

THE METAPHYSICS OF FICTIONAL OBJECTS

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A thesis
submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Victoria University of Wellington
2017

ABSTRACT

Realism about Fictional Objects is a view that is committed to the existence of fictional objects. In this thesis, I defend a view in the fictional realist tradition called the *Artefactual Theory of Objects*, and argue that this view provides the best explanation of fictional data. This is done in the following order. First, I evaluate and argue against alternative realist and anti-realist views that purport to explain fictional data better than the Artefactual Theory of Objects. Second, I show how semantic theories cannot aid in the success of alternative views or succeed by themselves. Third and last, I show how the Artefactual Theory of Objects is capable of overcoming the metaphysical problems raised against it.

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1. IN WHICH REALISM ABOUT FICTIONAL OBJECTS IS INTRODUCED

Winnie-the-Pooh, Sherlock Holmes, and Elizabeth Bennet are fictional characters. Quite sensibly, we may say they are three distinct fictional characters. We may also say that Pooh is a bear while neither Holmes nor Bennet is. We may even say that Bennet was created before Holmes, who was created before Pooh. These are some rather ordinary remarks about some rather common characters from some rather old books. And, having said all this, we could quite reasonably exclaim, “fictional characters aren’t real!”. But if there are no fictional characters, then how can we say anything of them? How can we demarcate Pooh, Holmes, and Bennet? How could we demonstrate that neither Holmes nor Bennet is a bear?

To answer to these questions, I defend a view which is committed to the existence of fictional objects, and that the best explanation for why our talk and thought about such objects succeeds is because they exist and they are created. While the view is unintuitive at first blush, I intend to show that it is tenable and can answer big and small protests raised against it. This particular chapter introduces the reader to the relevant material for getting off the ground and understanding the later chapters. It provides a summary of the fictional realist view, the finer points of the view I defend, the kinds of things we say about fictional characters, and a brief description of the coming chapters.

1.1 The Artefactual Theory of Fictional Objects

A growing number of philosophers have become concerned with expressions surrounding fictional objects. Among them, there are a number who claim that fictional characters exist. To these philosophers, our propositions, our cogitations, and our attitudes are all meaningful because there are fictional objects. This thesis is aptly known as *Realism about Fictional Objects*.

The thesis I defend has become a favoured view in the realist tradition. The thesis is called the *Artefactual Theory of Fictional Objects*. Commonly, it is known by the abbreviations of *Artefactualism* or *Creationism*. This view says that fictional objects are contingently existing abstract artefacts that are the product of intentional social activities.¹ This means that, first, they are not concrete, to wit they cannot be found

¹ Stuart Brock and Edwin Mares, *Realism and Anti-Realism* (United Kingdom: Acumen, 2007), 210.

within space, and, second, they do not exist necessarily, to wit it is possible that they may never have been.²

Broadly speaking, positions under the artefactualist scheme are characterised by the following theses:

Ontological Thesis: There are fictional characters. A fictional character is an individual (or role) picked out by a name or description that (i) is first introduced in a work of fiction and (ii) does not pick out any concrete individual in the actual world.³

Creation Thesis: Fictional objects are created, not discovered, by deliberate social activities.

Naïvely, the two theses inform us that if a fiction specifies a fictional object, then there really is that object, and it comes about by intentional activity. This naïve form is what I adhere to and defend for the duration of the coming chapters.

Artefactualism is accepted by many philosophers. Here are a few examples of different philosophers defending the Ontological Thesis and the Creation Thesis:

Fictional characters are actually existing abstract artifacts of (roughly) the same ontological category as novels and plots. Authors create characters when they create their fictions. Their existence supervenes on the pattern of activities of authors and readers, just as the existence of novels does.⁴ (Braun, 2005)

By pretending to refer to people and to recount events about them, the author creates fictional characters and events. ... As far as the *possibility* of the ontology is concerned, anything goes: the author can create any character or event he likes.⁵ (Searle, 1975)

[F]ictional characters should be considered entities that depend on the particular acts of their author or authors to bring them into existence. ... [They] may be created by more than one author, over a lengthy period of time, involving many participants in a story-telling tradition, and so on. ... [C]learly a fictional character can go on existing without its author or his or her creative acts, for it is

² Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-Realism*, 210.

³ Ibid., 199.

⁴ David Braun, "Empty Names, Fictional Names, Mythical Names," *Noûs* 39, no. 4 (2005): 609.

⁵ John Searle, "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse," *New Literary History* 6, no. 2 (1975): 331.

preserved in literary works that may long outlive their author.⁶ (Thomasson, 1999)

Various considerations ... weigh heavily in favour of an account of names from fiction as unambiguous names for artifactual entities. In its fundamental use that arises in connection with fiction... ‘Sherlock Holmes’ univocally names a man-made artifact, the handiwork of Conan Doyle.⁷ (Salmon, 1998)

Mrs. Gamp appears to have incompatible properties. For consider the properties: being a woman [and] having been created by Dickens. ... [O]n the theory I am proposing, Mrs. Gamp has only the second of these properties.⁸ (Van Inwagen, 1977)

I not only think that fictional individuals really exist, but that these are the sorts of individuals that are brought into existence by us. I do not think it plausible that we, as authors, ‘tap into’ a realm of necessarily existing abstracta and there discover Kirk, e.g.; rather, we actively and intentionally create individuals such as Kirk in writing about them.⁹ (Goodman, 2004)

If I were pressed to offer a specific kind of Artefactualism to compare to the view I defend, I think Amie Thomasson’s (1999) is comparatively the closest; but, importantly, *it is not her view that I expressly defend*.

1.2 Expressions about Fictional Things

The argument for Artefactualism is a straightforward one. Here is a version of it,

- (P₁) Expressions about fictional things *appear* to be meaningful and true.
- (P₂) The best explanation for this appearance is that fictional objects are created and exist.
- (C) Therefore, Artefactualism is true.

Let us call this version of the argument the *Main Argument for Artefactualism*. My thesis is a defence of both premises. A defence of (P₂) requires more work and will form the bulk of my later matter; whereas, the defence of (P₁) is easy to articulate like

⁶ Amie Thomasson, *Fiction and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1999), 7.

⁷ Nathan Salmon, “Nonexistence,” *Noûs* 32, no. 3 (1998): 304.

⁸ Peter van Inwagen, “Creatures of Fiction,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (1977): 308.

⁹ Jeffrey Goodman, “A Defense of Creationism in Fiction,” *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 67, no. 1 (2004): 132.

so. Fairly ordinary declarative sentences appear to make reference to or denote fictional objects. These sentences appear meaningful, and so they appear to express propositions; and those propositions appear to quantify over or refer to fictional objects. Here are some examples:

- (00) Winne-the-Pooh is a bear.
- (01) Sherlock Holmes is a detective.
- (02) Jean Louise Finch is nicknamed 'Scout'.
- (03) A wizard wears glasses.
- (04) The second eldest of five sisters eventually marries.
- (05) Dr Henry Jekyll is Mr Edward Hyde.
- (06) Some donkey was happy to receive a single birthday present.
- (07) There is a famous detective who lives at 221B Baker Street, London.
- (08) A young orphan asked for 'some more'.
- (09) There are wizards that are pure-blood and muggle-born.

And here are some more:

- (0A) Winnie-the-Pooh is not identical to Paddington Bear.
- (0B) Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character.
- (0C) Jean Louise Finch does not exist.
- (0D) There are more dragons in twentieth century novels than in eighteenth century novels.
- (0E) The character of Dante in *The Divine Comedy* was modelled after his author.
- (0F) Odysseus was portrayed as cunning and virtuous for an Ancient Greek audience.

There is an important difference between each set of examples: the first set appears to contain sentences about what is in stories whereas the second set appears to contain sentences about things that belong to stories. Sentences of the first kind are called *fictional* (or *internal*) *statements* and sentences of the second kind—the most significant kind for motivating realism—are called *critical* (or *external*) *statements*. As they are formally defined,

Fictional Statements: Statements made about the content of a particular work of literary fiction.¹⁰

¹⁰ Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-Realism*, 200.

Critical Statements: Statements that may be made in the context of literary criticism, but not claims *about* the content of a literary fiction, that are true *in virtue* of the content of a work of literary fiction in the sense that, were those fictions not to exist, the relevant statements would not be true.¹¹

It would be very strange to suppose that an abstract object named ‘Holmes’ could have some relation to detective-hood because, obviously, a non-spatial thing cannot be a detective. The trick, here, is that fictional statements such as (01) and (07) are true or false *according to the fiction*; not that Holmes really is a detective or that he really does live in London. This phrase ‘according to the fiction’ takes the fictional statement within its scope so that (01) becomes ‘according to the fiction, Holmes is a detective’ and (07) becomes ‘according to the fiction, Holmes lives in London’. Hence whether a fictional statement succeeds depends on what the fiction says, for they are *about* the fiction. As it happens, the Sherlock Holmes stories that Doyle authored do say that Holmes is a detective and that he lives in London, so (01) and (07) are both true.

Critical statements such as (0B) and (0E) are different: there are no true truncations of the same kind. (It is not true in the Holmes stories, for example, that Holmes is fictional). Presumably, then, such sentences are to be understood *literally and should be taken at face value*. This is the primary reason for accepting realism about fictional objects. Nowhere in the Doyle stories is it reported that Holmes is fictional. Yet Holmes clearly is fictional in the context of our assessment of Doyle’s stories. When an expression such as (0B) is presented, it seems to present the compound proposition that says, ‘there is exactly one *x* such that *x* is called Holmes and *x* is fictional’. But, for this to be true, there would need to be a Holmes-object; likewise, for (0E) to be true, there needs to be a fictional Dante that must have been based on Dante Alighieri. Without the fictional Dante, the proposition could not succeed unless he is so and he is portrayed as being the author himself. Thus critical statements must have something substantive to say about the world, and the realist says it all works out because there are fictional objects.

1.3 About What Comes Next

The defence of (P₂), however, is more complicated. It requires a detailed comparison of alternative theories that attempt to explain fictional data. In the second chapter, I

¹¹ Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-Realism*, 200.

consider some alternative theories to Artefactualism. These positions include popular realist and anti-realist theses that purport to successfully explain the data outlined in the previous section. I then demonstrate each theory's weaknesses to illustrate why I have espoused Artefactualism. I finish the chapter by looking at different varieties of fictionalism: a collection of different but importantly related anti-realist theories that attempt to explain the data without positing an ontology of fictional objects. The main objection to this cluster of theories is the semantic objection. According to all forms of fictionalism, there is a simple proposition related to the critical statement under consideration that is neither believed nor asserted; instead, it is either embedded in a wider context or it is merely quasi-asserted as part of a game of make-believe. According to the objection, which assumes a direct reference semantic theory, the simple proposition in play is a singular proposition comprised of an ordered pair of constituents, the first of which is a fictional object. As such, fictionalism is a form of realism about fictional objects.

In the third chapter, I look at alternative semantic theories that might help fictionalists dodge the objection: the *Gappy Proposition View* and *Descriptivism*. I then consider some problems for each alternative.

In the fourth chapter, I consider the metaphysical puzzles that Brock raises to Artefactualism. Brock brings forth several contentions that attempt to demonstrate that fictional objects are causally suspect. In particular, he emphasises that deliberate social creation is both unsatisfactory and not without problems of itself. He then argues further that even if these concerns were solved, there is an egregious imprecision of when an object is made, and that this cannot be solved due to the abstract nature of the objects. I consider a reply to Brock before arguing for a detailed theory of my own that I believe solves all of Brock's counterexamples.

In the fifth and last chapter, I consider Anthony Everett's ardent metaphysical rebukes of realism apropos of Artefactualism. Everett maintains that fictional realism suffers from crippling metaphysical difficulties in accounting for our intuitions about the identity of fictional objects. He sets forth a handful of fictions in which it is not clear what identities obtain, and these are intended to show outstanding metaphysical problems of indeterminacy, incoherence, and ontological status. This attack takes place over two substantive works authored by Everett, which have both been used. In an effort to reply to these problems, I consider a discussion between that of Everett and Benjamin Schnieder and Tatjana von Solodkoff. I then build from this discussion my own replies to Everett by offering a handful of solutions to the metaphysical qualms proposed.

2. IN WHICH OTHER VIEWS ARE PRESENTED AND REFUTED

The second premise of the main argument in support of Artefactualism is the following:

- (P₂) The best explanation for the fact that certain claims appear meaningful and true is that fictional objects are created and exist.

In order to defend this claim, one needs to compare Artefactualism with other alternative realist and anti-realist theories that purport to explain the same data.

2.1 Why Not Another Realism?

Let us begin by considering how competing forms of realism explain the data, and if they do it any better than Artefactualism. Unsurprisingly, there are as many fictional realisms as there are philosophers participating in the discussion. But we can demarcate the fictional realisms into three rough categories: *Concrete Realism about Fictional Objects*, *Meinongianism*, and the already mentioned Artefactualism. I shall now briefly describe concrete realism and Meinongianism, then explain their peculiarities to show why I reject them in favour of Artefactualism.

2.1.1 Concrete Realism

Concrete Realism about Fictional Objects is the view that fictional objects have a concrete existence. But if they have a concrete existence, it might be thought that it is possible for *us* to observe (merely) fictional characters. Unfortunately, we cannot do that. This fact has motivated concrete realists to combine the view with *Possibilism*, which holds that fictional objects are nonactual objects located in possible worlds.¹ Conjointly, this means that a fictional object such as Sherlock Holmes concretely exists in at least one possible world as they are described in the fiction, and this is so even if a story does not completely describe a world, in which case it describes a collection of worlds. In this way, fictional things are thought to be like pink elephants or talking horses, and the ontological status of them as well as the semantics depend on the nature of other possible worlds and objects. Hence if the concrete realist held

¹ Mark Sainsbury, *Fiction and Fictionalism* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2010), 74.

that possible worlds were concrete, then the content of those worlds, if there is any, would be concrete. But there are some problems for the thesis.

First, concrete realism seems to trip up on fictional statements that have information lacking in a fiction. To borrow Sainsbury's (2010) argument, suppose we want to know how tall Sherlock Holmes is.² For whatever reason, we wonder if he is 188 centimetres tall or above, or if he is 188 centimetres tall or below. According to the fiction, it is not the case that he is 188 centimetres tall or above, but it is neither the case that he is 188 centimetres tall or below.³ Peculiarly, this seems to entail Holmes has no height at all, for he has no property of being, being above, or being below 188 centimetres tall.⁴ But if something concrete exists, then it must necessarily have some height; and Holmes necessarily is a concrete thing owing to the nature of a concrete existence.⁵ This seems to show there is no possible Holmes-object at worlds where there should be.

Plausibly, a concrete realist could appeal to the set of worlds at which Holmes has variations of all heights, and so dodge the problem. But this only creates a second problem: concrete realism seems to suggest commitment to incomplete fictional objects.⁶ If there are worlds at which Holmes has the property of being 188 centimetres or above and worlds at which he is 188 centimetres or below, Holmes should still be Holmes in all those worlds and complete.⁷ But if Holmes has the property of being both 188 centimetres tall and above and below, but not in the same world at any world, then at any world in which there is a Holmes-object, he is incomplete.⁸ But every object in every possible world is complete, so Holmes is not a complete possible object.⁹

The one view that is an exception to both criticisms is David Lewis' concrete modal realism that accommodates fictional objects. Lewis (1978/1983) supposes that fictional objects are concrete possible objects; however, their ontological status and the fictional statements about them rely heavily on his own views of modal realism. So it happens that identity, truth, and ontological status become heavily intertwined on Lewis' view. I cannot fully explicate his position here, but I shall describe how the objections fail if levelled at him.

² Mark Sainsbury, *Fiction and Fictionalism*, 84.

³ Ibid., 84.

⁴ Ibid., 84.

⁵ Ibid., 84.

⁶ Ibid., 85.

⁷ Ibid., 85.

⁸ Ibid., 85.

⁹ Ibid., 85.

Lewis avoids the first objection faced by concrete possibilists by understanding fictional statements as *counterfactual statements*, which are the sort that look like ‘if it were that P, then it would be that Q’.¹⁰ He then limits fictional statements to ranging only over worlds where the fictions are told as fact; thus, ‘according to fiction f , p ’ becomes a claim about the set of worlds at which f is told as fact, and p is true at them.¹¹ From this, he develops the truth conditions for fictional statements:

Analysis 1: A sentence of the form “in the fiction f , ϕ ” is non-vacuously true *iff* some world where f is told as known fact and ϕ is true differs less from our actual world, on balance, than does any world where f is told as known fact and ϕ is not true. It is vacuously true *iff* there are no possible worlds where f is told as known fact.¹²

To put it another way, when fictional statements are asserted, the proposition expressed by the statement is implicitly scoped over the set of worlds at which the Holmes stories are *not told as fiction* but *as known fact*.¹³ Refining this further, Lewis applies limitations to evaluating fictional statements by, first, only countenancing those worlds that are as close to the actual world as possible, and, second, by specifying that we should avoid giving *vacuously true* fictional statements such as ‘Holmes is 188 centimetres tall or above or below’, for it could be true in some worlds while false in others, to wit it is merely true because it could be true.¹⁴ To even further refine his view, what does and does not count in these limits, says Lewis, “consists of the beliefs that generally prevailed in the community where the fiction originated: the beliefs of the author and his intended audience”.¹⁵ Thus Lewis avoids the first objection to concrete realism.

Lewis can also avoid the second objection despite not needing to worry about it. Lewis espouses *Counterpart Theory*, which says modal statements such as ‘it is possible that x is F’ should be understood as saying something about a *counterpart* of x . A counterpart of x is something relevantly similar to x . If there is a world at which a counterpart of x is F, then, and only then, it is possible that x is F. Using the machinery from the first objection, this means that fictional statements with ‘Holmes’ in them say something about the different but very similar possible Holmes counterparts, and truth conditions for such statements will abide by Analysis 1. So the Holmes counterparts

¹⁰ David Lewis, *Philosophical Papers: Volume I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 263.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 267.

¹² *Ibid.*, 270.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 269.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 270.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 272.

are always complete and the objection fails because Holmes is not completely identical to his counterparts in other worlds.

But does Lewis' account of concrete modal realism handle fictional data better than other fictional realisms? I think it is a matter of taste, for there is a lot of metaphysical luggage that comes with the position. Embracing it would mean committing to infinitely many concrete possible worlds in which there are all manner of different kinds of things. As Lewis himself notes, such a theory is likely to be met with incredulous stares.

2.1.2 Meinongianism

Meinongian accounts of fictional objects are more complicated than most owing to their technical and often unorthodox philosophical machinery. Ancillary to the view is *Platonism*, which says that there are eternal abstract objects independent of time, space, and mental episodes. (This is not always strictly adhered to, but there is at least some variant of it wielded to Meinongianism). The Meinongian, broadly speaking, embraces this Platonistic attitude to claim that there are non-existent objects, and fictional objects considered are among them. It is difficult to state precisely in what way these non-existent things have being because Meinongians disagree among themselves about the details of the theory; although, they do agree that there are fictional objects, notwithstanding their nonexistence and that they always were in a sense.

A good example of Meinongianism comes from Terrence Parsons (1980). Motivated by fictional objects, he sets forth an account of them that suggests they are non-existent objects that have the properties they are ascribed, but they are not necessarily logically complete or closed. According to Parsons, "all possible combinations of completeness, possibility, and logical closure are manifested; that is, there are objects that are complete and closed, and possible; objects that are complete, closed, and impossible; etc."¹⁶ So circle-squares, golden mountains, and—most importantly—fictional objects are on the table.

Being that there are so many objects, the task of distinguishing existent and non-existent objects becomes important. Parsons endorses a division between *nuclear properties* and *extranuclear properties* to help with this. Roughly speaking, nuclear properties are properties that constitute the object's nature while extranuclear properties are outside of the nature of an object.¹⁷ To decide what counts as what, Parsons gives the following.

¹⁶ Terrence Parsons, *Nonexistent Objects* (United States of America: Yale University, 1980), 22.

¹⁷ Mark Sainsbury, *Fiction and Fictionalism*, 56.

[If] everyone agrees that the predicate stands for an ordinary property of individuals, then it is a nuclear predicate and it stands for a nuclear property. ...[If] everyone agrees that it doesn't stand for an ordinary property of individuals (for whatever reason), or if there is a history of controversy about whether it stands for a property of individuals, then it is an extranuclear predicate, and it does not stand for a nuclear property.¹⁸

To be more specific, expressions such as 'is blue' or 'was kicked by Socrates' count as nuclear properties because they are ordinary properties ordinary objects have. But expressions such as 'exists', 'is possible', and 'is fictional' count as extranuclear properties because they are more controversial and are often considered 'higher-level' expressions.¹⁹ Putting it all together, this entails under Parsons' account that fictional objects such as Holmes or Elizabeth Bennet have those properties they are ascribed in the stories as nuclear properties, but they have the extranuclear properties of 'being non-existent' and 'being fictional' as a consequence of the kind of expressions they are. Hence Parsons' view says there are fictional objects that are detectives or daughters, but they do not exist. Although I have no specific objection to Parsons' account, I will sketch a general problem with all forms of Meinongianism.

Meinongianism appears quite mistaken about fiction and storytelling. The Meinongian, using the Platonist's thesis, wants to tell us that Holmes and his ilk do not exist but always are. But if a fictional object always is, then the author does not seem to invent or make up anything. It seems instead that the author merely *discovers* the object by way of the particular story being told. This is rather striking in two respects: first, Holmes was before the Doyle stories, which means that Doyle did not tell a story of fiction inasmuch as he *revealed* a cast of objects; second, it does not appear that Doyle is the author of anything: he merely stumbled on non-existent and dormant objects. (This further begs the question of whether these objects already had *de re* properties of being discovered by the authors at such-and-such time). As storytelling is primarily an activity thought of as inventing fantastic things and events, that the fictional objects are eternal does not compliment the activity.

2.2 Why Not an Anti-Realism?

The other thesis of choice is anti-realism. There are three popular versions belonging to this thesis: *non-cognitivism*, *non-factualism*, and *Prefix Fictionalism about*

¹⁸ Terence Parsons, *Nonexistent Objects*, 24.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

Fictional Objects. I shall do the same as I did in the last section by sketching the views, then displaying some oddities of the stratagems.

2.2.1 Non-Cognitivism

The first anti-realism stratagem is non-cognitivism. This thesis is typically asserted in the form of a *Pretence Theory*, which tells us that both fictional and critical statements are not really reports about anything in the world but merely *pretend* reports.²⁰ This means that the speaker does not believe what he or she is saying (thus it is non-cognitivist) but is simply using the fictions, and within which the objects, as *props* for an instrumentalist-like game of pretend.²¹ When a report about Holmes being a detective is made, it is not assertion about anything the speaker believes but an invitation to make-believe the fictional circumstances in which a thing called ‘Holmes’ is a detective; likewise, when a report about Holmes being a fictional character is made, we should use Holmes and the Doyle stories as props in a game where we are pretending it is appropriate that ‘Holmes is a fictional character’ is true.²² Hence whatever is said in the game of pretend remains in the game of pretend, and this does not commit us ontologically to fictional objects or display the beliefs of the participants.

Specific accounts of non-cognitivism toward fiction encourage a variety of cognitive and hermeneutic strategies. Perhaps the most well-known account of it comes from Kendall Walton (1990), who sets forth his own version of Pretence Theory. In it, Walton proffers *the mechanics of generation*, a series of principles used to govern talk and thought about fiction from within a pretence (a similar and perhaps more refined version was later used by Anthony Everett (2003, 2013)). These mechanics offer truth conditions, implicatures, and laws with which to properly create and understand how expressions and mental episodes correlated inside the pretence; for instance, he formalises critical statements in this way: “for every critical statement *C* we pretend to assert using a fiction (or set of fictions) *F* as a prop, we pragmatically convey the following information: in any game of a certain salient sort, to pretend to assert *C* is fictionally to speak truly”.²³ In short, provided the participants in the make-believe game share a mutually agreed imaginary-belief, the truth of some statement *C* succeeds or fails depending on either directly or indirectly generated truths and

²⁰ Stuart Brock and Edwin Mares, *Realism and Anti-Realism* (United Kingdom: Acumen, 2007), 216.

²¹ Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-Realism*, 218.

²² *Ibid.*, 216–9.

²³ *Ibid.*, 219.

circumstances of the fictional game.²⁴ Most, if not all, comes about by simple tokens of propositions that we are not intending to get at the world.

2.2.2 Non-Factualism

Non-factualism is also often offered in a Pretence Theory flavour. Ralph Clark (1980), for example, puts forward a non-factualist view of fictional discourse that says fictional sentences or phrases are best understood as expressing implicit imperatives.²⁵ These implicit imperatives are instructions to the audience to pretend what the world would be like if the story were the case (thus, it is a Pretence Theory), and so fictional sentences are not truth-apt because imperatives are not (hence, it is non-factualist).

Clark, however, does think it is possible to explain what we are doing when we make critical statements; for example, when we say

The character of Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* is a stereotype.²⁶

we can describe or explain the speech act as

In *A Christmas Carol*, one is instructed to think, in terms of one or more stereotypical properties, what the world would be like if it contained a person named Scrooge.²⁷

The problem with such a view is that non-factualists do not think critical statements are representational, that is they claim they do not express propositions. But, intuitively, claims such as the example above are representational. They are meaningful and they do express propositions; that is why they can be embedded in larger contexts as illustrated by the example.

2.2.3 Prefix Fictionalism

²⁴ Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of Representational Art* (United Kingdom: Harvard University Press, 1990), 151.

²⁵ Ralph Clark, "Fictional Entities: Talking about Them and Having Feelings about Them," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 38, no. 4 (1980): 342.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 345.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 345.

Prefix Fictionalism, a *factualist* position put forward by Stuart Brock (2002), insists that fictional and critical statements should be received as genuine utterances, but they are not to be read at face value.²⁸ Such statements are instead said to be elliptical for longer statements that have two important prefixes. These prefixes are ‘*according to such-and-such literary fiction*’ for fictional statements and ‘*according to the realist’s theory of fictional objects*’ for critical statements.²⁹ Each prefix is said to be what we really mean when we speak of fictional things. The former is something we have already come across, but the latter is something new. Instead of ‘Holmes is a fictional character’, the fictionalist informs us that it is rather to be read as ‘according to the realist’s theory of fictional objects, Holmes is a fictional character’.³⁰

The exceptions to this prefix treatment are a form of critical statements known as *existential statements*.³¹ Two examples of this are

(24) There is no Holmes.

(25) Pooh does not exist.

These exceptions are made because the fictionalist wants to preserve the demotic attitude we typically have of fictional objects without having to say much more of it. This makes sense, for Prefix Fictionalism is inspired by other forms of *fictionalism*, which all advocate that maintaining a certain theory *T* as a fiction is justified insofar as it has some utility, and hence it allows us to treat it as true without having to commit to anything it says.³²

2.2.4 Pretence Theory

Pretence Theory is a popular factualist view that says we should understand fictional and critical statements by way of a *propositional attitude*. An attitude of this kind is a *sentiment* we have of some particular fact of the matter; for example, statements such as ‘I am happy that: the sky is blue’ confer an attitude of happiness about the fact that the sky is blue. It does not *argue for* the claim that ‘the sky is blue’; it is a reflection and stating of their attitude towards the expression. For pretence theorists, this propositional attitude is generally cashed out in terms of a game of make-believe or

²⁸ Brock and Mares, *Realism and Anti-Realism*, 214.

²⁹ Ibid., 214.

³⁰ Ibid., 214.

³¹ Stuart Brock, “Fictionalism about Fictional Characters.” *Noûs* 36, no. 1 (2002): 9.

³² Ibid., 9.

playing pretend. It is factualist for this reason: our expressions confer *our attitude toward an expression* regardless if the expression has any semantic content or obtains.

Accordingly, fictional statements such as ‘Holmes is a detective’ are to be understood by our attitude toward those expression as ‘I am pretending that: Holmes is a detective’, where the individual is merely remarking on some attitude they have. Pretence theorists also take a relatively similar approach to critical statements, and they insist that our pretend attitude extends to those expressions. ‘Holmes is fictional’, for example, becomes something like ‘I am pretending that: the world is such that there is fact to the matter whereby Holmes is a thing and fictional’. Hence commitment to fictional objects extends only insofar as our attitude towards it.

2.2.5 The General Problem for Fictionalist Theories

There is a comprehensive problem for fictionalist theories: they cannot seem to account for the semantic content of critical statements. If a speaker declares ‘Holmes is a fictional character’, then that sentence seems to have all the information needed to pick out a genuine proposition, as it appears to report directly about a thing called Holmes as having the property of being fictional. Fictionalists must accept this because they say, as opposed to the non-factualist, that critical claims express propositions. Where they diverge from realists is in their view about whether these propositions (taken at face value) are believed and genuinely asserted. But if we accept this much, then it is possible to construct an argument that gives a *prima facie* reason for thinking that fictionalists are realists about fictional objects, and therefore that the view is compatible with Artefactualism and not a genuine alternative to it. The argument runs as follows

- (P₁) Fictionalists, unlike non-factualists, believe that critical statements are representational; that is, that they express atomic propositions (although these atomic propositions are *not* themselves believed).
- (P₂) *Direct Reference Thesis*: the atomic proposition a critical statement expresses is a singular proposition containing a fictional object as a constituent, e.g. the object the fictional name refers to.
- (P₃) Anyone who believes something that entails that there are fictional objects is a realist about fictional objects
- (C) Therefore, fictionalists are realists about fictional objects.

Fictionalists are unlikely to want to accept the conclusion of this argument. The only premise of the argument can be challenged is (P₂). In the next chapter, I will consider

what I take to be the only two alternatives to standard direct reference theory that might enable the fictionalist to avoid trouble: *Descriptivism* and the *Gappy Proposition View*. I will show why they both have problems.

3. IN WHICH THE SEMANTICS OF CRITICAL AND EXISTENTIAL STATEMENTS ARE SCRUTINISED

In the previous chapter, I considered alternative metaphysical theories about the nature of fictional objects. I concluded with a consideration of, what I believe to be, the main competitor to Artefactualism, fictionalism. Fictionalism, I suggested, has a serious problem, namely that it is committed to realism. This is a consequence that the fictionalist will not want to embrace. Moreover, if it is true, fictionalism is compatible with realism, and so cannot be viewed as a genuine competitor to Artefactualism. This suggestion was backed up by an argument that appealed to the following premise:

Direct Reference Thesis: The basic proposition a critical statement expresses is a singular proposition containing a fictional object as a constituent, i.e. the object to which the fictional name refers.

In this chapter, I consider two alternative semantic theories to Direct Reference Theory that may be appealed to by the fictionalist to dodge the objection. The first theory is *descriptivism*. I show why this semantic theory cannot explain critical statements without supposing fictional objects. Following this, I explore an addition to direct reference put forward by David Braun (1993, 2005) known as the *Gappy Proposition View*. I then argue that the Gappy Proposition View is inadequate for capturing the meaning of expressions featuring fictional names using several replies including my own. I intend to dedicate most of my attention to Braun's addition because it is a far more contemporary view with the asset of being fairly well-known.

3.1 Descriptivism

A description is a noun phrase introduced by a determiner. These come in two forms: *definite descriptions* and *indefinite descriptions*. Like the proper name, definite descriptions clearly denote a specific thing such as 'the Queen of England', 'the number before six', 'the author of Winnie-the-Pooh', or 'this teacup'. Indefinite descriptions are similar, but not quite the same. They pick out a specific thing; however, they do not directly *contribute* it as a referent. Some examples are 'a cat', 'an oval-looking thing', or 'someone'. The analysis of singular terms we look to now utilises these descriptions.

Descriptivism is an analysis of singular terms notably put forward by Bertrand Russell. Typically, this theory is divided into *The Theory of Descriptions*, which concerns only definite descriptions, and *The Description Theory of Names*, which concerns proper names; and each of them may be held independently of the other. When taken together, however, they become a powerful semantic theory that doubles as a theory of reference for both descriptions and proper names. But, oddly enough, it also works as an anti-realist view, for it allows direct semantic concerns about fictional objects to be eluded via the logical analysis of our expressions. It therefore makes it very possible to undermine the realist's abductive arguments.

Russell strived to demonstrate that proper names and definite descriptions express the same semantic content in propositions.¹ When understood properly, he asserted that these terms and phrases denote longer logical expressions that display the real meaning of what we claim.² When we say something like 'the teacup is red', what Russell thought we are really expressing is 'there is an x such that x is a teacup and x is red and, for all y , if y is a teacup and y is red, then x is identical to y '. And when we say something like 'Smith is a human', what we are really expressing is 'there is exactly one x such that x is a human called Smith'. This analysis may seem clunky and confusing at first, but what it generally expresses is very straightforward: 'at least one thing is such-and-such', 'at most one thing is such-and-such', and 'whatever is such-and-such is that thing'.

Now we go back to the sentences in the previous chapters. A straightforward sentence such as 'Holmes is detective' turns out to mean 'the x who did such-and-such is a detective'. Taken literally, this will turn out false, for there is no person in the world who fits the description of having done such-and-such and is a detective. Moreover, if we were interested in what a fiction reports, 'according to the fiction' would be added in front of the sentence as we saw in the last chapter. This will, of course, turn out to be true because they are true of what a fiction tells us.

Another impressive feature of descriptivism is shown particularly through negative existential statements. A negative existential such as 'Holmes does not exist' expresses the proposition 'there is not even one x that is a fictional detective called Holmes'. Before descriptivism came along, this meant a rather paradoxical commitment to something which is not. Thankfully, descriptivism allows for the negated existential to be inverted to fashion a positive universal statement that is logically equivalent: 'every x is such that if x is anything at all, then it is not a fictional detective called Holmes'. The upshot of this is that problems with all kinds of statements containing

¹ William Lycan, *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 31.

² Ibid., 34.

proper names and existential remarks vanish. The proposition expressed by ‘Holmes does not exist’ apparently obtains because what this really means is the common sense idea that there is not even one thing in the world that is a fictional detective. As an anti-realist, and certainly Russell, would say, not even one would.

There are, however, major troubles for descriptivism. One major trouble may be plainly seen when certain critical statements are given:

(20) Holmes is nonfictional.

(21) Holmes is fictional.

Understood properly, these critical statements become something like

(22) The detective about which Doyle wrote is nonfictional.

(23) The detective about which Doyle wrote is fictional.

The propositions expressed by (20) and (22) fit our intuitions quite well: it is false that the detective about which Doyle wrote is nonfictional. But (21) and (23) pose a dilemma: it is false that the detective about which Doyle wrote is fictional. As these are critical statements, ‘according to the fiction’ cannot be pressed into service to solve (21) and (23). And these cannot be treated as negative existential statements because they are directly addressing Holmes. So descriptivism tells us that all the propositions expressed are going to be false, for not even one proposition correctly describes and corresponds to an individual, fictional or not.

This is not at all what is wanted. The idea that both realist and anti-realist generally seem to acquiesce is that the property of being-fictional must somehow be cashed out whether anything exists or not. Descriptivism accommodates our intuitions that Holmes is not a nonfictional thing, but it rather bizarrely says that Holmes is not fictional, or by parity anything else.

Another problem for descriptivism is the *Modal Argument* offered by Kripke. The Modal Argument is this. Suppose ‘Walter Scott’ has the same meaning as ‘the author of Waverly’. We can say Scott is identical to Scott, and this is necessarily true.

Furthermore, we can substitute expressions that have the same in meaning for one another in any context. Therefore we can also say that Scott is identical to the author of Waverly, and this is necessarily true. So ‘the author of Waverly is identical to the author of Waverly’ seems good, too. But could Scott have not written Waverly? Surely, someone else could have written Waverly. It seems possible. But, according to descriptivism, this implies that ‘it is possible that: exactly one person authored Waverly, and whoever authored Waverly did not author Waverly’.

A name is equivalent to a definite description in meaning. To return to the previous paragraph, if Scott could have been a gardener rather than the author of *Waverly*, then the descriptive content associated with him is *contingent*. If we want to maintain that we can talk about Scott's being in different worlds with different properties, then descriptivism neither follows our intuitions nor seems to succeed in treating those modal issues. This is a strong disincentive to accept descriptivism.

3.2 The Gappy Proposition View

Braun (1993, 2005) attempts to resolve the problems empty names pose for direct reference by offering the Gappy Proposition View. This view allows that sentences containing empty names express *gappy* or *unfilled propositions*, or at the very least semantic objects that strongly resemble propositions.³ To explain this view, however, something more must now be said about structured propositions.

If we recall what was mentioned in the last chapter, the semantic content of a sentence is what expresses and forms its corresponding proposition. A meaningful sentence contains constituents and properties and is ordered in a particular way, which then carries into the proposition. The sentence 'Smith is taller than Jones', for instance, is composed of Smith, Jones, and the relation of being-taller-than.⁴ But a mere unordered aggregate of these three items is not enough to preserve the arrangement; thus, the proposition expressed by the sentence must capture that Smith is taller than Jones, and not the other way around.⁵

A theory of structured propositions accounts for this. It says that there is something more to a proposition than just its items, namely a structure.⁶ This means that a proposition is composed of at least two different distinct parts: first, a part that offers a scheme or structure, and, second, a part that has the items capable of being imported into that structure.⁷ Crucially, it is this schematic part of the proposition that contains spaces which may then be assigned those constituent and relational items.⁸ In effect, this leads to a proposition representing a sentence in two distinct ways. First, a proposition preserves the syntactical connotation of a sentence by offering a subject, or argument, position that receives a constituent and by offering a predicate, or

³ David Braun, "Empty Names," *Noûs* 27, no. 4 (1998): 460–1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 461.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 461.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 461.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 461.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 461.

property, position that receives the relations.⁹ Second, a proposition preserves the semantic content of the applicable words in the sentence, and it does this by merely containing the value of those tokens.¹⁰ Thus the proposition expressed by ‘Smith is taller than Jones’ is complex object of sorts that contains a structured entity that may be filled with semantic values that reflect the sentence’s syntactic and semantic order.

From this, it follows that a sentence has two semantical functions for structured propositions: first, a sentence produces a structure with the capacity to receive semantic values; second, the words in the sentence produce the semantic values capable of being imported into the structure.¹¹ So for the sentence ‘Smith is taller than Jones’, it can be said to take the following arrangement using the structured view of propositions in conjunction with singular propositions:

<<Smith, Jones>, being-taller-than>

Where the structure’s form is

< [Subject position], [Predicate position] >

and it receives

Smith (constituent); Jones (constituent in the relation position); being-taller-than
(property or relation)

just as we saw earlier with ‘Mars is a planet’. This finally brings us to Braun.

Braun observes, under the structured proposition thesis, that the propositional structure is distinct from the items that fill it and that a sentence may fulfil one of its semantic services while failing at the other.¹² From the former, it seems to him, “there could be a propositional structure containing positions unfilled by either individuals or relations”, while from the latter, it seems to him, “a sentence might generate a propositional structure without generating basic semantic values to fill in that structure”.¹³ Bringing the two together, Braun concludes that a theory of structured

⁹ David Braun, “Empty Names,” 461.

¹⁰ Ibid., 461.

¹¹ Ibid., 461.

¹² Ibid., 462.

¹³ Ibid., 462.

propositions allows there to be sentences that express propositional structures with unfilled positions or gaps.¹⁴ It is this thesis that forms the Gappy Proposition View.

Under this view, an empty name still has no semantic value; however, a sentence that contains an empty name does express a gappy proposition.¹⁵ Consider ‘Mars is a planet’ and ‘Holmes is a detective’ again. ‘Mars is a planet’ consists of Mars as a constituent, and it is attributed the property of being a planet in an ordered-pair. But ‘Holmes is a detective’ consists of the token ‘Holmes’, which an empty name under the direct reference thesis, so there is a gap in the subject position. We may represent this as follows:

<GAP, being-a-detective>

The ‘GAP’, here, simply notates the absence of any corresponding object. But it must also be emphasised that this is not to be taken as an empty set, or some other abstract or null object: it is simply a gap.

Braun tells us that these propositions may be asserted, believed, and hold some truth-value.¹⁶ He says that this is plausible for two reasons: “For one thing, [gappy] propositions strongly resemble completely filled propositions that bear truth-values. For another, [gappy] propositions ‘encode’ important semantical facts about sentences containing empty names that make sense”.¹⁷ To bring this out, Braun looks towards—but suspends judgement on—pragmatic implicatures from sentences in natural language. ‘Holmes does not exist’, for example, has some mental episode, or belief state, that accompanies it; moreover, its utterance has at least some causal significance to its utterer, and plausibly to its listener as well, whether that be its affect or effect on other beliefs or states.¹⁸ The sentence makes sense insofar as a reasonable speaker would judge it because it seems to produce a kind of propositional structure and semantic content that, at the very least, strongly resembles ordinary propositions that are believed and attempt to get at the world.¹⁹ Thus although ‘Holmes is a detective’ contains a gap, it seems significant enough to be a candidate for a proposition of some kind or other; and propositions, as we know, are truth-value bearers.

Given that gappy propositions seem to contribute some thing or sensation to our cognitive apparatuses and they come from ordinary sentences in natural language that

¹⁴ David Braun, “Empty Names,” 462.

¹⁵ Ibid., 462.

¹⁶ Ibid., 462.

¹⁷ Ibid., 462.

¹⁸ Ibid., 460.

¹⁹ Ibid., 460.

seem to be attempts to describe something in world, Braun claims that they seem to be liable to the same truth-value that propositions which fail to get at the world obtain, namely falsity.²⁰ Braun states truth conditions for atomic propositions to achieve this result and to accommodate gappy propositions:

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.²¹

As gappy propositions do not have an object in the subject position, they cannot be true, and are therefore false.²²

Negations for gappy propositions are straightforward, too, under the principle. Consider ‘it is not the case that Holmes exists’. Using what has been mentioned in structured propositions, we may represent it as

<<GAP, existence>, NEG>

Here, the embedded gappy proposition is false; however, the negation attributes falsehood to the false proposition, entailing that the compound proposition is true.²³

Notably, there is an unappealing consequence at first blush, which Braun is quick to fix. The proposition expressed by the sentence ‘Holmes is a detective’ is identical to ‘Winnie-the-Pooh is a detective’, for both take the gappy propositional form of <GAP, being-a-detective>. Braun believes a competent speaker may accept one but not the other, and the difference lies in the cognitive value:

Belief states, like sentences, can express unfilled propositions. The propositional content of a belief expressed by an utterance containing an empty name is an unfilled proposition. So the beliefs that a person expresses by sincerely uttering ‘Vulcan does not exist’ and ‘Ossian does not exist’ have the same unfilled propositional content. But they may nevertheless be distinct beliefs, for distinct beliefs may have the same unfilled propositional content. Hence a speaker might accept one of these sentences and reject the other, and may be disposed to make different inferences upon hearing them, and may act differently upon accepting

²⁰ David Braun, “Empty Names,” 462.

²¹ Ibid., 464.

²² Ibid., 464.

²³ Ibid., 464.

them. Thus these sentences and beliefs may differ in cognitive (and causal) respects, without differing in any semantic respect.²⁴

In short, the reasons or uses for these sentences are different, so our cognitive association with the sentences means we are able to tell the semantic differences between them.

With this, we come to the end of the Gappy Proposition View. But it should be perspicuous just how this position threatens to undermine the fictional realist thesis: if gappy propositions containing empty names are meaningful and truth-apt, then the best explanation for why sentences containing referring terms to fictional objects are successful or unsuccessful does not need to include that those object exist. Fictionalism, for example, may indeed be a better theory overall than Artefactualism. Yet there have been several powerful critiques of Braun's gappy proposition view, and in these next sections, I cover some of them and include my own.

3.3 Objections to the Gappy Proposition View

3.3.1 The Criticism of Brock

Stuart Brock (2004) notices that the Gappy Proposition View has a strong problem that goes against common sense: propositions that contain embedded empty names seem to come out as true despite that an empty name may be attributed a property that it appears not to have in any context.²⁵ Consider the following declarative sentences:

- (B1) According to the novel *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge exists.
- (B2) According to the Conan Doyle stories, Sherlock Holmes is a detective.²⁶

Now compare them with these two:

- (B3) According to the novel *A Christmas Carol*, Sherlock Holmes exists.
- (B4) According to the Conan Doyle stories, Ebenezer Scrooge is a detective.²⁷

²⁴ David Braun, "Empty Names," 464–5.

²⁵ Stuart Brock, "The Ubiquitous Problem of Empty Names," *The Journal of Philosophy* 101, no. 6 (2004): 282.

²⁶ Ibid., 282.

²⁷ Ibid., 282.

Looking at these sentences, it seems to Brock that the embedded sentence in (B1) expresses the same proposition as the embedded sentence in (B3); likewise, the embedded sentence in (B2) expresses the same proposition as the embedded sentence in (B4).²⁸ More formally, (B1) and (B3) express

<A Christmas Carol, <GAP, exists>>

while (B2) and (B4) express

<Conan Doyle stories, <GAP, being-a-detective>>

But, as Brock points out, (B1) is clearly true while (B3) is false, just as (B2) is clearly true and (B4) is false. Thus the result of Brock's objection from embedded propositions shows that gappy propositions seem to incorrectly parse the semantic content found in slightly more complicated expressions, and therefore mishandle the attribution of properties.

Braun has replied to Brock with a metaphysical thesis. This thesis centres on mental episodes, and it says they are uniquely caused by actual phenomena despite any modal similarity in episode.²⁹ Thus an individual may appeal to the cause of belief state in order to distinguish between the information content of similar and different propositions.³⁰

Using this, Braun argues that our apprehension of (B1) to (B4) does differ from what the propositions really express, but we are capable of understanding them in different ways nonetheless.³¹ (B1) may be believed in a Scrooge-like way while (B2) may be believed in a Holmes-like way; conversely, an individual can fail to believe the content of (B3) and (B4).³² Insofar as we are aware of the propositions expressed, our ordinary intuitions are accounted for by this.

To an extent, I am inclined to accept Braun's ways of believing. I suspend judgement on his metaphysical thesis, but that an individual could believe something in the absence of anything seems fairly ordinary and conventional. We may, I think, plausibly talk about something such as a singular vacuum in space as having no colour even though a vacuum is the absence of anything. Although we may be mistaken in our property attribution, we still certainly seem to have the vacuum as an

²⁸ Stuart Brock, "The Ubiquitous Problem of Empty Names," 282.

²⁹ David Braun, "Empty Names, Fictional Names, Mythical Names," 601.

³⁰ Ibid., 601.

³¹ Ibid., 604.

³² Ibid., 604.

object of thought and direct attention. Perhaps, too, we have other cognitive and semantic content associated with the vacuum that allows us to treat it different from other vacuums somewhere or sometime else. Thus I am somewhat willing to grant that the content of particular expressions differs because of their cognitive significance and associative values.

3.3.2 The Criticism of Everett

Anthony Everett (2003) raises two objections to the Gappy Proposition View. First, he claims, it ascribes incorrect truth-values to the propositions expressed by some declarative sentences.³³ Second, he claims, the Gappy Propositions View does not aptly explain our ordinary intuitions about the semantic content of those sentences.³⁴ He considers them in order.

3.3.2.1 The Problems of Truth-Values

Everett offers three problems for The Gappy Proposition View in his first objection. The first and second are fairly simple. For the first, consider the following declarative sentence:

(E1) Piglet is identical to Piglet.

On the Gappy Proposition View, the proposition expressed by (E1) is false.³⁵ But Everett thinks it is reasonable to say that (E1) expresses something true, or lacks a truth-value at the very least; moreover, it seems very unintuitive to him to suppose that (E1) expresses something false.³⁶ So the Gappy Proposition View appears to fail to reflect our intuitions about particular sentences containing empty names.³⁷

For the second, the negation of (E1)—‘Piglet is not identical to Piglet’—will come out as true.³⁸ But Everett thinks it is reasonable to say that the negation of (E1) expresses something false, or lacks a truth-value at the very least; moreover, it seems

³³ Anthony Everett, “Empty Names and ‘Gappy’ Propositions,” *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 116, no. 1 (2003): 9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

very unintuitive to him to suppose that the negation of (E1) expresses something true.³⁹ So the Gappy Proposition View fails to reflect our intuitions again.

Now for the third problem. Braun mentions atomic propositions (standard or gappy) may contain a predicate that is negated, where the predicate is directly negated rather than the negation being sentential upon the proposition; for example, in the sentence ‘Helen Clark is not blue’ the negation is applied directly to the property of blueness; whereas, in the sentence ‘it is not the case that Helen Clark is blue’ the negation is applied to the proposition.⁴⁰ But this, says Everett, “raises the question of how we should understand the truth conditions for atomic sentences involving predicate negation”.⁴¹ Everett cites Braun, who suggests that an object satisfies a negated predicate just in case it does not satisfy its complement.⁴² Being that a negated predicate contributes something to a proposition for Braun, a sentence such as ‘Eeyore is not a donkey’ expresses the gappy proposition of <GAP, being-a-non-donkey>, and so it is false.⁴³

Everett concedes that we may be willing to accept that ‘Eeyore is not a donkey’ is false because no property could be attributed to something which is not; however, he points out that propositions expressed by particular sentences that contain negated predicates such as ‘Eeyore does not exist’ will also be false.⁴⁴ This seems wrong to Everett.⁴⁵ On the Gappy Proposition View, to say anything of ‘*x* does not exist’, where *x* is a subject-variable for a token of an empty name, entails that a proposition expressing that something does not exist when it does not exist is false.⁴⁶ Worse still, when sentential negation is employed, a sentence such as ‘it is not the case that *x* does not exist’ comes out as true, for the proposition expressed is <<GAP, non-existence>, NEG>. According to Everett, this is extremely unintuitive.⁴⁷ He then considers several possible replies Braun may give.

Braun might deny that particular sentences feature negated predicates such as ‘Eeyore does not exist’ or deny that the truth conditions he stated for the Gappy Proposition View apply to expressions with negated predicates.⁴⁸ But neither option

³⁹ Anthony Everett, “Empty Names and ‘Gappy’ Propositions,” 9.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 9.

⁴¹ Ibid., 9.

⁴² Ibid., 9.

⁴³ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 11.

seems appealing to Everett, for both options would require some impressive independent justification for why negated predicates do not function in the same manner as other predicates; and Everett does not see this happening.⁴⁹ Alternatively, suggests Everett, Braun may abandon the last clause of his truth conditions for gappy propositions, which states that if a proposition is not true, then it is false.⁵⁰ But this seems implausible, as it would see Braun dump a significant principle in his thesis of gappy propositions.⁵¹ So far as Everett sees it, this should likely entail that Braun has made some new position due to a distinctive feature of his gappy proposition thesis being changed.⁵²

Finally, Everett considers the possibility that Braun may reply to the entire claim by saying that our intuitions about certain declarative sentences are mistaken.⁵³ But Everett does not like this either: “in order to do this Braun would obviously need to explain *why* it is we have such strong and misleading intuitions about these truth values”.⁵⁴ In Everett’s closing words on the matter, he suggests that Braun’s only likely strategy for explaining our intuitions away would be for him to embrace a kind of pragmatic thesis. But, as he notes, this would see Braun forfeit what makes the Gappy Proposition View distinct from other theses that have attempted to explain empty names.⁵⁵

3.3.2.2 The Problem of Propositional Content

In the second of Everett’s claims, Everett expresses his reservations about Braun’s way of distinguishing the semantic content of different sentences from one another.⁵⁶ If we recall, Braun relies on a cognitive value or mental episode to distinguish sentences expressing gappy propositions, but Everett complains that this is not enough: “Braun does not provide an explanation of why we have the intuitions ... that we do *despite* the fact that we recognize that the names they contain are all empty”.⁵⁷ To illustrate this, consider the following sentences:

⁴⁹ Anthony Everett, “Empty Names and ‘Gappy’ Propositions,” 11.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 11.

⁵¹ Ibid., 11.

⁵² Ibid., 11.

⁵³ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 12.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 12.

- (E2) Pooh does not exist.
- (E3) Edward Bear does not exist.
- (E4) Oliver Twist does not exist.

A reasonable speaker should be able to tell the similarities between the content expressed by (E2) to (E4) but should also know that there are some slight differences between them.⁵⁸ Even if a speaker were to learn that Pooh is Edward Bear, then they would certainly recognise that (E2) and (E3) still express something nontrivial; however, that they are also mostly the same, too.⁵⁹ So it seems difficult to Everett to suppose that the meaning of the sentences to a speaker should express the same gappy proposition upon learning that all the names are empty.⁶⁰ Everett then considers a possible response to this problem.

Braun could say we are motivated to accept these sentences as expressing different propositions because of the pragmatic implicatures they may have.⁶¹ Everett notes, however, that this option goes against Braun's truth-value assignment to gappy propositions; moreover, our ascription of truth or falsity comes from our intuitions about propositions, so it seems embracing this move would further conflate truth with pragmatic semantics.⁶² Overall, Everett believes that Braun's thesis would collapse into some form of pragmatism one way or another.⁶³

3.2.2.3 Braun's Response

This same thesis that seemed to save Braun from Brock somewhat applies to Everett's criticisms apart from negated predicates. Braun could claim that many of our intuitions are simply mistaken without resorting to any kind of pragmatic account that undermines his gappy proposition thesis. Apart from negated predicates, it may be said that sentences such as (E1), and its negation, express the propositions they should and it is merely causal consequence that provides our mistaken intuitions. The same, I think, may apply to the other problems Everett raises with the exception of negated predicates. To this, I do not think Braun can provide a satisfactory reply. Unless he revises his truth-conditions, as Everett suggests, gappy propositions plainly seem to give improper results of falsity in circumstances such as 'Eeyore does not exist' where the negative existential should be true. Being that it seems a large motivation for the

⁵⁸ Anthony Everett, "Empty Names and 'Gappy' Propositions," 12.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 12.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 13.

⁶¹ Ibid., 13.

⁶² Ibid., 13.

⁶³ Ibid., 13.

Gappy Proposition View is avoiding ontological inflation, this is a very bad consequence for Braun.

3.3.3 The Criticism of Mousavian

Seyed Mousavian (2013) criticises the Gappy Proposition View by way of two different approaches. First, he argues that Braun has failed to establish that gappy propositions are propositions, or at the very least sufficient to bear a truth-value.⁶⁴ Second, he argues that even if we accepted gappy propositions are semantic objects that can bear a truth-value, it has some implausible consequences.⁶⁵ Both arguments succeeding would be significant, for if gappy propositions were truth-apt, then there would be no need for a semantic objection to fictionalism and no reason to uphold Artefactualism or any other realism.

3.3.3.1 Gappy Propositions Are Not Propositions

Mousavian's first approach against Braun's gappy propositions comes in the form of two arguments against, first, resemblance and, second, encoding semantical facts. Of the first, Mousavian succinctly says that although gappy propositions resemble standard propositions, this is not enough by itself to show that gappy propositions are the same kind of semantic items as standard propositions.⁶⁶ Nothing else is said.

Of the second, Mousavian cites a passage from Braun (1993), where Braun claims that gappy propositions encode important semantical facts, and consequently seem liable to (mis)represent the world in the same way standard propositions do.⁶⁷ To this, Mousavian argues contrary to Braun that if declarative sentences containing empty names do (mis)represent the world, they do not do this in virtue of gappy propositions.⁶⁸ According to him, a gappy proposition such as <GAP, being-a-detective> simply does not contain enough semantic content to arrive at anything in the world, and he suspects that this is in virtue of another standard proposition that is expressed by something such as 'So-and-so is a detective'.⁶⁹ Thus a gappy proposition is not the same kind of thing as a proposition owing to a lack of good reasons to

⁶⁴ Seyed Mousavian, "Gappy Propositions?," *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 41, no. 1 (2011): 131.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 131–2.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

accept gappy propositions as being in the same class of truth-bearers as standard propositions.

3.3.3.2 Implausible Consequences

3.3.3.2.1 Argument A

In keeping with Mousavian, let us call a proposition semantically expressed by a simple sentence that comprises a just a proper name and a predicate a *standard atomic proposition*.⁷⁰ Mousavian's *Argument A* is this,

- (MA1) If gappy propositions are propositions, then standard atomic propositions contain other propositions.
- (MA2) Standard atomic propositions do not contain other propositions (at least in the case with which we are considering).
- (MA3) Therefore, gappy propositions are not propositions.⁷¹

He then justifies each claim in order.

For (MA1), consider these two sentences,

- (M1) Oliver Twist exists.
- (M2) Helen Clark exists.

According to The Gappy Proposition View, the semantic content of (M1) is

- (M3) <GAP, existence>

while the semantic content of (M2) is

- (M4) <Helen Clark, existence>

As Mousavian argues, (M4) can be made from (M3), for it seems as if (M4) contains all the information content of (M3), as they have identical structures and identical

⁷⁰ Seyed Mousavian, "Gappy Propositions?," 133.

⁷¹ Ibid., 133.

predicates.⁷² Since (M3) is a proposition and (M4) is a proposition, it follows that standard atomic propositions contain other propositions.⁷³

For (MA2), in a sentence such as (M2), neither the subject nor the predicate has a proposition as its semantic content, for the sentence has no other parts.⁷⁴ There is only the constituent, Helen Clark, and its predicate, existence. As Mousavian says, “the standard *atomic* proposition semantically expressed by the whole sentence does not contain any other proposition”.⁷⁵ This entails (MA2). Given (MA1) and (MA2), it therefore follows that (MA3). Mousavian then considers two possible objections to this argument.

It may first be objected that standard atomic propositions can contain other propositions.⁷⁶ Take, for instance, the proposition expressed by ‘ $2 + 2 = 4$ ’, and call it ‘Matthew’.⁷⁷ Then consider the proposition expressed by ‘Matthew is obvious’, which is $\langle \text{Matthew, being-obvious} \rangle$.⁷⁸ This atomic proposition seems to contain another proposition, namely, Matthew.⁷⁹ It therefore seems to be the case that the premise (MA2) is false.⁸⁰

According to Mousavian, this objection fails. If propositions are contained within other propositions, then this is in virtue of the semantic content that is expressed by the larger proposition.⁸¹ In the case of ‘Matthew is obvious’, ‘Matthew’ has the atomic proposition expressed by ‘ $2 + 2 = 4$ ’ as its semantic content.⁸² But in cases such as (M2) no part of the sentence has a proposition as its semantic content.⁸³ So the objection seems to fail in cases where a proposition *really is atomic*.

It may second be objected that standard atomic propositions do not contain gappy propositions since the latter is not a proposition in the structure of the former.⁸⁴ The motivation for this claim comes from a metaphysical analogy: “If an armless person is a person, then a person who like the armless person except that has arms contains a person, i.e. the armless person. Yet no person contains a person. Therefore, the

⁷² Seyed Mousavian, “Gappy Propositions?,” 134.

⁷³ Ibid., 134.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 134.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 134.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 134.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 134.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 134.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 134.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 135.

⁸¹ Ibid., 135.

⁸² Ibid., 135.

⁸³ Ibid., 135.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 135.

armless person is not a person”.⁸⁵ So although (M3) is a proposition, it is not a proposition *in* <Helen Clark, existence>.⁸⁶

This objection also fails. Aside from the analogy being inadequate, propositions within propositions are still propositions, and significantly those propositions still maintain their identity.⁸⁷ The token ‘Matthew’ in ‘Matthew is obvious’ refers directly to the proposition expressed by ‘ $2 + 2 = 4$ ’, and this does not change whether embedded or not. So ends the objections against Mousavian and Argument A.

3.3.3.2.2 Argument B

Mousavian’s *Argument B* is this,

- (MB1) If gappy propositions are propositions, then completely gappy propositions are propositions.
- (MB2) Completely gappy propositions are propositional structures.
- (MB3) Propositional structures are not propositions.
- (MB4) Therefore, gappy propositions are not propositions.⁸⁸

Once again, he justifies each claim.

Consider the declarative sentence

- (M5) Oliver Twist is dephlogisticated.

Neither ‘Oliver Twist’ nor ‘is dephlogisticated’ have any semantic content (or assume so). If having a propositional structure with a gap in its subject place can be done, then it seems a propositional structure could also have a gap in its property place because the structure is distinct from the semantic items that fill it.⁸⁹ Thus it seems through parity that there could be a completely gappy proposition expressed by (M5), namely

- (M6) <GAP, GAP>

which justifies (MB1).

⁸⁵ Seyed Mousavian, “Gappy Propositions?,” 135.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 135.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 135.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 136.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 136.

(MB2) may be justified like so. Suppose (MB2) is false, and so in the case of (M5), (M6) is a completely gappy proposition, but it is not the propositional structure fashioned by (M5).⁹⁰ The propositional structure (M5) creates instead is

(M7) <VAC, VAC>

So (M5) has the propositional structure of (M7) and semantically expresses the completely gappy proposition displayed in (M6).⁹¹ This should mean that there is some difference between what is represented by ‘GAP’ and what is represented by ‘VAC’; however, if they represent different items, then there must be some semantic contribution from an empty name in order to distinguish them.⁹² But this is contrary to what the Gappy Proposition View tells us: genuinely empty names do not contribute any semantic value to a proposition or propositional structure.⁹³ It therefore seems to be the case that what ‘GAP’ and ‘VAC’ represent must be equivalent, which also entails that completely gappy propositions are propositional structures; thus, (MB2).⁹⁴

Justifying (MB3) is fairly straightforward, and Mousavian provides two such explanations for why. First, propositions are things that can bear truth-values or include the semantic content of sentences, or be the objects of thought.⁹⁵ But a propositional structure alone is not sufficient to perform all of these tasks. For one, propositions can have the same structure but differ in truth-value.⁹⁶ A propositional structure does not display this, for it has no way to distinguish different propositions from one another; thus, it cannot perform an important task standard propositions can.⁹⁷ Second, structured propositions require propositional structures to bind together the semantic value of declarative sentences, which express those propositions; however, if propositional structures were propositions in and of themselves, then they would seem to require a structure for their structure.⁹⁸ But they could not use the same structure that they already have, as that would lead to an infinite regress where structures would continuously structure other structures for the same reasons.⁹⁹ As

⁹⁰ Seyed Mousavian, “Gappy Propositions?,” 137.

⁹¹ Ibid., 137.

⁹² Ibid., 138.

⁹³ Ibid., 138.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 138.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 138.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 138.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 138.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 138.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 138.

there seems to be no better explanation or structure available, (MB3) seems to be the case. Thus given (MB1), (MB2), and (MB3), (MB4) is entailed. Mousavian then attends to a possible objection.

Mousavian considers that it could be protested that a sentence such as (M5) is not a completely gappy proposition, contrary to (MB1). The protest runs as follows: “[t]he predicate ‘is dephlogisticated’ is a predicate with an empty extension; namely, there is no object in the actual world exemplifying this predicate. From this it does not follow that ‘is dephlogisticated’ does not express any property”.¹⁰⁰ So the semantic content of (M5) would then be

(M8) <GAP, being-dephlogisticated>

and any other sentence containing a predicate with an empty extension would not express a completely gappy proposition.¹⁰¹

While Mousavian admits that there is a difference between a predicate with no extension and a properly empty predicate that does not express or refer to any property, he claims the objection fails nevertheless.¹⁰² He invokes an argument that he calls the *Argument from Consistency*.¹⁰³ This argument says that consistency forces us to consider some legitimate predicates as expressing no property because if empty names feature in grammatically well-formed declarative sentences, and we are able to discern their lack of semantic contribution, then an empty predicate phrase should be able to successfully perform the same semantic function, too, despite not expressing any property.¹⁰⁴ He then offers an example where an unperformed language has a lambda operator ranging over property variables in a two-place relation forms the predicative phrase ‘has the property that does not exemplify this very property’:

$((\lambda X)\sim(X \text{ exp } X))$

Under the assumption of classical logic, it seems plausible that a relational phrase such as this could be introduced by an unperformed natural language, for the lambda proposition does not seem malformed by conventional standards and it seems to be able to be meaningfully expressed.¹⁰⁵ Thus Mousavian concludes that Argument B is successful.

¹⁰⁰ Seyed Mousavian, “Gappy Propositions?,” 139.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 139.

¹⁰² Ibid., 139.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 139.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 139.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 139.

3.3.3.2.3 No Reply

Can Braun reply to Mousavian? I do not think so. The first of Mousavian's criticisms points out the obvious: just because something looks like something, it does not mean it is the same thing. But this could be skirted by offering that gappy propositions belong to a broader class of truth-evaluable semantic objects of which propositions are a member, but it seems highly implausible. As Arguments A and B show, I do not see Braun being in a position to justify this move. The only defence that comes to mind is Braun providing some explanation for why gappy propositions should be a member of the of truth evaluable class over other objects. This, however, seems to cause more problems than it solves.

3.4 My Criticism

The argument I have in mind has two parts: first, the Gappy Proposition View fails to capture the semantic content of sentences in particular contexts and, second, as a consequence of the first, a predicate is not always sufficient to provide a structured proposition with a truth-value. I maintain that these two problems arise predominately in circumstances where substitution takes place between that of a proper name and a demonstrative. But I must make it clear that I do not wish to argue the meaning of demonstratives; simply, I wish only to emphasise that they serve a very similar, if not identical, purpose to proper names in some contexts. Using this, I display some shortcomings of the Gappy Proposition View.

Direct reference treats proper names in a very similar fashion to how many theories of reference and meaning treat *demonstratives*. In both cases, the terms and phrases are directly referring, and their meanings are just their constituents; however, an important difference between a proper name and a demonstrative is that a demonstrative derives its meaning from a *context*, and so it is often called an *indexical*. Terms such as 'I', 'here', 'today', 'she', and 'that' are clear cases of demonstratives (or indexicals). To provide an example, a speaker may say 'I fed the cat', and someone near her may say to her 'you fed the cat'. Here, the tokens are different, but both the 'I' and the 'you' refer to the same object, the speaker; furthermore, the proposition expressed is the same, as the same subject is attributed the same predicate in both cases. Yet were the 'I' or 'you' spoken by different individuals, then the semantic content of those words would change.

But demonstratives are not limited to spoken languages. Gestures and symbols, too, often play the same role as those terms mentioned earlier; for example, an arrow pointing up can inform an individual to go *that* way while a person pointing toward

something can inform an individual to go *this* way. These, once again, have their meaning determined by that which they instantiate as their constituents. So I use this similar function now to display where the Gappy Proposition View defaults.

Suppose three individuals called Smith, Jones, and Williams are having tea together. Jones asks, “who ate the last biscuit?”, to which Williams replies, “Smith ate the last biscuit”; and it is true, Smith ate the last biscuit. In this circumstance, the speech act performed by Williams was successful, and the act produced a declarative sentence, which in turn expressed a meaningful proposition, in response to Jones’ question. Plausibly, too, Williams’ answer could have also been “he did” while gesturing at Smith, which would have produced the same semantic content and expressed the same proposition, for the demonstrative token ‘he’ refers directly to Smith and it gained its semantic value by the gesture. But if we are willing to accept this alternate act, then it seems plausible that Williams may have simply pointed at Smith in response to Jones, and that this performative act would, in some way, communicate the *same* semantic content as the speech act would have; that is to say, his gesturing *functioned* in the same way both a proper name and a demonstrative operate.

This last speech act should invite some concern to gappy propositions. By merely picking out an object, it was enough to serve as elliptical for a longer declarative sentence, allowing the attribution of a property to take place. It therefore would seem that picking out an object has more semantic significance than a predicate in at least one circumstance, so let us see if it can be done in another.

Using previous example, now suppose Smith is a long-term hallucination Williams has, and so does not really exist. What would Jones make of Williams gesturing? Surely, Jones would ask, “who?”, or, “at what are you pointing?”, for Williams is the only one who can see Smith. But it does not seem as if Jones would offer falsity to the proposition expressed by Williams’ gesture; rather, seems as if the act did not convey anything false but instead something *meaningless*. More formally, the relevant information content of the gesture was primarily picking out an object before the attribution; however, no object was designated, which produced a gap. But the gesture did not seem to produce anything false; rather, it *failed*, and consequently the speech act produced something *meaningless*. Thus it would seem, once again, an object has more semantic significance than a predicate in some circumstances.

It should be clear what the consequence of this means for gappy propositions: there are contexts in which a gappy proposition does not produce the right result. This, I think, is sufficient to show that the gappy proposition thesis cannot succeed, and so fulfils the first part of my argument. But it can be taken further: it could mean that a propositional structure with a predicate is not sufficient to establish a proposition or it

could mean that a subject, not a predicate, is necessary for a gappy proposition to be truth-apt. The former is somewhat self-explanatory, as it is the received view of structured propositions, but the latter is somewhat controversial, though may be possible if one were to embrace some other thesis about gappy propositions. Nevertheless, this seems eerily similar to ordinary truth conditions for standard propositions.

Braun could plausibly argue that I am confusing speaker meaning and semantic meaning. Indeed, he could argue that our preoccupation with the subject of a sentence is cognitively and pragmatically significant but not semantically significant. Thus a gesture such as pointing to something *ought to* be counted as semantically expressing something false rather than something meaningless. This would then mean any predicate deficiency claims I have made are false.

I do not, however, think that this is quite enough. Demonstrative gestures, and their semantic significance, seem to be an ordinary part of natural language. While it is widely noted that not all speech acts express propositions, non-verbal speech acts can operate in a declarative way. Sign language, for instance, often uses representation and demonstration to convey information content. To pick out ‘you’ requires the speaker to point to their referent while, in an inquisitive sentence, raising the eyebrows informs the listener that a question is being asked of them. These speech acts appear to represent the same content our formal understanding of natural language does, so I see little reason to suppose that a demonstrative act such as pointing does not show that the subject of our semantic expressions is sometimes more significant than a predicate.

3.4 Conclusion

In chapter 2, I maintained that the only reasonable alternative to Artefactualism was fictionalism. But in order for fictionalism of any kind to count as a genuine alternative to artefactualism, let alone a better theory, fictionalists have to provide a semantics for critical claims that does not appeal to a referent of the fictional names used when making those claims. In this chapter, I considered two such theories: Descriptivism and the Gappy Proposition View. I have shown that each of these semantic theories has considerable costs associated with it, and fictionalism will inevitably inherit those costs. But this is not enough to show that Artefactualism is the better theory. That would require a demonstration that Artefactualism has no comparable costs. The best way to do that is to answer the most significant objections that have been put forward against the view. That is the job of the next two chapters.

4. IN WHICH THERE IS A DEFENCE OF HOW AND WHEN FICTIONAL OBJECTS COME TO BE

Stuart Brock (2010) has criticised Artefactualism for failing to establish precisely *when* a fictional object comes into existence, and *how* that causal instant comes about. He brings attention to the fact that supporters of the artefactual theory have remained either silent on how fictional characters emerge or they have afforded a rather vague explanation from pretend reference.¹ Despite whether there could be an explanation provided, Brock maintains that the Creation Thesis and the Ontological Thesis are conjointly problematic, and they will therefore be incapable of aptly producing a clear and precise way in which to discriminate when an object should come into existence. He pushes this offence by presenting some three complicated situations where there do not appear to be any satisfactory answers. The conclusion on which Brock settles is that Artefactualism cannot supply the metaphysical goods it purports to exemplify.

In this chapter, I defend Artefactualism from Brock by offering a more thorough explanation of when a fictional object becomes. This will be done like so. First, by inspecting the challenge that Brock has issued to Artefactualism. Second, by considering previous accounts of when and how fictional objects are created. Third, by considering the three counterexamples to Artefactualism put forward by Brock. Fourth, by considering a reply to Brock from David Friedell, and an evaluation of that reply. Fifth and last, by developing and tendering my own creation theory immune to Brock's counterexamples. This, I hope, should be enough to successfully defend Artefactualism from Brock's counterexamples.

4.1 The Chagrin of Artefactualism

4.1.1 The Challenge Presented

Brock correctly notices the artefactualist's temporal and causal explanations of fictional objects are rather absent. This is a problem. Brock explains it as follows:

[If] fictional objects are created, they *do* have a temporal location, and, in particular, there must be a moment at which the character comes into existence for the first time. One problem for the abstract creationist, then, is specifying

¹ Stuart Brock, "The Creationist Fiction: The Case against Creationism about Fictional Objects," *The Philosophical Review* 119, no. 3 (2010): 356.

when fictional characters are brought into existence by their author. When, exactly, does life begin for a fictional character? An answer to this question, I maintain, has not been forthcoming from abstract creationists and providing a plausible answer will be difficult and perhaps impossible.²

So answering Brock's 'when' challenge is going to be necessary in order to clear away the miasma surrounding the creation of fictional objects, and, particularly, their identity conditions in and over time.

4.1.2 Conditions for Emergence

Current answers about when a fictional object is created are charged with being wanting. If artefactualists want to answer Brock's criticism, they will certainly need to provide some time at which those objects emerge. As well as failing to specify when, Brock discerns that there is a prior ontological question that is still without an explicit answer. Perhaps, as Brock believes, part of the problem in finding out when resides earlier in the artefactualist's stipulations of *how* a fictional object is created. So we should ask, 'how is it these objects come into existence?'.

There seem to be a distinct lack of answers to this question, too. While Peter van Inwagen (1977, 1983) points out that critical statements about *creatures of fiction* seem truth-apt and sincere utterances, he remains oddly quiet on the matter of how they come to be—they simply just seem to be. Amie Thomasson (1999) provides a comprehensive construction of an artefactualist theory of fictional objects. She tells us that fictional characters are, first, rigidly and historically dependent on the deliberate and creative act of its author or authors, and, second, constantly and generically dependent upon literary works.³ While Thomasson does give a splendid exposition from authorial dependence, the immediacy is still lacking, for there is no precise time provided for *when* the consequence of the author's activity results in an instance of a fictional object. After all, is it from first utterance or first thought, or what?

One answer that seems to approach this question the most directly comes from John Searle (1975). Searle calls attention to the intentions behind speech acts from an author as being the only way we may identify whether a work is fictional or not.⁴ When an author of fiction writes, for example, 'it is raining', the content of that utterance is no different to a genuine assertion using the same sentence; however, the author is not *seriously* asserting that it is raining, but merely *pretending* that the

² Stuart Brock, "The Creationist Fiction: The Case against Creationism about Fictional Objects," 355.

³ Amie Thomasson, *Fiction and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1999), 35.

⁴ John Searle, "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse," *New Literary History* 6, no. 2 (1975): 325.

weather is such.⁵ In this sense, the only way to distinguish between when a speech act is serious or not is by appealing to the intentions of the speaker or author. Thus, Searle says, “[b]y pretending to refer to people and to recount events about them, the author creates fictional characters and events”.⁶ This is named *pretend reference*.

Although Searle does not say so himself explicitly, Brock affords charity to his claim and says that we may suppose pretend reference is either the immediate cause of the fictional object’s coming into existence or the very same event under a different description.⁷ This should moreover give us a way to know *when* a fictional object emerges. Brock points out several ways this could be applied, and finds fault in all of them, with the last way being given some three counterexamples. I consider the two strongest applications, then the three counterexamples given to the strongest of those.

4.2 Ways of Pretending to Refer

4.2.1 First Use Account

The first way a creationist could indicate when a fictional object emerges is by suggesting that a fictional object is created whenever an author uses a fictional name for the first time.⁸ By whatever utterance, an author could pretend to refer on their first use of a name, and *genuinely* refer to *that same object* on every subsequent use of it.⁹ This view may be called the *First Use Account*, or ‘FUA’ for short.¹⁰

Brock contends that FUA is indefensible. He argues that the FUA is vulnerable to two kinds of counterexample. The first example Brock provides is from *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Stevenson. In the first chapter of the novel, the reader is introduced to Mr Edward Hyde through Gabriel Utterson and Richard Enfield, two other characters in the novel, as they recount an unfortunate run-in a little girl has with Hyde. It is not until later in chapter two that the reader is indirectly introduced to Dr Henry Jekyll, who seems to have a peculiar relationship with Hyde, much to Utterson’s curiosity. When Utterson is finally introduced to Jekyll, Jekyll informs him that everything is in order and that he ought to leave Hyde alone. It is not until much later, however, that the reader and Utterson find the suicided Hyde and

⁵ John Searle, “The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse,” 324–5.

⁶ Ibid., 331.

⁷ Stuart Brock, “The Creationist Fiction: The Case against Creationism about Fictional Objects,” 357.

⁸ Ibid., 357.

⁹ Ibid., 357.

¹⁰ Ibid., 357.

three enclosures, revealing that Jekyll and Hyde were the same person. We should therefore say that Stevenson's use of 'Jekyll' and 'Hyde' pick out the same character.

But the FUA entails something different: "[b]ecause the names are different, one fictional character was created when Stevenson used the name 'Hyde' for the first time in chapter 1, and a second different fictional character was created when Stevenson used the name 'Jekyll' for the first time in chapter 2".¹¹ This may be favourable to some artefactualists who desire the consequence so as to account for cases where non-identity can be determinate, but Brock notes it seems faulty.¹² He points out that if the FUA is meant to be a fully general account of how fictional characters are created, then it will be committed to a multitude of characters that are thought of as identical to each other. As a result, this commitment will include all those fictional objects that are addressed by several aliases but are considered the same. This means that Bruce Wayne and Batman will be distinct, according to FUA, despite being considered identical objects intuitively and by the author.

To make matters worse, the FUA will inevitably end up falling short in cases where a proper name for an object is not forthcoming. The infamous novel *The Painted Bird* by Jerzy Kosinski is one such case. In the novel, the narrator and main character is a young boy, yet he is never named by his author, himself, or any of the other characters. According to the FUA, there is neither a narrator nor a young-boy character, for they were not given a fictional name. Whichever way we look, there seem to be too many or too few characters being picked out correctly by the FUA.

An amendment may be made, however. It could be added that a fictional character is created when an author uses a fictional name *or a denoting phrase* for the first time.¹³ This may solve problematic cases such as the one above with the young boy or Marl Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* where a character has no name although it is provided with descriptions. Unfortunately, there is a further consequence: now both names *and* denoting phrases will pick out fictional objects.¹⁴ A use of a name such 'Elizabeth Bennet' will create an object on its first use; however, definite description such as 'the second child in a family of five daughters' will foster a second object on first use despite it being a description of Bennet. For reasons such as this, Brock concludes that this broad designative strategy is undesirable, for it will lead to the creation of even more characters and it still fails to fix the problem of aliases. Hence the FUA is largely untenable.¹⁵

¹¹ Stuart Brock, "The Creationist Fiction: The Case against Creationism about Fictional Objects," 358.

¹² Ibid., 358.

¹³ Ibid., 359.

¹⁴ Ibid., 359.

¹⁵ Ibid., 358.

4.2.2 Intended Creation by Pretence

A second way an artefactualist could indicate when a fictional character emerges is by suggesting that an author creates a fictional object for a reason.¹⁶ As Brock puts it, “[t]hose reasons make reference to the author’s intentions, perhaps the desire to produce a fictional object and a belief that by pretending to refer, one would thereby create such an object”.¹⁷ So having the intention of creating a fictional object (the ends) causes the author to engage in fictional assertions (the means), and that produces a fictional object from a desire and a means-end belief.¹⁸ We may extend this further by saying that a fictional object is created when, and only when, an author pretends to refer or pick out a unique object as a causal consequence of her intention to create that object.¹⁹ This act may occur in different ways, say, by using a name, a description, or an indexical.²⁰ Moreover, if there is no intention, then no fictional object is made.²¹ The view given may be called *Intended Creation by Pretence*, or ‘ICP’ for short.²²

A strong part of the motivation for this view comes from likening the activity of an author of fiction to that of a creator of something concrete. Just as a carpenter may fashion a table, so too does an author create a fictional object.²³ The carpenter makes such a table for a reason, from a desire and a means-end belief, and fashions the table accordingly.²⁴ Advocates of ICP claim that fictional objects are created in the same way. This provides a *causal* explanation for the creation of artefacts like tables and fictional objects, where intentions cause actions, and those acts bring about an artefact.²⁵ Brock, however, claims that, despite the strength of ICP, counterexamples are too easy to come by. He then goes on to present three counterexamples, so as to give us a reason to reject it.

4.3 The Three Counterexamples

¹⁶ Stuart Brock, “The Creationist Fiction: The Case against Creationism about Fictional Objects,” 360.

¹⁷ Ibid., 360.

¹⁸ Ibid., 360.

¹⁹ Ibid., 360.

²⁰ Ibid., 360.

²¹ Ibid., 360.

²² Ibid., 360.

²³ Ibid., 359.

²⁴ Ibid., 359.

²⁵ Ibid., 360.

4.3.1 When One and One Makes One and Not Two

The first of Brock's counterexamples against ICP is called *A Counterexample Involving Two Distinct Acts of Referential Pretense Conjoined with Appropriate Intentions When Intuitively There Is Just One Character*.²⁶ For the sake of brevity, let us name this counterexample 'BC1'. The challenge is as follows.

Imagine that Robert Louis Stevenson's first draft of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was rather different. It was, let us suppose, written as a thriller. The plot developments up until the last two chapters were basically the same. But at the moment the body of Hyde is discovered, and Utterson opens Dr. Layton's letter revealing all, the narrative is completely different. We learn of Jekyll's criminal past and his association with Hyde as a young man. We also learn that Hyde was blackmailing Jekyll, thus explaining his privileged place in Jekyll's household. As events transpire, it is revealed that because Jekyll was planning to cut Hyde out of his life, Hyde got angry, attempted to murder Jekyll, but was overpowered in the process and accidentally killed. By the final chapter, Henry Jekyll's position in society is restored. Everyone except the late Mr. Hyde lives happily ever after. Suppose further that after reading the manuscript, Stevenson's wife Fanny screwed up her face and exclaimed "how trite." Stevenson was thus motivated to revise the story, and the result is the novella with which we are all acquainted.²⁷

According to Brock, it follows from ICP that Stevenson created two different characters, but intuitively what Stevenson did was create just one fictional character with two aliases, and this would be the case even if the thought experiment turned out to be true.²⁸ More precisely, says Brock, "[w]e don't suppose that Stevenson created two characters and ascribed to these distinct individuals the impossible property of being identical to one another".²⁹

Brock is right to point out that ICP is very much at odds with the common sense assessment of the case. Common sense tells us that there is just one character referred to by two different names, 'Jekyll' and 'Hyde'. But ICP entails that there are two

²⁶ Stuart Brock, "The Creationist Fiction: The Case against Creationism about Fictional Objects," 360.

²⁷ Ibid., 360–1.

²⁸ Ibid., 361.

²⁹ Ibid., 361.

characters, a distinct character referred to by each name. This is because Stevenson pretended initially to refer to two distinct characters.

4.3.2 When an Author Omits Some Important Details

The second counterexample Brock presents against ICP is called *A Counterexample Involving Just One Act of Referential Pretense Conjoined with an Appropriate Intention When Intuitively There Are Two Characters*.³⁰ For the sake of ease, let us call this ‘BC2’. The thought experiment is this,

Imagine that the inconsistencies in the Holmes stories—for example, Watson’s claims that he had only one war wound, that wound was in his arm, and that the wound was in his leg—were not the result of carelessness on the part of Conan Doyle but rather a clever hint to the reader that Watson was in fact an unreliable narrator. Suppose, moreover, that it was Conan Doyle’s intention to complete his Holmes series with a fifth novel, *The Strange Case of Dr. Watson and Mr. Holmes*. In it he would reveal that Watson was really Holmes all along. Unfortunately for us, Conan Doyle died before he started work on the novel.³¹

Brock claims that, for all we know, the thought experiment may be true, yet it does not affect our intuitions that Holmes and Watson are two distinct fictional objects.³² Accordingly, ICP is inconsistent with this intuition.

Brock is quite right. For all we know, Doyle was a fan of Stevenson’s work and thought it would be grand to have two seemingly different characters talk of each other as distinct, when they are really the same character all along. Brock is also right to say that ICP is inconsistent with the intuition, for while Doyle seemingly pretended to refer to two individual objects, his properly understood utterances are really pretending to refer to one individual only.

4.3.3 When an Author Does Not Want to Refer to a Thing

The third counterexample to ICP is given the name of *A Counterexample Involving No Act of Referential Pretense Conjoined with an Appropriate Intention When Intuitively*

³⁰ Stuart Brock, “The Creationist Fiction: The Case against Creationism about Fictional Objects,” 361.

³¹ Ibid., 361–2.

³² Ibid., 362.

There Are Many Characters. For the sake of convenience, let us refer to this as ‘BC3’. Brock proposes the challenge like so,

Imagine that J. K. Rowling is not only a famous author but also an amateur philosopher. In particular, we might suppose that she has nominalistic tendencies and believes that abstract entities of any kind do not exist. As a consequence, she does not believe that by telling her stories and engaging in any acts of referential pretense, she will thereby create a fictional character. We might even suppose further that if she did have such a belief, she wouldn’t have written the stories because her disdain for abstract objects in general is so great she would never do anything to bring about their proliferation.³³

Brock claims that intuitively there are many characters created by Rowling. But ICP entails that she created none because she lacked the requisite intention.

4.4 The Friedell Affair

David Friedell (2016) has recently attempted to reply to all of Brock’s ICP counterexamples. In reply to BC1, Friedell evaluates the possible responses an artefactualist could give of Stevenson’s musings such as that only one of the characters survives or that neither of the characters survive and a third distinct character is created, or that the original characters are distinct but a third character is created that is identical to them both. Eventually, he decides on

Two Ascribed One: Stevenson’s first draft is about two distinct characters: Jekyll and Hyde. The final draft ascribes to them the property of being identical to each other. They remain distinct characters.³⁴

The outcome of this analysis is that Jekyll and Hyde are different objects, but they are ascribed the properties of being identical to each other in the fiction. This has the advantage of being less arbitrary than claiming that there is a new character and less superfluous than there being a third character that is identical to the initial characters.

Friedell notes Brock has rejected this proposal, but he nonetheless maintains that he is too quick to do so.³⁵ To demonstrate this, he offers an analogy by way of a

³³ Stuart Brock, “The Creationist Fiction: The Case against Creationism about Fictional Objects,” 362.

³⁴ David Friedell, “Abstract Creationism and Authorial Intention,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 74, no. 2 (2016): 131.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 131.

hypothetical humorous fan fiction, *The Wizard Who Loved Me*, where Harry Potter grows up to become James Bond. The characters are of course distinct in that they were created by separate authors at different times, but in the fan fiction they are ascribed the property of being identical. As Friedell notes, this may look a different case at first blush to what Brock puts forward, but he assures us that it is in fact quite the same metaphysically, as all that is lacking is the epistemic resources for the readers to know that the characters are really different objects in the Jekyll and Hyde case.³⁶ Being that Brock's concerns are metaphysical and that the Two Ascribed One does not rest on any epistemic requirements, it seems to Friedell to handle BC1 in an intuitive and plausible way: Jekyll and Hyde are distinct fictional objects that are each ascribed the multi-place predicate of being identical to each other within the fiction.

Friedell admits that there may be vague cases, and his analysis may appear suspicious in them. Primarily, Friedell worries, these will come about from authorial intentions. One such example he lays forth is a case in which Stevenson thought of Jekyll and Hyde with a nuanced attributed property. He supposes what would happen under the conditions where Stevenson's had two independent thoughts: 'I will revise the story so that Jekyll and Hyde are the *same person*' and 'I will revise the story so that Jekyll and Hyde are the *same character*'.³⁷ Depending on which thought Stevenson had, Friedell thinks it is best to utilise the fictional-critical division, where the former should be understood as a fictional statement, for an abstract object cannot be a person, whereas latter should be understood as a critical statement, for it is a remark about the kind of ontological status the object has.³⁸

Another messy case is one in which Stevenson has the same thoughts but switches between them.³⁹ Under such conditions, Stevenson's muddled thoughts make it hard to decide the identity of such fictional objects.⁴⁰ Friedell offers this as recourse,

In any event, abstract creationists should not be discouraged. Concrete artifacts can be messy too. Suppose a carpenter oscillates between thinking the thing he or she is making is a table and thinking it is a bench. His or her jumbled intentions obfuscate what kind of thing he or she makes. We should not on this basis reject creationism about tables and benches. We should instead accept that the creation of artifacts—whether abstract or concrete—is sometimes messy.⁴¹

³⁶ David Friedell, "Abstract Creationism and Authorial Intention," 132.

³⁷ Ibid., 132.

³⁸ Ibid., 132.

³⁹ Ibid., 132.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 132.

⁴¹ Ibid., 132.

In brief, Friedell does not so much as directly tackle the case as much as he appeals to the parity that is also faced by concrete objects. This is more a so-matter-of-fact response rather than an argument, but it serves to illustrate that the intentions behind the creation of all sorts of objects can make them difficult to classify.

In reply to BC2, Friedell asserts that Brock is mistaken: Holmes and Watson are still the same character.⁴² Appealing to Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Friedell recounts that the Fool and Cordelia never appear at the same time; and, because of this occurring, there are many conclusions that enthusiasts and scholars of Shakespeare have drawn.⁴³ It intuitively seems, however, that the Fool and Cordelia would be taken to be the same if they were intended to be. Unfortunately, whether Shakespeare intended them to be the same cannot be known.

The same may be said in the case of Brock. If Doyle intended that Holmes and Watson were the same, then they are.⁴⁴ Endorsing a relaxed way of interpretation of a work of art, Friedell says, "Brock has not provided a case in which an author makes two characters while making one. An author makes one character and misleadingly leaves the impression that there are two".⁴⁵ Just as with BC1, Friedell maintains this so-matter-of-fact response on the assumption that interpretation matters when considering what a work of art displays.

Surprisingly, unlike with the other counterexamples posed by Brock, Friedell concedes that BC3 does refute ICP.⁴⁶ But he also tells us that it should not be a reason to reject Artefactualism because the same problem applies seemingly to cases of concrete objects as well.⁴⁷ Playing off with what he replied to BC1, a carpenter fashions a table if, and only if, she intends to fashion a table by performing particular acts, and performs those acts as a result (notwithstanding whether she is pleased at the outcome).⁴⁸ Yet it may well be that our carpenter produces what seems to be table to her and a stool to others. There would still be an artefact although it may not be what its maker wanted. The point Friedell wishes to draw out is this, "Brock is trying to show that fictional characters are uniquely mysterious, or at least that they are more mysterious than mundane concrete artifacts. He has not succeeded".⁴⁹

⁴² David Friedell, "Abstract Creationism and Authorial Intention," 133.

⁴³ Ibid., 133.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 133.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 133.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 134.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 134.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 134.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 134.

After having broached the three counterexamples, Friedell spends the last section of his response considering the role that intention has in manufacturing fictional objects. He notes that there may be some tension in what he said about how many objects there are and about how authors may create characters without intending them to be created.⁵⁰ To palliate these concerns, he thinks we should reject an extreme view of intentionalism: “that fictions always contain as many characters as their authors intend”.⁵¹ He then offers a heuristic for how we may decide on the occurrence of fictional objects:

Nothing New: Generally, when a fiction’s author intends for a property to be ascribed to a particular pre-existent character—when that character is originally from that work or another—that author represents that character without creating a new one.⁵²

This heuristic is claimed by Friedell to be perfectly consistent with the decisions to include or exclude the creation of fictional objects in the Jekyll-Hyde case, the Holmes-Watson case, and the Rowling case. So ends Friedell’s reply.

4.5 Nothing New (in a Different Way)

I do not think there is much to say in favour of Friedell’s reply, for I do not think Friedell has adequately argued for ICP, or anything much else for that matter; in a forthcoming article for *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Brock also maintains the same.⁵³ Friedell has not attempted to answer Brock’s largest challenge, to answer the question *how* a fictional object comes into existence, and *when* that instant is. These questions lead to ICP, and the counterexamples Brock put forward were intended to demonstrate how implausible ICP would be in circumstances where there is a lot of vagueness or authorial activity.

From with what Friedell did answer, he only sparsely touched on this in reply to BC1 when he suggested the ascription of identity and in reply to BC3 when he formed a principle for deciding intra- and inter-fictional identity. But his answers were not relevant: his answers to Brock presupposed the matter Brock was challenging. To

⁵⁰ David Friedell, “Abstract Creationism and Authorial Intention,” 134.

⁵¹ Ibid., 134.

⁵² Ibid., 135.

⁵³ Stuart Brock, forthcoming in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (n.d.): 2.

make matters worse, Friedell even concedes to Brock in BC3. On top of that, in the cases of BC2 and BC3, his arguments (if they are arguments) seem more concerned with parity than with plenitude, which was not what Brock was after.⁵⁴ Brock never suggested that the same problems did not apply to other objects; merely, he thought it could not be resolved in regards to abstract objects owing to the way in which they are created.

Friedell's reply, however, is not a complete let down. Some of what he has said is applicable to other metaphysical concerns facing fictional objects. It may be better thought, then, that Friedell's reply is a fragment of a frontend problem for Artefactualism, and he was mistakenly talking past Brock. But he does appeal to something more backend that I think has a great amount of merit and relevance, namely intentionalism. In the coming sections, I shall develop this idea to answer Brock's challenge.

4.6 To Defend Artefactualism

To oppose Brock's counterexamples and to answer his 'how' demur, I have in mind a possible modification to ICP as a way of defending Artefactualism. It requires a bit of ground work, but I think it is capable of handling all of Brock's counterexamples. The modification that I have in mind is influenced by Thomasson's categories of dependence as well as discussions surrounding interpretation. Thomasson speaks at great length on how fictional objects are dependent on their authors, texts, and the wider community in all parts of their existence; and modest intentional theses talk of the interpretation of fiction as being not strictly dictated by the author. It is this relaxed requirement of authorship that is of particular interest to me. I shall detail more about interpretation now, as I largely take Thomasson's work for granted.

4.6.1 Interpretation

There are a variety of positions on how to decide on the best interpretation of a literary work. At one side of the contrast class is the view that only the author is relevant to interpreting a work while on the other side is the view that there is no best interpretation of a work. Between these two extremes are several theses which champion an idea that, first, there are better interpretations than others and, second, that there are some things other than the author's intentions that are relevant in interpreting a work. The severity of how much influence an author has over the interpretation differs considerably, but most place the author as a sufficient and not a

⁵⁴ Stuart Brock, forthcoming, 7.

necessary condition for interpretation. For our purposes, let us call this kind of thesis of interpretation a *modest thesis of interpretation*, and say that it is a part of the modest contrast class.

Theses in the modest contrast class standardly hold that literary works should be understood as an utterance produced in a public context by a historically and socially situated author.⁵⁵ Roughly, this means that what a literary work means is what an appropriate reader would most reasonably take the author as trying to convey through speech acts.⁵⁶ Hence a modest thesis of interpretation would have us interpret a literary work of fiction by considering its temporal and social context to make and refine a hypothesis about what a literary work means.

A reader that uses this historical, social, and authorial knowledge which is available to her forms an *optimal hypothesis about literary meaning*.⁵⁷ Of course, the most optimal hypothesis of a literary work is the best interpretation of that work, but as readers are not customarily ideal epistemic agents, it is optimal in the sense that (for all intents and purposes) it is approximately true and better than any competing hypotheses of what a literary work really means. At any rate, in what way a hypothesis is optimal may be cashed out in several ways. Some may argue for an ‘ideal author’, where a hypothesis is optimal if it gets closest to what a possible author would best express. While others may argue for a conjoint approach, where a hypothesis is optimal if it is the most comprehensive of historical and social information, and the thesis is weighted towards such information. In this defence of mine, I do not commit to any particular modest thesis of interpretation. I simply assume that the objectively best interpretation of a literary work will come from a thesis in the modest contrast class. Although admitting this weakness of my upcoming defence, to discuss it further is beyond the scope of this work.

4.6.2 Modest Hermeneutic Creation

I think a modest view of interpretation is deserving of being considered in ICP cases. If a work of fiction is not completely dictated by the intentions of the author, then we should consider that the author is not the only relevant source of creation. For this reason, I think some aspects of modest intentionalism may be hacked into ICP to fashion a good explanation for when and how a fictional object is made. I submit the following.

⁵⁵ Jerrold Levinson, *Contemplating Art: Essays in Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 302.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 302.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 302.

- Modest Hermeneutic Creation:* An author x creates a fictional object y *iff*
- (1) x is deliberately undertaking fiction making,
 - (2) x pretends to refer to an object that has the properties ascribed to y , and
 - (3) the *ideal reader* would infer that x was intending to create y .

Modest Hermeneutic Creation, or ‘MHC’, says a fictional object is created just in case a referring term or phrase is used in the course of authoring a fiction to designate or denote an individual, and the success (whether it creates a new individual or picks out the same one) of that creation is determined by what the ideal reader would infer. But MHC needs some more explanation and justification for its criteria. Let us consider each condition in turn.

The first condition is taken for granted, but it is quite important. The idea behind it is that at any world where x is intending to make fiction and x is attempting to perform acts that respect their intentions, then x is making fiction. Again, it is trivial, but it eliminates situations and contexts in which accidents or other forms of procedure would fashion an entirely different ontology such as mythical objects. This condition is also significant to condition two, for it requires it to get off the ground.

The second condition is something we have already seen. I have only slightly adjusted it to be able to accommodate a broader range of singular terms and theories of meaning. The inclusion of phrases and denotation, for instance, allows definite and indefinite descriptions to count as well. Of course, the second condition needs the first condition to get off the ground, for none of the singular terms would designate or denote fictional objects had not performative expressions been about fiction.

Now we come to the third condition. By the ‘ideal reader’, I mean the reader who is most fit for interaction with a fiction. This is similar to the concept of an ideal rational agent, for instance, who always acts rationally according to some epistemic or moral criteria. There may be all sorts of other properties the ideal reader has such as knowing when semantic or speaker meaning is used, having extreme fluency in many languages, or whatever else, but they are ideal because they have ideal qualities. Now, at first blush, this condition may seem to be some bizarre form of backwards causation or flagrant question begging; I will argue that neither is the case.

Because the ideal reader has the best qualities, she can form the most optimal hypothesis and the best interpretation available. As we have already covered, an optimal hypothesis is derived from what a reader would make of those expressions

produced by an author *in the work*. This ‘in the work’ idea which is significant in that it suggests a literary work is independent from the author to some extent. It is precisely this independence of which MHC takes advantage, for if a work may somewhat stand apart from the author and the context in which it is made is relevant, then it would seem that utterances produced in a fiction making context are subject to the *general and temporally immediate situation* of the world. The ideal reader consummates this situation by having the ideal qualities needed for reading at that time.

It is important to note, however, that *the ideal reader does not need to be in ideal conditions*. All she may have in front of her is a book without any idea what the author was intending. This can be brought out like so. Suppose the ideal reader picks up Hesiod’s *Theogony*. She may know as sorts of thing about Ancient Greece including the languages and social customs, and so on, but she never met or had anything to do with Hesiod. Surely, she can still be ideal, for she seems to have otherwise excellent qualities that appear very intuitively what we ordinarily would use to read a literary work. On top of this, if modest theses of interpretation are correct, it does not matter how much she knows about the author: the author is merely sufficient. Hence the ideal reader need not be in an ideal situation.

I realise that this will look like question begging, for why would the ideal reader insist on inferring and creating one object over another? The most obvious answer to this would be concerning critical statements, and how they are true only if there are fictional objects. But to say this is quite circular. I think instead that the answer lies in an already accepted practice of forming an optimal hypothesis from historical and social information, and then seeing how this practice could affect the ideal reader.

4.6.3 An Ordinary Practice

Consider the following case.

- (H) A series of books, which collectively make up an entire narrative, are translated over several centuries by various persons and attributed to a single author. With each iteration of translation, various intra-textual affairs become more precise as the knowledge about it and its surrounding culture are refined. The received exegeses are contemporarily such that at least two of the books are thought to have been authored by persons that did not initially belong to the work, and it is further thought that the books were authored by different persons.

(H) is a case about Homer's *Odyssey*. Authorship in (H) seems strange, and it may be fairly asked, 'to whom do we ascribe authorship?', but there is a more pressing issue at hand, namely 'did *that* author, or all of *those* authors, have intentions to pretend to refer?'.

There is only so much known about the author 'Homer'. Typically, it is held that his stories began as an oral tradition somewhere between the late dark ages and early archaic period of Attic Greece. The precise temporal and geographical placement is difficult, though, for many parts of the Homeric epic are presented in and derive from Ionian, Dorian, Aeolian, and some foreign provincial dialects; furthermore, there are the presences of two additional books that bear no resemblance whatsoever to the rest of the tradition due to the style of phrasing and the imagery invoked in them. Now, being that there is so little to go by about what the author intended, we may expect to be in no position to say anything of the fiction; but this is simply not the case. Indeed, it seems that the classical community refines the knowledge we have of the text by judging *what they take to be* the best hypothesis of the *Odyssey* from a historical and social position despite that there is so much absent about the author's intentions. In other words, they are attempting to put themselves in the position of the ideal reader: in trying to form the most optimal hypothesis available about a work, the community attempts to survey and weigh the evidence available to make judgements on how to interpret (H)'s meaning in the most ideal way possible. It may therefore be said that we do impose an optimal hypothesis about what intentions were behind an author's activities and in determining what a story means, and this concept of the ideal reader is already established.

The artefact in (H) is brought about somewhat differently than what Brock's counterexamples display, but they all seem to have authorial activities that do not causally align correctly with their artefacts, and subsequently place a strain on pretend reference. In BC3, for example, Rowling has a propositional attitude that incentivises us to interpret her work as containing expressions that lack any sort of referent; that is to say, while she was pretending to refer, she did not *believe or intend that* there was any pretend reference such that it made a fictional object. Under ICP, the intention to pretend to refer is essential; otherwise, it fails account for what the author has done, and consequently fails to account for the creation of a fictional object. In the Homeric case, it is not clear what the author, or authors, had in mind when they pretended to refer, or even if they had some attitude towards their references. They may have believed that some of the objects were surrogates, that they were partially referring to concrete objects and events as well as referring by pretence, or that the entire tradition derives from imaginative and deliberate activities. Whichever case we inspect, we have only two assumptions to go by: first, that there is at least one author such that

they *deliberately* partook in fictional discourse, and, second, that their fictional activity resulted in some sort of fiction that contains, what seems to be, pretend references, as evident by the various names and denoting phrases used within them.

Despite that there is so much information lacking about the author(s), it still seems that the works are taken seriously and genuinely because of those utterances contained within the literary work even though what occurs in these cases is epistemologically odd. No one would say that their works are uninterpretable or that the author(s) did not tailor any expressions or speech acts that formed a plenitude of agents and events with good causal reasons for interacting and proceeding one another. From this, it should seem that the work may be analysed as the result of intentional activities and that there is, whether or not the author should care to admit it or whether there is any knowledge about the author, good reasons to suggest that the ideal reader would say the author(s) pretended to refer to fictional characters.

4.6.4 The Argument from Initialisation by Expression

I think we can also answer the first part of ‘when’ as being already resolved within in MHC: the very first time an author pretends to refer; or, more specifically, at the first time she performs a speech act about a character, or by that character having a relation to some other thing; and the ideal reader would say she was doing just that. Thus we have a proximate cause for a fictional object and Brock’s ‘when’ challenge has an answer.

There will inevitably be extreme discomfort about the claim I have laid. After all, a completed expression or utterance being the exact point in time for a fictional object being created seems *prima facie* entirely arbitrary. I do not think so. Many synthetic and natural languages have syntactical and semantical conventions that inform its audience and speakers about things and properties, and the instructions on how to order them. Most significantly, there are boundaries and rules for completeness; for example, in the programming language Java, a semicolon is used to delimit a statement, signifying the extremity of an instruction. The difference between a programme compiling and throwing up an error may be as little as failing to delimit a statement due to the procedural way in which a compiler translates those statements into a machine-readable way. So if a programmer is to have her programme be machine readable, she must adhere to the grammar and expressions of her language so that her statements are read and executed according to what she specifies.

Keeping with the programming analogy, I think something similar for fiction: when the author presents information in a legible expression that introduces a proposition containing a proper name or denoting phrase, there is enough information

to invoke a fictional object at that very instant if the ideal reader would say they were referring. So the difference between a character being made and no character may be as messily as a writer failing to place a letter.

Much like a programmer, an author creates story procedurally by deliberately acting upon their mental episodes or neural correlates, and arranging them into expressions in such a way so as to be understood by an audience as pretending to refer; and this will be accomplished by adhering to the grammatical rules of the language in which those expressions occur. Much like a machine, a reader will interpret those statements following along by that procedure the author has construed with their expressions, and interpret them by the grammatical rules and definitions provided by the language in which it is. This would thereby entail that, under some speech act, the moment when a description is *complete* such as ‘Lizzy is a daughter’, an object called ‘Lizzy’ is fashioned; whereas, when a description is *incomplete* such as ‘Lizzy is a daught’ there is no object that is created. Call this supplement argument to MHC the *Argument from Initialisation by Expression*, or ‘AIE’ for short.

This, I think, is enough to establish MHC for testing against Brock’s counterexamples. But rather than considering Brock’s counterexamples in the order in which they appear, I should like to consider them in an order that I think makes more logical sense for my defence. We turn to them now.

4.6.5 BC3 Considered

Before testing MHC against this counterexample, I should like to contend that the last half of the counterexample is not necessary to tackle. Rowling’s disdain for and withholding of creation seems to be a trivial remark about means-end beliefs in general, and it seems quite sensible to ask, ‘why would she bother producing fiction if she is not interested in pretending to refer or story telling?’. The lack of pretend reference coupled with the subjunctive conditional of withholding the activity seems very suspicious. If an author does not wish to pretend to refer, then there seems to be no intention to engage in any fictional story telling activity. If there is no intention to engage in that activity, then surely she would refrain from it. To suggest otherwise seems strange.

The rest of the counterexample is, however, a perfectly good challenge to ICP. If an author does not desire to bring about a fictional object, the referential pretence seems to go awry. To this end, Rowling pretended to refer, but she did not intend to create, which is contradictory of ICP. But what does MHC say of it?

MHC would appeal to the ideal reader and the literary work. Given what is available (and that the ideal reader is never in ideal conditions), when Rowling first

used an expression containing ‘Harry’, it would be most reasonable for the ideal reader to believe she pretended to refer to a fictional individual. Although Rowling never believed that there would be a fictional individual created, the context in which she purported to refer was one such that, first, it was fiction making and, second, as a consequence the first, it would be most reasonable to understand the intentions behind her expressions as having referred to a fictional individual. Thus MHC would say that Rowling created a fictional object because an ideal reader would most likely say that was what she trying to do.

I suspect that there will be immense dissatisfaction of this proposal. I imagine it will be similar to ‘are not we disregarding her intentions in favour of her activities?’. I think Friedell’s carpenter emphasises that this task of understanding how we impress on the world our fabrications is not a simple and clean one. Take our carpenter again. She fashioned, what she took to be, a table. She had the intentions and performed the activities consistent with table-making. Now suppose someone comes along taking her creation to be a stool. Does this make it a stool? In an off-hand way, I think it does. If it seems that the product of the carpenter is best suited to a stool rather than a table, then it seems feasible to say that it is a stool, or a table-and-stool, and not strictly a table. For our fictional creation, it seems significantly more reasonable to form the optimal hypothesis that Rowling intended to make one Harry Potter.

Yet again, I see this being met with dissatisfaction. But, in line with what Friedell has said, I think there is almost certainly going to be some contention between the intention and the act, and the product of them. The only way I can think to resolve this tension is by offering what the ideal reader would make of an author’s activities. It is reasonable to suggest there are times when the evaluation of an object, or whether any object came to be, is going to be heavily dependent on more than one agents’ assessment. What Rowling set out to do, and what intentions she had behind them, seem much better understood as having pretended to refer to a fictional object, and thereby create one, because what she is doing would appear to be this.

4.6.6 BC2 Considered

I think this one is straightforward. If Doyle had intended that Holmes and Watson were the same character in a world where this was very clear, then the ideal reader would say Doyle’s speech acts created one character. But in a world where the identity of Holmes and Watson was not made clear, then the ideal reader can only go by those expressions found within Doyle’s works, and so it seems reasonable to say by way of information available that the characters are distinct. Seeming as MHC is aware of historical and social data, and takes a strong stance on expressions for

creation, it is completely within the thesis' ability to claim that Holmes and Watson are distinct or identical objects in different worlds without inconsistency. When they come into existence, then, is a matter of what historical and social resources are available to invoke AIE for the ideal reader.

4.6.7 BC1 Considered

This is a very interesting challenge. It includes intention, revision, and identity all in one. How should MHC overcome this counterexample? Let us first generalise Brock's counterexample like so.

An author P pretends to refer to some fictional object x at t_1 and another fictional object y at t_2 . At some time later, P revises their intentions and references, and pretends to refer to some fictional object z at t_3 that, at the very least, strongly resembles both x and y .

To borrow Friedell's musings, there are three ways we may choose to understand the identities of x , y , and z :

- (1) $(x = z) \ \& \ (y = z) \ \& \ \sim(x = y)$
- (2) $\sim(x = y) \ \& \ \sim(x = z) \ \& \ \sim(y = z)$
- (3) $(x = y) \ \& \ (x = z) \ \& \ (y = z)$

(1) is inconsistent, as it fails to account for identity relations correctly, (2) is what Friedell tried to avoid earlier, and (3) is what Brock thinks is desirable for the creationist theory, but what it fails to obtain.

MHC has an answer to this counterexample that Brock will like: the answer is (3). The ideal reader is going to read through the work, and discern that there are statements that say Jekyll and Hyde are identical. Unless there is some outstanding textual reason for why this is not the case, the text seems best interpreted, especially in what it lends when departed from its author, that Jekyll and Hyde are identical.

4.7 Conclusion

Having considered and replied to Brock's challenges, I hope I have demonstrated that Artefactualism remains tenable and is able to quell some bigger metaphysical protests. MHC has given Artefactualism more clarity and precision in knowing when and how a fictional object is created; and AIE supplemented this thesis by offering that an

object is created in the instant in which there is enough semantic information for a meaningful expression to refer to a subject and its property. This metaphysical foundation allowed me to defeat, or at the very least reply to, Brock's counterexamples without supposing bizarre or vague concepts. Hopefully, this is enough to show the cogency of the artefactualist position.

5. IN WHICH THE IDENTITIES OF FICTIONAL OBJECTS ARE DEFENDED

Consider the following micro-fiction originally authored by Anthony Everett (2005).

Frackworld: No one was absolutely sure whether Frick and Frack were really the same person or not. Some said that they were definitely two different people. True, they looked very much alike, but they had been seen in different places at the same time. Others claimed that such cases were merely an elaborate hoax and that Frick had been seen changing his clothes and wig to, as it were, become Frack. All that I can say for certain is that there were some very odd similarities between Frick and Frack but also some striking differences.¹

Is the Frick-object identical to the Frack-object? Is the Frick-object indeterminately identical to the Frack-object? Are there two separate objects? Or, perhaps more pressingly, is it indeterminate overall if there is an object? Fictions such as *Frackworld* pose complicated questions and problems for the artefactualist, for if she is committed to the existence of fictional objects, is she committed to indeterminate or vague identities and objects?

In this chapter, I defend Artefactualism from protests of this kind; in particular, from the protests put forward Anthony Everett, and the discussion brought about by it. Everett rebukes all forms of realism about fictional objects in *Against Fictional Realism* (2005) and *The Nonexistent* (2013). He contends that fictional realisms such as Artefactualism suffer from severe metaphysical problems concerning the identity, ontological status, and logical coherence of fictional objects to such an extent that he sees the position as wholly untenable.

It is worth noting, however, Everett's rebukes of realism about fictional objects have remained largely similar between publications notwithstanding the protests raised against his arguments. This is not to say that he has refused to acknowledge them, but rather that he has acknowledged and responded to those new arguments for and against realism between the texts, and found such responses wanting. So, in the coming sections, the discussion that takes place will try to consummate his views between that of his earlier work and of his later work, and the replies in turn. I shall,

¹ Anthony Everett, "Against Fictional Realism," *The Journal of Philosophy* 102, no. 12 (2005): 629.

for the most part, attempt to follow along with his earlier works, then enter the discussions surrounding it, before considering his later contentions and defences. Moreover, while Everett's attack is proffered against all forms of fictional realism, I shall only deal with criticisms that relate to Artefactualism.

With this in mind, the discussion will run as follows. First, I cover the material in Everett (2005), which includes his identity principles and his indeterminacy kinds. Second, I consider a reply to his article from Benjamin Schnieder and Tatjana von Solodkoff. Third, I present a counter from Everett to Schnieder and von Solodkoff's reply using his later material (2013). Fifth and last, I submit a procedure an artefactualist may utilise to overcome the metaphysical and logical criticisms presented by Everett's material.

5.1 Everett's Objections to Artefactualism

5.1.1 Identity Conditions and Kinds of Indeterminacy

Before considering the objections proposed by Everett against Artefactualism, his identity conditions and kinds of indeterminacy resulting from fictions must be explained. Everett (2005) suggests that there are two identity principles that are essential to our understanding of fictional objects, and that to reject them is to give an account or criticism of some other kind of object or entity.² The principles are as follows.

- (P1) If the world of a story concerns a creature *a*, and if *a* is not a real thing, then *a* is a fictional character.
- (P2) If a story concerns *a* and *b*, and if *a* and *b* are not real things, then *a* and *b* are identical in the world of the story *iff* the fictional character of *a* is identical to the fictional character of *b*.³

It should be noted, however, that Everett's use of 'real' in these identity principles is to be understood in a conventional or vernacular sense: he is not implying any Quineian or Meinongian qualities of an object. Nonetheless, Everett holds that these identity principles are essential to fictional objects but not without some contention.

Everett (2013) also notices and distinguishes between two different kinds of indeterminacy resulting from fiction. The first kind of indeterminacy is *type-A*

² Anthony Everett, "Against Fictional Realism," 627.

³ Ibid., 627.

indeterminacy.⁴ This form of indeterminacy occurs when it is indeterminate whether, according to some fiction *f*, some object *a* is identical to some object *b*.⁵ In Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, for example, it seems indeterminate whether Charles Kinbote is identical to the King Charles II, Professor Botkin, or John Shade due to the style and unreliableness of the literary work. The poem is divided into four cantos that are fictionally claimed to be written and narrated by Shade and fictionally claimed to be edited by Kinbote. But the plot is muddled between the cantos written by Shade and the critical content provided by Kinbote. Kinbote says that he received the poem from a dead Shade, but the poem also suggests to the reader at times that Kinbote is Shade while at other times also suggesting that Kinbote was a King (or he has the delusion of being one). To make matters more confusing, it also strongly seems to suggest that Kinbote is in fact a very mentally ill Botkin, who is fabricating a revenge work to spite his colleagues and school of which Shade is a member. Despite this confusion, the rest of the fictional world, so described, seems to be very close to our own.⁶ Being that the fiction uses a surrogate world very close to our actual world, it must be the case that, for example, either Kinbote is Botkin or is not Botkin; unfortunately, *Pale Fire* does not describe whether the identity obtains.⁷ Hence we have a clear case where type-A indeterminacy occurs.

The second kind of indeterminacy is *type-B indeterminacy*.⁸ This form of indeterminacy occurs, more generally, when, according to some fiction *f*, it is indeterminate whether some object *a* is identical to some object *b*.⁹ Everett then divides this type-B indeterminacy further into *type-B₁* and *type-B₂* forms of indeterminacy. As he explains them,

Let's say that we have a case of type-B₁ indeterminacy if we have a case where, within the fiction, it is either true or false that *a* = *b* but it is indeterminate which. And let's say we have a case of type-B₂ indeterminacy if we have a case where, within the fiction, it is neither true nor false that *a* = *b*.¹⁰

Noticeably, cases of type-B₁ indeterminacy may count as cases of type-A indeterminacy, for if it is left open *in the fiction* whether it is true that *a* is identical to

⁴ Anthony Everett, *The Nonexistent* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2013), 210.

⁵ Ibid., 210.

⁶ Ibid., 209–10.

⁷ Ibid., 210.

⁸ Ibid., 211.

⁹ Ibid., 210.

¹⁰ Ibid., 211.

b , then it will be left open whether it is true that, in the fiction, a is identical to b .¹¹ But a case of type-A indeterminacy may not result in a case of type-B₁ indeterminacy and vice versa. An example of a pure type-B₁ indeterminacy is in a fiction such as Frackworld. In it, it is either true or false in the fiction that Frick is Frack and the fiction acknowledges that no-one is quite certain whether Frick is the same as Frack. Pale Fire does not do this: it mentions many different supposed individuals, but it does not establish their identities, or lack of identities, in an obvious way. Hence Pale Fire is a case of type-A indeterminacy.

Cases of type-B₂ indeterminacy, however, will not count as cases of type-A indeterminacy, as in such cases it is neither true nor false that, *in the fiction*, a is identical to b . An example is Haruki Murakami's *Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, where the fictional world is dissimilar to that of our actual world.¹² The book, or books, detail Turo Otada interacting and participating in a series of events that have some underlying magic to them, which often leaves out some details or shuffles them. As Everett explains, "[w]ithin the fictional world itself there is no fact of the matter as to exactly what is taking place during certain episodes and as to whether, for example, Kumiko and the woman in the hotel room are identical."¹³ Being that the fiction seems to propose a world that is dissimilar to ours, it seems the reader is invited to imagine that the objects themselves are indeterminately identical.¹⁴ Hence we have a clear case where a type-B₂ indeterminacy occurs.

With both identity conditions and indeterminacy kinds, Everett then sets out to challenge Artefactualism by delivering several examples and arguments that show how the artefactualist is committed to ontological vagueness and indeterminate identities.

5.1.2 Ontological Vagueness and Indeterminacy

Everett makes two claims against Artefactualism in the first objection. The first of Everett's (2005) claims is that the artefactualist is committed to objects that are vague or indeterminate in their identities.¹⁵ If we recall Frackworld, for example, the fiction described Frick and Frack in such a way that it is left indeterminate whether or not they are identical.¹⁶ But if the artefactualist accepts a principle such as (P2), or a

¹¹ Anthony Everett, *The Nonexistent*, 211.

¹² Ibid., 210.

¹³ Ibid., 210.

¹⁴ Ibid., 210.

¹⁵ Anthony Everett, "Against Fictional Realism," 629.

¹⁶ Ibid., 629.

disambiguated principle similar to it, then she accepts that there is some Frick-object such that it is indeterminate whether it is identical to Frack, and so she is existentially committed to an object that is vaguely identical to some object or other; however, and as Everett cites, an argument by Gareth Evans demonstrates that it cannot be an indeterminate matter as to whether *a* is identical to *b*.¹⁷ Evans' argument is roughly this,

- (P₁) If it is indeterminate whether *a* is *b*, then *b* has the property of being indeterminately identical to *a*.
- (P₂) Since *a* is determinately identical to *a*, *a* does not have the property of being indeterminately identical to *a*.
- (C₁) Therefore, there is a property which *b* has but *a* lacks.
- (C₂) Therefore, and by Leibniz's Law, *a* is not identical to *b*.¹⁸

Given that Frackworld appears quiet on the matter of whether Frick and Frack are identical, it is not clear on what objects the story exports; and, moreover, if Frick and Frack are existing objects, then it does not seem possible that they could be vaguely identical if Evans' argument holds true. The artefactualist, therefore, seems committed to objects that are vaguely identical to each other.

A possible solution that Everett briefly mentions would be to invoke some kind of many-valued or fuzzy logic that allows for values of truth which are not strictly bivalent.¹⁹ Invoking such qualifying options would then allow the artefactualist to argue that, for example, Frick is, to some extent, identical to Frack and, to some extent, not identical to Frack. But, as Everett points out, "[t]he problem here is that it is completely unclear how we could assign any degree of truth at all to the claim that Frick is Frack in our story."²⁰ To make matters worse, it is not entirely clear that one would ever be in a position to claim that there is some value or degree of truth that says Frick is, for instance, in some way identical to Frack.²¹ Thus a many-valued or fuzzy scheme of logic would still not capture what is happening in the story or what is happening outside of the story.

The second of Everett's claims is that the artefactualist is committed to cases of vague or indeterminate existence.²² The example that he uses comes from Tatyana Tolstaya's novel *The Slynx*, where it is left open, inside the fiction itself, whether there

¹⁷ Anthony Everett, "Against Fictional Realism," 629.

¹⁸ Ibid., 629.

¹⁹ Ibid., 630.

²⁰ Ibid., 630.

²¹ Ibid., 630.

²² Ibid., 630.

exists a Slynx creature. In this fiction, the plot centres on Benedikt, some two hundred years and post-apocalypse from now, who is rewriting old books to claim them as new works by the Great New Leader. Outside of the dystopic city is said to be a screeching animal called ‘the Slynx’ waiting beyond the borders; however, no-one has seen it and it remains rather conjectural in the fiction. But owing to (P1), it follows that it is indeterminate whether a Slynx-object exists, so the problem becomes that it is not clear how the being of a Slynx-object could be an indeterminate or vague matter.²³

This existential indeterminacy problem leads Everett to suggest three possible solutions the artefactualist may adopt. The first suggestion is that the Slynx-object may be a special object that has an indeterminate ontological status, and for that reason does not completely have being but does not completely lack it either.²⁴ The second suggestion is that it may be indeterminate whether the property of ‘being a slynx’ is instantiated.²⁵ The third and last suggestion is that it may be indeterminate whether the circumstance of there being a Slynx-character obtains.²⁶ Everett then argues against them all.

Everett argues the first option fails because it does not seem possible that there is a coherent position that could postulate indeterminately existing objects.²⁷ An object that does not have a determinate ontological status would, in some sense, require that there is a position that commits itself completely to that object, even though it does not have existence or being but does not lack existence or being either. Thus it would seem such a position would commit to an object as having a determinate ontological status despite that it claims otherwise.²⁸ For this reason, Everett concludes that this way of arguing for the Slynx-object fails.

The second option is not much better according to Everett. He says, “in order for it to be indeterminate as to whether a property is instantiated, there must surely be an object or a set of objects such that it is indeterminate as to whether they instantiate that property.”²⁹ Take the Slynx-object, for example. If the property of being-a-slynx is indeterminately instantiated, then it must be indeterminately instantiated by a fictional object in *The Slynx*.³⁰ But if every character occurring in *The Slynx* that has a determinate ontological status does not instantiate the property of being-a-slynx, and

²³ Anthony Everett, “Against Fictional Realism,” 630.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 631.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 631.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 631.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 631.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 631.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 632.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 632.

the property of being-a-slynx is one only instantiated by an object that has such a property indeterminately, then if the property is instantiated at all, it must be instantiated by an object that indeterminately exists or has being; thus, the property of being-a-slynx indeterminately collapses into the same problem as the first option, for it requires determinately committing to an object that has an indeterminate existence or being in order to instantiate the property of being-a-slynx.³¹

The third and final option fails, too. According to Everett, “if it indeterminate as to whether the state of affairs of there being a Slynx-character obtains, it must surely be indeterminate as to whether the property of being the Slynx-character is instantiated”.³² For if that property of being-a-slynx was determinately instantiated or failed to be determinately instantiated, then it would seem that there must be a state of affairs, according to which, there being a Slynx-object obtains.³³ And as demonstrated by the previous two objections, this move will not do.

After considering the three possible solutions, Everett then concludes that the only other possible way to overcome his objections against Artefactualism would be for the artefactualist to deny either (P1) or (P2).³⁴ But to do so would then still require that she give some account of whether Frick is identical to Frack and whether there is a Slynx.³⁵ “Hence,” he says, “I would argue, simply rejecting (P1) and (P2) will not save the fictional realist.”³⁶

5.1.3 Logical Incoherence

Everett (2005) claims that the artefactualist is committed to logically incoherent fictional objects in his second objection against Artefactualism. Owing to (P1) and (P2), what exists in the world of the fiction determines what fictional objects there are, so if impossibilities occur such as ones that defy logical laws or identity principles, then they will affect the objects so exported. Hence the artefactualist is said to be in the uncomfortable position of having to decide between what objects there are (if there are any) and committed to impossible or implausible objects and properties.³⁷ A further two stories provided by Everett are purported to show how this is the case.

³¹ Anthony Everett, “Against Fictional Realism,” 632.

³² Ibid., 632.

³³ Ibid., 632.

³⁴ Ibid., 632.

³⁵ Ibid., 633.

³⁶ Ibid., 633.

³⁷ Ibid., 633.

Dialethialand: When she arrived in Dialethialand, Jane met Jules and Jim. This confused Jane since Jules and Jim both were, and were not, distinct people. And this made it hard to know how to interact with them. For example, since Jules both was and was not Jim, if Jim came to tea Jules both would and wouldn't come too. This made it hard for Jane to determine how many biscuits to serve. Then Jane realized what to do. She needed both to buy and not to buy extra biscuits whenever Jim came. After that everything was better.³⁸

Asymmetryville: As soon as he got up in the morning Cicero knew that something was wrong. It was not that he was distinct from Tully. On the contrary, just as always he was identical to Tully. It was rather that while he was identical to Tully, Tully was distinct from him. In other words, sometime during the night (he could not tell exactly when) the symmetry of identity failed. This had some rather annoying consequences. When Cicero got paid Tully could spend the money but not vice versa. Tully got fat off the food Cicero ate and gave up dining himself. And Tully was praised for Cicero's denunciation of Catiline although he himself had slept through the whole affair. It was enough to test Cicero's Stoicism to the limits. Then something happened that changed everything. Cicero's political enemies who knew that Cicero was Tully mistook Tully for Cicero and murdered him. At first it seemed as if Tully had died. But then Cicero realized that since he was alive and he was Tully, Tully was alive too. Tully was understandably grateful and reformed his ways. After that Cicero and Tully lived together happily.³⁹

In Dialethialand, Jules is and is not Jim, which defies the *Law of Non-Contradiction*; in Asymmetryville, Cicero is Tully and Tully is not Cicero, which defies the symmetry of identity. So what fictional objects are there?

If the artefactualist commits to both (P1) and (P2), then there are only two responses according to Everett: first, the artefactualist may deny that the stories contain any fictional objects or, second, she may allow that the stories contain

³⁸ Anthony Everett, "Against Fictional Realism," 633–4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 634.

fictional objects, but she may maintain that the objects do not defy or contravene on any logical principles or identity conditions.⁴⁰ The earlier response is named the *No Character* response while the later response is named the *Coherent Character* response. Everett then considers and rejects to both positions like so.⁴¹

The No Character response has the artefactualist deny that *Dialethialand* and *Asymmetryville* world contain any fictional objects. But it does seem as if there are indeed characters in those worlds. So, as Everett says, “if the fictional realist is to maintain the No Character response she had better argue that ... *Dialethialand* and *Asymmetryville* do not succeed in describing fictional worlds in the first place”.⁴² Yet this solution seems implausible to Everett and he is not sure how it could be best defended.⁴³

Everett suggests that the No Character response could be defended by the artefactualist imposing some principle that says fictional worlds must obey logical laws and identity principles.⁴⁴ But, as he points out, this seems to go against stories that provide adequate descriptions of fictional worlds though they may describe impossible things.⁴⁵ In the end, this solution just seems too *ad hoc* to Everett, so he rejects it.

Another way, Everett suggests, the No Character response could be defended is by the artefactualist arguing that a story only counts as successfully describing some world insofar as we are able to imagine that world.⁴⁶ Seeming as stories such as *Dialethialand* and *Asymmetryville* pose impossible worlds, we are straightforwardly unable to imagine them fully, and so they fail to describe anything.⁴⁷ While Everett grants that perhaps we are not able to imagine in too much detail or completeness what impossible worlds would be like, he does argue, however, that there are many other fictions that contain impossibilities, and we seem able to imagine and to engage with them nonetheless.⁴⁸ Alan Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh*, for example, seems to feature a variety of anthropomorphic animals that wander about having adventures in the Hundred Acre Wood, while the BBC’s *Doctor Who*, as another example, features

⁴⁰ Anthony Everett, “Against Fictional Realism,” 634.

⁴¹ Ibid., 634.

⁴² Ibid., 634.

⁴³ Ibid., 635.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 635.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 635.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 635.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 635.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 636.

an eccentric alien that travels through time because he has nothing better to do.⁴⁹ Now, as Everett notes, to completely imagine what any of these worlds is like would certainly require us to imagine or endorse some logically and metaphysically incoherent concepts, but it does not seem to preclude us from imagining them completely.⁵⁰ Thus this strategy for the No Character response seems to fail, and so too does the No Character response in general, according to Everett.

The Coherent Character response has the artefactualist argue that only the objects that do not defy or contravene on any logical principles or identity conditions succeed as being created. As Everett sees it, there are two problems with this reply, and they may be brought out by considering Dialethialand again. The first problem that Everett sees is that it seems *ad hoc* to take Jules or Jim as being either distinct or identical from each other, for the fiction does not specify either of those options, and gives no indication that this could or could not be the case; thus, the move lacks any good reasons for the choice.⁵¹ The second problem that Everett sees is that to say Jules and Jim are distinct or identical is not very fair to his story; thus, to maintain that Jules and Jim are distinct or identical seems to plainly get something wrong according to the story.⁵² Therefore, Everett concludes, the Coherent Character response will not save the realist either.

5.2 Schnieder and von Solodkoff's Objections to Everett

Schnieder and von Solodkoff in *In Defence of Fictional Realism* (2009) defend realism about fictional objects. Although they do not argue that realism is correct, they nonetheless proffer a rebuttal to Everett's (2005) challenges against fictional realism to show that the realist position is tenable.⁵³ Here, I cover their counterarguments to Everett's objections in the context of Artefactualism.

5.2.1 Indeterminate Identity

In their first rebuttal of Everett's argument, Schnieder and von Solodkoff's argue that there are no truth-value gaps resulting from fictionally indeterminate identities. They maintain that when a fiction does not specify whether an identity obtains that the

⁴⁹ Anthony Everett, "Against Fictional Realism," 636.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 636.

⁵¹ Ibid., 637.

⁵² Ibid., 637.

⁵³ Benjamin Schnieder and Tatjana von Solodkoff, "In Defence of Fictional Realism," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 59, no. 234 (2009): 139.

truth-value of a proposition containing one or more fictional characters' identities is false rather than indeterminate because no identities are supplied by the text. To show this, they begin by noting that Everett's (P₂) seems *prima facie* plausible for a realist thesis; however, due to a comment cited from Everett (2005), they interpret Everett's (P₂) as saying

Everett.1*: If a story concerns *a* and *b*, and if *a* and *b* are not real things, then (it is indeterminate whether *a* = *b* in the world of the story) *iff* (it is indeterminate whether the fictional entity *a* = the fictional entity *b*).⁵⁴

They then provide *Bah-Tale* as an example of indeterminate or vague identity that is meant to reproduce Everett's previous stories:

Bah-Tale: There once was a man called Bahrooh
 There once was a man called Bahraah
 But nobody knew if Bahraah was Bahrooh
 Or if they were actually two.⁵⁵

From these, they surmise Everett's argument as the following, where (P₂) comes from (Everett.1*) while (P₁) comes from the readers' understanding of *Bah-Tale*.

- (P₁) It is indeterminate whether (Bahraah = Bahrooh) in the world of *Bah-Tale*.
- (P₂) (It is indeterminate whether (Bahraah = Bahrooh) in the world of *Bah-Tale*) *iff* (it is indeterminate whether the fictional entity Bahraah = the fictional entity Bahrooh).
- (C) Therefore, it is indeterminate whether the fictional entity Bahraah = the fictional entity Bahrooh.⁵⁶

After presenting Everett's argument, Schnieder and von Solodkoff remark that his argument relies on how (P₁) is interpreted. At first blush, this critique may appear to have already been solved by Everett after he had distinguished kinds of indeterminacy; however, Schieder and von Solodkoff still see a scope ambiguity in the premise, and as such it may be interpreted in two ways:

⁵⁴ Benjamin Schnieder and Tatjana von Solodkoff, "In Defence of Fictional Realism," 140.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 139.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 140.

1*: It is indeterminate whether in the world of *Bah-Tale*: Bahraah = Bahrooh.

1†: In the world of *Bah-Tale*: it is indeterminate whether Bahraah = Bahrooh.⁵⁷

As they explain, “[o]ur understanding of the story supports (1*) if we take (1*) as saying that the story *leaves it open* whether or not Bahraah is Bahrooh. To say this is to make a statement *about* the story, not to report some truth which is *part* of the story.”⁵⁸ So, as they see it, *Bah-Tale* is best interpreted by (1*); however, as Schnieder and von Solodkoff show, *Bah-Tale* may be easily changed to fit (1†). *Bah-Tale II*, as they give it, does like so.

Bah-Tale II: There once was a man called Bahrooh
 There once was a man called Bahraah
 But nothing determined if Bahraah was Bahrooh
 Or if they were actually two.⁵⁹

In this story, there is a clear demonstration of internal indeterminacy, as displayed by (1†), so it would seem, if Evans’ argument holds true, that it contains a necessary falsehood and demonstrates a case of an *inconsistent fiction*.⁶⁰

Having established the scope ambiguity from which Everett’s argument suffers, Schnieder and von Solodkoff attempt to show that there are no truth-value gaps resulting from indeterminacy in *Bah-Tale*, and fictions similar to it. To do this, they argue that to connect (Everett.1*) with (P₁), the first occurrence of ‘indeterminate’ must be interpreted as ‘left open’, or type-A indeterminacy.⁶¹ But, as they see it, this does not make sense of the right side of the bi-conditional because ‘it is indeterminate whether Bahraah = Bahrooh’ is not a statement about the contents of the fiction.⁶² This amounts to Everett’s argument requiring a mixed reading in order for the indeterminacy to carry through into a truth-value gap.⁶³ So they say the argument is blocked due to (P₁) lacking the right reading.

⁵⁷ Benjamin Schnieder and Tatjana von Solodkoff, “In Defence of Fictional Realism,” 140.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 140.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 141.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 141.

⁶¹ Ibid., 142.

⁶² Ibid., 142.

⁶³ Ibid., 142.

But there still is a pressing question left for the artefactualist: ‘is Bahraah identical to Bahrooh?’ To answer this question, Schnieder and von Solodkoff suppose two identity principles, (Identity) and (Identity*):⁶⁴

Identity: If a and b are fictional entities originating in story T , then the fictional entity $a =$ the fictional entity b iff according to story T , $a = b$.⁶⁵

Identity*: If a and b are fictional entities originating in story T , then the fictional entity $a \neq$ the fictional entity b iff according to story T , $a \neq b$.⁶⁶

Moreover, the right-hand side of the bi-conditional in (Identity*) is satisfied if the story says that $a \neq b$ (and is consistent) or if the story leaves it open whether $a = b$.⁶⁷

These identity principles are then supported by two further principles, (Grounding) and (Interpretation):

Grounding: The nature (and identity) of fictional entities must be grounded in facts about their stories; unless the story provides sufficient grounds for the identity of an entity a and an entity b , no such identity is constituted.⁶⁸

Interpretation: Since stories seldom explicitly state the non-identity of an entity a and an independently mentioned entity b , their non-identity is the (warranted but defeasible) default assumption in interpreting a story.⁶⁹

Consequently, there is a default assumption that if two objects are named differently, then they are *prima facie* two separate objects.⁷⁰ Bahraah and Bahrooh are therefore distinct.

But what about Bah-Tale II or other inconsistent fictions? Schieder and von Solodkoff do not provide complete explanation as to how the realist can cope, but thanks to (Grounding) and (Interpretation), it may be done in cases similar to Bah-Tale; for example, in the case of Bah-Tale II, it may be said that, as it explicitly mentions the indeterminate identity of Bahrooh and Bahrooh, (Interpretation) does nothing; however, (Grounding) seems to establish that they are different objects. As

⁶⁴ Benjamin Schnieder and Tajtana von Solodkoff, “In Defence of Fictional Realism,” 143.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 143.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 143.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 143.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 143.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 143.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 143.

there seems to be little to ground either the identity or lack of identity, the realist is justified (at least *prima facie*) in saying that two objects are exported, and that they are not identical. While this explanation may not be seen as satisfying, it nonetheless provides an answer to what objects occur from *some* inconsistent fictions.

5.2.2 Vague Existence

In their second rebuttal, Schnieder and von Solodkoff then turn their attention to Everett's arguments of vaguely existing fictional objects. Once again, they take into account another comment by Everett (2005) to interpret (P2):

Everett.2*: If a story concerns a creature *a*, which is not a real thing, then if it is indeterminate whether the story has it that *a* exists, then it is indeterminate whether the fictional entity *a* exists.⁷¹

Using Everett's (2005) example of The Slynx, they then construct his argument as this,

- (P₁) It is indeterminate whether The Slynx has it that the Slynx exists.
- (P₂) If it is indeterminate whether The Slynx has it that the Slynx exists, then it is indeterminate whether the fictional entity Slynx exists.
- (C) Therefore, it is indeterminate whether the fictional entity Slynx exists.

As they point out, their previous objection to Everett works here.⁷² (P₁), again, is won from the reader's understanding of The Slynx, which means 'indeterminate', again, ought to be read as 'left open'.⁷³ This requires a mixed reading, again, of (Everett.2*), where the two uses of 'indeterminate' are read differently; thus, the argument is blocked again.⁷⁴

But the artefactualist still needs to provide an account of whether there is a fictional object called 'the Slynx'. According to The Slynx,

Alt: *Either* the Slynx is a creature living in the woods *or* the Slynx is a mythical creature.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Benjamin Schnieder and Tatjana von Solodkoff, "In Defence of Fictional Realism," 144.

⁷² Ibid., 144.

⁷³ Ibid., 144.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 144.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 145.

By artefactualist standards, the Slynx-object exists on either side of the disjunct; however, the second case differs only in that the Slynx-object would not be internally a ‘real’ object but only a fictional object.⁷⁶ That is to say, what there is to decide between here is whether (i) according to the fiction, the Slynx is such that it lives in the woods, or (ii) according to the fiction, the Slynx is such that, according to some (internal) fiction, it is fictional (or mythical). So the question becomes merely about the Slynx’s ontological status.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, Schnieder and von Solodkoff do not think the realist should be too hasty to accept the existence of the Slynx. Whether the Slynx exists seems to hinge on whether

- (a) The Slynx incorporates a particular fiction according to which the creature Slynx exists.

or

- (b) The Slynx only speaks of *some* story about a creature called ‘Slynx’, whose content remains untold.⁷⁸

Schnieder and von Solodkoff say that both cases are possible, and that the artefactualist ought to have something to say about them; however, they note that (b) seems to be problematic: “if it is true, *The Slynx* has it that either the creature Slynx exists, or *some* story (left untold) exists which has it that the creature exists.”⁷⁹ But in the latter case, there is no such story, so there cannot be a Slynx because it requires a story in which to originate. As a solution, they offer this explanation.

[We] assume *The Slynx* has it that there is a mythical *or* true story (left untold) about the Slynx. Since the story is untold, there is actually no story which has it that the creature Slynx exists. There only is a story, i.e., *The Slynx*, which has it that either the *creature* Slynx exists, or the *fictional creature* Slynx exists. In both cases, the fictional realist can say that the fictional *entity* Slynx exists; it originates in *The Slynx* because that story definitely has it that the Slynx exists. The Slynx is not a *fictional creature*, though, because *The Slynx* does not have it

⁷⁶ Benjamin Schnieder and Tatjana von Solodkoff, “In Defence of Fictional Realism,” 145.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 145.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 145.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 145.

that it is a creature. Nor is the Slynx a *fictional fictional-creature*, because The Slynx does not have it that it is a fictional creature. Rather, the Slynx is a fictional *creature-or-fictional-creature*. Fortunately, no dangerous indeterminacy is involved: the fictional entity Slynx exists. So the realist can account for the existence of the Slynx even in the hardest possible case.⁸⁰

Plainly, the artefactualist may choose how the compound proposition proposed by (Alt) is applied to her thesis. So, in cases where she uses a prefix, ‘according to *The Slynx*, the Slynx is such that is a creature-or-fictional-creature’ may be used, or in cases where she uses ascription, ‘the Slynx-object is such that it is ascribed that property of being a creature-or-fictional-creature’ may be used. Either way, the realist is no longer compelled to accept vaguely or indeterminately existing objects if Schieder and von Solodkoff’s argument holds.

5.3 The Reply of Everett

Responding to Schnieder and von Solodkoff, Everett (2013) acknowledges that the (P2) identity principle is ambiguous and may be read in two ways.⁸¹ The two possible disambiguated readings he suggests are

- (ID) If a fiction *f* is such that (1) in that fiction *a* exists and *b* exists, and (2) no real thing is identical to *a* or *b*, then the fictional character *a* = the fictional character *b* iff in fiction *f*, *a* = *b*.
- (ID') If a fiction *f* is such that (1) in that fiction *a* exists and *b* exists, and (2) no real thing is identical to *a* or *b*, then:
 - (i) It is true that fictional character *a* = fictional character *b* iff in fiction *f*: it is true that *a* = *b*,
 - (ii) It is false that fictional character *a* = fictional character *b* iff in fiction *f*: it is false that *a* = *b*.⁸²

Everett had intended (P2) to be read as (ID'); however, he does not think it is unreasonable to read (P2) as (ID) either.⁸³ He also disambiguates indeterminacies, but we have already covered that.

⁸⁰ Benjamin Schnieder and Tatjana von Solodkoff, “In Defence of Fictional Realism,” 146.

⁸¹ Anthony Everett, *The Nonexistent* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2013), 205.

⁸² Ibid., 205.

⁸³ Ibid., 205.

Having made more precise his identity conditions and indeterminacies, Everett then raises two problems for Schieder and von Solodkoff: first, that their identity conditions are not satisfactory for an account of intra-fictional identity and, second, that even if we were to adopt their identity conditions, it still results in indeterminacy.⁸⁴ He uses their (Identity) principle to bring this out although he gives it a different name:

(ID^{SS}) If a fiction f is such that (1) in that fiction f a exists and b exists, and (2) no real thing is identical to a or b , then the fictional character a = the fictional character b iff according to f , $a = b$.⁸⁵

For the sake of faithfulness, I shall use Everett's name for their principle in this section to display his arguments.

Everett says that the first problem of taking (ID^{SS}) to show intra-fictional identity is that if a fiction leaves it open as to whether one fictional object is identical to another, then those characters are *de facto* distinct.⁸⁶ This seems highly arbitrary to Everett notwithstanding Schieder and von Solodkoff attempts to justify it using (Interpretation) and (Grounding). But he nonetheless considers both principles in turn, and their legitimacy for compelling the identity conditions.

To begin with, Everett is not sure why (Interpretation) is relevant.⁸⁷ In his own words,

Suppose our best interpretations of a fiction *do* involve our distinguishing two protagonists a and b , perhaps as the result of applying *Interpretation*. Then in that fiction $a \neq b$. But the controversial cases are not of this form. They are ones where the default assumption articulated by *Interpretation* is overridden. They are ones in which our best interpretations of the relevant stories *do not* involve our distinguishing the relevant protagonists when we interpret the story, as we found with *Pale Fire* and with *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*. It is difficult to see how *Interpretation* could possibly be relevant here.⁸⁸

But, he admits, perhaps what they mean is different. Everett then considers that Schieder and von Solodkoff may have proposed (Interpretation) on the assumption of

⁸⁴ Anthony Everett, *The Nonexistent*, 216.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 216.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 216.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 216.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 216–7.

a metaphysical principle.⁸⁹ This principle could assert something such as that the natures of fictional objects include some kind of intrinsic distinctness from one another unless said otherwise.⁹⁰ Even on this assumption, Everett is not sure how this principle would work. Still, Everett considers how the metaphysical principle would be relevant in such a circumstance, but decides that the only plausible reason for its involvement in fictional discourse comes from pragmatic speech acts.⁹¹ He gives (CP) to show this:

(CP) If an extended stretch of discourse concerns the same individual then the speaker should not use several different terms to refer to that individual unless she has reason to suppose her interlocutors can recognize those terms as co-referential.⁹²

As the narratives of stories are presented in the same manner in which we typically speak about the actual world, it seems feasible to understand the author, or any internal fictional speaker, as implicitly accepting (CP).⁹³ But if this is the case, then there is no need for any underlying metaphysical principle; moreover, employing the metaphysical principle seems plainly misguided in the first place, as fictions do not *necessitate* adherence to this principle.⁹⁴ If a narrator were unreliable, for example, and the reader comes to learn that he deliberately does not use speech or established habits that concrete laypersons do, then, as Everett suggests, (Interpretation) seems to fail to capture the content of the fiction.⁹⁵ For, in such a case, taking the narrator to refer to two distinct objects may provide us with good reasons to say that they are the same object instead.⁹⁶ From this, Everett concludes that (Interpretation) does not do much to motivate Schieder and von Solodkoff's identity conditions.

As for (Grounding), Everett concedes that it seems plausible at first blush; however, he does not think the principle can succeed by itself.⁹⁷ He claims that what Schieder and von Solodkoff really needed was

⁸⁹ Anthony Everett, *The Nonexistent*, 217.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 217.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 217–8.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 218.

Grounding': The nature (and identity) of fictional entities must be grounded in facts about their stories; if the story does not provide sufficient grounds for the identity of an entity x and an entity y , then this constitutes the distinctness of x and y .⁹⁸

But this seems far less plausible to Everett in that fictions seemed forced to explicitly state the identities of all their objects.⁹⁹ Moreover, he says, (Grounding) could easily be inverted to say instead

Grounding'': The nature (and identity) of fictional entities must be grounded in facts about their stories; unless the story provides sufficient grounds for the distinctness of an entity x and an entity y , no such distinction is constituted.¹⁰⁰

But which of (Grounding) or (Grounding'') should be preferred, then? Obviously, both could not be held, for that would see Bahrooh and Bahraah become neither identical nor distinct.¹⁰¹ Yet there seems to be no more reason to accept one over the other.¹⁰² Thus Everett concludes that Schnieder and von Solodkoff have not offered a satisfactory account of intra-fictional identity.¹⁰³ So ends the first problem.

The second problem Everett raises is that, even if (ID^{SS}) was countenanced, indeterminacies still seem to result.¹⁰⁴ He asks us to suppose a story in which there are good grounds for it being the case that a is the same as b as well as there being good grounds for it being the case that a is distinct from b .¹⁰⁵ So, in this fiction, it is strongly suggested that a is and is not identical to b , which is a form of type-A indeterminacy. In such a case, it seems indeterminate according to that story whether one thing is the same as another; and this indeterminacy is preserved by the bi-conditional in (ID^{SS}).¹⁰⁶ This seems to show that (ID^{SS}) is still going to suffer from problems of indeterminacy.

⁹⁸ Anthony Everett, *The Nonexistent*, 218.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 218.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 218.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 218.

¹⁰² Ibid., 218.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 218.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 218.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 219.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 219.

Everett then wonders how (ID^{SS}) would handle type-B indeterminacy. He notes that Schieder and von Solodkoff admit (Interpretation) plays no role in inconsistent fictions, but that (Grounding) does play some role.¹⁰⁷ As mentioned earlier, Schieder and von Solodkoff apply (Grounding) in cases of type-B indeterminacy, where, according to some fiction, it is indeterminate whether two objects are identical. Being that there does not appear to be sufficient grounds in such inconsistent fictions for establishing the identity of the object, they say that the object becomes two separate objects. But this, to Everett, seems to observe the same problems that (ID^{SS}) had in cases where it seemed plausible to say that the identity and distinctness obtain for particular fictional objects, for both states seem equally well grounded.¹⁰⁸ Thus Everett remains unconvinced by Schieder and von Solodkoff's attempt to defend realism.

5.4 My Objection to Everett

The strength of Everett's objections come from his identity principle (P2), which is to be read as (ID'). He is adamant that to deny the identity principle is to fashion an account of identity belonging to some other kind of object. I do not think so. In this section, I display how Everett's (P2) principle is inadequate for correctly describing or establishing the identity of fictional objects. Then I provide an alternative to Everett's identity conditions by suggesting that Modest Hermeneutic Creation does double-duty by offering a thesis of identity as well as a way of creation.

Here is why Everett's (P2), even when disambiguated, is mistaken. Suppose we replace the relational predicate, 'is identical to', with a monadic predicate like in the following case.

If a story concerns *a*, and if *a* is a not real thing, then *a* is a bear in the world of the story *iff* the fictional character *a* is bear.

In such an analogous case, the principle fails obtain. This is because no fictional object on the artefactual thesis could be a bear due to the abstract nature of the objects. Moreover, when taken generally, the failure of this principle illustrates something even more significant: what is said in the world of a fiction is merely *contingent* in that, despite that a fiction may specify an object *x* has the property P, it does not *necessarily* entail that *x* has P outside of the fiction. To illustrate the problem, we can extend Everett's (P2) to the case of monadic predicates as in (P3):

¹⁰⁷ Anthony Everett, *The Nonexistent*, 219.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 219.

- (P3) If a story concerns *a*, and if *a* is not a real thing, then *a* is ascribed *F* in the world of the fiction *iff* the fictional object *a* is *F*.

(P3) appears not only mistaken but quite bizarre. The bi-conditional, on which the truth of the entire compound proposition rests, stipulates that an object has some property if, and only if, that object is ascribed that property. This seems rather normal, but the other implication of the bi-conditional is odd: an object is ascribed some property if, and only if, that object has that property. Apart from Meinongianism, the view that fictional objects have all those properties they are ascribed in a story is denied across other fictional realist theories. So the identity principle does not make sense to a position such as Artefactualism. Hence the compound proposition will be false, for the necessary condition of the second material conditional is not met, which leads to the first material conditional also being false.

It may be argued that my analogy fails because a monadic predicate or a relational predicate is distinct from the special relation of identity. While it is strictly speaking true that the predicates differ, this contention misses my point: simply because a fiction tells us *a* is a certain way, it does not necessarily mean that *a* is that way outside of the fiction. This contingency undermines Everett's indeterminacy and vagueness arguments because *it is not necessary* that the identity of an object is *determined* by whether a fiction specifies it. Unless there is a better reason for why the generalised predication in (P3) does not analogise to predication in (P2), the bi-conditional fails in Everett's (P2), and so his identity condition fails to predicate and capture not only the identity of fictional objects but other properties and existence generally.

But how, then, is identity determined non-arbitrarily? How many objects does a story produce? And, more pressingly, how do we determine the identity of objects? I think that MHC resolves these questions in much the same way it answered Stuart Brock's counterexamples in the previous chapter. To quell Everett's belaboured indeterminacies, we shall go through his indeterminacy kinds in the context of the fictions he has proposed to see what MHC would say of them. It goes without saying that condition (1) of MHC is going to be assumed as being met throughout analysis.

The first kinds of indeterminacy to consider are type-A and type-B₁. If we recall, these sorts of indeterminacies say it is either true or false that *a* is identical to *b*, but it is indeterminate which is the case. An example of type-A is Pale Fire and an example of type-B₁ is Frackworld. How does MHC establish identities? As I see it, there are two ways it can be done. The first way is that the ideal reader could use AIE and choose to establish an individual object upon every singular term that does not clearly

designate or denote an existing object. The consequence of this view is that Kinbote, Botkin, Shade, and Charles of Pale Fire and Frack and Frick of Frackworld all become distinct existing objects outside of the fiction. The second way is that the ideal reader could take into account any evidence that their favoured view of interpretation requires, and make a judgement according to the relevant information; for example, if they favour what an ideal possible author would do, the ideal reader will inspect the evidence in favour of what is considered optimal for that sort of hypothesis. The consequence of this second way is that had, say, an ideal Nabokov intended Kinbote and Botkin to be identical (as is rumoured to be the case), then only one object will come into existence, for the ideal reader is aware of social and contextual information that would lead her to infer the singular terms designate the same individual. As there is no concern of whether something has any logically incoherent or impossible properties, neither way of doing things has to worry about creating objects with incompatible features.

I presume the second consequence is what most would find agreeable. I do imagine, however, that there may be some protest about the first way in that it comes off as quite arbitrary. Despite this, I think the first way of deciding or establishing the identity of a fictional object may be more preferable than the second way. Here is why.

Being ascribed a property is not the same as having a property: an ascribed property is a property that an object is *represented* as having according to a fiction but need not actually have. As David Friedell (2016) points out, identity can be ascribed to objects while the objects may not be identical outside of the fiction. Moreover, Evans' argument points out that an object x cannot be identical to an object y if they have different properties. Wielding these together, this could mean for the first way that Frick and Frack could be separate objects in the actual world, but they are ascribed being identical or disparate internally. In other words,

Frick is such that he is ascribed the property of being identical to Frack.

is different to

Frick is identical to Frack.

Were it the case that Frick and Frack had the same properties, they would be identical. But having an actual property as measly as 'being introduced three words earlier than' may be enough to distinguish them if it counts for anything. Hence I think the first way is just as plausible as the second way and I think it achieves a good result.

The second kind of indeterminacy is type-B₂. If we recall, this indeterminacy says it is neither true nor false that *a* is identical to *b*. Examples of this kind of indeterminacy are Asymmetryville, Dialethialand, and the Wind-Up Bird Chronicles. The two methods for establishing the identity of fictional objects that I gave before will be very arbitrary for this kind of indeterminacy; for example, to say that Jules is or is not Jim is not very faithful to what the fiction says because Jules is neither identical nor not identical to Jim. This is not to say that I think those methods could not guarantee good results, but that they do not seem faithful enough to the literature. So how should MHC handle this kind of indeterminacy?

I think MHC could handle fictions that concern type-B₂ indeterminacies thusly: an author has failed to meet condition (2) of MHC, so no fictional object is fashioned. As we have seen, Everett maintains the move to deny that there is an individual is too *ad hoc*. I agree, but there is an intuitive argument to display how this could work without being *ad hoc*:

- (P₁) If an author pretends to refer to a fictional individual that is ascribed some indeterminate property, she must first refer to that fictional individual, and ascribe it that indeterminate property.
- (P₂) If a thing is ascribed a property, it determinately is ascribed that property.
- (C₁) Therefore, the author has failed to refer to a fictional individual that is ascribed an indeterminate property.
- (C₂) Therefore, the author fails condition (2) of MHC.

The argument uses Everett's very reasonable discussion about the Slynx against him. If an author pretends to refer to a fictional individual and ascribe it some property, then it determinately has that property. If a fictional individual indeterminately has a property, then that fictional individual must determinately have that indeterminate property; however, this is not what the author means to ascribe, for she means to ascribe an indeterminate property indeterminately. But the author cannot ascribe a property to the fictional individual indeterminately unless it is determinate that it has that indeterminate property. Hence type-B₂ indeterminacies fail condition (2) because the author fails to refer to a fictional individual that is ascribed an indeterminate property, and the consequence is that no fictional object is created.

5.5 Conclusion

Everett has contended that Artefactualism suffers from metaphysical and logical identity problems as a result of fictions in which there is inconsistency or

indeterminacy. Schnieder and von Solodkoff appeared to fail to get the better of Everett's arguments, largely owing to Schnieder and von Solodkoff's principles being somewhat arbitrary. I argued that Everett's (P2) identity principle is wanting because it stated that ascribed properties necessarily exported into the actual world by analogy. I further argued that MHC could replace (P2), and that it produced non-arbitrary determinate results because of the way in which it understands fictional objects.

This concludes my defence of Artefactualism. I have claimed that Artefactualism is the best theory available for explaining our apparent reference to and quantification over fictional objects. I have defended this claim by pointing to significant problems for all alternative views (in Chapter 2) and by considering (in Chapter 3) the problems associated with alternative semantic theories (distinct from orthodox direct reference theories) that might save fictionalists from the semantic objection levelled against it in the final chapter. But in order for my case to be complete, I also needed to defend Artefactualism from the main objections levelled against it. This is what I have done in the final chapters by answering Brock's (2010) challenge for artefactualists to specify a precise time fictional objects were created and the method for doing so (in Chapter 4), and by answering Everett's (2005, 2013) challenge for artefactualists to specify precise identity conditions for fictional object.

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