's game even if that is not their intended function. Given that sofas are pressed into service for a single game they are an exemplification of what Walton labels *ad hoc props*. In contrast with these types of props there are other ones that are designed to be such; for example, dolls or toy trucks were made specifically for the purpose of being used as props in games of certain kinds. Dolls are intended to "count as" babies and toy trucks as trucks. Certainly, there are indefinitely many games played by different appreciators on different occasions; however, in all of them the toy is used according to the function it was made to serve. Walton labels games of the kind in which a given prop has the function of serving in, *authorized* ones for it. Games of make-believe of the kind in which the prop does not serve the function it was made for, are instead labelled *unofficial* games. For example, Luc and Annabel make-believe to be young chemists and try to discover how long it takes plastic to melt by burning Annabel's doll. This would be an *unofficial* game in which there is a misuse of the doll, in the sense that the two children, as appreciators, ignore the kind of games the doll was made for. Furthermore, we shall complete the parallel between games of make-believe prompted by *ad hoc*

props and by toys and game of make-believe prompted by works of representational art.

One of the core elements of Walton's theory is that works of representational art are made with the purpose of serving as props in games of make-believe. They are made with the intention to prompt certain kinds of games, generating certain fictional truths rather than others. Appreciators recognising the function the work of art serves and the type of games it prompts, for example making believe that a certain story has taken place by reading a novel, will engage in an authorized game for that work. According to Walton, the type of function a work of art is supposed to serve in the imaginative activities appreciators engage with, results from conventions, from the way in which certain works are used in certain societies or from the author's intention and how she expects the work to be used. Props in conjunction with principles of generation establish certain fictional truths, namely they establish that certain propositions are to be imagined. What is a principle of generation? Principles of generation are an understanding, agreement or convention on which basis props generate certain fictional truths, independently of what one does or does not imagine. According to Walton, what is true in a work of art is what is prescribed to be imagined and more generally what is true is a set of propositions, a set of fictional propositions defined as those propositions that are to be imagined – whether or not they are in fact imagined. A final important distinction in Walton's framework consists in what metaphorically is called the "world of the work" as different at least in certain respects from the "world of the game".[79]

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[79] I will discuss in a further section why the analogy between the set of fictional propositions prescribed by the work and the notion of 'possible worlds' is not adequate.

In our engagement with works of art there are fictional propositions generated by the work and fictional propositions generated by appreciators' engagement with the work. For example, in Gulliver's Travels it is fictional that the novel itself is a journal of a certain ship's physician; at the same time in Clare's engagement with the novel it is fictional of herself that she is reading a journal of a certain ship's physician. However, this latter fictional proposition is not generated by the novel, Claire is not mentioned in the novel, but rather it is generated in participation in the game of make-believe in which the novel serves as a prop.

In conclusion, I suggest that a general positive definition of 'fictionality' we can derive from Walton's work is that, according to the way a certain prop is intended to be used and the rules that are associated to the way we use it, what is fictional corresponds to what is to be imagined. I reiterate this with Walton's words: "Fictionality has turned out to be analogous to truth in some ways; the relation between fictionality and imagining parallels that between truth and belief. Imagining aims at the fictional as belief aims at the true. What is true is to be believed; what is fictional is to be imagined."[80]

3.2   Representations and Narratives

My goal in this section is to introduce a more articulated understanding of what we may mean for a work of representational art intended as an intentional-communicative artefact. As an exemplification, I will provide in what follows an overview of the constitutive elements of narratives. Although I will only

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[80] Walton, K. (1990), pg. 41.

draw the very essential elements of narratives with many aspects pertaining to the study of narratives not even being mentioned, I believe that for the discussion of Walton's proposal it is important to provide some form of exemplification of our understanding of a representational art form.

3.2.1   Representational Systems

Dretske in *Explaining Behaviour* delineates a distinction between different types of representations.

I will follow and synthesize his proposal, however, with a different purpose. Dretske aims at a classification of representations distinguishing between mental representations and a form of representation that, he wants to argue, is generated by our sensorial experiences; I will instead consider different representational systems in order to find some room for narratives within Dretske's classification.

Let us assume a general definition of a representational system as follows:

"The fundamental idea is that a system, S, represents a property, F, if and only if S has the function of indicating (providing information about) the F of a certain domain of objects"[81].

There are two elements that seem to be crucial in the definition of a representational system: firstly, the function that a system performs in indicating a property of a certain object; secondly, what this function is generated by within the system, e.g. by convention, by our use of the system,

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[81] Dretske, F. (1997) *Naturalizing the Mind*. Ed. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

or by a lawful dependency between the indicator and the indicated. Dretske distinguishes three types of representational systems.

In Type 1, the function of providing information about something else is assigned by convention. For example, consider that in a discussion about a football match the speaker assigns to some pen lids the function of representing football players and to the rubber the function of representing the ball. He reproduces on his desk some highlights of the match. The representation of the match is accomplished through the function assigned to the pen lids and this function is established conventionally by the speaker on that particular occasion.

In Type 2, systems are shaped to perform a certain representational function in the form of artefacts. For example, devices such as thermometers or fuel gauges are shaped to perform the function of indicating the temperature or the amount of fuel in the tank. Unlike Type 1, in this case the representational function is not attributed on a certain occasion but it is fixed by the way in which a certain artefact works. On the one hand, the function these devices perform is independent from us. In fact, we may contemplate the case of a broken fuel gauge in which any of our attributions of a representational function would not be taken into account; the fuel gauge would not indicate anything, even if, coincidentally, the amount of fuel displayed corresponds in that particular moment with the actual amount of petrol in the tank. On the other hand, there is a sense in which the use of a fuel gauge is conventional. Given the way in which electrical fuel gauges operate they cannot indicate the amount of fuel in the tank without also exhibiting the electrical flow in the

wire. However, we recognize that the fuel gauge was made with the intention of performing the function of indicating the amount of fuel, and conventionally we assume that as its representational function. Therefore, in Type 2 the representational function is fixed by the way in which the device works, but the fact that that device serves to provide information about, for example, the amount of fuel in the tank and not the amount of electrical current flowing in the wires connecting the gauge to the tank, is established by the way in which we use it and by the recognition of the intention for which it was made.

In Type 3, representational systems' indication of the property of a certain object is generated by a lawful dependency between the indicator and the indicated. Consider examples such as tracks in the snow, or fingerprints on a gun or growth rings in a tree stump. Following Dretske[82], we may call these signs "indicators", underscoring their intrinsic relation of dependency upon what they indicate. Namely, their indications are not a result of a particular function that we conventionally attribute to them, or of a particular way in which we use them, but there is a lawful dependency between the indicator and the indicated. There is a physical relation between some particular tracks and the passage of something in particular, just as the physical relation between fingerprints and the person to whom they belong is an intrinsic one, or between a type of skin spot and the presence of a virus that generates a particular disease. Even if we do not see or use those signs as indicators, they still indicate what they have been generated by. Let us sum up in the following table.

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[82] Dretske, F. (1988) *Explaining Behaviour. World of Causes*. ed. Massachusetts: MIT Press, chapter 3.

R. S. Type 1	R.S. Type 2	R.S. Type 3
Representation is not an indicator.	Indicators shaped to perform a certain representational function.	Indicators.
The representational function is assigned conventionally on a particular occasion.	The representational function may vary in relation to the way we use it.	What it is used to indicate is not a matter of convention.

Narratives may be understood as forms of representations, for example of events, facts or stories. They may be assimilated to an artefact shaped by an author who intends it to perform a certain function that is: telling a story. Employing the classification delineated above, narratives may be associated with a representational system of Type2. In fact, narratives are shaped to perform a certain representational function; moreover the function may vary in relation to the use we make of the narratives. We may use a narrative, ignore the function it was made for and instead adopt it as an example of the vocabulary of a certain author, or as an example of grammatical structures in use at the author's time or in a certain composition, or we may wish to use it to identify the social structure of a certain period within a certain national context, etc. These uses would not correspond to the function a narrative is intended to perform or is conventionally assumed to perform but can be still possible.

However, to embody narratives within Dretske's classification we may need to face some difficulties. Reconsider the general definition provided above: "a system, S, represents a property, F, if and only if S has the function of indicating (providing information about) the F of a certain domain of objects". Restricting this definition to the representational system of Type 2, we assume

that there is a certain domain of objects, for example, fuels in the tank or temperatures about which a system represents a property, that is, the amount of fuel in the tank or the level of temperature. A test for a representational system would seem to consist of determining whether that system is able to misrepresent what it is intended to indicate. For example, a fuel gauge may misrepresent the amount of fuel in the tank if broken. The misrepresentation is possible because we are assuming domains of objects. In contrast to the assumed general definition of a representational system, a fictional narrative would not provide information about the F of a certain domain of objects. In fact, it may be the case that the F it represents is ascribed to someone or something that is not actual, and so does not belong to any domain of objects. The concept of misrepresentation needs to be reformulated if we want to apply it to fictional narratives.

3.2.2   The Constitutive Elements of Narratives

Narratives are intentional-communicative artefacts. As artefacts they require a maker, namely the author; as intentional-artefacts, they have been made with the intention of performing a specific function, as intentional-communicative artefacts, the realisation of their purpose consists in telling a story. In other words, there is a storyteller or an author that makes up a story and he or she recounts it to an audience.

Let us start from the 'story'. This together with the author and the author's intentions is a core element of narratives and for the understanding of our engagement with them. We may see narratives as representations of stories and

the stories as their content. There may be fictional stories or ones based on true fact or historical accounts. I see at least three elements indispensable in the definition of the concept of a 'story.' Firstly, a story is told by someone: therefore, where there is a story, there is an author of the story, there is someone who tells us the story. Secondly, it seems that we talk about a story to talk about what has happened, about a sequence of events. Thirdly, the chains of events develop in a temporal dimension, each event covers a time interval; in addition a temporal relation between two events sometimes ascribe a causal relation to these events, for we think that causes precede their effects. Thus temporal dimensions seem to be essential elements of stories. It is quite intuitive to see that we would not have a story without an agent who authors or causes the story, just as a story without events would be a story without any content: it would be odd to imagine a story about nothing; and finally it is difficult to imagine a sequence of events developed outside of a temporal dimension.

3.2.3   Stories: Possible Worlds and Impossible Stories

A broad use of the notion of 'proposition' rather than 'event' is adopted in the study of fiction and consequently a story is generally individuated as a set of propositions, rather than a sequence of events. A proposition is a function from a possible world to a truth value and a set of propositions may individuate a possible world. A possible world intuitively is an alternative way in which things could be. Assuming a story as a possibility, we may easily describe a story as a possible world and start referring to it as "the world of the story".

However, the nature of a story and the nature of a possible world are different and this analogy is erroneous. A possible world is complete and determinate whereas a story comprises a set of propositions but is indeterminate in different aspects. A story can be then associated more appropriately with a set of possible worlds: this set is composed of all those worlds in which the set of propositions formed in the story is true. We should think of a (consistent) story as corresponding to a "way some part of the world might have been". However, a metaphysic of fiction based on the notion of possible worlds will face strong difficulties. Consider for example the case of impossible stories. The notion of impossibility taken into account here is tantamount to logical impossibility. When we talk of impossible stories we should consider stories that represent contradictory propositions. Any possible world by definition will not contain any contradictory propositions.

Can we imagine a contradiction? Assuming that the imagination could be a test for possibility, if we can imagine a contradiction we should conclude that we can entertain possible contradictions. That is, there are possible worlds that are impossible and yet this is quite contradictory in itself. However, there are contents of intentional states that can be inconsistent: a person can have contradictory beliefs, or a person can have contradictory perceptions, e.g. beholding the optical illusion of Escher's drawings. Lewis suggested regarding an inconsistent story as a fragmented corpus; P would be true according to a fragment and non-P true in respect to another fragment. For example, in *Sunset Boulevard* the proposition that Joe Gillis is alive is true according to the fragment in which it is implied that he is narrating the story; whilst the proposition that Joe Gillis is dead is true according to the fragment representing

his death. There are no parts of the story in which both the propositions are true at the same time. It seems that in the case of inconsistent stories, we do not infer the truth of the conjunction from the truth of conjoined propositions.

Graham Priest objects that Lewis' fragmentation strategy is not a solution. In fact, he proposes we consider a story such as the "Sylvan's Box story" in which the thematic unity of the story would not allow fragmentation to solve the contradiction. In the "Sylvan's Box story" two logicians meet each other in the home of one of their friends to organise his scripts, notes and materials after his death. In cataloguing different papers Graham discovers a box in which there both is something and at the same time there is not. Graham - the character in the story - discovers the existence of a contradiction in the actual world and shares his discovery with Nick. Both of them react in the same way, with incredulity and fear, they feel responsible for protecting a precious secret. After two nights spent together, they leave for different directions. In this story the thematic unity is founded on the discovery of a contradiction.[83]

Priest's solution would be to consider a framework of a plurality of worlds, some possible and some *open worlds* in which contradictions are admitted. Possible and open worlds have the same domain in terms of actual and possible objects, but we could have access to open worlds contemplating impossible, nonexistent objects and contradictory propositions.[84]

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[83] Daniel Nolan proposes a consistent reading of the story, based on the unreliability of the narrator in the story, see Nolan (2007) A consistent reading of Sylvan's box. *Philosophical Quaterly*, Vol. 57, no.229, pp. 667-673.
[84] See Graham Priest, *Towards Non-Being: The Logic and Metaphysics of Intentionality*, 2005, for a detailed account of *open worlds*.

3.2.4 Authors and Narrators

According to what has been said so far, thinking about a narrative means thinking of a storyteller or an author who makes up a story, and he or she recounts it to an audience. Abstracting from literary examples for the moment, let us consider three figures to which the authorship of the narrative may be attributed. Firstly, to the real author in the activity of making up the story Secondly, to the author as he represents himself, for example in recounting the story assuming a particular attitude towards facts and events. We may suppose that his narration is created in such a way that the author puts himself or herself in the shoes of someone else. This other self of the author has been introduced in literary theory under the name of "implied author". Thirdly, a figure which can be in charge of the narration may be a fictional author/narrator that belongs to the story and according to the story, he or she is the author of the story. On these bases, a general distinction can be delineated between the authorship attributed to a real author or implied author who does not belong to the story and to an author/narrator which is so according to the story. Let us exemplify this in the following representation:

Outside the story	$\Longrightarrow$	Real Author
Implied Author		

Within the story		Author/Narrator (fictional character)

Consider some examples: let us begin from a perspective internal to the fiction. We may encounter a fictional narration developed in first person by one of the characters; he or she will tell us his or her story. Take as example the novel *Moby Dick*, the narrator is a fictional character, Ishmael, and within the fiction it is true that he is the narrator. It is possible to demarcate here a clear distinction between the external position to the story of Herman Melville as author of the novel and the internal position (within the pretence) of Ishmael as author and narrator of the story. In the story Ishmael is the sole survivor of the Pequod shipwreck and he is telling us his story. In this sense we may infer that he is the author of the story. A similar and more classical example is Doctor Watson in Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* stories[85]. In fact, it is part of the fiction that Watson has written those stories during his collaboration and adventures with Sherlock Holmes. As in the previous case, we may draw the distinction between the external position of Conan Doyle to the fiction and the internal position of Watson as the character that holds the role of author/narrator in the story. Let us exemplify this with the following schematic representation:

Real Author: Conan Doyle

Outside the story

Within the story: Sherlock Holmes' stories

Author/Narrator: Doctor Watson

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[85] There are some classifications of types of authors/narrators that would distinguish the case of Watson from the case of Ishmael. In the first case it is explicit in the story that Watson writes Sherlock Holmes stories, in the second case the reader may infer from the story that Ishmael is narrating his story. Walton, for example, classifies this second case as the 'storytelling narrator'. Watson would be a fictional character that holds the role of author/narrator whereas Ishmael would hold the role of storytelling narrator. I think that for the purpose of this paragraph we can skim over these distinctions and be focused on the main difference between external and internal perspectives to the fiction.

There are cases in which there seems to be a more complicated structure. Consider the novella by Alexander Dumas *One Thousand and One Ghosts* or *The Divine Comedy* by Dante. Here, in the fiction the narrator corresponds to the actual author. Dumas and Dante in their respective works are themselves narrators within the pretence. For example, Dante is a character in the story that interacts with other characters and builds his path from Hell to Heaven. In explaining this case, the option for which I would opt consists in distinguishing the actual author in his external position to the fiction from the author/narrator within the pretence. We may suppose that the actual authors portray themselves in the story, as in a self-portrait. In the story the actual Dante experiences and says things that he never did or said in actual life. The following would be a schematic exemplification:

Real Author: Dante Alighieri

Outside the story

*Within the story*: *Divine Comedy*

Author/Narrator: Dante Alighieri

The above examples cover the cases in which a character is the author or narrator. In addition, there are cases in which there is an implied author that we may identify as a fictional author/ narrator that is not part of the story. Consider the case in which we recognise a different personality of the author from the one we know to be from the reading of the novel. For example, in reading *Death in Venice,* we may build up an idea of the personality of the author that is different from the one we would have if we had known the actual maker,

Thomas Mann. Whilst as readers, we may associate the author with a narrow-minded and unforgiving person, people acquainted with Mann described him as an open-minded and understanding person. In this case for example, that narrow-minded person who, we feel, is telling us the story, may be associated with the "implied author". This corresponds to a fictional entity that does not belong to the story. According to the story there is no such character, a narrow-minded and unforgiving person that is in charge of writing and narrating it. In fact, the narration is in third person. However, in the reading of the novel we may reconstruct which set of intentions rests in the narration, in which way the author is communicating to us, which kind of personality is expressed by his or her way of narrating. These kinds of suppositions can lead us to imagine a person different from the real author; this is an imaginary person, and in this sense is fictional but is not part of the story. The delineation of a certain implied author rather than a different one is a stylistic choice of the real author. The choice of a certain point of view in the narration may be justified by an aesthetic purpose that the author may want to achieve with that stylistic solution. Given that the implied author is a fictional entity that does not belong to the story, we may consider that it will belong to another story: a meta story in which the story he fictionally has authored is embedded. Let us resume the previous example, *Death in Venice*. In this case there is a meta story about a narrow-minded and unforgiving person who writes a story about a man who falls unhappily in love with a young boy and eventually dies. This latter story is embedded in the former. It is then possible to describe the communicative process of the narrative as follows: (a) the real author makes up a $story_1$ where an alter ego of Thomas Mann, a narrow-minded and unforgiving person writes

and is the narrator of a story$_2$; (b) this fictional character, the implied author, will hold the role of the author/narrator in respect to the story$_2$. Moreover, note that story$_2$ is fictional from the stance of story$_1$. Let us exemplify this with the following schematic representation:

Real Author: Thomas Mann

Implied Author $\implies$ Story$_1$: a narrow-minded and unforgiving person who writes a story.

Story$_2$:
a man who falls unhappily in love with a young boy and eventually dies.
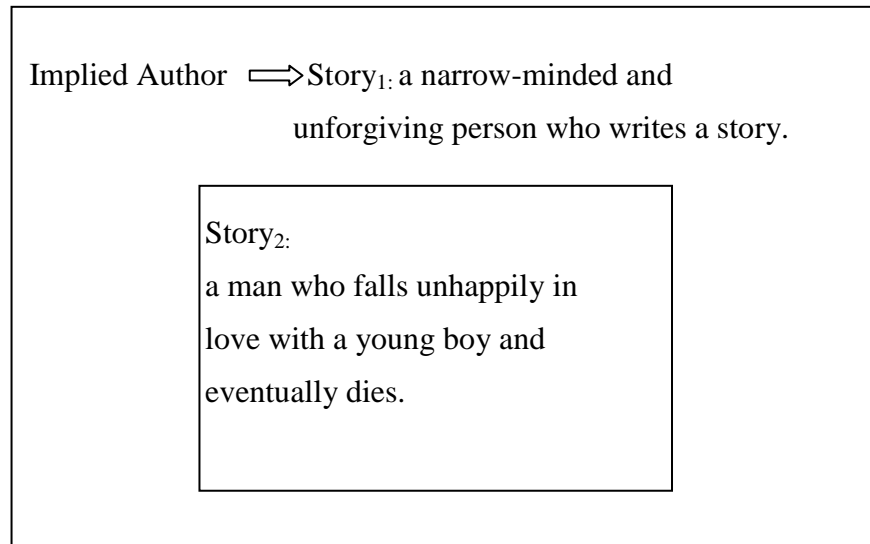
The main characteristic of embedded stories is that there is a relation of fictionality between story$_1$ and story$_2$. Story$_2$ is fiction from story$_1$'s stance; therefore we may talk of a fiction within the fiction. Every narration led by an implied author is analysable in terms of embedded stories. Other cases of embedded stories, where we do not need to refer to any implied author, are readily available in the history of literature. Consider *The Murderer of Gonzago* in *Hamlet.* Within the fiction of *Hamlet* (story$_1$), the main character with some old friends makes up a play entitled *The Murderer of Gonzago* (story$_2$). Hamlet, as director, and other fictional characters will be the audience

of this latter, embedded story. In this sense we may speak of a fiction within the fiction and describe the relation between story$_1$ and story$_2$ as the second one being a fiction within the former. In fact, according to story$_1$, *The Murderer of Gonzago* is authored by the fictional character Hamlet. Let us exemplify this in the following schema:

Real Author: William Shakespeare

Story$_1$: *Hamlet*

Fictional author: Hamlet

Story$_2$:
The Murderer of Gonzago
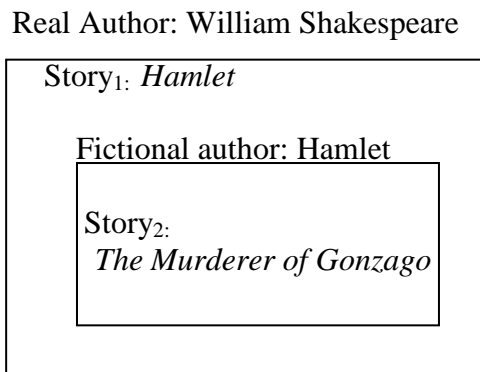
Every narrative in which an implied author is recognisable is associable with the schema of embedded stories. As a fictional author, the implied author will fill the role of the individual responsible for the act of fiction making, from which the narrative is created.

Finally, a third example of narrative may be recognised in third person narrative where no fictional author is assumed in the story, either being part of the story or being a fictional author external to the story. In these cases the actual author is the narrator of the story[86]. For example, *Middlemarch* by George Eliot is a narrative in third person where there is no clue in the story of an internal narrator. The story is made up by Eliot and she is the narrator of the story. The narrative is a result of an act of fiction making and is an intentional-

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[86] There is a current debate on the presence of an effaced narrator in any narrative. However, my emphasis is here more on the author's intentions, so I take one stance without discussing the different points of view on the effaced narrators. For an overview on the different arguments in favour or in disfavour of the different stances see Levinson (1996) and Wilson (2006).

communicative artefact resulting from the communicative act of its maker. Our understanding of it is related to the understanding of the author's intentions and what he or she wants to communicate. The author makes up a representation by writing a text; this is a set of indicators through which the reader may infer the author's intention or the reader may infer what it is the author intends the reader to infer. Consider the following as a schematic representation of the communicative process in narratives:

Author's intentions

Set of indicators

Representation
(Text)

Story Content
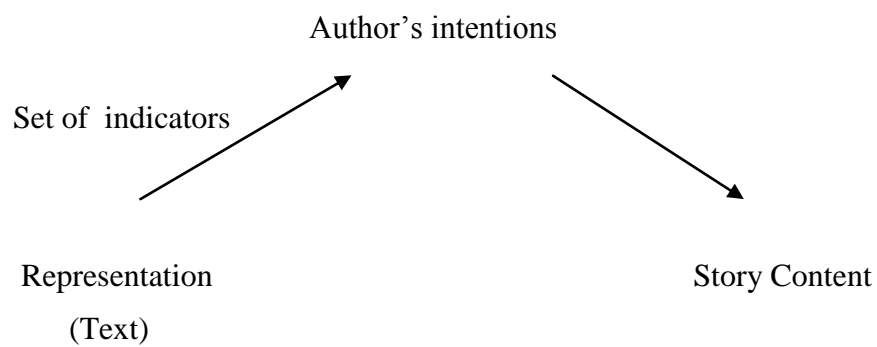
3.3 Participation in a Game of Make-Believe

The previous section shows the central role of authors and authors' intentions for what concerns narratives. The text of the narrative as a set of indicators represents the author's intentions which, in the communication process set up by the narrative, guide appreciators recognising its fictional or non-fictional status. However, the role of the author's intentions should not be taken for granted. There are different points of view on the centrality of the authors' intentions in establishing the fictionality of a work. According to Walton, this can be determined by different factors: convention or the ways in which a certain artefact is employed in a certain cultural context, as well as author's intentions. Moreover, one or the other of these elements may have a different relevance in relation to the different art forms. Appreciation of a narrative in terms of a fictional account or a true story is strongly related to the author's intentions. However, even in this case, counterexamples are not difficult to find. For instance, narratives comprised in Greek Mythology are fictional in our culture whereas they were not in the Ancient Greek societies. I am not entering the debate about at which degree intentionality is a central element in establishing the fictionality of a work of art in contrast to other factors, such as certain uses or conventions in certain cultural contexts. My interest here is directed to a clear definition of what it is to be fictional. In fact, this would give us a chance to have a clearer account of what, in Walton's view, is a fictional truth or what it means to speak truly within a game of make-believe. These are central notions in his construal about sentences appearing to make a reference to fictional entities. As discussed above, a proposition is fictional if there is a prescription to imagine it. Or, in other words, something is true in fiction if it is

to be imagined. Works of representational arts intended as props within games of make-believe are generators of fictional truths. There are different principles and rules that an author can adopt in designing an art work; certain rules are *categorical*, for example, novels set up a certain type of engagement in our social context that is different from the one in which appreciators are involved when appreciating a painting. The work of art prescribes one's role as a participant in the imaginative activity in question. For example, *Gulliver's Travels* prescribes of itself that it is a journal of a ship's physician and when we read it, it prescribes that we make-believe of ourselves that we are reading the journal of a ship's physician. If we are refusing to imagine what has been prescribed we are refusing to "play the game" or we are playing it improperly. Walton considers *conditional* rules next to *categorical* ones: ones to the effect that if certain circumstances obtain, certain things are to be imagined. These rules may be adopted to different degrees, for example in loosely designing what is to be implicitly imagined. However, a discussion of the principles of generation, although very interesting from an aesthetic point of view, can lead us very far from the focus of interest of this study. In fact, it would create confusion to overlook the distinction between what is a fictional truth and how it is generated. As Walton explicitly specifies: "The contingent means by which fictional truths are generated in one or another social context have no bearing on what it means for a proposition to be fictional"[87]. What matters here, is the clear understanding that what is fictional is what is to be imagined. On these bases, we find ourselves confronting an important crossroad: for an understanding of fictionality we need to turn towards the study of appreciators'

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[87] Walton, K. (1990), pg.140.

imaginative activities in their participation in the game of make-believe rather than towards the study of mechanisms employed in the generation of fictional truths. Having said this, these two different paths may sometimes intertwine; the understanding of the mechanisms of generation may be employed to see appreciators' moves in their participation in games of make-believe in which works of art serve as props.

Participation in a game of make-believe is the explanatory key in Walton's account of different phenomena. For example, our emotional response to fiction can be understood as a participation in a game, one in which appreciators' *quasi-emotions* are their contributions to the game; their emotional reactions make themselves props in a game of make-believe. For example, playing cops and robbers Luc, the robber, hiding from Annabel, the cop, experiences a feeling which resembles the fear of being discovered. In a similar way, Claire, watching a horror movie with some friends, is scared by the moves of a bloodthirsty monster; she is not hiding herself in a safe place or running out from the house, however, she is experiencing the physical symptoms of actual fear.[88] Participation is also verbal. Appreciators participate verbally in the game of make-believe, commenting on what is going on in the game or talking about it in different ways. This happens to ordinary players of games of make-believe as well as to appreciators of works of representational arts. For example, Annabel is verbally participating in the game when she shouts "Stop thief!", when running after Luc. Shouting in that way is an exemplification in the game of a kind of pretence, she is pretending of herself

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[88] For Walton's view on *quasi-emotions* and psychological participation to game of make-believe see "Fearing Fictions" and chapters 5 and 7 in Walton (1990).

that she shouts those very words while trying to catch a thief. In a similar way, according to Walton, we can explain Luc's exclamation "Look! Wow! So many ships!" while looking at a painting portraying Portofino's harbour; Claire saying "Oh Gosh! Here he comes!" while watching the horror movie; or the reader's sad comment "Poor Anna!" while appreciating *Anna Karenina*. Appreciators, in the same way as children, participate verbally in games of make-believe in which works of art serve as props. They are themselves props in those very games, they make-believe that their verbal contributions count as actual exclamations or comments in relation to actual facts. According to Walton "understanding such remarks in this way locates the speaker within the fictional world (the world of his game) and has him contributing to it. This contrasts with the usual assumption that the speaker is making a genuine assertion about a fictional world (a work world) from a perspective outside of it, that he is saying something about what fictional truths it contains. The pretence construal has the appreciator pretending to describe the real world rather than actually describing a fictional one."[89]

3.4   Pretence Construal and Fictional Names

Although the above examples of verbal participation can easily be compared to children's participation in games of make-believe, many other examples of sentences containing fictional names do not immediately look like instances of appreciators' verbal participation in games of make-believe. For example, one may be recounting the plot of the novel while saying "Tom Sawyer attended

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[89] Walton, K. (1990), pg. 392.

his own funeral", or describing a certain character saying "Sherlock Holmes is a detective". Moreover, we may find in literary theory or criticism many sentences containing fictional names that look like genuine assertions. Without doubt there is a dual perspective towards works of representational art. Appreciators themselves both participate in their game and observe them. As Walton notes: "they attend to the propositions that are fictional, and also to the fact that they are fictional and the means by which their fictionality is generated"[90]. An even clearer distinction can be delineated between appreciation and criticism. It is sometimes difficult to see some remarks or statements for example in a lecture of literary criticism, as acts of participation in a game of make-believe. For example, reading a passage of Gerard Genette's *Narrative Discourse*, when he is discussing a Santeuil novel:

"Jean, after several years, again finds the hotel where Marie Kossichef, whom he once loved, lives, and compares the impressions he has today with those that he once thought he would be experiencing today."[91]

It is difficult to interpret it as a way of pretending to describe the real world rather than as actually describing a fictional one. However, participatory appreciation and criticism are intimately intertwined. It is part of the critical work to experience and participate in the game in which the work serves as a prop in order to be able to describe and observe how a given work prescribes a certain imaginative experience and then suggest what the work's aesthetic value is in a certain cultural context. According to Walton, there are different ways in which we can see the connection between pretending and the

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[90] Ib., pp. 49-50.
[91] Genette, G., *Narrative Discourse: An essay in Method* (1983), pp.37-38.

utterances of serious claims which apparently refer to fictional entities[92].

Consider some of Walton's examples: "a critic-appreciator pretending to claim (seriously) that there is a country inhabited by six-inch-tall people may be pointing out that it is fictional in *Gulliver's Travels* that this is so. [...] A teacher of literature remarks on Willy Loman's sad plight with an air of gravity and an expression of deep concern ("Poor Willy" he begins), in the course of discussing the allegorical or symbolic significance of his trouble."[93]

In Walton's view the critic-appreciator may well be engaged in a pretence, verbally participating in a game of make-believe, while making a serious claim about the novel. In a similar way the teacher of literature is pretending to describe a human tragedy, empathising with the circumstances and at the same time making serious observations about the play. Alternatively, a speaker's utterances which apparently refer to fictional entities may be made with the intention that the hearer make-believe that a certain proposition is expressed in regard to a certain person. For example, one may claim "Tom Sawyer attended his own funeral" with the intention that her hearer make-believe that there is a certain Tom Sawyer and that her utterance express a certain proposition, although she herself is not engaged in such a pretence. We can see here a parallel with the role of the author in a narrative. The author of the narrative intends her reader to make-believe that the story narrated is true.[94] A speaker may adopt the same communicative intentions but for a different purpose; she

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[92] The idea of the exploitation of make-believe for purposes of serious assertion seems to be Walton's development of a Gareth Evans' idea. See G. Evans, *Varieties of Reference*, pp. 363-364.

[93] K. Walton (1990), pp. 394-395.

[94] For a complete reading of how the author's intentions shape the communication process outlined in a narrative see G. Currie, "Fictive communication", in *The Nature of Fiction*, 1990.

is not aiming to entertain her hearer but she may want the hearer to engage in a pretence in order to see her serious remark about a work of art.

Thus far, in Walton's proposal there is no reason to commit to any fictional entities or to enter the metaphysical debate. However, the pretence construal needs to face the fact that there are genuine assertive utterances of sentences containing fictional names, whether or not speakers are employing their participation in a pretence for the purposes of making such assertions. Even for these cases, the notions of 'make-believe' and the 'participation in a game of make-believe' are key notions. "The key to understanding assertive uses of sentences appearing to make reference to fictional entities is to take as primary their use in pretence. What is asserted by means of them is to be understood in terms of their role in make-believe."[95]

3.4.1 Pretence, Thought and Reality

Walton's proposal for the assertive uses of sentences containing fictional names provides a unified treatment and offers the most complete range of answers between those views that claim the emptiness of fictional names. However, the comprehensiveness of this proposal is counterbalanced by its complexity. I will offer a reading of it, building a parallel with the previous views discussed in this study. Not only will I discuss similar examples discussed in the previous chapters but I will adopt an analogous systematisation of the puzzle of fictional names. I have assumed as an epistemological starting point that when we think we think of something and

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[95] Walton, K. (1990) pg. 396.

when we use a name we name something. I have then classified the problems raised by the uses of fictional names as pertaining to the connection between Language and Thought and Language and Reality. The former concerns which thoughts we are grasping in uttering sentences containing fictional names. The latter focuses on which facts, if any, are being addressed by speakers' utterances. From a linguistic point of view, Walton's answer is very straightforward: fictional names do not bear any reference and sentences containing fictional names do not express any propositions. Rather, he suggests reading speakers' utterances as acts of pretence, or adopting Walton's terminology, acts of participation in games of make-believe. Still, speakers do grasp some thoughts in their imaginative activities and their genuine assertive uses of sentences containing fictional names do assess some facts.

In parallel with the relation between Language and Thought and Language and Reality adopted in the previous chapters, I will examine the relations between Pretence and Thought and Pretence and Reality. The former relation within Walton's framework pertains not to the proposition expressed, given that there is not such a proposition, but rather to the thought process which speakers undertake when performing a certain act of pretence. Namely, which sort of game is implied and is introduced into the conversation by their verbal participation in a game of make-believe? In fact, speakers, far from communicating only through the literal meaning of their utterances, adopt a figurative, metaphorical language and imply that they are participating in a pretence. The relation between Pretence and Reality will therefore not pertain to the truth or falsehood of a proposition expressed, in fact there is no

proposition expressed, but to the fact that it is appropriate or not, acting as they do, within the game of the implied sort.

3.4.2   Pretence and Thought

Let us start by discussing the relation between Pretence and Thought. Let us say that Claire utters (1) and (2) talking about *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and Conan Doyle's stories in different circumstances:

1.   Tom Sawyer attended his own funeral.

2.   Sherlock Holmes is a detective.

Claire is verbally participating in a game of make-believe. Her utterances are understood to be such that they might naturally be uttered in pretence in the course of an authorised game of make-believe for *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* or Conan Doyle's stories. With her act of pretence, she is implying in the conversation that she is speaking as if the story-world were the real world. The specificity of Walton's view consists in the fact that in doing this she is performing a certain act of pretence and is making a genuine assertion implying the prefix "In *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer*". In this way, her utterance makes sense only if her interlocutor recognises her utterance as a form of participation in a game of make-believe and recognises that the pretence she is participating in is the one authorised for the game of make-believe in which *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer* or Conan Doyle's stories serve as a prop. Her utterance can be understood then as an extension of such a game within the conversation. For (1) and (2) to be part of an extended game

they neither require a reference to any fictional entities, nor do they express a proposition. According to Walton, they are acts of pretence of a certain kind.

Statements appearing to make reference to fictional entities are of several kinds. Many of them exemplify acts of pretence which are not for an authorised game, but rather for unofficial games. In these cases the game of make-believe in which the speaker is participating verbally is not identified with the one in which a certain work of art serves as a prop. A new kind of game needs to be established. Let us consider some more examples:

3.   Robison Crusoe was more resourceful than Gulliver.

4.   Sherlock Holmes is more famous than any other detective.

Utterances of (3) and (4) cannot be understood as acts of participation in authorised games of make-believe. In fact there is not a unique work of art to serve as a prop which represents both Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver in the same story. In the same way, there is not a work of art which represents all actual or fictional detectives together with Sherlock Holmes and which sets a comparison on their degree of fame. Given that the speaker cannot be participating in an authorised game of make-believe when uttering (3) and (4), given that in a conversation we would look for an alternative before deeming an utterance meaningless and given that we are familiar with precedent unofficial games, we will look for an interpretation that would involve an unofficial game in which these utterances are examples of participation. Again, the individuation of what sort of game the speaker is participating in is what I take to characterise the relation between Pretence and Thought. In uttering (3), the speaker implies a game in which both novels *Gulliver's Travels* and

Robinson Crusoe serve as a prop. She intends her interlocutor to recognise that she is participating verbally in that sort of game, comparing the degree of resourcefulness of Gulliver in *Gulliver's Travels* to the degree of resourcefulness of Robinson Crusoe in *Robinson Crusoe*. In uttering (4) the speaker implies a game in which Conan Doyle's stories are a prop together with all the other detective stories and the speaker's knowledge of any actual detective. She intends her interlocutor to recognise that she is participating in this sort of game, comparing Sherlock Holmes' fame with the fame of other detectives to her best knowledge.

Let us consider how Walton's proposal works with some of the examples submitted to other anti-realistic views discussed in the previous chapters. We saw that if fictional names are empty it can be problematic to explain the intuition that speakers uttering (5) and (6) are saying something similar in contrast to what they say uttering (7):

5.   Superman is in love.

6.   Clark Kent is in love.

7.   Romeo is in love.

Employing Walton's proposal, speakers, in uttering (5) and (6), are participating verbally in the same game of make-believe in which Superman stories serve as a prop. In contrast, speakers participate verbally in a game authorised for *Romeo and Juliet* in uttering (7). A similar interpretation can be given for (8):

8.   Superman is Clark Kent.

If "Superman" and "Clark Kent" are empty names, how do we account for the meaningfulness of (8)? In Walton's view, the utterance of (8) is a verbal participation in an authorised game for Superman stories and, in accordance to the mechanisms of generation operating in those stories, (8) makes perfect sense within the pretence.

A slightly more articulated account can be provided for (9):

    9.   Claire believes that Superman is Clark Kent.

As we saw, if fictional names are empty names it becomes problematic to account for Claire's belief. In fact, given that the embedded sentence does not express any proposition, neither does (9). Adopting Walton's account, we will exploit the pretence to account for the utterance of (9). However, (9) can be interpreted in two ways, which would imply different kinds of pretence:

    9a.   In the pretence, Claire believes that Superman is Clark Kent.

    9b.   Claire believes that, in the pretence Superman is Clark Kent.

Speakers uttering (9a) would be participating verbally in an unofficial game of make-believe in which Claire's "world of the game" serves as a prop - what Walton loosely calls the "world of the game" would be in this case the game comprising both Claire's participation and the work of art as props. Speakers intend their interlocutor to imagine Claire's statement uttered in pretence as a state of belief. Speakers uttering (9b) are participating verbally in an unofficial game according to which speaking of fictional truths is tantamount to speaking of actual facts. Speakers intend their interlocutor to imagine Claire's attitude towards a fictional truth to be equivalent to her attitude towards actual facts.

In this way Walton's proposal is able to avoid any commitment to fictional entities. However, if fictional names are empty names and if utterances appearing to make reference to fictional characters do not express any proposition, but are rather to be understood as acts of pretence, how do we explain that Claire's utterance "Tom Sawyer attended his own funeral" seems to be tantamount to Clara's utterance in French "Tom Sawyer a assisté à ses propres obsèques", but not to Ariella's utterance "Superman puede volar" in Spanish? Claire's, Clara's and Ariella's utterances do not express any proposition, so how do we account for the apparent equivalence between what is said by Claire and Clara and the differences to what is said by Ariella, given that their utterances do not express a proposition? Surely, saying that Claire and Clara pretend to assert the proposition that Tom Sawyer attended his own funeral is not a solution given that there is no such proposition. According to Walton, Claire's and Clara's utterances are about the same kind of pretence, one that, following Walton, may be dubbed kind K. Claire specifies the kind K by performing or displaying a single instance of it. The same can be said for Clara, who specifies the kind of her act of pretence by displaying it; however, if we do not know how to relate these two acts of pretence as acts of pretence of the same kind, we will not able to distinguish them as different from Ariella's one. Metaphorically, the same situation occurs when "one can specify a shade of color by pointing to a single instance, but only if it is understood that the kind indicated is a shade of color, one whose instances are exactly alike in color."[96]

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[96] Walton, K. (1990) pg. 402. Walton is relying here on Kripke's account of natural kind terms, according to which the reference to a natural kind is fixed via ostension to one of its samples.

According to Walton, neither is the meaning of "K" tied to any particular instance, nor do we need to abstract a crucial non-relational property from the sample which we can look for in other samples. For what concerns the relation between Claire's and Clara's acts of pretence, we can recognise that both fictionally attribute the property of having attended one's own funeral to someone; and fictionally there is a single person to whom both attribute this property. It happens that fictionally they use the same name, "Tom Sawyer", to refer to the person to whom they attribute the property. If fictionally Tom Sawyer had a nickname such as "Tommy" and if Claire would have used "Tommy" whilst Clara would have used "Tom", fictionally they would have referred to the same person and their act of pretence would have been of the same kind. Ultimately, the kind to which an act of pretence belongs finds its justification not in the content expressed by speaker's utterances, given that there is not such a content; but in the way the speaker's participation in a game of make-believe takes form, according to the mechanisms of generation operative in the work of art.

In conclusion, we can note that there is a very important move in Walton's account, from the notion of 'propositions' to the notion of 'acts of pretence of a certain kind'.

3.4.3 Pretence and Reality

Speakers' acts of pretence contribute to the thought process developed in the conversation. I have delineated this contribution in the above section,

characterising the relation between Pretence and Thought. In this section I will instead focus on the relation between Pretence and Reality.

Thus far, adopting Walton's view, I have assumed that statements which apparently make reference to fictional entities can be understood as acts of participation in a game of make-believe. However, speakers' assertive uses of those very statements raise the problem of what has been asserted participating in such acts of pretence. In other words, which facts in the actual world are speakers assessing by displaying their acts of pretence? Let us recall some of the examples discussed above:

1.   Tom Sawyer attended his own funeral.

It may be said that speakers, in uttering (1), are asserting that fictionally Tom Sawyer attended his own funeral. However, this first answer is easily refutable given that (1) does not express any proposition[97], therefore speakers cannot assert the fictionality of such a proposition.

Walton's proposal, in fact, follows a completely different line. In appreciating his proposal it is important to note that some statements uttered in verbal participation in a game of make-believe are appropriate or acceptable while others are not. For example, participating verbally in a game authorised for Conan Doyle's stories by saying that "Sherlock Holmes smokes the pipe" is justified in a way that saying "Sherlock Holmes wrote a diary recounting his own detective enterprise" is not. According to Walton this acceptability or unacceptability easily passes as truth or falsehood, hence the common intuitions that the former statement is true and the latter is false. However, in

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[97] At least the literal construction of (1) does not give form to a content, given that, in Walton's view, fictional names are empty.

Walton's view these intuitions are wrong. Statements such as (1) are acts of participation in a game of make-believe. Speakers in uttering (1) are participating verbally in an *authorised* game for *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* - they are making it fictional of themselves that they speak truths rather than falsehoods. In this way their act of pretence is appropriate. In explaining the acceptability or unacceptability of an utterance of (1) there is no need to assume that engaging in an act of pretence of this kind is genuinely asserting something true or false. Yet, according to Walton, the fact that acts of pretence are appropriate or inappropriate creates an opportunity for making assertions. By displaying a certain act of pretence, speakers claim that it is proper and acceptable to participate in a certain pretence in the way that they are doing. Consider Claire's utterance of (1) in a conversation. Loosely, Claire's utterance introduces into the conversation an act of pretence - she is suggesting or implying a certain game of make-believe, the one authorised for *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; she does so by displaying her participation in such a game. Moreover, when pretending to assert (1), Claire is making the genuine assertion according to which in a game of make-believe, in which *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer* serves as a prop, she speaks truly. The genuine assertion Claire is making is about the game she is participating in, she makes an assertion by displaying her participation in the game of make-believe and by implying that the game authorises the kind of participation she is engaged in.

 "In general, when a participant in a game of make-believe authorized by a given representation fictionally asserts something by uttering an ordinary

statement and in doing so makes a genuine assertion, what she genuinely asserts is true if and only if it is fictional in the game that she speaks truly."[98]

Walton offers a unified treatment of assertive uses of statements that imply both an authorised and unofficial game of make-believe. Let us recall an example employed in the previous section:

3.   Robison Crusoe was more resourceful than Gulliver.

The speaker in uttering (3) is asserting something true if and only if it is fictional in the unofficial game - in which both novels *Gulliver's Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe* serve as a prop - that she speaks truly. As we noticed, discussing the difference between participation and criticism, in uttering (3) the speaker may not be engaged in pretence. In this case, what she asserts is true if and only if it would be fictional in the unofficial game implied that she speaks truly were she playing one.

So far, I considered cases in which a speaker's assertions are about the game of make-believe she is participating in. However, there are assertive uses of statements that do not seem to be inherent to a game of make-believe. Consider the following examples:

10.   Frankenstein was created by Mary Shelley.

11.   Sherlock Holmes does not exist.

Utterances of (10) or (11) seem to be about fictional entities and not a game of make-believe, even if in the case of (11) the commitment to fictional entities is quite paradoxical. Walton's proposal, coherently with the analysis developed

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[98] Walton, K. (1990), pg. 399.

so far, points to a solution that avoids any ontological commitment to fictional entities and gives an account of utterances of (10) and (11) in terms of participation in a certain game of make-believe. Speakers, when uttering (10) or (11), contribute to the conversation indicating unofficial games of a certain sort. For example, in the utterance of (10), speakers imply games in which to author a novel means to bring into existence certain entities or, when uttering (11), games in which we can distinguish between existent and non-existent individuals. As we saw for other authorised and unofficial games, the implication that they are participating in a game of make-believe comes quite naturally; by displaying their involvement in the pretence, it does not require a special or explicit stipulation. Moreover, utterances of (10) or (11) perform an additional function in the communicative exchange, apart from asserting that to verbally participate as they do in the pretence means speaking the truth in the unofficial game implied. To fictionally predicate non-existence or the property of "being created by a certain author" in the same way as fictionally predicating of "being a fictional character," "being a mythical beast," "being feigned," "being counterfeit," "being a cultural artefact," "being a product of an overactive imagination," "being a trick of the light," "being a failed posit" and "being an empty concept,"[99] is both participating in a game of make-believe and claiming that the fictional attempt to refer, acted within the game, is unsuccessful.

Let us create a parallel between children's participation in a game of make-believe and speakers' participation in unofficial games of make-believe such as

[99] Walton, K. (2000) Existence as Metaphor? *Empty names, Fiction and the Puzzles of Non-Existence.* edited by Everett, A. & Hofweber, T., ed. Stanford: CSLI Press, pg. 83.

the ones they engage with when uttering (10) or (11) in order to obtain a better intuitive grasp of these speakers' utterances.

Suppose that Clara is playing a game of make-believe in which her bike is a horse and the garage is the stall. Once her game is ended and she is ready to go out with her mum, she might say "I am ready, mum. The horse is back in the stall!" Clara seems to be participating in a game of make-believe; however, in this context, she is employing her pretence to reassure her mum that the bike is back in the garage. Therefore, she is employing her pretence to claim something about the props of her game.

Let us consider if something analogous may happen in the utterances of (10) or (11). Speakers, as we saw in the previous sections, can themselves be props in their own imaginative activities and, for the analogy to hold, they should employ a pretence to claim something about their own acts of pretence. But this requirement does not seem to be different from what we met in cases with utterances such as "Tom Sawyer attended his own funeral". Generally speaking, as we have seen above, speakers' assertions consist of claiming that their speaking in a certain way is meant to speak truly within a game of a certain sort. However, in the case of utterances of (10) and (11) there is something more to say. According to Walton, when uttering (11), speakers not only claim that their verbal participation in a pretence in which we imagine that there are existent and non-existents objects means fictionally speaking the truth, but also convey that their fictional attempt to refer employing the term "Sherlock Holmes" is unsuccessful. In their pretence, they are acting as if they attempt to refer to someone employing the term "Sherlock Holmes" and they

predicate the non-existence of the potential referent. According to Walton, in doing so, they disavow their fictional attempt to refer. Similarly to Clara, they are employing a pretence to communicate something about some of the props in their game, namely themselves in acting as they do when fictionally attempting to refer, by employing, for example, the term "Sherlock Holmes". To reiterate, what they communicate is that the fictional attempt to refer is unsuccessful.

Walton suggests a schematic way of reading these types of utterances, to say "Sherlock Holmes does not exist" is to say:

11$_a$.   Sherlock Holmes: That didn't work.

where 'that' refers to the kind of attempted reference illustrated by the utterance of the name.

The same analysis can be provided for (10) and the predicate listed above, which in Walton's view are means speakers can employ to disavow their own acts of pretence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Walton's proposal is the most satisfactory among all the anti-realistic views discussed in this study. Adopting the notion of 'make-believe' and 'participation in a game of make-believe', Walton offers a coherent account of the whole range of examples submitted to the different theoretical stances. Furthermore, in contrast to the "gappy propositions" view, Walton

does not employ an ad hoc solution, something which "gappy propositions" are susceptible to being criticised.

Make-believe is founded on our activities as a species; human beings engage themselves in imaginative activities which occupy them from infancy. Imagination seems to cover a very important role in our growth, in acquiring awareness of the world and objects around us during our first years and then in providing us with an insight into psychological relations and value systems in our societies during our adulthood. It is not difficult to think how our propensity towards engaging in imaginative activities, as human beings, can have contributed to our evolutionary process as a species. Moreover, it is not difficult to see our propensity towards utilising the imagination reflected in the way in which we use the language. Statements in which there is an apparent reference to fictional entities are to be understood within speakers' acts of participation in pretence. Walton's proposal on the puzzles raised by sentences containing fictional names has been fully elaborated in his *Mimesis as Make-Believe. On the Foundation of Representational Arts*, in 1990. Since then, this part of his work has not been discussed in its entirety and it has been mainly avoided as too complicated or implausible from a linguistic point of view[100]. My contribution in this study is not only a clearer delineation of Walton's view, but also a further development of an understanding of how utterances of sentences containing fictional names can be read as acts of communication. I suggest here that, on the same level as other more "playful" uses of language

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[100] Mark Richard, in "Semantic Pretence", (2000) wonders why the module language should be so inefficient following Walton's account of speakers' assertive uses employing sentences containing fictional names.

such as metaphors and figurative language, acts of pretence in employing fictional names can also be understood within our communicative exchange in conversations. In this way I attempt to answer the objection of implausibility advanced against Walton's view.

Sentences containing fictional names do not express propositions. The equivalence between utterances of "Tom Sawyer attended his own funeral" and utterances of the same sentence in Italian ("Tom Sawyer ha assistito al suo stesso funerale") is not based on the content expressed by these sentences, because there is not such a content, but on the equivalence of the kind to which speakers' acts of pretence belong. Sentences containing fictional names, taken literally, do not express a proposition. However, taken as means by which speakers display their own acts of pretence, speakers, by employing such sentences, do express something. Yet, employing the notion of make-believe available, does not give us the opportunity to have a deeper insight on what that something is. Although a philosophical analysis of 'make-believe' does not seem essential, there may be more work to do on the psychological account of 'make-believe'.

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