UNIVERSITAT DE BARCELONA

Fictional names and fictional discourse

Chiara Panizza

ADVERTIMENT. La consulta d'aquesta tesi queda condicionada a l'acceptació de les següents condicions d'ús: La difusió d'aquesta tesi per mitjà del servei TDX (**www.tdx.cat**) i a través del Dipòsit Digital de la UB (**diposit.ub.edu**) ha estat autoritzada pels titulars dels drets de propietat intel·lectual únicament per a usos privats emmarcats en activitats d'investigació i docència. No s'autoritza la seva reproducció amb finalitats de lucre ni la seva difusió i posada a disposició des d'un lloc aliè al servei TDX ni al Dipòsit Digital de la UB. No s'autoritza la presentació del seu contingut en una finestra o marc aliè a TDX o al Dipòsit Digital de la UB (framing). Aquesta reserva de drets afecta tant al resum de presentació de la tesi com als seus continguts. En la utilització o cita de parts de la tesi és obligat indicar el nom de la persona autora.

ADVERTENCIA. La consulta de esta tesis queda condicionada a la aceptación de las siguientes condiciones de uso: La difusión de esta tesis por medio del servicio TDR (**www.tdx.cat**) y a través del Repositorio Digital de la UB (**diposit.ub.edu**) ha sido autorizada por los titulares de los derechos de propiedad intelectual únicamente para usos privados enmarcados en actividades de investigación y docencia. No se autoriza su reproducción con finalidades de lucro ni su difusión y puesta a disposición desde un sitio ajeno al servicio TDR o al Repositorio Digital de la UB. No se autoriza la presentación de su contenido en una ventana o marco ajeno a TDR o al Repositorio Digital de la UB (framing). Esta reserva de derechos afecta tanto al resumen de presentación de la tesis como a sus contenidos. En la utilización o cita de partes de la tesis es obligado indicar el nombre de la persona autora.

WARNING. On having consulted this thesis you're accepting the following use conditions: Spreading this thesis by the TDX (**www.tdx.cat**) service and by the UB Digital Repository (**diposit.ub.edu**) has been authorized by the titular of the intellectual property rights only for private uses placed in investigation and teaching activities. Reproduction with lucrative aims is not authorized nor its spreading and availability from a site foreign to the TDX service or to the UB Digital Repository. Introducing its content in a window or frame foreign to the TDX service or to the UB Digital Repository is not authorized (framing). Those rights affect to the presentation summary of the thesis as well as to its contents. In the using or citation of parts of the thesis it's obliged to indicate the name of the author.

FICTIONAL NAMES AND FICTIONAL DISCOURSE

Universitat de Barcelona

Facultat de Filosofia

Departament de Filosofia

Programa de Doctorat en Ciència Cognitiva i Llenguatge

Director de la tesi: Manuel García-Carpintero Sánchez-Miguel

Director de la tesi: Josep Macià Fàbrega

Tutor de la tesi: Josep Macià Fàbrega

Doctorand: Chiara Panizza

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely grateful to my supervisors, Manuel García-Carpintero and Josep Macià, for encouraging and motivating my research, and for their invaluable contributions, with written comments and discussion, to the ideas and arguments I put forward in this dissertation.

Special thanks go to Manuel García-Carpintero and Sven Rosenkranz for allowing me to combine my research with my administrative job (for the PERSP, PETAF and DIAPHORA research projects) over the past six years.

Additional thanks go to the (past and present) members of the LOGOS research group, for a much valuable philosophical discussion, and for creating a friendly and stimulating work environment.

I thank Stacie Friend for supervising me during a visiting term at Heythrop College, University of London, in 2007.

I also would like to thank Paco Murcia, for being such a great colleague.

I finally thank Michael Maudsley for the grammatical revision of this dissertation.

My research was funded through a predoctoral fellowship offered by the Catalan Government (Generalitat de Catalunya), and by different research projects ('Truth in Special Contexts', 'Semántica y Pragmática de los Contextos Especiales', 'La Naturaleza de la Aseveración: Consecuencias para el Relativismo y el Ficcionalismo' and 'About Ourselves').

RESUMEN EN CASTELLANO

Los nombres de ficción como 'Sherlock Holmes', 'Anna Karenina' y 'Don Quijote de la Mancha' aparecen en diferentes contextos de discurso, en los que hablamos de los personajes de ficción de una forma que muestra que nuestras intuiciones preteóricas sobre el uso de este tipo de nombres a menudo tienden en direcciones opuestas. Por ejemplo, hablando sobre la obra de ficción *Las aventuras de Sherlock Holmes*, podríamos decir que Sherlock Holmes es un brillante detective que colabora con Scotland Yard; sin embargo, si nos preguntaran si Sherlock Holmes podría ayudar a la policía británica, diríamos que, siendo sólo un detective ficticio, evidentemente no podría ser de ninguna ayuda para resolver crímenes en la realidad. También nos referimos a Sherlock Holmes como a un personaje de ficción creado por el escritor escocés Sir Arthur Conan Doyle y, al mismo tiempo, como a un detective de ficción y, por lo tanto, como a un ejemplo de algo que no existe. El punto de partencia de esta disertación es precisamente un análisis semántico de los enunciados que contienen nombres de ficción. Ejemplos de enunciados de este tipo son 'Sherlock Holmes fuma la pipa', 'Sherlock Holmes no existe' o 'Sherlock Holmes es un personaje de ficción'. El problema semántico fundamental que postulan dichos enunciados podría sintetizarse de la siguiente manera: ¿cómo es posible explicar la intuición de que tales enunciados dan lugar a usos lingüísticos significativos y, en algún sentido, verdaderos, aun cuando parezca que uno no está hablando acerca de nada o nadie real?

En el debate filosófico contemporáneo sobre la ficción hay dos corrientes teóricas principales: por una parte, las teorías irrealistas, que argumentan que los nombres de ficción carecen de referentes y, por la otra, las teorías realistas, que argumentan que los nombres de ficción refieren a entidades ficticias. Si asumimos que los nombres de ficción carecen de referentes, como teorizan los irrealistas, nos enfrentamos a preguntas semánticas sobre cómo dar sentido a los aparentes fenómenos de referencia y verdad en el discurso de ficción. Las teorías irrealistas suelen proponer que los enunciados que contienen nombres de ficción deben ser parafraseados en términos de enunciados generales que expresan proposiciones conceptuales, esto es, enunciados que no contienen nombres de ficción en posiciones referenciales y, de ese

modo, evitan comprometerse con objetos ficticios que oficien de referentes de tales nombres. Por otra parte, las teorías realistas se comprometen con la existencia de objetos ficticios, por lo general referidos por los nombres de ficción. Si asumimos que los nombres de ficción refieren a entidades ficticias, como teorizan los realistas, nos enfrentamos a cuestiones semánticas sobre los enunciados en los que parece haber referencia y verdad acerca de las entidades ficticias, juntamente con cuestiones metafísicas sobre la naturaleza de dichas entidades.

Esta disertación consta de seis capítulos. Después de presentar los datos y los objetivos de mi investigación en el Capítulo 1, en el Capítulo 2 analizo las que considero ser dos de las propuestas irrealista más influyentes, la de Kendall L. Walton (1990) y la de Mark Sainsbury (2005 y 2010), que ofrecen un análisis de los nombres de ficción, y a la vez de los enunciados en los que aparecen, sin invocar entidades ficticias. Posteriormente, analizo las tres principales teorías realistas sobre la ficción, es decir el *Meinongianismo*, el *Posibilismo* y el *Creacionismo*. Si las tres teorías comparten la asunción ontológica de que sí hay entidades ficticias, sin embargo discrepan acerca de la naturaleza metafísica de tales entidades. Los capítulos 3, 4 y 5 están dedicados a un análisis detallado de los pros y los contras de cada una de esta teoría realista, con respecto al análisis semántico de los nombres de ficción y de los enunciados en los que aparecen.

Finalmente, en el Capitulo 6 asumo la teoría ontológica y metafísica conocida como *Creacionismo*, según la cual los personajes de ficción existen en la realidad como artefactos creados por la actividad artística de los autores. Por lo tanto, son artefactos en el mismo sentido en que lo es una silla o un coche, pero con una diferencia: son *abstractos*, lo que significa que carecen de ubicación espacio-temporal (Amie L. Thomasson, 1999). En este último capitulo, presento varios argumentos a favor del creacionismo que no son de carácter metafísico, sino más bien de carácter semántico y cognitivo. Desde un punto de vista semántico, defiendo la tesis de que los nombres de ficción son términos singulares que refieren a objetos ficticios, y que los enunciados en los que aparecen expresan proposiciones singulares, constituidas en parte por tales objetos ficticios. El análisis semántico se complementa con el análisis cognitivo de los nombres de ficción, y de los mecanismos que subyacen a los usos de dichos nombres,

basado en la teoría cognitiva de Robin Jeshion sobre el pensamiento singular, conocida como *Cognitivismo*. (2002, 2004, 2009, 2010a, 2010b y 2014). En concreto, desde un punto de vista cognitivo, defiendo la tesis de que los nombres de ficción son expresiones referenciales directas que nos llevan a tener pensamientos *de re* o singulares sobre los personajes de ficción, a través del uso de 'archivos mentales'. Con el fin de dar cuenta de las aparentes incoherencias en el discurso acerca de la ficción, voy a distinguir entra una explicación semántica de los principales tipos de enunciados que contienen nombres de ficción, y una explicación cognitiva sobre las intuiciones preteóricas de la verdad o falsedad de dichos enunciados. Como resultado, el análisis semántico y cognitivo de los nombres de ficción que presento en esta disertación proporciona una explicación coherente de los enunciados que contienen nombres de ficción, asumiendo que los nombres de ficción refieren a objetos creados abstractos.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 10

CHAPTER 1: SETTING THE SCENE
1 Introduction 12
2 Fictional Discourse 15
3 The Reference of Fictional Names 20
4 Some Problems for Irrealism 22
5 Some Problems for Realism 24
6 Concluding Remarks 26

CHAPTER 2: IRREALISM
1 Introduction 28
2 Walton's Make-Believe Account 29
2.1 Setting the Scene 29
2.1.1Fictional Truth 30
2.1.2 Games of Make-Believe 31
2.2 Walton's Analysis of Fictional Discourse 32
2.2.1 Internal Discourse 32
2.2.2 Critical and Non-existence Discourse 36
3 Sainsbury's irrealist account 39
3.1 Setting the Scene 39
3.2 Fictional Discourse 40
3.2.1 Fidelity vs. Truth 40
3.2.2 Presupposition-Relative Truth 43
4 Concluding Remarks 46

CHAPTER 3: MEINONGIANISM
1 Introduction 48
2 Meinongian Accounts of Fiction 49
2.1 Setting the Scene 49
2.2 Nuclear and Extra-Nuclear Properties 50
2.3 Encoded and Exemplified Properties 51
3 Motivating Meinongianism 53
4 Authorial Creation 55
5 Concluding Remarks 58

CHAPTER 4: POSSIBILISM

1 Introduction 61
2 Lewis's Account of Truth in Fiction 61
3 Some Problems 66
3.1 The Particularity Problem 66
3.2 The Problem of Actual World Reference 68
3.3 Impossible Fictions 69
4 Critical Discourse 72
5 Concluding Remarks 73

CHAPTER 5: CREATIONSIM

1 Introduction 75
2 Motivating Creationism 77
2.1 The Metaphysical Argument 77
2.2 The Semantic Argument 79
2.3 The Cognitive Argument 81
3 The Metaphysics of Creationism 81
3.1 The Creation of a Fictional Character 82
3.2 Kinds of Pretence 85
3.3 The Metaphysical Nature of a Fictional Character 87
4 The Semantics of Fictional Names and Fictional Discourse 89
4.1 Fictionalizing Discourse 89
4.1.1 The Two-Tier Approach to Fictional Names 90
4.1.2 The Uniform Approach 94
4.2 Internal Discourse 102
4.2.1 Introduction 102
4.2.2 The Special Predication View 103
4.2.3 The Standard Prediction View 106
4.3 Non-existence Discourse 108
4.3.1 Introduction 108
4.3.2 The No Proposition Analysis 109
4.3.3 The Non Literal Analysis 109
4.3.4 The Restricted Quantification Analysis 111
4.3.5 The Metalinguistic Analysis 114
5 Concluding Remarks 116

CHAPTER 6: FICTIONAL NAMES AND SINGULAR THOUGHTS

1 Introduction 118
1.1 Data 118
1.2 Desiderata 119
1.3 The Semantic Analysis 119
1.4 The Cognitive Analysis 121
2 The Cognitive Framework 122
2.1 Setting the Scene 122
2.2 Jeshion's Cognitivism 124
3 The Semantics of 'Sherlock Holmes' 126
3.1 'Sherlock Holmes' Always Refers to Sherlock Holmes 126
3.1.1 The Creation of Sherlock Holmes 128
3.1.2 The Name-using Practice for 'Sherlock Holmes' 130
4 Fictional Names and Singular Thoughts 133
4.1 Setting the Scene 133
4.2 Singular Thoughts about Sherlock Holmes 135
5 Fictional Discourse 137
5.1 Introduction 137
5.2 Fictionalizing Discourse 138
5.3 Internal vs. Critical Discourse 139
5.3.1 Truth-Conditions 139
5.3.2 The Cognitive Contribution of 'Sherlock Holmes' 141
5.4 Non-existence Discourse 144
6 Singular Thoughts and Abstract Artefacts 145
6.1 An Abstract Artefact Smoking the Pipe? 145
6.2 De Re Pretendings about Abstract Artefacts 148
6.3 Non-Fictional Names in Fictional Works 150

CONCLUSIONS 153

REFERENCES 155

INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I am concerned with the question of how best to make sense of discourse involving fictional names like 'Sherlock Holmes', 'Anna Karenina' and 'Don Quixote of La Mancha', and the related questions of whether fictional names need to refer and fictional characters need to exist in order to best account for our literary practices when fiction is concerned. Fictional names ordinarily occur in different contexts of discourse, in which we think and talk about fictional characters in ways that show that our pre-theoretical intuitions regarding the use of fictional names often tend in opposite directions. For example, in reporting the content of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories we may say that 'Sherlock Holmes' is the name of a very smart detective that collaborates with Scotland Yard; however, if asked whether Sherlock Holmes could help the British police, we are likely to admit that he is just a fictional detective and, as such, he cannot be of any help in solving real crimes. We quite commonly use 'Sherlock Holmes' as the name of the fictional character created by the Scottish writer Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. All the same, we use 'Sherlock Holmes' as the name of a mere fictional detective, and, as such, as the name of something that does not exist.

Given the conflicting intuitions about our linguistic practices when fictional names are involved, theories of fiction have ended up giving away some intuitions to favour others. In the contemporary philosophical debate about fiction, there are two main streams of theories of fiction: irrealist theories of fiction that state the lack of reference of fictional names, and realist theories of fiction that state that fictional names refer to fictional characters. If we assume that fictional names do not refer to fictional characters, as irrealists do, then semantic questions arise regarding how best to make sense of the apparent phenomena of reference and truth in fictional discourse. If, on the other hand, we assume that fictional names refer to fictional characters, as realists do, then semantic questions arise concerning the contexts of discourse in which there is reference and truth about fictional characters, together with metaphysical questions about the nature of those characters.

This dissertation consists of six chapters. After laying out data and desiderata for my research in Chapter 1, in Chapter 2 I address what I consider to be two of the most influential irrealist proposals, Kendall L. Walton's (1990) and Mark Sainsbury's (2005 and 2010). Both proposals make sense of fictional names and fictional discourse without invoking fictional entities. In Chapter 3, 4 and 5 I address three main realist theories of fiction, according to which fictional names refer to fictional characters: *Meinongianism*, *Possibilism* and *Creationism*. If the three theories endorse the ontological claim that there are fictional entities, they disagree about the metaphysical nature of such entities. After arguing for pros and contras with respect to the semantic account of fictional names and discourse put forward by any such realist view, I endorse the realist stance known as *Creationism*. The label '*Creationism*' is used in the philosophical jargon to denote a family of theories that hold the metaphysical thesis that fictional characters exist as artefacts, really created by authors in making works of fiction, and so really existing; they are not real individuals (or places, animals, or whatever) and do not have a spatio-temporal location – they are *abstract*.

In chapter 6 I put forward arguments in favor of creationism that are not broadly metaphysical in nature, but are instead founded in our understanding of storytelling practices and fictional discourse. My research does not focus on the issue of whether there really are fictional characters, but rather on the issue of *how* and *when* we refer (mentally and linguistically) to them, assuming that fictional characters are abstract created artefacts. Furthermore, in order to account for the apparent inconsistencies in our linguistic practices involving fictional names, I distinguish a semantic account of the main types of sentences of fictional discourse, from a cognitive account of the pre-theoretical intuitions of their truth or falsity. Indeed, I believe that explaining the truth-conditions of utterances of sentences containing fictional names it is not enough to give a plausible explanation of the relation between thought and language when fiction is concerned, for it leaves out the cognitive mechanisms by which we get engaged with fictional works and respond to them.

CHAPTER 1
SETTING THE SCENE

1. INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I present a critical study of fiction, focusing on the semantics of fictional names and fictional discourse. The notion of fiction, broadly understood, ranges over diverse forms of genres: novels, short stories, dramas, epic poems, fables, legends, poetry, theatrical plays and so forth. The list of works that are indisputably considered fictional is enormous, and yet we tend to think mostly of written narratives, especially novels, when fiction is concerned.[1] In this dissertation I am concerned primarily with an analysis of fictional names and fictional discourse in relation to novels having to do with human beings in realistic kinds of situations, like Jane Austin's *Emma*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote of La Mancha*, Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* stories, Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*, and Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* – to mention but a few. I shall focus on this particular genre of fiction because I think it is the most basic, central case: getting clear about this basic case should be the foundation for trying to account for all other cases (that is, dramas, epic poems, fables and so on). I will mainly using examples from the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, featuring the clever detective Sherlock Holmes, partly because a work of fiction of this kind is traditionally chosen in the literature, and partly because it is about one of the most well-known fictional characters.

Novels typically portray fictional characters: within novels fictional characters usually are persons (Sherlock Holmes), animals (Lassie), places (Neverland) and things (Dorian Grey's portrait). There are characters in novels that are left unnamed, but for present purposes I here use the term 'fictional character' to refer to *named* fictional

[1] We usually tend to associate the term 'fiction' with literature; however, the fiction/nonfiction distinction is more general. There are indeed works of fiction in sculptures, paintings, visual media etc.

characters, and I focus my attention on fictional characters that bear proper names and that are, in the fiction they belong to, persons (e.g., Sherlock Holmes, Anna Karenina and Emma Woodhouse). We can distinguish between two main types of names that occur in fictional works: in the first place, there is the type of names that I call 'fictional names', which are introduced in storytelling as names of fictional characters, such as for example 'Sherlock Holmes' in Doyle's first novel, *A Study in Scarlet.* In the second place, there is the type of names I call 'non-fictional names', which already exist as names of concrete individuals (dead or alive) or objects, e.g., 'Napoleon' in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* or 'London' in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. I use the term 'fictional discourse' to refer to contexts of discourse containing occurrences of fictional names.

Since the early 1970s, the nature of fiction has become a serious topic of interest for analytic philosophers. There are four main issues at stake in the philosophical debate about the nature of fiction. The first concerns the study of the nature of fiction as a work of art, involving reflections on theoretical and normative questions (e.g., what distinguishes fiction from non-fiction), which is of particular interest to philosophers of aesthetics and art. A second issue concerns the semantics of fictional names and fictional discourse, involving reflections on theories of reference and truth in relation to fiction, which is of interest to philosophers of language. The third issue concerns our responses to fiction, involving reflections on the nature of the cognitive resources required to understand, appreciate and emotionally engage with fiction, which is of interest to philosophers of mind, drawing upon and connecting with studies in aesthetics, cognitive science and psychology. A fourth issue concerns whether we need to postulate fictional entities in order to properly account for our literary practices, and what kind of entities they would be, which is of main interest for philosophers working in the field of ontology and metaphysics.[2]

In this dissertation I focus my attention on the philosophy of language debate in fiction, which concerns the issue of whether we need fictional names to refer to fictional characters in order to account for our literary practices – the thinking, writing, reading,

[2] Amie L. Thomasson (1999) distinguishes between two types of questions that philosophers can pose about fictional entities: the *ontological* question concerning the motivation for positing an ontology of fictional entities (i.e. do we need fictional entities?); and the *metaphysical* question concerning the nature of fictional characters (i.e. if there are fictional characters, what kind of entities are they?).

and talking about fiction[3] – in connection to fiction, which is connected to a semantic debate on the status of fictional discourse, and to an ontological and metaphysical debate concerning the nature, if any, of fictional characters. More specifically, the two main questions I address are: do we need to postulate the existence of fictional characters as the referents of fictional names in order to adequately account for fictional discourse? If the answer is positive, do fictional names refer to fictional characters in all the contexts of discourse in which they occur?

In the contemporary philosophical debate about fiction, we can individuate two main streams of theories of fiction: irrealist theories of fiction that state the lack of reference of fictional names, and realist theories of fiction that state that fictional names refer to fictional characters. The distinction between irrealist and realist is a distinction regarding ontological theories – i.e., whether or not there fictional characters. This ontological distinction has, of course, quite a direct implication for semantics: if there are not fictional characters, names will not be able to refer to them, and if there are fictional characters then, naturally, names will refer to them. If we assume that fictional names do not refer to fictional characters, as irrealists do, then semantic questions arise regarding how best to make sense of the apparent phenomena of reference and truth in fictional discourse. If, on the other hand, we assume that fictional names refer to fictional characters, as realists do, then semantic questions arise concerning the contexts of discourse in which there is reference and truth about fictional characters, together with metaphysical questions about the nature of those characters. Both streams, I hold, have to face some problems in giving a full, consistent account of fictional discourse. I present the problems in Sections 4 and 5 of this chapter.

The over-all organization of this dissertation is as follows. After laying out data and desiderata in Chapter 1, in Chapter 2 I address two prominent irrealist approaches which defend that we can understand things we think and say about fiction and its characters by rejecting that fictional names ever refer to fictional entities: Kendall L. Walton's (1990) and Mark Sainsbury's (2005 and 2010); I analyze the pros and cons of these views in accounting for the meaning of fictional names, and for the meaning of sentences that occur in fictional discourse. In Chapters 3, 4 and 5, I present reasons for

[3] I borrow the terminology from Thomasson (1999).

and against the main realist theories according to which fictional names refer to fictional characters. If realist theories share the intuition that the fictional name 'Sherlock Holmes' refers, they disagree about what kind of entity it refers to. There are three main approaches to fictional names and fictional discourse that can be summarized by considering what each theory claims about the semantics of 'Sherlock Holmes'. According to a first realist proposal, *Meinongianism*, 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to a nonexistent (concrete or abstract) entity (Chapter 3). On another realist proposal, *Possibilism*, 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to a possible entity that does not exist in the actual world but only in some other possible worlds (Chapter 4). According to a further alternative, *Creationism,* 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to an actually existent abstract and created artefact (Chapter 5). In chapter 6 I endorse creationism, and I consider and reply to some important semantic challenges that creationism has to face, to ultimately offer a semantic treatment of fictional names and fictional discourse in accordance with such a view, connecting with the cognitive mechanisms that underlie our thought and discourse when fictional names are concerned. I shall defend that fictional names like 'Sherlock Holmes' belong to the semantic category of genuine names, such as 'Chiara', 'Barcelona' or 'Italy': they not only purport to refer, but actually do refer to fictional characters, understood as abstract created artefacts; moreover, I shall argue that they trigger cognitive mechanisms that underlie singular thinking, as much as ordinary names of concrete individuals.

2. FICTIONAL DISCOURSE

In this dissertation I limit the analysis of fictional discourse to declarative utterances containing occurrences of fictional names – although the list is certainly not exhaustive, I believe it covers the prominent types of statements that should be addressed by any theory of fiction in providing an account of fictional discourse. There are four main types of linguistic activity related to fiction, which generate four main types of fictional discourse.[4] First of all, there is the activity of producing fiction, namely storytelling,

[4] I derive the terminology for the different types of fictional discourse from Thomasson (2009).

such as when Doyle writes about Sherlock Holmes in his first novel of the series, *A Study in Scarlet*:

(1) Sherlock Holmes was certainly not a difficult man to live with

This activity generates fictional discourse of type I, what I call 'fictionalizing discourse'. This type of discourse constitutes a work of fiction and is usually understood in the philosophical reflection on fiction as intuitively not truth-evaluable, even when it is composed of declarative sentences. In the second place, there is the activity of reporting the content of a work of fiction, as when, for example, a reader of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories reports that:

(2) Sherlock Holmes is described by Dr. Watson as being an easy man to live with

(3) Sherlock Holmes lives at 221B Baker Street

(4) Sherlock Holmes occasionally uses addictive drugs, especially cocaine

(5) Sherlock Holmes worked as a detective for twenty-three years

This activity generates fictional discourse of type II, what I call 'internal discourse', in which we talk about fictional contents, describing the events and characters that occur in a work of fiction. Many sentences that appear in this type of discourse have the same surface form as sentences that appear in fictionalizing discourse, but they are uttered to report the content of a given fiction rather than being part of the fiction itself. We intuitively judge this type of discourse in relation to truth and falsehood.

Before addressing the next type of discourse, a brief comment on internal discourse is in order. When giving an account of the semantics of internal discourse, one of the main problems (for irrealists as much as for realists) is that of determining what has to be taken as the *content* of a given fiction to be reported. When we read a novel, we understand its content by going beyond what is written in the text, partly applying some background assumptions, and partly making inferences on the explicit

content, some of which strike us as important and relevant, while others do not. We could say that what is explicit content in a novel is what is actually written in the novel: it is explicit in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories that Sherlock Holmes is a detective. How to characterize the explicit content connects to the *hard* issue of what makes something true according to a given fiction – it is a hard issue, for it seems fairly plausible to say that something may be true or fictional in a story even if it is never mentioned there, namely if it is left implicit. One can hardly deny that much of the interest (together with pleasure, entertainment, fear etc.) deriving from fiction consists in the imaginative ‘filling in’, namely the process by which readers fill in the content of a work of fiction with a large number of details not explicitly given in the work itself. It is undeniable that some novels concede readers more freedom to fantasize about the fictive content. However, not all statements reporting free supplementations of the original content of a novel should be counted as relevant by readers. For example, what happens in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories? Well, to begin with, it happens that a private detective named ‘Sherlock Holmes’, who has amazing deductive abilities, solves many complicated crimes in late-Victorian London. Since Sherlock Holmes is also a man with normal human anatomy, he has a brain and blood running through his veins, among other things; and since Sherlock Holmes lives in London, and London is on planet Earth that revolves around the Sun, Sherlock Holmes lives on planet Earth that revolves around the Sun. So if you ask me what happens in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, I could for example tell you that Sherlock Holmes has a brain and has blood running through his veins, and that the planet Earth revolves around the Sun. But in so doing I will have misled you, for you probably wanted to know what specifically happens in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. If something very important, intuitively, in the stories and unique to them is nonetheless *implicit*, to be inferred, you would want me to tell you. Even if I will say more about the explicit and implicit content of a given work of fiction in Chapter 4 (while discussing the realist theory of fiction commonly known as ‘Possibilism’), for the most part of this dissertation I will focus my attention on providing a semantic analysis of the basic case: that is, of the truth-conditions of utterances of internal discourse that report the content of what is *explicitly* said in a

work of fiction, for which, roughly, what is true according to a given fiction is ultimately related to what is explicitly written there.

There is a third linguistic activity related to fiction: when speakers talk about fictional characters *as* such (e.g., by discussing the historical circumstances of introduction of a fictional character, its historical relations to other literary figures etc.) they generate fictional discourse of type III, what I call 'critical discourse'. Examples of this type of discourse are:

(6) Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character

(7) Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character created by Scottish author and physician Sir Arthur Doyle in 1887

(8) Sherlock Holmes appeared in print for the first time in 1887, in *A Study in Scarlet*

(9) The fictional character Sherlock Holmes was inspired by Joseph Bell, a surgeon at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh

Taking the above statements at face-value seems to commit us to the fact that fictional characters exist. In the fourth place, there is the activity of denying the existence of fictional characters, such as when we utter a sentence like
(10) Sherlock Holmes does not exist

This activity generates fictional discourse of type IV, what I call 'non-existence discourse'. Our naive, pre-theoretical intuitions seem to allow for the possibility of true negative existentials like (10), and any account of fictional discourse should be able to account for such an intuition. Both realist and irrealist theories of fiction have trouble accounting for this type of discourse: on the one hand, realist theories that claim that fictional names refer to fictional characters owe us an explanation of why we think of singular non-existence claims involving fictional names as true; on the other hand, irrealist theorists owe us an explanation of how these claims can, in the first place, be meaningful and, in the second place, true, given that the names involved fail to refer (cf. Thomasson 2003a: 209).

Given the different types of ways in which we seem to speak about fictional characters, different theories of fiction have been articulated – some denying and some defending the existence of fictional characters – depending on which of the four types of fictional discourse is taken as *central* and *motivating* the theory. I believe that a full, consistent account of fiction must be able to do the following: in the first place, explain what, if anything, we are asserting when we utter claims of fictional discourse; in the second place, it must be able to explain why we commonly have the intuitions that we have regarding the truth and falsity in relation to those claims (or, at least, regarding most of them). Last but not least, it must recognize and be able to account for the fact that, depending on the type of discourse in which fictional names occur, different properties can be ascribed to fictional characters.

The philosophical literature on fiction broadly acknowledges a distinction between two varieties of property ascriptions to fictional characters, which are reflected in the way we think and speak about them: 'intra-fictional' property ascriptions and 'extra-fictional' property ascriptions'.[5] Intra-fictional property ascriptions are those carried out, for example, by authors in works of fiction, or by readers when they report the contents of the works of fiction, as when Doyle or readers say that Sherlock Holmes is a private detective with great deductive abilities; by contrast, extra-fictional property ascriptions take place from a perspective external to the fictions themselves, in which we see fictional characters *as* such, as when we say that the fictional character Sherlock Holmes was inspired by Joseph Bell, a surgeon at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. This distinction in property ascriptions seem to reflect a 'double nature' of fictional characters that lead to the *prima facie* inconsistencies in the ways we think and speak of fictional characters: Sherlock Holmes is an amazing detective, yes, but it is also one of the most developed characters featured by the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. But here is the inconsistence: as an amazing detective, Sherlock Holmes must be human (or must have

[5] I'm speaking here of 'intra-fictional' and 'extra-fictional' ascriptions of properties rather than properties itself because it is not clear whether any property is intrinsically intra-fictional or intrinsically extra-fictional. For example, one would say that 'non-existence' is an extra-fictional property of fictional characters – namely a property ascribed to a character from a perspective external to the fiction – given that in works of fiction fictional characters are usually described as existent. However, there are fictions in which the existence of their main characters is denied, like Italo Calvino's *The Nonexistent Knight*.

been, at least); and yet, no human being can be a well developed character of a literary work of fiction.[6]

3. THE REFERENCE OF FICTIONAL NAMES

In this section I briefly present a view of reference and apply it to fictional names. Proper names are expressions that refer, or at least are commonly used under the presupposition that they refer. Historically, views concerning the way in which Gottlob Frege (1892) and Bertrand Russell (1911) and says that, roughly, names have a descriptive sense sufficient to determine a unique individual, and that they refer to whatever satisfies it. For example, it may be that 'Aristotle' abbreviates a description like 'the teacher of Alexander the Great', or that 'Hesperus' abbreviates a definite description like 'the evening star'. One of the problems with this sort of account is the difficulty that ordinary speakers have in supplying and agreeing upon a definite description of the appropriate sort. Although Frege's and Russell's analyses of the reference of proper names led to two very different proposals, they both endorsed the view that terms which allegedly lack reference like fictional names are empty names, i.e. names without a referent. Frege's and Russell's ideas were developed into different views of reference that have been labeled 'descriptivism'; the views that fall under such a label share the idea that, roughly, a particular use of a proper name refers by means of some descriptive content associated with that name, which is thought to uniquely determine the name's referent.

Descriptivism was strongly criticized in the second half of the twentieth century, in favour of an account of reference based on the idea that the truth-conditional contribution of a singular expression is not mediated by a definite description.[7] The thesis related to those critiques is the so-called Millian conception of the meaning of proper names, originated by John Stuart Mill (1843): proper names are directly referential terms. The semantic value of a proper name is simply its bearer, the object it

[6] Of course a human being can be the source of inspiration of a fictional character, but this is not, I suppose, what we have in mind when we think of Sherlock Holmes as a well-developed character in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories.
[7] Especially, by Keith Donnellan (1970), Saul Kripke (1972) and David Kaplan (1989)

refers to. Associating such a view with the one according to which utterances of assertive sentences express propositions, a name's contribution to the determination of the proposition expressed by sentences containing it is exhausted by the name's bearer.[8] This semantic thesis is famously labeled 'Direct Reference Theory' for proper names, and is associated with the work of Saul Kripke, even though he never committed to the theory too explicitly.[9]

Kripke (1972) denies that names have, in general, any descriptive content. He proposes instead that the referent of a name is fixed as whatever is linked to it in the *appropriate way*, a way that does not require that speakers associate any sort of identifying descriptive content with the name. A name refers to a given individual since it is applied to it in a public way. From the moment in which it is applied in a public way, the name starts to refer to that individual and is passed along a communicative chain. Such a communicative chain usually (but not necessarily) begins with an original act of dubbing or initial baptism, in which the name is fixed to an individual and starts to rigidly refer to it. At the initial baptism, reference is usually fixed by *ostension*, which establishes a causal link between the object and its name. For example, the most typical case of dubbing is religious baptism, in which a priest bestows a name upon a newborn, pointing to it and saying, for example, 'I name thee 'Jane''. With that initial public act, the priest baptizes the newborn; family, friends and all those attending the ceremony will know from then on that 'Jane' is the name which refers to the newborn. Kripke allows also for cases where reference can be fixed by *description.* An example is that of the name 'Neptune', stipulated by the astronomer Leverrier to refer to 'whatever was the planetary cause of observed perturbations in the orbit of Uranus'.

According to this general picture, a successful baptism (be it by ostension or by description) initiates a *causal chain* in which all speakers in the community use the name in the same way to refer to the same object. This occurs because learning the referent of a name requires that speakers use the name in the same way as the person

---

[8] Strictly speaking, Millianism is committed only to the view that the semantic value of a name is simply its bearer. However, Millianism is often taken to be committed to the further claim that the proposition expressed by an assertive utterance of a sentence containing a proper name is a 'singular proposition', namely a proposition containing the bearer of the name as constituent.

[9] For a profuse examination of the connections between the direct reference theory and Millianism see Nathan Salmon (1981) and Scott Soames (2002).

who introduces them to it, with the intention of referring to the same individual. Success in reference is thus explained by the fact that the name being used can be traced back, from speaker to speaker, to its original introduction as the name of a particular individual; this way, each transmission of the name from one speaker to the other preserves the chain of communication, along with the link originally established between the object and its name.[10] Notably, speakers that use the name do not need to be aware of how exactly a name was introduced to be sure that they all use the same name: to belong to the same naming practice their uses of the name must all be causally linked in the same chain of communication and performed with the same intention to conform to previous uses back in the chain all the way down to the baptism of the name, in which the name was fixed to its bearer. On this view, the meaning of the name is the object introduced by the baptism.

Now, if one endorses a direct reference theory for proper names, the problem of (allegedly) non-referring names like 'Sherlock Holmes' becomes evident: according to such a semantic theory, if the meaning of a name really consists in the object referred to, then names like 'Sherlock Holmes', 'Anna Karenina', 'Hamlet' etc. should be meaningless, as there are no existent objects for those names to refer to. In this dissertation I endorse a direct theory of reference for proper names. I shall not explain the independent reasons why I favor a direct theory of reference for proper names, but rather I shall focus on the matter of *how* a direct reference theorist can account for the semantics of fictional names.

4. SOME PROBLEMS FOR IRREALISM

In this section I describe what I believe to be four prominent problems for irrealist theories of fiction endorsing a direct theory of reference for proper names. To start with, a first main problem for irrealists is that of reconciling the emptiness of fictional names with their substantial contributions to the meaning of the sentences in which they occur.

[10] Kripke's original account was later revised and modified by Gareth Evans (1982), who provides several examples of uses of proper names that cannot be accounted by Kripke's picture, such as cases of reference shifts. Evans's variation hangs on the idea that the reference of a proper name (as used by a speaker) is the dominant causal source of the body of descriptive information the speaker associates with the name.

If we deny that fictional names ever refer to fictional entities, as irrealists do, and endorse a direct reference theory for names for which the meaning of a name is simply its bearer, we seem to be speaking of nothing when using fictional names: if 'Sherlock Holmes' has no bearer, it has no meaning.[11] If we speak about nothing when we use a fictional name, we should account for our understanding of the linguistic processes, for which we seem to be speaking about something by using a meaningless name. Ordinary pre-theoretical intuitions tell us that many sentences in which fictional names occur are meaningful; so here we have the problem of accounting for their apparent meaningfulness in spite of the fact that there seem to be no individuals that the utterances of the sentences are about. Moreover, we have intuitions of difference in meaning for sentences in which two different fictional names occur, but the same property is involved, such as in utterances of the following two sentences:

(11) Sherlock Holmes is a detective

(12) Hercule Poirot is a detective

If fictional names contribute nothing to the sentences in which they occur, it is hard to account for the intuition of difference in meaning from (11) and (12). A second problem is that our ordinary pre-theoretical intuitions tell us that many sentences in which fictional names occur are not only meaningful but also true. If 'Sherlock Holmes' has no meaning, then an utterance of a sentence like (11) should have no (full) meaning, and cannot be true or false. And yet, while (11) strikes us as intuitively true an utterance of

(13) Sherlock Holmes is a thief

(where the same fictional name appears) strikes us as false – at least according to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. A third problem for irrealists is that of accounting for the intuitive straightforward truthfulness of critical statements, in which we intuitively talk *of* fictional characters *as* such, from a critical standpoint. For irrealists it is hard to

[11] I use here the term 'meaning' interchangeably with 'semantic content'.

account for the external perspective in which we think and talk about fictional characters without appealing to *ad hoc* reformulations of what seem to be literally and straightforward talk. And it is not only discourse that refers to things, but also thoughts: this feature that thoughts possess, their being about something, their referring to something, is called in the philosophical jargon 'intentionality'. If I think of Barcelona that it is a beautiful city, seemingly my thought is about Barcelona: Barcelona is the thing I am thinking of. Similarly, if I think of Sherlock Holmes as one of the most fully developed characters in English Literature, it is Sherlock Holmes, the fictional character of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, that my thought is about, or so it seems. However, if Sherlock Holmes does not exist, my thought could not be directed to any such fictional character. A fourth problem for irrealists is that of doing justice to the intuitions of aboutness or object-directness associated with uses of fictional names in fictional discourse: in virtue of what is an utterance of a sentence containing a fictional name directed at a *specific* fictional character, given that there is no such character? Furthermore, irrealists must explain two related phenomena: the phenomenon of thinking and talking about the *same* fictional character, even though there are no fictional characters: in virtue of what is my thought or discourse about Sherlock Holmes about the same fictional character, of your thought or discourse about Sherlock Holmes, if there is no Sherlock Holmes?; and the related phenomenon of thinking and talking about *different* fictional characters, even though there are no fictional characters: in virtue of what is my thought or discourse about Sherlock Holmes *different* from my thought or discourse about Dr. Watson, if there is no Sherlock Holmes and no Dr. Watson?

5. SOME PROBLEMS FOR REALISM

There are two broad prominent types of problems for realist theories of fiction. On the one hand, the major issue realists have to face is whether or not they are justified in bringing fictional objects into the ontology as the referents of fictional names. This issue brings with it several problems of ontological and metaphysical nature that any realist theory of fiction should be able to deal with. On the other hand, there are

problems of a semantic nature that connect with problems of cognitive nature. For purposes of this dissertation, I do not address the problems of ontological and metaphysical nature, but I rather focus on the problems of semantic and cognitive nature, to ultimately offer a defense of creationism in Chapter 6.

I shall start with the problems of a semantic nature. If we postulate that fictional names refer to fictional entities, as realists do, and endorse a direct reference view according to which the meaning of a name is simply its bearer, two main problems arise. Firstly, if 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to the fictional character Sherlock Holmes, the sentences in which it occurs express propositions about Sherlock Holmes. But it is quite controversial among realists whether 'Sherlock Holmes' refers in all the prominent types of fictional discourse. Indeed, depending on the kind of realism about fictional characters one endorses, different types of fictional discourse turn out to be problematic. For example, for Meinongian and possibilist accounts of fiction, non-existence claims do not seem to pose a problem: a claim like (10) is true given that Sherlock Holmes is a nonexistent entity (Meinongianism), or a possible person that does not exist at the actual world (possibilism). By contrast, creationism faces the problem of accounting for the intuition of the literal truth of (10), given that Sherlock Holmes is an existent, abstract created artefact. On the other hand, creationism can easily account for the straightforward and literal truth of claims of critical discourse like (6), while Meinongianism and possibilism do not: Sherlock Holmes, as nonexistent or possible individual, is ill suited to be a created fictional character. Secondly, realist theories of fiction must account for the difference in property ascriptions in relation to fictional characters, according to which a fictional character like Sherlock Holmes is ascribed properties according to its status as a fictional character (e.g. 'appearing in a total of four novels and 56 short stories), and all the same properties that it only 'fictionally' has, according to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories (e.g. 'having a great proficiency with observation'). The point is that all sentences concerning Sherlock Holmes, be they intra-fictional or extra-fictional ascriptions of properties, seem to refer to one and the same fictional character: Sherlock Holmes.

Here we connect to a main problem of cognitive nature: realist theories owe us an account of speakers' *thoughts* and intentions in connection to the distinction between intra-fictional and extra-fictional ascriptions of properties to fictional characters. The

issue has recently been raised with special emphasis in relation to a specific form of realism, creationism. Creationists can easily and intuitively account for extra-fictional ascriptions to fictional characters, in which fictional characters are predicated properties that characterize their status as abstract entities; less obvious for them is how they account for intra-fictional ascriptions, in which fictional characters are predicated properties they have within the fictional works in which they appear: according to creationism fictional characters are said to be entities of an entirely different kind from how they are (typically) described by authors in their home fictions. But even if creationists can account for the truth (or falsity) of claims expressing intra-fictional ascriptions of properties, they do not seem able to account for the *singularity* of thoughts and imaginings required by fiction: while engaging with the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, we do not seem to imagine or think of Sherlock Holmes as an abstract object – otherwise, how are we supposed to imagine or think that he investigates cases for a wide variety of clients, including Scotland Yard? (See, for example, Anthony Everett (2010), Stacie Friend (2007), and Mark Sainsbury (2005) and (2010)). I address this issue in detail in Chapter 6, to ultimately provide a defense of creationism.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this dissertation I am concerned with the questions of whether fictional names need to refer and whether fictional characters need to exist in order to best account for our literary practices. We think and talk of Sherlock Holmes as a brilliant detective, although we know that Sherlock Holmes cannot help the British police to solve mysterious crimes as, after all, he is just a fictional detective; we deny that there ever existed a Sherlock Holmes in late-Victorian London, for, after all, Sherlock Holmes is a literary character of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. Our discourse about fictional works and its characters seems to pull our pre-theoretical intuitions in opposite directions: on the one hand we think and talk about fictional characters, and report their adventures and misfortunes; on the other hand we say that fictional characters clearly don't exist as they are the product of authorial imagination and, as such, we would not include them in our commonsense ontology that comprehends ordinary entities such as tables, glasses,

my dog or my mom. Given the prima face conflicting intuitions about our literary practices, all theories of fiction have ended up giving away some intuitions to favor others, or to account for them only via paraphrases of the sentences involving them. We must recognize that because we make seemingly inconsistent claims about fictional characters, and not all the things we say about them using fictional names can be true at face value, any consistent theory of fiction must give up the grammatical forms *somewhere* to avoid the surface inconsistencies in our way of talking about fiction and its characters (cf. Thomasson: 2003a: 205).

I think that there are four main desiderata that we should expect a consistent theory of fiction to provide: to start with, it must face the ontological issue of whether we need or not to postulate fictional entities in order to account for our literary practices; in the second place, it must shed light on the metaphysical nature of fictional characters, if there are any. In the third place, a consistent theory of fiction must be able to provide a semantic account of fictional names and, all together, a semantic account of fictional discourse by providing an account of the truth conditions of the four prominent types of fictional discourse (i.e., fictionalizing, internal, critical and non-existence discourse); this should be done by resorting to as *few* paraphrases of our ordinary discourse as possible and, in any case, we should always provide a good justification of the paraphrases. Ultimately, a consistent theory of fiction must be able to deal with intuitions of singularity associated with the use of fictional names: thoughts involving fictional names seem to be directed at specific fictional characters.

I believe that a consistent theory of fiction *does need* to postulate fictional entities in order to provide an account of the conflicting intuitions we have in relation to the use of fictional names in fictional discourse, and I believe that the most *convincing* form of realism is creationism, according to which fictional characters are abstract artefacts, really creating in the making of fictional works by authors, and thus really existing. The main concern driving this dissertation is to contribute to our understanding of fiction by providing a full, consistent account of the semantic and cognitive mechanisms that underlie our thought and discourse where fictional names are concerned, assuming that there are fictional characters, and that they have the metaphysical status creationism attributes to them.

CHAPTER 2
IRREALISM

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I present and critically review irrealism, the theoretical stance according to which there are no fictional characters and fictional names are genuinely non-referring expressions; such a stance takes pretence as central for our understanding of fiction and fictional discourse.[12] There are potentially many different views that fall under the label of irrealism, which I believe can be divided into two very broad main streams. On the one side, there is the stream of pure pretence irrealists that are mainly concerned in explaining why we appear to have imaginative engagement with fictional works and its characters, and paraphrase away the appearance of reference and truth when fictional discourse is concerned: our engagement with fiction should be understood in terms of our engagement in some kind of imaginative act or pretence.[13] The most popular contemporary account in which fictional discourse is understood through the mechanisms of pretence is Kendall L. Walton's (1990), which I present in Section 2. On the other side there is the stream of irrealists that do not take pretence to be ubiquitous, and are mainly concerned with the semantics of fictional names and fictional discourse, yet still avoid postulating that there are fictional characters. In Section 3 I will present what I believe to be one of the most promising forms of irrealism on this stream, Mark Sainsbury's (2005 and 2010). [14]

---

[12] In this dissertation I deliberately do not address standard irrealist approaches to fictional names that are descriptivist, as I reject a descriptivist account of names in general, in favour of a direct referential account (see Chapter 1). The standard solution to the semantics of fictional names from an irrealist perspective has been proposed by descriptivist and quantificational analysis that contend that the meaning of fictional names like 'Sherlock Holmes' consists in the set of properties and relations attributed by the author in the story to the specific character. The problem with this account of the semantics of 'Sherlock Holmes' is that it makes knowing what some of the stories attribute to Sherlock Holmes a necessary condition for understanding the name.

[13] Exponents of such a view are, among others, Gregory Currie, Gareth Evans, Anthony Everett and Kendall Walton.

[14] A fair number of irrealists that I believe would belong to this stream hold that sentences containing fictional names fail to express full-blown propositions, but rather express so-called 'gappy' propositions.

2. WALTON'S MAKE-BELIEVE ACCOUNT

2.1 SETTING THE SCENE

In *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (1990) Walton develops a pretence-based account of fiction that gives a uniform semantic account of fictional names and fictional discourse: he contends that fictional names are non-referring expressions and that fictional discourse is not actually about fictional objects, for there are no such things as fictional characters, although we often make-believe that there are. Walton endorses a direct reference view regarding the semantic function of ordinary names, and fictional names as well: given that there are no fictional characters, fictional names do not refer and what looks like a straightforward assertion about a fictional character (i.e. a declarative sentence in which a fictional name occurs) has to be treated as a merely pretend assertion. According to him, it is not until we have a better understanding of why we think and talk about fiction in the way that we do that we are able to decide how to account for fictional names and fictional discourse.

Walton begins his account of fiction by examining the nature of our engagement with representations in general, and with fictions in particular, at the base of which there is the notion of *imagination*, which plays a central role in our mental economy.[15] The reasons for which people read fictions and engage in fictional discourse are of the same sort as the reasons for which people engage in other kinds of games: playing games is a form of enjoyment, of fun, of entertainment etc. Engaging in the 'verbal game' that is fiction consists in speaking of fictional people, places, animals, events etc. as if they were real; doing otherwise will simply spoil the game.

The literature on so-called gappy propositions is by now extensive. For a representative sample, see Braun (1993, 2000) and Friend (2011).

[15] Walton uses the term 'fiction' in a quite technical way, according to which any work of representational art is a fiction. I here focus on literary fiction.

2.1.1 FICTIONAL TRUTH

According to Walton, we must trace the grounds of fiction in games of 'make-believe'. If imagination is the foundation of Walton's theory, games of make-believe are a species of imaginative activity (exemplified by children's games) involving *props*. What is a prop? Sometimes we start imagining things without apparent reason, for instance when we are daydreaming; but when our imagining is prompted by the presence of a particular object this object is referred to as a 'prop'. An object becomes a prop due to the imposition of a rule (or 'principle of generation', cf. 1990: 38-39) prescribing what we have to imagine when presented with the object. For instance, in a child's game stumps can be regarded as bears: the rule is 'let's call stumps bears'. A prop serves as a generator of fictional truths, where 'fictional truth' is not to be understood as a special kind of truth, but rather as a fact about *what is fictional.* In Walton's words, something is fictionally true when is mandated or prescribed to be imagined; more generally what is true is a set of fictional propositions defined as those propositions that are to be imagined – whether or not they are in fact imagined (cf. 1990: 39).

Fictional truths are only meaningful within the scope of our games of make-believe. Typical examples in which the mechanism of make-believe is at play are children's games (like 'cops and robbers', the 'tea party' etc.). For example, in a game in which holds the rule ('the principle of generation') that pieces of mud (the 'props') are dragons, a piece of mud by its presence generates the fictional truth that a dragon is present, and if one piece of mud is bigger than the other, it generates the fictional truth that one dragon is bigger than the other. What makes it fictionally the case that one dragon is bigger than the other is not only that there is a piece of mud bigger than the other, but also that there is a prescription of the game according to which the size of pieces of mud determines the size of dragons.

Similarly to children's games, adults participate in games of make-believe when they engage with a work of fiction that mandates imagining that certain events really happened, that certain people really existed and so on. Works of fiction like novels are

'works whose function is to serve as props in games of make-believe' (1990: 72). Roughly, a novel can serve as prop in a game of make-believe when, in general, there is a prescription for people to engage in the pretence that the objects to which the novel seems to refer to and provide a description of exist. Novels are said to prescribe certain imaginings on the part of the reader; among them, that what she is reading is a true account. If a novel as a whole is a prop, then once we are prescribed to imagine that it is a true report of events, we are further prescribed to imagine the truth of the sentences contained within it.

2.1.2 GAMES OF MAKE-BELIEVE

According to Walton, there are two different kinds of games of make-believe: *authorized* (1990: 51) and *unofficial* (1990: 406). The distinction between the two kinds of games is based on a distinction in rules of generation – namely the rules that determine what we have to imagine when presented with a prop. Authorized games of make-believe are those in which the rules of generation are publicly agreed (and thus shared by the other members of the society) and establish relatively stable games. If a prop is associated to a generally accepted and stable rule it is a representation (cf.: 1990: 52-4). One of the core elements of Walton's theory is that novels are made for the purpose of serving as representations in games of make-believe. For example, *A Study in Scarlet* is a representation that invites us to imagine that there is a brilliant detective, who lives at 221B Baker Street etc., according to the stable rules established for fictional works. In making believe that the stories written by Doyle have taken place, readers engage in an authorized game for the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. By contrast, unofficial games of make-believe are those in which rules of generation are private and introduced *ad hoc*. For example, when children decide to play the game for which stumps are bears, they play an unofficial game of make-believe; stumps have here the function to serve as props on the particular occasion of game even if that is not their intended function.

2.2 WALTON'S ANALYSIS OF FICTIONAL DISCOURSE

2.2.1 INTERNAL DISCOURSE

In Walton's theory, the central notion to account for, in relation with fictional discourse, is that of fictional truth (or truth within pretence). As seen in the previous section, fictional truths are not about fictional objects and, strictly speaking, most of them are not even truths at all. An utterance of

(3) Sherlock Holmes lives at 221B Baker Street

fails to express a proposition, given that 'Sherlock Holmes' fails to refer. The use of the name 'Sherlock Holmes' is to be understood as taking place inside pretence: Doyle is pretending to refer to a fictional detective and, thus, he is not committed to its actual existence. Given there are no fictional objects, there are no propositions expressed which have them as constituents. When Doyle wrote (3), he didn't actually assert (3). Rather, Doyle pretended, in a non-deceptive way, to perform this assertive illocutionary act, and he is not committed to the content of the claim uttered as a piece of fictionalizing discourse.

Along the lines, when a competent reader of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories utters (3) with the intention to report the content of the fiction, she should be understood as pretending to refer to some individual by means of 'Sherlock Holmes', and as pretending to assert of such an individual that he lives at 221B Baker Street, while in reality she is playing an *authorized* game of make-believe for the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. Even if there is only pretence that a proposition is being expressed every time that a fictional name occurs in a sentence, this is not to say that by uttering a sentence of internal discourse like (3) one can never make assertions. In uttering (3) in a game of make-believe authorized by the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, one is *asserting* the following paraphrase:

(3*) The *Sherlock Holmes* stories is such that one who engages in pretence of kind *K* [claiming 'Sherlock Holmes lives at 221B Baker Street'] in a game authorized for it makes it fictional of himself in that game that he speaks truly.[16] (cf. 1990: 400)

According to (3*), my utterance of (3) is an act of pretend assertion in a game of make-believe authorized by the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. Such an act is appropriate, and the appropriateness in question is of a specific kind, one that Walton dubs 'kind *K*'. The fact that some acts of pretence are more *appropriate* than others is what gives the appearance of truth or falsehood to sentences of internal claims. As we can see, there is a theoretical move in Walton's account from the notion of 'proposition' to the notion of 'act of pretence of a certain kind'.

A crucial issue in the account of internal discourse is *how* to individuate *K*, for which an act of pretence of a specific kind would count as appropriate or inappropriate. It should be noticed at this stage that one important feature of Walton's account of fictional discourse is his use of examples: rather than providing clear definitions of the technical terms, he attempts to sketch their meanings by using those terms to illustrate certain features of fiction. And this also applies to the technical term *K*. Walton knows of no informative description to individuate *K* when fictional discourse contains fictional names: in uttering (3) – while asserting (3*) – one specifies the kind *K* to which her act of pretence belongs to by *displaying a single instance of it in using 'Sherlock Holmes' in pretence* – although the meaning of *K* is not tied to any particular instances (cf. 1990: 398-402).[17]

As we saw, utterances that appear to make reference to fictional characters – namely utterances involving fictional names – are to be understood as acts of pretence. A question that remains is in what respect an act of pretence must be similar enough to the displayed kind to count as a pretence of the *same* kind, or different enough to the displayed kind to count as a pretence of a *different* kind. Following Walton, utterances containing uses of the same fictional name in pretence would indicate acts of pretence

[16] Walton's original example is based on Mark Twain's novel *Tom Sawyer*.
[17] Walton is relying here on Kripke's account of natural kind terms given in *Naming and Necessity*, according to which the reference to a natural kind is fixed via ostension to one of its samples (cf. 1990: 402).

belonging to the same kind *K*, while uses of different fictional names in pretence would indicate acts of pretence belonging to different kinds. For example, my utterance of (3) would count as belonging to the same kind *K* as my utterance of

(11) Sherlock Holmes is a detective

In uttering (3) and (11) I am participating in a game of make believe authorized by the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, and I am appearing to make reference to the same fictional character (by means of using 'Sherlock Holmes'). For two acts of pretence performed by *different speakers* to count as being of the same kind *K*, Walton appeals to the notion of 'extended games of make-believe' that include both acts of pretence (1990: 403). In an extended game of make-believe, when it is fictionally true that two different acts of pretence *count as* assertions of propositions about the same individual (although the utterance produced in neither act of pretence expresses a proposition), the two acts of pretence are of the same kind *K*. For example, let us suppose that I and my friend Claudia are talking about the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. My utterance of (3) and Claudia's utterance of (11) would count as belonging to the same kind *K*. The appeal to *K* is also what allows Walton to account for acts of pretence being different enough to the displayed kind to count as pretence of a *different* kind. Let us say that, together with (3), I utter the following sentence in talking about the *Sherlock Holmes* stories:

(14) Dr. Watson lives at 221B Baker Street

Intuitively, I would say that my utterance of (3) does not have the same meaning as my utterance of (14): I seem to be talking about different fictional characters, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. For Walton, as already mentioned, fictional names are empty names and make no semantic contribution to the sentences in which they occur. But then how can we account for the (apparent) difference of meaning between (3) and (14), which seems to predicate the same property to different fictional characters? A reasonable answer, following Walton's account of internal discourse, seems to be that the kinds of pretence involved in utterances of (3) and (14) are different because they

involve different names, 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'Dr. Watson'. And given that fictional names have no referents, and thus provide no semantic contribution to the sentences in which they occur, we are left with their syntactic contribution: what ultimately seem to individuate kinds of pretence are *name-types*. However, Walton seems to ultimately recognize that a name-type does not seem to be *enough* to specify a kind of pretence as being of the same kind as another, or as being of a different kind. For example, I could have made the same fictional assertion if, instead of uttering (14), I had uttered:

(14*) Sherlock Holmes's colleague lives at 221B Baker Street

The name-type 'Dr. Watson' does not longer appear in (14*), and yet my fictional assertion would count as belonging to the same kind *K* as (14). Moreover, the same character can have different name-types ('Odysseus' in Greek and 'Ulysses' in Latin) or different characters can have the same name-type (like 'Emma' in Austen's *Emma* and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*) (cf. Friend 2007). Last but not least, translation into languages in which the name-type itself is translated seems to pose a further problem (cf. García-Carpintero 2010, 286-7). For instance, the fictional name 'Don Quijote de la Mancha' is translated into English in 'Don Quixote of La Mancha'.[18] Consider the following utterance of a Spanish sentence, uttered as a piece of internal discourse about the novel *Don Quixote of La Mancha*

(15) Don Quijote de la Mancha es un ingenioso hidalgo

Intuitively, a speaker would be engaging in the *same* pretence (authorized by the fictional work *Don Quixote of La Mancha*) in uttering the following sentence (which is a correct translation of (15)):

(16) Don Quixote of La Mancha is an ingenious gentleman

[18] 'Don Quijote de la Mancha' is the name of the leading fictional character of the novel *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, written by the Spanish novelist Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra.

The fact that, intuitively, in uttering (15) ad (16) speakers seem to be engaging in the same kind of pretence cannot be accounted for by appealing to the concept of 'name-type', as there are two different name-types occurring in (15) and (16): 'Don Quijote de la Mancha' and 'Don Quixote of La Mancha', respectively. But then it seems that belonging in the same kind of pretence has to do, after all, with a *common* content expressed by (15) and (16), which makes it doubtful that the two sentences do not express propositions – and yet, for Walton utterances of sentences appearing to make reference to fictional characters do not express any proposition, but are rather to be understood as acts of pretence.

Summing up, on Walton's view fictional names are non-referring and do not contribute anything to the semantic content of the sentences in which they occur; they would then make no semantic contribution to make it the case that my act of pretence is about Sherlock Holmes as much as yours, or that my act of pretence about Sherlock Holmes is different from my act of pretence about Dr. Watson. Without the referent of a name, we are left only with the name-type; however, we have just seen that appealing to the concept of 'name-type' is not *enough* to identify a given act of pretence. We are thus left without individuating conditions for *K,* and hence without individuating conditions for 'acts of pretence', on which Walton's account of fictional discourse is ultimately based.

2.2.2 CRITICAL AND NON-EXISTENCE DISCOURSE

So far, I have considered examples in which speakers' utterances containing fictional names are about the authorized games of make-believe they are participating in. However, there are assertive uses of sentences containing fictional names that do not seem to count as a kind of participation in authorized games of make-believe. For example, consider the following sentences:

(6) Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character

(10) Sherlock Holmes does not exist

Given that nowhere in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories it is said that Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character, or that Sherlock Holmes does not exist, speakers uttering (6) and (10) are not participating in a game authorized by the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. A new kind of game needs to be established. Walton's proposal is that in uttering (6) and (10) speakers verbally participate in *unofficial* games of make-believe. Let us start with critical discourse. In uttering (6) a speaker would make a claim that many of us would acknowledge as being straightforwardly true. Walton's proposal is to regard an utterance of a sentence like (6) as implying that there is an unofficial game, in which one who says (6) speaks the truth, a game in which it is fictional that there are two kinds of people, 'real people' and 'fictional people' (1990: 423). The apparent conflict between saying that Sherlock Holmes smokes the pipe, and that Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character, is ultimately based on different kinds of games, authorized and unofficial.

Thomasson (2003a) has argued against the extension of Walton's pretence-based account to claims of critical discourse. One of her point is that an analysis of claims of critical discourse as involving unauthorized games of make-believe is definitely at odds with our intuitions about our behaviour when engaging in this type of discourse, and about our intuitions on the truth-values of such claims. When we make critical claims such as (6) we do not seem to be pretending and, moreover, we do not seem to be in need of paraphrases to get the correct truth-value of what it strikes us as genuine and straightforward truths. She says:

> If two police officers discussing a case say 'This is such a tough one, we need Sherlock Holmes to help us solve it', they do indeed seem engaged in a pretence that Holmes is a real detective who could be called upon in times of need. But the point of a humourless colleague's remark 'There's no such person as Holmes, it's just a fictional character', seems precisely to step *outside* these forms of pretence and assert the real truth about Holmes. (2003a: 209)

Following Thomasson, I think that Walton's theory, in proposing a paraphrase of fictional discourse as always involving an element of pretence, goes against people's pre-theoretical intuitions in all cases in which fiction is considered and evaluated from

an external, critical perspective. Even if I can understand Walton's idea of a 'creative' form of pretence initiated by the author in fictionalizing discourse and passed on to readers in internal discourse, I find it difficult to grasp the idea of the sort of *ad hoc* pretence that is needed to accommodate critical discourse. Some sentences involving fictional characters are asserted seriously without any explicit or implicit pretence. For example, when a literary critic utters

(7) Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character created by Scottish author and physician Sir Arthur Doyle in 1887

she does appear to have the intention to say a literal truth, a truth to which she would commit herself – it is extremely implausible to claim that, unbeknown to her, she is actually engaged in pretence.

Let us now move to Walton's analysis of claims of non-existence discourse. An utterance of

(10) Sherlock Holmes does not exist

seems intuitively true. However, (10) cannot be literally true, for 'Sherlock Holmes' does not refer, and there is no proposition expressed by (10) than can be true (or false). For Walton, what seems to give us the intuition of truth is rather that it is true that we cannot succeed in referring to Sherlock Holmes, as there is no such individual. In other words, it is like saying that the fictional attempt to refer made by uttering 'Sherlock Holmes' is unsuccessful. An utterance of a sentence like (10) should be read as suggesting that there is an unofficial game in which one who utters (10) plays along with the standard use of the name 'Sherlock Holmes' (according to the pretence invoked by the *Sherlock Holmes* stories), and then immediately betrays such a pretence by adding the words 'does not exist' (1990: 422-425). This way, Walton tries to capture the intuition that utterances of negative existentials express truths. I think that a problem with Walton's account of negative existentials is that he does not tell us what the content of the supposedly truth of (10) is – for him, there is no such truth given that 'Sherlock Holmes' does not refer and (10) does not express a proposition. What he rather tells us is that a certain act of speech does not succeed in referring; however, this

does not account for the fact that we intuitively take negative existentials like (10) as being literally and straightforwardly true, without the appeal to any sort of pretence or 'game of make-believe'.

3. SAINSBURY'S IRREALIST ACCOUNT

3.1 SETTING THE SCENE

In *Reference without Referents* (2005) Sainsbury develops a semantic theory that accounts for how we understand names and sentences that do not refer to anything, like fictional names and sentences of fictional discourse. The underlying idea of the project is that the meaning of a name, rather than being identified with its referent, has to be identified with its reference conditions, and that the meaning of a sentence has to be identified with its truth conditions.

To account for the fact that a name can be meaningful despite the failure of reference, Sainsbury introduces the notion of 'name-using practice': understanding a name involves participating in a name-using practice, which is metaphysically individuated by an act of baptism. There can be a successful act of baptism which initiates a practice of using a name even *without* there being an object baptized.[19] For example, the astronomer Le Verrier thought that a planet orbiting between Mercury and the Sun was perturbing Mercury's orbit. He introduced the name 'Vulcan' for the planet causing perturbations in Mercury's orbit. Unfortunately for Le Verrier, there was no such planet. In cases where a name-using practice is successfully initiated but an object is not successfully associated with the name, intentionally or not, *empty or non-referring names* are introduced. Sainsbury's picture of reference focuses thus on name-using practices: a baptism of a non-referring name is considered successful when it originates a name-using practice in which the name is used in the same way by all the speakers involved in the practice. The existence of a name-using practice depends then on whether the practice of using the name 'catches on' (cf. 2005:109).

[19] Whereas, as seen, according to the Kripkean picture of reference, a baptism necessarily associates the name that it originates with exactly one object, according to Sainsbury's picture, a baptism associates the name with at most one object (2005: 106).

3.2 FICTIONAL DISCOURSE

3.2.1 FIDELITY *VS*. TRUTH

In Chapter 6 of the book, ‘Existence and Fiction’, Sainsbury applies the semantics developed in the previous chapters to fictional names: the main goal is to show that there is no need to embrace heavy weighted metaphysical assumptions about the nature of fictional characters to explain the semantic functioning of sentences containing fictional names. In the case of fictional names and sentences of fictional discourse the corresponding referential conditions fail to hold, and yet both the names and the sentences are meaningful. He writes:

> Semantics recognizes no special category of fictional sentences or fictional names. Everything will proceed just as for non-fictional regions of language. (...) fictional names belong to the general category of names, and so receive the standard homophonic axioms, for example: for all x (‘Sherlock Holmes’ refers to x iff x=Sherlock Holmes). (2005: 202)

In order to make utterances of sentences containing non-referring names meaningful, Sainsbury adopts a negative free logic, in which simple sentences that contain a non-referring term in the subject position turn out as false. His motivation for adopting a negative free logic is that it allows us to speak meaningfully about both what does and does not exist, while getting the intuitive results about the truth-values of sentences containing non-referring names.

Concerning fictional discourse, Sainsbury does not analyze sentences that occur in fictionalizing and critical discourse, but rather concentrate on sentences that occur in non-existence and internal discourse.[20] In the case of negative existentials, the appeal to a negative free logic gives a far simple and more plausible way to account for them than Walton’s irrealist view: in all sentences containing a fictional name in subject position and a negation, the negation operator takes wider scope than the subject and thus the

[20] Sainsbury also analyses other types of fictional discourse that are not the subject of study of the present work.

sentence turns out to be true. However, if Sainsbury's semantics gives a simple and intuitive account of negative existentials, it might be considered problematic given that all simple subject-predicate sentences with a fictional name in subject position turn out to be false, contrary to what we intuitively would say about many of them. According to the semantics provided in the book, an utterance of internal discourse like

(11) Sherlock Holmes is a detective

is plainly false. And yet we would inclined to say that an utterance of (11) is true in a way that an utterance of

(17) Sherlock Holmes is a farmer

is not. A first strategy adopted by Sainsbury to account for the intuition of truth we associate with (11), by contrast to the intuition of falsity we associate to (17), is that of distinguishing between being true and being *faithful*. Whereas the truth of a sentence like (11) seems to require the existence of Sherlock Holmes, its *fidelity* does not. On this strategy, internal claims are treated as not truth-evaluable; in the place of truth values or truth conditions, we adopt the notion of 'faithful-to-the-story': an utterance of (11) is faithful to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, but not literally true.

I think that a general problem with this account of internal claims is the notion of fidelity itself: what is and is not faithful to the story associated with a given work of fiction is a matter of controversy, related to the basic problem of how the content of a given fiction is determined. It is clear that appealing to the propositional content of a sentence of internal claim like (11) cannot be of any help in accounting for its being faithful to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, given that there is no such a propositional content, as 'Sherlock Holmes' does not refer. If there is no propositional content, the sentences that are faithful to the *Sherlock Holme*s stories are those that, strictly speaking, syntactically compose the stories. But then the problem I see with Sainsbury's proposal is that many of the sentences of internal discourse that we would intuitively judge as true would not be analyzable in terms of fidelity. For example, consider the following an utterance:

(4) Sherlock Holmes occasionally uses addictive drugs, especially cocaine

(4) does not literally occur in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, and yet we would be inclined to say that it is true.

Another strategy put forward by Sainsbury to deal with the truth-condition of claims of internal discourse is to take them as elliptical for claims that no longer purport to refer to existent fictional characters. Taken as a straightforward existence claim about a real person (11) is clearly false (if not meaningless); yet, there are contexts of discourse in which an utterance of (11) seems correct or even true, namely contexts of discourse about what is the case according to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. For example, an utterance of (11) is evaluated as being *genuinely true* if it is paraphrased into another sentence, (11*), the truth-conditions of which are not ontologically committing:

(11*) According to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, Sherlock Holmes is a detective

(11*) reveals the hidden logical form of (11), and provide an account of the intuitive truth-conditions of (11). On such an analysis, the semantic behavior of a sentence like (11) is then reflected by its paraphrase, (11*), namely a sentence prefixed by an operator of the form ‘according to the story S’. While the sentence within the scope of the story operator may be false when taken in isolation, the full sentence may be true. I think that this account of the truth-conditions of sentences of internal discourse is problematic. Let us see why.

Sainsbury discusses the semantics of sentences containing fictional names at length while only briefly discussing how we are to understand them in the context of the fictional operator. The fictional operator is an intensional one, and it is thus supposed to create an intensional context. The problem I see concerns the semantic contribution of the fictional name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ in such an intensional context. As previously seen, Sainsbury provides a semantics for ‘Sherlock Holmes’ that accounts for its semantic behavior in an extensional context: the meaning of ‘Sherlock Holmes’ is provided by its reference condition, which is not satisfied given that Sherlock Holmes does not exist, for which the name contributes nothing to the truth conditions of the sentences in which it occurs. However, Sainsbury does not analyze the semantic

behavior of 'Sherlock Holmes' when embedded under the scope of the fictional operator. But then it is not clear whether 'Sherlock Holmes' is making the same semantic contribution to the truth conditions of the sentences in intensional contexts as much as in extensional contexts. If it does not make the same semantic contribution, then I believe that *Reference without Referents* falls short of providing a semantic account of the fictional operator and of the semantic behavior of fictional names in the intensional contexts it generates. By contrast, if 'Sherlock Holmes' does make the same contribution in intensional contexts, then it is not clear what the truth-conditions of (11*) are. To see where the problem lies, consider an utterance of

(17*) According to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, Sherlock Holmes is a farmer

On my opinion, it is not clear either what the truth-conditions of (17*) are, and why an utterance of (11*) should be considered as having a different truth value from an utterance of (17*). Sainsbury argues that we can obtain the intuitive truth-values – that is that (11*) is true while (17*) is false – by ultimately appealing to the notion of fidelity: while the simple subject-predicate sentence that falls under the scope of the fictional operator in (11*) is faithful to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, the one that falls under the scope of the fictional operator in (17*) is not, as it is said nowhere in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories that Sherlock Holmes is a farmer. However, as I said before, the notion of fidelity to a given fiction is in need of further elaboration and, as it stands, cannot really be of any help to refine the notion of truth according to a given fiction.

3.2.2 PRESUPPOSITION-RELATIVE TRUTH

The account of fictional discourse sketched in *Reference without Referents* is taken up in *Fiction and Fictionalism* (2010, Chapter 6). Sainsbury's aim in the book is to show that we can account for our thought and discourse about fiction and its characters without taking a realist stance. He argues that we should recognize two kinds of truth when fictional discourse is concerned: on top of truth *simpliciter* we should have a notion of *truth relative to a presupposition*. More in detail, he appeals to the notion of presupposition, according to which we may presuppose things which we know are not

true for the purposes of the conversation, and for the purposes of evaluating the propositions involved as true or false (cf. 2010: 145). Although most of the claims in which fictional names occur are false, we can achieve a proper understanding of those claims by the acceptance of certain presuppositions shared by speakers and listeners. While a sentence of internal discourse like (11) is literally false because there is no Sherlock Holmes, we can still account for the idea that in some circumstances the sentence can be taken as true through the notion of presupposition: our understanding of the proposition expressed by the sentence of internal discourse (11) presupposes that Sherlock Holmes exists, and that the information provided about him by the relevant fiction is accurate. In understanding and accepting the proposition we do not come to believe it, for there is no proposition at all expressed by (11).

According to Sainsbury's account, depending on the type of sentences in which it occurs the name 'Sherlock Holmes' triggers different presuppositions and generate different intuitive judgments about the truth-values of the sentences involved. Consider the following utterance of a claim of critical discourse:

(7) Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character created by Scottish author and physician Sir Arthur Doyle in 1887

Literally taken, (7) does not seem to fall under the scope of any sort of operator or pretence. According to Sainsbury, the apparent truth of (7) can be accounted for in terms of presupposition: the presupposition triggered by (7) is that Sherlock Holmes exists as a mere fictional character. However, this does not make the view a realist one, for according to a realist stance an utterance of (7) is true, whereas for an irrealist it is plainly false, although it is true under the presupposition that Sherlock Holmes is a mere fictional character, which the irrealist takes to be false. One apparent advantage of the presupposition-based approach over full pretence views is that it accounts for the seeming truth of many sentences that, intuitively, cannot be prefixed by a fictional operator or cannot be accounted for by invoking any sort of pretence, such as in the case of sentences of critical discourse.

In what follows, I address what I take to be some weak points in Sainsbury's view. First of all, I think that Sainsbury fails to *properly* account for the *change* in

presupposition from claims of internal discourse to claims of critical discourse. Consider again (11) and (7). An utterance of (11) triggers the presupposition that Sherlock Holmes exists as a flesh-and-blood individual, while an utterance of (7) triggers the presupposition that Sherlock Holmes exists as a mere fictional character. The name 'Sherlock Holmes' is clearly of no help in explaining the change in presupposition from (11) to (7), as it should trigger the same presupposition, given that it is the same name-type. It seems that what trigger the different presuppositions in (11) and (7) are the properties associated to the name-type 'Sherlock Holmes' in the two sentences: in the case of (11) properties that Sherlock Holmes supposedly has from a perspective internal to the fiction ('human-like properties'), while in the case of (7) properties that Sherlock supposedly has from a perspective external to the fiction ('character-like properties'). The presupposition shifts from (11) to (7) – that is from Sherlock Holmes existing as a flesh-and-blood individual to Sherlock Holmes existing as a mere fictional character – because of the properties associated to 'Sherlock Holmes'. Together with the shift in presupposition there is a shift in the perspective of evaluation of the two claims: we shift from the evaluation of (11) as true against the context of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories – under the scope of the presupposition that Sherlock Holmes exists as a person – to the evaluation of (7) as true against the context of the real world – under the scope of the presupposition that Sherlock Holmes exists as a fictional character. Sainsbury's account seems to ascribe the same status to (11) and (7) – false, but true under presupposition, namely *accepted* as true. However, I think that claims of critical discourse are *believed* to be straightforwardly true – and not only accepted as true under a certain presupposition.

Let me address a further weak point in Sainsbury's account. Let us consider again an utterance of (17): we would intuitively say that an utterance of (17) has a different truth-value from an utterance of (11): while an utterance of (17) strikes us false, an utterance of (11) strikes us as true. However, following Sainsbury, nothing concerning the referent of 'Sherlock Holmes' can help us explaining this difference, for there is no such referent; nor is the notion of presupposition of any help here, for the presupposition should be the same in both sentences, namely that Sherlock Holmes exists as a flesh-and-blood, which is triggered by the syntactic appearance of 'Sherlock

Holmes' in both sentences. What then would make us intuitively accept the truth of (11), relative to the presupposition that Sherlock Holmes exist as a real person, but not of (17)? It seems that the only way to explain our acceptance of (11) is in relation to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories (in which Sherlock Holmes is described as being a detective): the intuition of truthfulness for (11) is ultimately explained in terms of fidelity, for it is faithful to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories that the person that we presuppose to exist is a detective rather than a thief. However, I have already pointed out that the notion of fidelity needs further elaboration and, as it stands, cannot be of any help in accounting for the notion of truth relative to a presupposition when fictional names are concerned.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

To sum up this chapter, the irrealist approaches analyzed in the previous sections capture important ideas about the nature of fiction, and of our literary practices when engaging with fictional works. Let me clarify that I have decided to group together in the same chapter Walton's and Sainsbury's proposals as they offer an account of fictional names and fictional discourse from two different irrealist perspectives. On the one hand, Walton's account rightly emphasizes the role of imagination in the making and appreciation of fictional works, accounting for fictional names and fictional discourse accordingly: discourse purportedly about fictional entities is taken as essentially involving pretence and make-believe. The use of a fictional name like 'Sherlock Holmes' is to be understood as taking place inside pretence, and an apparent assertion about a fictional character should be understood as a move in a game of make-believe in which we pretend to give a true description of how things are in the world. On the other hand, Sainsbury's account focuses on the semantics of our reactions to fiction: he provides an accurate semantic analysis of what we say when we employ fictional names and engage in fictional discourse according to which we have determinate truth-conditions for both fictional names and the sentences in which they occur.

Walton's influential account based on the notion of pretence gives unintuitive accounts of claims of fictional discourse that are made from a real world stand-point,

namely critical and non-existence claims. Such an account extends pretence in cases where a literal interpretation would seem far more straightforward (at least for what concerns critical claims). Sainsbury's account of fictional discourse, unlike Walton's, offers a straightforward and simple account of negative existentials, which prove to be problematic on a pure pretence account of fiction. However, as Walton's, it has difficulties accounting for the apparent straightforward truth of critical claims. I think that Sainsbury's account of critical claims could be regarded as a way of making more precise what to utter a sentence like (6) under pretence consists of: we play along with the presupposition that 'there are real people and fictional characters'.

Ultimately, an advantage of Sainsbury's account over Walton's is that, by individuating name-using practices through baptism, it seems to be able to account for the phenomenon for which different people can use the name 'Sherlock Holmes' to talk about the same fictional character: this is so because their uses of the name are linked back to the same act of baptism, which is individuated by Doyle's act of storytelling. And as long as speakers' uses of 'Sherlock Holmes' constitute participation in the same name-using practice, we have an explanation of the intuition that we can think and talk about the same thing even if there is no such thing. Along the lines, we have an explanation of the intuition for which by using 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'Dr. Watson' I talk of two different characters: I participate in two different name-using practices, one associated to 'Sherlock Holmes' and the other associated to 'Dr. Watson'.

In conclusion, both Walton's and Sainsbury's irrealist accounts offer interesting insights into the way we think and speak about fiction and its characters without appealing to fictional entities. Yet, as I have argued before, the irrealist revisions so far analyzed about the structure and meanings of critical claims are quite implausible and would be hardly accepted by an ordinary speaker. Both irrealist views imply the presence of pretence where a literal interpretation would seem far more intuitive: they must at a certain point have recourse to *ad hoc* reformulations of sentences that seem to literally and straightforwardly assert the existence of fictional characters *as literary* characters, and therefore they are not able to recognize the historical and cultural reality of works of fiction and their characters.

CHAPTER 3
MEINONGIANISM

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is devoted to Meinongianism, a realist theory of fiction according to which fictional names refer to fictional characters understood as nonexistent entities that can become the objects of our thoughts, beliefs, desires and so on, and to which we can refer in ordinary linguistic practices. 'Sherlock Holmes' for Meinongianism refers to the fictional character Sherlock Holmes – it is only that Sherlock Holmes does not exist. This form of realism is originally inspired by Alexius Meinong's 'principle of intentionality', for which every mental phenomenon is directed towards an object (1904). Meinong takes a different direction from contemporary philosophy, based in the paradigm belief that everything exists, relying on the intuition that often people seem to have intentional states (they imagine, fear, love, desire etc.) that are directed *towards* something that does not exist; for example, one can imagine, dream or think about a flying horse, although such a thing does not exist. An object need not exist in order to be thought of or talked about: Meinong draws a distinction between the *Sein* of a thing – the existential status – from its *Sosein* – its being so and so, its having certain properties. Whereas, radically, everything has being, only actual objects (like myself or the chair I'm sitting on) have existence; thus, even if every object that exists also has being, not every object that has being also exists. Remarkably, an object can have properties even if it doesn't exist. Moreover, on such a view every name refers to an object: if a name does not refer to an object that exists, it refers nonetheless to an object that does not exist but has being; for example, whereas 'Mick Jagger' refers to an actual existing person, 'Johnny Cash' refers to a particular individual that does not longer exist but nonetheless has being. And lacking existence concerns also an uncountable number of objects that populate novels, myths and tales we love to read and listen to: the fictional characters Anna Karenina, Sherlock Holmes, Hamlet, and so on.

There is a contemporary group of influential philosophers that, inspired by Meinong's work, defend that fictional names refer to fictional characters, and that fictional characters are nonexistent objects – they are referred to as Meinongians (or neo-Meinongians). The most prominent upholders of Meinongianism are Dale Jaquette (1996), Terence Parsons (1980), John Priest (2005), Richard Routley (1980) and Edward N. Zalta (1983)). In the following sections, I briefly address the main tenets of Meinongianism by presenting the theories of two (neo-) Meinongians: Parsons and Zalta.[21] I analyze pros and contras of Meinongianism to ultimately argue that it should be discarded as full, consistent theory of fiction. Let us see why.

2. MEINONGIAN ACCOUNTS OF FICTION

2.1 SETTING THE SCENE

The central idea underlying Meinongianism is that to every set of properties there corresponds exactly one object. There are more sets of properties than existing objects, and some sets of properties are not possessed by any existing object. And many of these nonexistent objects are fictional objects. Fictional objects lack existence at the actual world, where they can nevertheless *bear properties* not entailing existence. They bear representational properties and have the properties they are represented as having according to the works of fiction in which they appear. Thus, Sherlock Holmes is a nonexistent individual in virtue of being a correlate of the set of properties attributed to him in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories.

Historically, a very influential argument against nonexistents has been raised by Russell (1905), for which Meinong's claim that there is an object for every set of

[21] Zalta's theory about fictional characters (see especially Zalta (1983)) does not count as a purely Meinongian theory of fiction. He is rather defined in the literature as '*unorthodox* neo-Meinongian' given that he interprets Meinong's distinction between existence and non-existence in terms of being concrete and being *abstract*: nonexistent objects are *abstract* entities, where 'abstractness' is understood as 'lacking spatio-temporal' location. Fictional characters as well are here conceived as abstract objects that have non-spatio-temporal mode of existence. I have decided to address Zalta's account of fiction in this chapter given that in his work we can find important insights into a Meinongian theory of fiction.

properties lead to have that nonexistent objects are 'apt to infringe the principle of contradiction': if 'the round square that exists' referred to an object that had all of the properties expressed by the expressions in 'round square that exists', then it would refer to an object that is round and square and that exists. But no object that is both round and square exists. So 'the round square that exists' would refer to an object that both exists and doesn't exist. But that's impossible. Specifically, for present purposes, the claim that there is an object for every set of properties puts the Meinongians in trouble when fictional characters are concerned. Sherlock Holmes is a fictional nonexistent, but of course Doyle never described Sherlock Holmes as nonexistent for, in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, Sherlock Holmes is described as an existent, flesh-and-blood detective with great deductive abilities. So here Meinongianism is in danger of contradiction by taking Sherlock Holmes to be a nonexistent that exists. Historically, two relatively well known solutions are provided to this problem by Parsons (1980) and Zalta (1983). Let us see how in the following sections.

2.2 NUCLEAR AND EXTRA-NUCLEAR PROPERTIES

To avoid the unwanted result that Sherlock Holmes exists and does not exist at the same time, Parsons (1980) appeals to the distinction between nuclear and extra-nuclear properties that an object can have, originally introduced by Meinong (1972).

Nuclear properties are, roughly, ordinary properties of objects, which are supposed to constitute an object's nature like the property of 'being thin', 'being red', 'being a mountain' and 'being a detective'; by contrast, extra-nuclear properties are properties external to the nature of an object, like 'existence' (an ontological property), 'being possible' (a modal property) or 'being admired by Chiara' (an intentional property). It is only sets of nuclear properties that are correlated to objects – there is an object correlated to each nonempty set of nuclear properties – so that it is by means of nuclear properties that we individuate objects, be they existent or nonexistent. What distinguishes existent from nonexistent objects is that whereas existent objects are complete (i.e. they either posses a nuclear property or its negation), the nonexistent ones are manifestly incomplete (i.e. they can neither posses a nuclear property nor its

negation). And it is by means of nuclear properties that we can individuate the nonexistents of fiction. Here is how Parsons defines the identity of fictional characters:

> (*) The F [fictional character] of a story *s* = the object x which is such that for any nuclear property p, x has p if, and only if, the F of *s* is such that in (i.e. according to) *s* it has p. (1980: 141)

For example, 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to the nonexistent object that has all those nuclear properties stated in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, like, for example, the property of 'smoking the pipe', of 'living at 221B Baker Street', 'solving amazing crimes' and so on. Thus, when one utters

(3) Sherlock Holmes lives at 221B Baker Street

one says something true, given that the nuclear property of 'living at 221B Baker Street' is ascribed to the character Sherlock Holmes in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. This way, the account seems to accommodate both intuitions of reference and truth about fictional characters.

2.3 ENCODED AND EXEMPLIFIED PROPERTIES

Zalta agrees that fictional objects form a subset of Meinongian objects, but also maintains that Meinongian objects are objects that have a non-spatio-temporal mode of existence, and hence are abstract rather than concrete objects. According to his ontology, there are two general categories of objects, 'ordinary objects' and 'abstract objects': whereas ordinary objects are the ones that exist and can have spatio-temporal location, like my laptop, Italy or my brother Davide, abstract objects are those objects that are never to be found in space or time, like numbers, the round square or the golden mountain. Zalta's ontology is based on the distinction between two kinds of predication: 'exemplification' (which corresponds more or less to the standard notion of predication) and 'encoding' (which corresponds to a special kind of predication that only applies to

abstract objects).[22] To avoid the undesirable consequence that an ordinary concrete object and an abstract object turn out to be identical, it is an axiom on Zalta's theory that no ordinary object can encode any property; by contrast, the identity of an abstract object is determined by the properties it encodes.

Fictional characters are but one kind of abstract objects and, as such, they exemplify properties that do not imply spatio-temporal determination, e.g. 'being introduced on page 5 of *A Study in Scarlet*' or 'being well developed'. However, as an abstract object, Sherlock Holmes is the wrong sort of entity to have the property of 'playing the violin', 'smoking the pipe' and so on. Zalta's response to this difficulty is to argue that Sherlock Holmes does not have but merely *encode* the properties that imply concreteness. And the notion of 'encoding' is what provides us the criteria of identification for fictional characters: fictional characters encode exactly all the properties that the fictions in which they originate describe them as having. A consequence of this distinction in kinds of predication is that fictional characters do not have their individuating properties in the same way that ordinary concrete objects do. For example, Sherlock Holmes is not a detective in the same way as an existent detective, for Sherlock Holmes merely encodes the property of being a detective.

Fictional characters are abstract objects dependent upon other abstract objects, stories. A story is an abstract object written by an author, but not created by him: an author, in writing a story, rather than creating an abstract object decides which abstract object is going to count as her story, by determining which propositions are true in the story. Given that stories are abstract objects encoding all and only the propositional properties uttered by authors, a story like *A Study in Scarlet* will encode properties like 'being such that Sherlock Holmes is a brilliant detective', 'being such that 221B Baker Street is a Victorian House' and 'being such that Watson is a doctor' etc. uttered by Doyle while penning it down. Zalta distinguishes between native from non-native stories: a native story is the one in which a fictional character originally appears, as, for example, *A Study in Scarlet* for Sherlock Holmes; by contrast, a non-native story is one in which a fictional character originally introduced in another story appears. Such a distinction allows Zalta to fix the identity conditions for fictional characters on the set

[22] Originally, the distinction was formulated by Ernst Mally (1912), a disciple of Meinong.

of properties that are attributed to a character in the story in which it first appears, namely its native story. This turns to be very helpful when, for example, one needs to distinguish the appearance of a character in different stories from different authors.

3. MOTIVATING MEINONGIANISM

In this section I list what I take to be the main motivations for wanting to embrace Meinongianism as a theory of fiction. One of the principle motivations is that it gives a straightforward account of the intuitively true claims of non-existence discourse like

(10) Sherlock Holmes does not exist

'Sherlock Holmes' denotes a nonexistent detective and thus is meaningful. This way, the whole sentence is also true, given that Sherlock Holmes does not belong to the class of existent objects. According to this picture, an utterance of (10) simply expresses the truth that Sherlock Holmes is a nonexistent object. Now let us turn to sentences of internal discourse. An utterance of a sentence like

(11) Sherlock Holmes is a detective

seems to be about Sherlock Holmes. Despite the non-existence of the character, there is a strong tendency to take (11) as being true. Meinongianism argues that 'being a detective' is truly predicated of Sherlock Holmes as it is a nuclear or encoded property of Sherlock Holmes. So, although Sherlock Holmes does not exist, it can nonetheless have properties (nuclear or encoded). Furthermore, Meinongianism seems to be able to provide a straightforward account of sentences in which properties are attributed to fictional characters as such, namely sentences of critical discourse. We know things to be true of Sherlock Holmes, even though these truths are not ascribed to him in the relevant fiction, and cannot be inferred from things we know about them. For example, consider an utterance of

(8) Sherlock Holmes appeared in print for the first time in 1887, in *A Study in Scarlet*

Ordinary speakers have the intuition that (8) is as a straightforward true about the fictional character Sherlock Holmes. Meinongianism is able to account for this intuition by formalizing (8) as an ordinary subject-predicate statement, for 'appearing in print for the first time in 1887, in *A Study in Scarlet*' is an extranuclear or exemplified property of Sherlock Holmes.[23]

In conclusion, all in all Meinongianism a motivation for endorsing a Meinongian account of fiction is that it seems to be able to provide an account of the different types of fictional discourse in a *uniform* way, preserving our pre-theoretical intuitions about our use of the different claims involving fictional names, accounting for the intuition that fictional characters have the properties that we predicate of them (be they nuclear or extranuclear, encoded or exemplified). Last but not least, 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to the very same object, the nonexistent Sherlock Holmes, in all relevant types of fictional discourse: Sherlock Holmes, as represented in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, is a brilliant detective with amazing powers of deduction, collaborating with Scotland Yard; as a matter of fact though, that is, in reality, it's a purely fictional character that does not exist and, in spite of this, happens to be much more famous than any real detective. Meinongianism can thus give a plausible account of the intuitions of singularity when fictional characters are concerned: there is an entity, Sherlock Holmes, about which all our thoughts and claims containing 'Sherlock Holmes' are about – it is only that it does not exist.

Thomasson (1998: 56-62) provides an argument to the effect that the identity conditions on fictional characters that a Meinongian theory of fiction proposes cannot account for intuitions of sameness and difference of fictional characters across *different* works of fiction. If we individuate a fictional character with the set of nuclear or encoded properties given in the work of fiction in which the character originally appears, the same set of properties will give us the same character, so a character cannot be literally said to appear in stories in which so much as a single property is changed. This is quite implausible, for one of the main reasons for writing and reading parodies or re-adaptation of a novel, is exactly the idea that they are about the *same* character.

[23] It should be noticed that Meinongianism would not be able to give such a straightforward account of critical sentences that involve reference to the creative act of fiction, such as 'Sherlock Holmes was created by Doyle', which seems pre-theoretically true. I address this issue in section 4.

4. AUTHORIAL CREATION

Having outlined the goods delivered by Meinongianism in giving an account of fictional discourse, in this section I explore what is considered to be a general and still open problem for Meinongianism as a theory of fiction: in understanding fictional characters as entities that are there long before the creative process of story-telling, Meinongianism seems to fail to account for the quite commonly shared intuition that authors of works of fiction have some kind of creative role to play. Meinongians cannot say that in writing about fictional characters an author bring them into existence, for fictional characters are nonexistent entities; nor can they really say that the author brings them into non-existence, for they were non-existents before the storytelling act. For example, the fictional character Sherlock Holmes is a nonexistent long before Doyle writes down the *Sherlock Holmes* stories; thus, we cannot really take seriously the idea that Doyle *created* Sherlock Holmes, contrary to our pre-theoretical intuitions.

A strategy available to Meinongianism to account for authorial creativity is to say that it is at least true that Doyle *selected* Sherlock Holmes among all the available nonexistents and *described it* in a work of fiction, and by so doing, he made it *fictional.* For example, Parsons thinks of Sherlock Holmes as the fictional character individuated by all the nuclear properties ascribed to it in the relevant fiction:

> I have said that, in a popular sense, an author creates characters, but this is too hard to analyze. It does not mean, for example, that the author brings those characters into existence, for they do not exist. Nor does he or she make them objects, for they were objects before they appeared in stories. We might say, I suppose, the author makes them fictional objects, and that they were not fictional objects before the creative act. (1980: 188)

Along the lines, Zalta thinks of Sherlock Holmes as the fictional character individuated by *all* the encoded properties ascribed to it in the relevant fiction. This is presumably why he understands the process of storytelling itself as an extended baptism of a fictional character. Zalta writes:

> Instead of pointing and mentioning the relevant name, the author *tells a story*. I suggest that the act of storytelling is a kind of extended baptism, and is a speech act more similar to definition than to assertion. (2003: 8)

As previously seen, on Zalta's ontology, what a fictional character is – its identity – is defined relative to the properties it encodes and thus, in turn, to the story in which the character originally appears: the identity of fictional characters is strictly related to that of the stories in which they originally appear, for which any change in the identifying properties of a native story of a character amounts to a change in the identifying properties of a character (i.e. amounts to a different character), and the other way around. In order to baptize (and, successively refer to) a fictional character one must then, first of all, baptize the story in which the character appears; and it is by means of an act of storytelling that an author baptizes both a story and the characters which originally appear in it. For Zalta, reference to fictional characters does not take place until the whole process of writing a story is *over*, given that the baptism of a fictional character extends as much as the act of storytelling in which the character originally appears; this allows him to have the reference fixed only when a character is characterized in a definitive way.

The strategy of taking Sherlock Holmes as the fictional character individuated by all the (nuclear or encoded) properties ascribed to it in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories raises two problems, discussed in detail by Sainsbury (2010). The first problem stems from a conception of the nature of storytelling as a dynamic process, in which the nonexistent's *Sosein* of Sherlock Holmes undergoes a temporal change, when some new properties are added to it by Doyle's act of writing. (cf. 2010: 59-60). Sherlock Holmes would count as being a different fictional character as the narrative act develops through time, as at later stages of the storytelling process he will be ascribed more properties than he is at the beginning of the story. But then it is not clear how authors and readers are supposed to have Sherlock Holmes in mind, rather than a different nonexistent. To what nonexistent are we supposed to be thinking while reading the name 'Sherlock Holmes' as it occurs during storytelling? It is clear that if a fictional character is metaphysically individuated by all the nuclear or encoded properties it has in a give

fiction, then associating new properties to it will give us a different fictional character. To clarify, this is not to say, though, that in order to have a fictional character in mind one has to know all its individuating properties: one can have a fictional character in mind (as much as any other entity or individual) while knowing little or nothing about its individuating conditions. The problem lies in the fact that the unfolding of the storytelling process gives a different fictional character picked out by the name 'Sherlock Holmes', given that during storytelling Doyle associates to the name new properties. This will make the fictional character picked out by 'Sherlock Holmes' modally fragile.

The second problem, strictly connected to the first, is the 'selection problem', which Sainsbury spells out as follows:

> That's what occurs in the creative process: it's not conjuring an object out of nothing, but adding properties to an object that previously had only a minimal Sosein: whatever array of present-tense properties (non-existence and other present-tense negative properties) that any nonexistent has. The trouble with this suggestion is that it remains unclear how the author is to add the properties to the *right* object: that's what I call the *selection problem*. Presumably on Meinongian views, it is true of Holmes, before Doyle started writing any Holmes stories […] that he will be invested with the property of living in Baker Street, or perhaps simply that he will live in Baker Street. (2010: 58)

As I understand it, the selection problem is the problem of what exactly makes it the case that in writing the *Sherlock Holmes* stories Doyle creatively added properties to the *correct* nonexistent, i.e. the nonexistent Sherlock Holmes rather than the nonexistent Anna Karenina. Given that the properties that identify the fictional character Sherlock Holmes are the nuclear or encoded properties it is attributed in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, Doyle, before writing down the novels, must have used such properties to identify the correct nonexistent to be written about in the first place, which cannot be the case if the properties that identify the character Sherlock Holmes are related to Doyle's act of writing. If Sherlock Holmes is already in the realm of nonexistents, and has its features independently of what the *Sherlock Holmes* stories tell us, what makes it

the case that Doyle can think about Sherlock Holmes, single it out among all nonexistents and make true claims about it? Doyle should have managed to single Sherlock Holmes out in order to begin writing things about him in *A Study in Scarlet* – this, according to Sainsbury, requires something like an initial 'purely intentional act of individuation'. But it is hard to see how this can take place.

On my understanding, the selection problem relies on the nature itself of fictional characters and on the idea that the properties they are ascribed in a work of fiction function as individuating properties of a fictional character. As we saw, Sherlock Holmes is individuated by the properties it has according to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories; thus, a fictional character like Sherlock Holmes is not to be *identified* with a set of nuclear or encoded properties, but rather it *depends* on sets of nuclear or encoded properties for its *criteria of individuation*. Now the problem seems to be that if we understand creation as a matter of investing the 'correct' nonexistent Sherlock Holmes with all the properties that it is ascribed in the relevant stories, it is requested for Doyle to be the first to have selected a certain metaphysically independent nonexistent object among the great variety of nonexistents, picked it out and named it 'Sherlock Holmes', despite lacking a causal relation to it. How this can be done is a mystery, given that there are no criteria of individuation before the very same act of storytelling.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As seen, a Meinongian theory of fiction can assign negative existentials the intuitive truth values while preserving their subject-predicate form, without appealing to any paraphrase: an utterance of

(10) Sherlock Holmes does not exist

simply says that the individual referred to by the name 'Sherlock Holmes' – the character Sherlock Holmes – lacks the property of existence, for it is a nonexistent. Regarding internal and critical discourse, Meinongianism seems to be able to offer a smooth account based on a distinction on properties (encoded or exemplified), for

which it is both true that Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character and all the same a smart private detective. 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to the same entity in internal, negative and critical claims – that unique nonexistent entity, represented in the novels written by Doyle as detective known for drawing broad conclusions from minute observations, it is a well known literary character inspired by the real-life figure of Joseph Bell, a surgeon at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, whom Doyle met in 1877.

In what follows, I shall point out some worries I have in relation to a Meinongian account of fiction. First of all, I do not think that the analysis of negative existentials provided by Meinongianism preserve ordinary speakers' pre-theoretical intuitions about the meaning of such claims. According to Meinongianism, an utterance of (10) is true in virtue of the fact that Sherlock Holmes is a nonexistent, namely in virtue of the fact that it belongs to the realm of entities that only have being and lack existence. But is this what we, as ordinary speakers, really mean by uttering (10)? I don't think we would be so ready to accept

(10*) Sherlock Holmes is a nonexistent entity

as much as we accept (10). This thought is connected to a very general worry: it is not very clear what sort of being fictional characters are supposed to have according to Meinongianism. In ordinary talk we commonly speak of things that do not exist, like the brilliant detective Sherlock Holmes, and Meinongianism stems precisely from the non-philosophical commonsensical intuition that some things are existent while others are not. However, even if I can understand such a commonsensical intuition, it is much harder to understand the claim that there is a distinction between things that have being and things that exist – a distinction that many philosophers find incomprehensible (for example see van Inwagen (2003)).

Another worrisome consequence of a Meinongian theory of fiction is that authors of fictions do not, as we pre-theoretically believe, create fictional characters; rather, fictional characters, being a species of nonexistent objects, are an assembling of properties having a non-existence status independently of authorial activity: they are assembling of properties that authors can select or pick out, but not *create*. In

conclusion, all considered and in spite of its advantages, I do not endorse Meinongianism as a theory of fiction, and I rather favour a less (or so I believe) metaphysically committed realist view on fictional characters, creationism, which I present and analyze in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4
POSSIBILISM

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I critically asses a version of realism that takes 'Sherlock Holmes' to refer to a man who does not exist in the actual world, although he exists, smokes the pipe and solves mysterious crimes in some merely possible worlds: all the worlds where the *Sherlock Homes* stories are told as known fact rather than fiction. This view is based on a possible-worlds metaphysics in which we have infinite possible worlds along with the actual one, and some of these worlds are the worlds in which a given fiction is told as known fact. In the philosophical reflection on fiction, this form of realism is usually referred to as 'Possibilism', and it has been traditionally associated to the account of truth in fiction originally developed by David K. Lewis (1978). This is the motivation for which in this chapter I present and critically asses Lewis's view in detail, considering its pros and cons, to ultimately conclude that a possibilist theory of fiction is not a viable account of fictional names and fictional discourse.

2. LEWIS'S ACCOUNT OF TRUTH IN FICTION

In the well know paper 'Truth in Fiction' (1978) Lewis offers an account of fiction according to which in sentences of internal discourse are not to be taken at face-value, but rather as abbreviations for longer sentences that begin with 'In fiction f'. 'In fiction f' is understood as an intensional operator that works as a shifting device, for it shifts the actual circumstances of evaluation of a sentence from the actual world to the possible world of the fiction in which the sentence occurs. Sometimes, Lewis acknowledges, when we try to give an account of the truth-conditions of claims of internal discourse, it might be that we are left with no determinate answer. To deal with the indeterminacy of a world of fiction, Lewis's move is to assume that each work of

fiction describes a *set* of possible worlds, rather than just one single possible world, so that we cannot properly talk of *the* world of a fiction. Lewis writes:

> We sometimes speak of the world of a fiction. What is true in the Holmes stories is what is true, as we say, "in the world of Sherlock Holmes". That we speak this way should suggest that it is right to consider less than all the worlds where the plot of the stories is enacted, and less even than all the worlds where the stories are told as known fact. (1978: 42)

it is then reference to a set of possible worlds, signalled by the covert fiction operator, which gives us the semantic analysis for sentences of internal discourse: truth in fiction is ultimately explained in terms of what is true at certain metaphysically possible worlds, among the different worlds that can be associated to a given fictional work, where each world is characterized by a particular structure and ontology. The set of worlds associated to a given fiction is not made up of worlds in which the plot of the fiction is enacted but rather of worlds in which the fiction is told as *known fact* rather than fiction. But what are the 'worlds where the fiction is told as known facts'? To answer this question, Lewis sets up three analyses. The first tentative analysis is one in which the 'worlds where the fiction is told as known facts' are the worlds in which the content *explicitly* conveyed by a fiction is true.

ANALYSIS 0 (*explicit content)*

> A sentence of the form 'In fiction f, Φ' is true iff Φ is true at every world where f is told as known fact rather than fiction. (1978: 41)

The analysis does not satisfy Lewis, since it does not take into account any reasoning to what is true in fiction that goes beyond the explicit content of a fiction. For example, it does not account for sentences like

(18) Sherlock Holmes has a brain

An utterance of (18) sounds intuitively true, given that Sherlock Holmes is presented as a real individual, and therefore as supposedly possessing all the vital functions that characterize human beings. Yet, (18) is not true in virtue of what the *Sherlock Holmes*

stories explicitly say. To account for the truth of sentences like (18), a further element should be taken into account: the *background knowledge* against which readers rely. Whereas the content of a work of fiction does not update a competent reader's background knowledge – e.g. if I read the *Sherlock Holmes* stories knowing that it is a piece of fiction, there is no updating of my knowledge about London that there is a detective called 'Sherlock Holmes' who lives in it at 221B Baker street – it does play a crucial role in determining truths that are left *implicit* in a work of fiction.

Lewis proposes two further analyses where truth in fiction is understood as the product of two factors: the explicit content of the fiction combined with the background knowledge on which readers rely to go beyond the explicit content. What changes in each of the proposed analyses is *how* the background is determined.

ANALYSIS 1 (*background of known facts about our world*)

> A sentence of the form 'In 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, in 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. (1978: 42)

In analysis 1, truth in fiction is analyzed counterfactually: what is true in a fiction depends crucially on what our world is like. This analysis ensures that any fact of the actual world that is not related to the facts described in the fiction will be also true in the fiction; moreover, it also ensures that all other facts should change as little as possible as to make it compatible with what is explicitly said in the fiction. Truth in fiction turns out to be dependent on contingent matters, due to the fact that departure from actuality depends on a contingent fact, the contingent fact on which all others depend: which possible world is *the* actual world.

Some authors have pointed out that closeness to the actual world, as a way to determine fiction implicit content, can lead to some counterintuitive consequences. For example, Walton writes:

> A storyteller, in a culture in which it is universally and firmly agreed that the earth is flat and that to venture too far out sea is to risk falling off, invents a yarn about bold mariners who do sail far out to sea. No mention is made in the story of the shape of the earth or of the danger. (1990:150)

Walton's point is that if what is true in a fiction depends on what is true in those worlds that are closest to the actual world in which the explicit content of the fiction is true, one should conclude that, in the yarn example, the earth is round and there is no danger of falling off the edge, given that the worlds in which the earth is round and there is no danger of falling off the edge would be closer to the actual world than worlds where the earth is flat and there is danger of falling off the edge. However, this seems a little odd, for the earth being flat is *crucial* to the fiction in question.

Lewis himself recognizes that a general problem with analysis 1 is that it leads to the inclusion, in the content of a given fiction, of unknown or little well known facts about the actual world which interfere with the explicit content of the fiction. He mentions as example (among others) a story in which Sherlock Holmes solves a mysterious murder by pointing out that the victim was crushed to death by a constricting type of snake, a Russell's viper. But a Russell's viper is not a constrictor in the actual world; it is rather a venomous type of snake. Thus, following analysis 1, the worlds closest to the actual world ('our world') at which the story is told as known fact are worlds at which Sherlock Holmes is wrong (given that it is said nowhere in the relevant fiction that he is right), and at which the victim did not die because of being crushed to death by a Russell's viper. But this is quite counterintuitive. We would rather say that Sherlock Holmes is right (as he never errs), and that the fact that Doyle and his audience presumably believed that a Russell's viper is a constrictor it is sufficient to make it true in the story.

Lewis proposes a further analysis, in which implicit content should be imported not from a background of known facts about the actual world, but rather from a

background of overt beliefs in the community in which the fiction originates, namely the overt beliefs of the author of the fiction and her intended audience.[24]

ANALYSIS 2 (*background of overt beliefs in the community in which the fiction originates*)

> A sentence of the form 'In fiction *f*, Φ' is non-vacuously true iff, whenever *w* is one of the collective belief worlds of the community of origin of *f,* then some world where *f* is told as known fact and Φ is true differs less from the world *w*, on balance, that 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. (1978: 45)

According to this analysis, to determine if a proposition is (non-vacuously) true in a given fiction one has to consider all the possible worlds of the collective beliefs of the community of origin of the fiction and, successively, look at the subset of worlds in which the fiction is told as known fact. We could obtain all the propositions that are true in a given fiction *f* by starting out with the set of collective belief worlds of the author and the community in which the fiction originates, and then make all of the changes needed so that whatever is explicitly stated in *f* is true in all the worlds in the set; otherwise, we try to keep everything as close as possible to *f.* This analysis rules out from the implicit content of a given fiction all the 'intrusive material' about the actual world: it was not generally believed in the community in which Doyle lived and wrote the *Sherlock Holmes* stories that a Russell's viper was a non-constrictor – this information is then excluded from the explicit content of the fiction, as desired.

In conclusion, what the last two analyses essentially capture is the fact that what is true in a fiction can be seen as the result of combining what is explicitly stated in the fiction and what is suggested by the background knowledge on which the fiction relies. Lewis does not really choose between the two analyses, but leaves the reader to decide which is to be preferred. In the next sections I address some problems with a possibilist account of fiction, based on Lewis's account of truth in fiction.

[24] The beliefs must be *overt* for Lewis so that an author's private intentions are no longer an important consideration when determining truth. For present purposes, I do not go into detail of this proposal.

3. SOME PROBLEMS

3.1 THE PARTICULARITY PROBLEM

What does 'Sherlock Holmes' refer to in the possible worlds where it refers? In a possibilist account of fiction, the answer seems to be that 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to a particular possible individual, that exists at other possible worlds, including those worlds that realize the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. However, one central reason to reject the idea that fictional names refer to fictional characters understood as possible non-actualized individuals can be traced in a very influential argument by Kripke*:*

> I hold the metaphysical view that, granted that there is not Sherlock Holmes, one cannot say of any possible person that he would have been Sherlock Holmes, had he existed. Several distinct possible people, and even actual ones such as Darwin or Jack the Ripper, might have performed the exploits of Holmes, but there is none of whom we can say that he would have been Holmes had he performed these exploits. For, if so, which one?. (1980: 158)

The argument presupposes that 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to a single individual if it refers at all: it refers to the actual or possible person who has all the properties ascribed to Sherlock Holmes in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. However, the properties provided by Doyle would give us a multiplicity of 'Sherlock Holmes-candidates': possible non actual objects that meet the descriptions found in the stories, and yet differ with respect to properties neither mentioned nor implied (as, for example, that of having blood-type A rather than B). None of these possible non-actual objects has the right to serve as *the* referent of 'Sherlock Holmes', for they all have the properties ascribed in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories and there is not enough information provided by the stories that could privilege one of the Sherlock Holmes-candidate over the rest as the referent of the name. If any of these Sherlock Holmes-candidates is Sherlock Holmes, all are, from which it follows that no *particular* possible object is Sherlock Holmes. Let's call this the 'particularity problem'.

The core of Kripke's argument lies on a consideration of the difference between possible worlds and the worlds of a fiction. While possible worlds are complete, the

worlds described by a work of fiction are essentially incomplete. In the worlds of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, Sherlock Holmes is a detective but it is neither true nor false that he has blood type A. However, if fictional characters are understood as possible un-actualized objects, they cannot be incomplete: it is not the case that Sherlock Holmes has the property of having blood type A, and it is not the case that Sherlock Holmes lacks the property of having blood type A. But rarely (if ever) a fiction associates enough descriptive content with a fictional name to uniquely identify any possible or actual individual. Moreover, even if the descriptive content provided by a work of fiction accidentally picked out a unique individual in the actual world, it would not thereby be the Sherlock Holmes of Doyle's novels. To prove that the actual existing individual is Sherlock Holmes, following Kripke's reasoning, Doyle, in writing the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, must have participated in a practice of using the name 'Sherlock Holmes' that traces back to the actual existing Sherlock Holmes. But we cannot say that Doyle was participating in such a practice and was referring to *this* actual person, as Doyle's intention was to write the stories about the brilliant detective as pure fiction, and the existence of such an actual person would be just coincidence.

Kripke's reasoning connects to wider considerations about the nature of reference to fictional characters understood as possible non-actual objects: as briefly exposed in Chapter 1, there are two main theories of ordinary reference, the descriptivist theory and the direct theory of reference. If fictional characters are particular possible non-actual objects, we should be able to refer to them in one way or another. But it's pretty clear that we can't. Consider first the direct referential approach. Following Kripke, no actual individual stands in a causal relation of the correct type to the name 'Sherlock Holmes', as the name was introduced by Doyle as *pure fiction*. And we can rule out also possible individuals, as no causal relations can hold between individuals of one possible world to individuals of another possible world. As for the descriptive approach, we have already seen that no work of fiction ever provides enough information to uniquely single out any possible individual. In conclusion, I believe that what rules out possibilism as a candidate for a theory of fiction is the fact that we have no satisfactory explanation of *how reference* to a particular non-actual object is achieved.

3.2 THE PROBLEM OF ACTUAL WORLD REFERENCE

Granted that we cannot refer to particular possible objects with fictional names, a different approach is needed for a possibilist account of fiction. We want the *Sherlock Holmes* stories to be realized by a set of worlds in which it exists an individual named 'Sherlock Holmes', who smokes the pipe, has brilliant deductive faculties and so on. A possible move is to take 'Sherlock Holmes' as referring collectively to a *class* of possible individuals that satisfy the Sherlock Holmes-characterization (as given in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories) at any world that realize the fiction. All the possible individuals in the class referred to by 'Sherlock Holmes' will share common features, those features that are explicitly stated in the stories, and will differ for all the irrelevant things that the stories does not mention nor imply. For example, 'Sherlock Holmes' will denote a class of individuals having the common features of living in 221B Baker Street, playing the violin etc., and differing for small irrelevant features, like for example the presence (or absence) of a mole on the back. There is no single possible object to which 'Sherlock Holmes' refers, but the name is connected this way to all those possible objects in the worlds of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories that do all the things we would say that Sherlock Holmes does. Given that different individuals will satisfy this characterization in different worlds, 'Sherlock Holmes' works here as a non-rigid, semantically descriptive term. The problem of failing to denote not only an actual but also a possible object is of no relevance here. However, the proposal of taking 'Sherlock Holmes' as working as a non-rigid semantically descriptive term would have to deal with the problem of 'actual world reference', as pointed out by Kripke. Let us imagine that, by extraordinary coincidence, things in the actual world (our world) are as the *Sherlock Holmes* stories represent them as being: among its inhabitants, the actual world contains some actual person called 'Sherlock Holmes' who does all the things Sherlock Holmes does according to the relevant novels. On this imaginary scenario our world would be one of the worlds in which the plot of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories is enacted. Thus, according to the descriptivist account of 'Sherlock Holmes', 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to an actual person. But this is wrong. The existence of someone named 'Sherlock

Holmes' satisfying the Sherlock Holmes-characterization does not make 'Sherlock Holmes' any the less a fictional name (see Kripke's argument in section 3.1).

Lewis's account of truth in fiction avoids such a problem by excluding the actual world from consideration in assessing truth in fiction: instead of taking into consideration the worlds that simply enact the plot of a given work of fiction, we must consider the worlds in which the fiction is *told* as known fact rather than fiction, thus excluding from the evaluation all the worlds that enact the plot of the fiction without the fiction being *told* there (see Section 2 of this chapter). Lewis understands a work of fiction as essentially 'a story told by a storytelling on a particular occasion'. For him, each fiction is an act of storytelling in which the author of the fiction plays the role of the teller of a story which he knows to be true:

> Storytelling is pretence. The storyteller purports to be telling the truth about matters whereof he has knowledge. He purports to be talking about characters who are known to him, and whom he refers to, typically, by means of their ordinary proper names. But if his story is fiction, he is not really doing these things. Usually his pretence has not the slightest tendency to deceive anyone, nor has he the slightest intent to deceive. (1978: 40)

In such an account, the pretence is connected to the author that in the actual world pretends to be a 'fictional narrator' who tells the story as known fact in the possible worlds where the story is true. For example, in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, the author, Doyle, pretends to be someone else, Dr. Watson. Dr. Watson is the fictional narrator who tells the adventures of Sherlock Holmes in first person and as real facts.

3.3 IMPOSSIBLE FICTIONS

In this section I will show why Lewis's account of truth in fiction is in need of clarification or refinement. As seen in section 2, both counterfactual analyses of truth in fiction put forwarded by Lewis (analysis 1 and analysis 2) appeal to worlds where the fiction is told as known fact – that is worlds where the author of the fiction produces the fiction as a report of matters she has knowledge of. However, Lewis himself recognizes

that there are 'exceptional' fictions in which the clause 'told as known fact' does not apply correctly, namely fictions where the author produces the fiction as something other than a report of her knowledge (i.e. the fictional story is not 'told as known fact') (cf. 1978: footnote 7) . For instance, the author of the fiction might pretend to be a liar. The worlds realizing the fiction would be those in which the author produces it as a lie; what would be true in such a fiction is that the fictional narrator does what the author actually pretends to do, namely telling lies. Then it may be that some of the claims explicitly occurring in the fiction will not be true in the fiction; rather, what would be true in the fiction may be that someone makes the claims falsely.

Furthermore, there clearly can be fictions in which not only things are not told as known fact, but are not even *told*. For instance, in a realistic fiction about the Jurassic period of dinosaurs, including the destruction of the earth before any human beings evolve, many things can happen (e.g. dinosaurs fighting to survive), but no one is possibly there to tell the story. In other words, there would be no counterfactual teller. I think that the case of fictions that could not possibly be told clearly indicates that Lewis's understanding of storytelling based on the 'told as known fact' notion is approximated and needs refinement, in order to be able to provide an account of truth for all the works of fiction that – unlike the *Sherlock Holmes* stories for example – are not to be evaluated by going to worlds where they report known facts.

In order to account for fictions that are not possibly told Lewis introduces the concept of *impossible* fiction: according to him, a fiction is impossible if and only if there is no world where it is told as known fact rather than fiction. Beside the fictions that are not possibly told, there is a further type of impossible fictions: fictions that are impossible because there are contradictions or inconsistencies in the reported facts. Fictions that contain contradictions or inconsistencies in the reported facts can be inadvertent or blatant. An inadvertent impossible fiction is one in which the author inadvertently falls into inconsistency or contradiction. For example, Dr. Watson has a single old war wound, and Doyle describes it at different times as being on different parts of his body (on a shoulder or on a leg). A blatant impossible fiction, by contrast, is one in which some facts hold on it that openly contradict the laws of logic, for which the plot turn out to be impossible (as, for instance, a story about the troubles of the man

who squared the circle, or the worst sort of incoherent time travel story). Where the plot in a work of fiction is blatantly impossible, Lewis claims that anything, every proposition, is (vacuously) true in it. As a consequence, every blatant impossible fiction would generate exactly the same (vacuously) fictional truths. For example, according to the story about the man who squared the circle, it is equally true that the man who squared the circle did not square the circle. However, this seems unacceptable. Even in a fiction where someone squares the circle, not everything holds: it is a circle that is squared and not a triangle, for example. Moreover, it does not seem plausible to suppose that the authors of blatantly impossible fictions intend any and every proposition to be implied in the fictions.

To deal with the problem of impossible fictions, in a postscript to the paper 'Truth in Fiction', Lewis's preferred strategy is to divide an impossible (and thus inconsistent) fiction into consistent *fragments*, with truth in such a fiction being identified with truth in at least one fragment. More precisely, Lewis proposes to divide impossible fictions in logically consistent fragments that can, separately, be subjected to his analysis of truth in fiction: for an impossible fiction F, a proposition p is true in F just in case p is true in some logically consistent fragment of F (cf. 1983: 277-78). What is true in a fragment is what would be true had the fragment being told as known fact. Each consistent fragment of an inconsistent fiction will generate a set of possible worlds at which the fiction is told as known fact, and hence a set of propositions that are (non-vacuously) true in it. For example, according to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, it is true that Dr. Watson has a war wound on a shoulder, and it is true that Dr. Watson has a war wound on a leg, but the conjunction of these two sentences is not true in the fiction because the individual sentences are true in different consistent fragments.

However, such a move seems to rule out impossibilities that are *crucial* to works of fiction. For example, if in a work of fiction is crucial that we have A ('it is raining') and not-A ('it is not raining') at the same time, according to Lewis's analysis it will be true that A and also that not-A, but not that A and not-A *at the same time*. Priest (2005) has objected to Lewis's fragmentation strategy by considering a work of fiction, the *Sylvan's Box Story*, in which the thematic unity of the whole story will not allow for fragmentation to solve the contradiction. In the story, Priest (the fictional narrator) finds

out an impossible object: it is a box in which there both is something and at the same time there is not. The discovery of the impossible box is crucial to the story: the thematic unit of the story is precisely founded on the impossibility of having a box that is empty and non-empty at the same time.

Richard Hanley (2004) has suggested accounting for fictions like the *Sylvan's Box Story* as generating consistent contents about the inconsistent or contradictory contents of the narrator's beliefs. The underlying idea is that while reading the *Sylvan's Box Story* a typical reader would take the narrator of the story as *believing* that the box is empty and non empty at the same time, and thus has being unreliable (at least for what concerns the box). Following this reasoning, there is no need to apply Lewis's fragmentation, given that there are simply no contradictory pair of propositions that are determinately true in the story (cf. 2004: 125).

4. CRITICAL DISCOURSE

Undeniably, I think that Lewis's analysis of truth in fiction seems to offer a plausible theory of how claims of internal discourse about Sherlock Holmes may well be true even if Sherlock Holmes does not exist (at the actual world). In general, the appeal to the 'In fiction f' operator removes many difficulties that arise in dealing with claims of internal discourse, and it is commonly applied in the philosophical reflection about fiction (both from realist and irrealist stances). However, a general worry with the operator strategy relies in its essential limited applicability, for the fact that it cannot really provide intuitively correct truth-conditions for sentences that fall out of the scope of what is true according to a given fiction. As previously said, Sherlock Holmes does not *actually* have the property of being a detective, for he does not exist at the actual world; he only has the property of being a detective in (some of) the possible worlds in which he exists. However, there seem to be various assertions containing 'Sherlock Holmes' and purportedly about Sherlock Holmes that do not seem to involve the hidden operator 'In fiction f'; rather, they purport to be about the way things actually are as opposed to the way things are in the fiction. For example, we seem to be speaking (truly) against actual facts when we assert that

(8) Sherlock Holmes appeared in print for the first time in 1887, in *A Study in Scarlet*

(9) The fictional character Sherlock Holmes was inspired by Joseph Bell, a surgeon at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh

This type of claims seems to put a possibilist account of fiction in trouble, for we seem to be speaking truly about an *actual* object, not a merely possible entity. Lewis himself recognizes that the In fiction f' strategy would not deliver the right truth-conditions for sentences that are not fictional reports of internal discourse, and that his account is, in that respect, incomplete: some truths about Holmes are not abbreviations of prefixed sentences, and also are not true because 'Holmes' is denotationless here at our world (cf. 1978: 38).

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

A possibilist theory of fiction finds its inspiration in the idea that there is a sense in which 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to a detective that exists, smokes the pipe and solves brilliant crimes – although as an inhabitant of some other concrete possible worlds. On such a view, myself and Sherlock Holmes are both made of flesh-and-blood, only that I exist in the actual world while Sherlock Holmes exists at non-actual possible worlds that are in many ways like the actual world. A *prima facie* advantage of taking 'Sherlock Holmes' to refer to a possible individual is that it captures an intuitive understanding of many true claims of internal discourse, for which Sherlock Holmes can have constitutive properties in the same sense as actually existent people have, only in other possible worlds. Moreover, possibilism allows us to account for the apparent truth of claims that go beyond what is explicitly said in a work of fiction: Sherlock Holmes, as presented by Doyle, is a flesh-and-blood detective, and unless explicitly stated otherwise, we are led to assume that he has all the characteristics that human beings have. However, as presented in the previous sections, possibilism has to face several problems which ultimately have convinced most philosophers working in the field of fiction that possible entities are, after all, not suitable candidates to do the work of fictional characters.

Let us now turn more specifically on Lewis's account of truth in fiction. As we saw, it faces two main serious problems. Firstly, we can have examples of or contemplate impossible fictions. When impossible fictions are concerned, possible worlds by definition are not suitable candidates as worlds where the fiction is told as known fact, and, as we saw, Lewis has to make an *ad hoc* move to deal with this type of fictions. Secondly, even if the problem of impossible fictions can be overcome, the account cannot be extended easily to sentences of critical discourse. Many assertions we make about fictional characters from a perspective external to the works of fiction in which they occur seem to be straightforwardly true, and seem to indicate that fictional names refer to *actual* rather than possible (non-actual) entities. Moreover, it does not seem able to account for the fact that one characteristic property of fictional characters is their being genuinely *created* by their authors through the activity of storytelling for which, intuitively, there is no Sherlock Holmes before Doyle starts to write down the *Sherlock Holmes* stories.

CHAPTER 5
CREATIONSIM

1. INTRODUCTION

I devote this chapter to the analysis of a third form of realism about fictional characters: creationism. The label 'creationism' is used in the philosophical jargon to denote a family of theories that hold the metaphysical thesis that fictional characters exist as artefacts, really created in making works of fiction, and so really existing; they are not real individuals (or places, animals, or whatever) and do not have a spatial location – they are *abstract*. That is, fictional characters are not discovered by their authors; they do not exist in some Platonic realm waiting for an author to write about them[25]. Upholders of creationism think that fictional characters like Anna Karenina and Sherlock Holmes are created by an author that writes about them in a novel, under the conventions established for the genre, and that their existence is grounded in the narratives in which they originally appear. For example, when Doyle sat down and started to write the *Sherlock Holmes* Stories, together with the literary work he also created the fictional characters named 'Dr. Watson' and 'Sherlock Holmes', which did not exist before that very same act of writing.

[25] There is another family of forms of realism that take fictional characters to be abstract entities; however, rather than being created and hence contingent members of our world, fictional characters are conceived as eternal, uncreated entities, constituted or identified by set of properties. Following Friend (2007) such a family of forms of realism can be labeled 'internal realism', given that fictional characters are individuated by the properties they have from a perspective internal to the works of fiction, such as 'being called 'Sherlock Holmes'' or 'being a pipe-smoking detective'. As such, fictional characters need no relation to an author in order to exist (for they are not created by her), although they may need such a relation to be called 'fictional'. Upholders of such a form of realism theorize that fictional names refer to 'types' (Bonomi 1995), 'roles' (Currie 1990, 171-180), 'character-types or set of characterizing properties' (Lamarque and Olsen 1994: 95-101, Lamarque 1996: 23-39) or 'person-kinds' (Wolterstorff 1980: 134-149, 1985). All these forms of realism share a main problem with Meinongian theories of fiction: the descriptions a fictional character is ascribed in a work of fiction determine its identity conditions, for which even if a single property of the character is changed, we have a different character. As a result, following Thomasson (1999), these views must maintain that sequels, parodies and even revised versions of a work of fiction must be about entirely different characters from the original texts – which seems quite implausible.

Creationism is a metaphysical theory about fictional characters, and seems to do justice to the quite straightforward intuition that fictional characters are created by the authors of the fictions in which they originally appear. Moreover, it seems to preserve our intuitions about the truth-conditions of utterances of sentences in which we seem to refer to and quantify over fictional characters, namely sentences of critical discourse: they are literally true, as we are pre-theoretically inclined to judge. Let me clarify here that this chapter does not focus on the metaphysics of creationism; rather, the aim of this chapter is to better understand the semantic contents of the four main types of sentences that typically involve fictional names (i.e. fictionalizing, internal, critical and non-existence sentences), assuming that fictional names refer to abstract created artefacts.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. In section 2, I address three main arguments that are commonly advocated to motivate creationism, what I will call the 'metaphysical', the 'semantic' and the 'cognitive' arguments. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will not address in detail the metaphysical argument, but I will rather concentrate on the semantic argument (Chapters 5 and 6) and on the cognitive one (Chapter 6). Specifically, in Chapter 6 I put forward my own account about the semantic and cognitive mechanisms that govern our thought and discourse when fictional names are concerned. In section 3, I briefly present some of the main tenants of the metaphysics of creationism. The motivation of section 3 is that, I believe, a proper understanding of the main metaphysical tenants of creationism is essential for a proper understanding of its main semantic tenants. In Section 4 I discuss at length some of the different semantic analyses of sentences of fictional discourse put forward by the most prominent upholders of creationism: Kripke (1973/2013), Salmon (1998), Schiffer (1996), Searle (1975) Thomasson (1999, 2003a and 2003b) and van Inwagen (1977)[26]. This section is divided into three mains parts: Section 4.1 is devoted to the semantics of fictionalizing discourse, while Sections 4.2 and 4.3 are devoted to the semantics of

[26] Although van Inwagen is non committal as to whether fictional characters are created or eternal entities – and thus, strictly speaking, cannot be considered an exponent of creationism – important reflections that support creationism are found in his work, which is the reason why I have decided to address his view in detail in this chapter.

.

internal and non-existence discourse respectively. We will see that fictional names, depending on the kind of discourse in which fictional names occur, are not given the same semantic analysis by creationists. Indeed, if upholders of creations agree that 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes in critical and internal discourse, there is less agreement about the semantics of 'Sherlock Holmes' occurring in fictionalizing and non-existence discourse. For example, while some creationists hold that 'Sherlock Holmes' is a non-referring expression in fictionalizing discourse, other creationists take it as referring to the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes. And there is even more disagreement about the semantics of 'Sherlock Holmes' in non-existence discourse, as I will explain in section 4.3. In section 5, I summarize the conclusions of the present chapter.

2. MOTIVATING CREATIONISM

2.1 THE METAPHYSICAL ARGUMENT

One argument advocated in favor of creationism is of a *metaphysical* nature. The source of the argument is the consideration that there are seemingly true utterances of sentences that apparently entail the existence of novels and plots, like

(19) Some novels were written in the 20th century

(20) The fictional work 'the *Sherlock Holmes* stories' has a complex plot

as much as there are seemingly true utterances of sentences that apparently entail the existence of fictional characters, like

(8) Sherlock Holmes appeared in print for the first time in 1887, in *A Study in Scarlet*

If we are ready to accept the existence of works of literature (novels, poems, plots etc.), then we should also be ready to accept the existence of fictional characters, for they belong to the same ontological category of abstract artefacts brought into existence by

authors: if we accept the former we should also accept the latter. For articulations of this argument see for example Salmon (1998: 300), and, especially, Thomasson:

> Is doing without fictional objects really more parsimonious? The answer is, no, not as such. Those who 'do without' fictional objects almost without exception rely heavily on the notion of a literary work in order to avoid apparent references to fictional objects. But if one keeps works of literature, the one gains nothing but false parsimony by 'getting rid of' fictional objects, for they are just in the same categories, and so this is no more 'parsimonious' than rejecting baseball games and accepting board games into our ontology. (1999: 143)

This argument has been criticized in the literature on the basis that, even if one admits that fictional characters and works of fiction share the same kind of dependence on authors' activity of storytelling, it is far from clear that fictional characters are similar enough in *kind* to works of fiction for the purposes of the argument (see for example Iacona and Voltolini 2002). But even if one grants that fictional characters are, after all, similar in kind to works of fiction, it is unclear whether the metaphysical argument really motivates creationism as a the most viable account of fiction. Taking fictional characters as belonging to the same ontological kind to which works of fiction belong to would make them less metaphysically suspicious, but it would not give us a motivating argument for endorsing such a realist theory of fiction. What would rather give us a motivating argument would be to explain what these characters *do for our theory of fiction*, once we accept them into our ontology. And here is where the semantic and the cognitive arguments kick in, I believe. I think that if the metaphysical argument shows that there is no metaphysical problem (because of parsimony considerations) against accepting fictional characters understood as abstract created artefacts, the semantic and the cognitive arguments give us *positive* reasons for wanting to accept them. For the purposes of this dissertation, I do not further address the metaphysical argument, but I rather concentrate on the semantic and cognitive arguments, for I believe that – if correctly articulated – they motivate creationism as the most consistent theory of fiction to account for our thought and discourse about fictional characters.

2.2 THE SEMANTIC ARGUMENT

Upholders of a creationist view on fictional characters hold that fictional names refer to fictional characters, and are usually interested in providing an account of fictional discourse by discussing the problem of *when* inscriptions of fictional names refer, and when utterances of sentences containing fictional names express propositions. The primary focus on the semantics of fictional names and fictional discourse should come as no surprise, as the probably most influential argument to be found in favor of creationism is of a *semantic* nature: creationism fits well with common sense when critical discourse is concerned, given that it takes claims of critical discourse at face value, without need for paraphrase. For creationists, the intuition that fictional characters exist is provided by common ways of speech, in which we seem to refer to fictional characters as created entities, as in:

(9) The fictional character Sherlock Holmes was inspired by Joseph Bell, a surgeon at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh

Specifically, creationists appeal to two principal reasons to advocate the existence of fictional characters, which essentially rely on ways we talk about them from a critical perspective. First, we commonly use quantification when talking about fictional characters. Following Quine (1948), it is reasonable to take quantification to determine our ontological commitments: we are committed to the existence of these entities that our quantifiers range over. Consider the following piece of critical discourse:

(21) There are characters in some nineteenth-century fictions that are presented with a greater wealth of physical detail that any other character in any eighteenth-century fiction[27]

Common sense tells us that an utterance of a claim of critical discourse like (21) is not only meaningful but also true. Creationism can account for such an intuition of truth-

[27] This example is from van Inwagen (1977).

fullness by giving a straightforward analysis of the claim, according to which (21) quantifies over existing abstract artefacts.

Second, creationism takes the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ to have an actual referent, the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes, for which an utterance of a sentence containing the name would express a proposition: we are thus able to supply truth conditions that involve the referent of the name itself. This is of special interest for those who buy into a direct reference theory for proper names, as I do in this dissertation: a proper name merely contributes its referent to the sentence in which it occurs. The genuine existence of the referent of ‘Sherlock Holmes’ would deliver the *intuitively correct* truth conditions for claims in which we seem to be referring to the fictional character Sherlock Holmes, like

(22) Sherlock Holmes, which first appeared in print in 1887, featured in four novels and 56 short stories

Critical claims like (22), in which we have a fictional name in subject position, strike us as literally true, but it would be difficult to account for their truthfulness if there were no fictional characters.

Despite the popularity of creationist accounts of fiction, it should be acknowledged that they face difficulties in providing a semantic account of fictional names when occurring in fictionalizing, internal and non-existence discourse. Indeed, it seems that not all our claims involving fictional names can be analyzed straightforwardly as involving reference to (or quantification over) abstract created artefacts. Before addressing such semantic difficulties in detail in sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3, here is a short summary. To begin with, creationism has to account for the occurrences of fictional names in fictionalizing and internal discourse, in which fictional characters are usually ascribed properties they cannot possibly have, given their abstractness. In Section 4.1 and Section 4.2, I address how the most prominent creationists deal with fictionalizing and internal discourse. As I have briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, the big *semantic thorn* for creationism is posed by negative existentials. Negative existentials concerning fictional characters are generally taken to be literally true. They typically belong to a perspective external to the works of fiction: in the

Sherlock Holmes stories, Sherlock Holmes is an existing flesh-and-blood detective. It is precisely because of such an external perspective that we deny the existence of Sherlock Holmes: Sherlock Holmes (the great detective) does not exist, for, after all, he is just a fictional character. But then theorists of creationism are in trouble, for according to them Sherlock Holmes is very much existent, as an abstract entity. I address the problem of negative existentials in Section 4.3.

2.3 THE COGNITIVE ARGUMENT

Another main argument advocated in favor of creationism is its ability to account for the intentionality or object-directedness of thoughts and discourse about fictional characters (Thomasson (1999)). I call this the *cognitive* argument. According to this argument, by assuming that fictional characters exist as abstract entities creationism can explain why my thought and talk about Sherlock Holmes is *about* Sherlock Holmes, and why my thought and talk about Sherlock Holmes is about something *different* from my thought and talk about Dr. Watson. However, it has been argued that the semantic analysis of fictional discourse provided by creationism – for which Sherlock Holmes is a great detective, but he (it) is also a fictional character introduced on page 5 of *A Study in Scarlet* – cannot account for the special feature of the imaginings triggered by fictional works, which seem to lead to singular thinking about fictional characters: creationism invites us to think of or imagine the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes as a private detective with excellent deductive abilities – which is clearly implausible. I address this issue in detail in Chapter 6.

3. THE METAPHYSICS OF CREATIONISM

This dissertation is devoted to an analysis of the semantic and cognitive aspects of our thought and talk when fictional names and fictional discourse are concerned. Nonetheless, I believe that there a few broad metaphysical issues related to the creationist way of understanding the nature of fictional characters that should be taken into consideration, given that they affect the semantic and cognitive analysis of fictional

names and fictional discourse. In the first place there is the issue concerning the creation of a fictional character: *how* is a fictional character created? I will show that an understanding of *how* a fictional character is created is strictly related to an understanding of *when* it is created. In the second place there is the related issue concerning the identity conditions of a fictional character: what makes it the case that a fictional character X is identical to fictional character Y and distinct from fictional character Z? [28] I address these related metaphysical issues in the following sections, and show their relevance for the semantic and cognitive analyses of fictional names and fictional discourse.

3.1 THE CREATION OF A FICTIONAL CHARACTER

The ontology and metaphysics of creationism are most thoroughly worked out by Thomasson (1999, 2003a and 2003b). According to her, postulating the existence of fictional characters involves no commitment to a new kind of ontological category: fictional characters belong to the same category of ordinary cultural creations whose existence depends on mental and physical states, like literary works, institutions, languages, marriages, linguistic expressions etc. Although plainly lacking spatial location, fictional characters are not atemporal entities, for they literally come into existence when the stories in which they originally appear are created. Along the lines, Salmon thinks that

> Wholly fictional characters like Sherlock Holmes, though real, are not real people. Neither physical objects nor mental objects, instead they are, in this sense, abstract entities. They are not eternal entities, like numbers; they are man-made artefacts created by fiction writers. But they exist just as robustly as the fiction themselves, the novels, stories, etc. in which they occur. Indeed, fictional characters have the same ontological status as fictions, which are also abstract entities created by the authors. (1998: 293)

[28] Related to this, there is the issue of the epistemological identity conditions for fictional characters: what makes it the case that *I take* a fictional character X to be identical to fictional character Y and different from fictional character Z? I come back to this issue in Chapter 6.

A clear advantage of creationism is that, by postulating that fictional characters actually exist as abstract entities created by their author(s) in the relevant fiction(s), it does not conflict with the quite common idea that authors engage in creative activity when they write about fictional characters. But assuming fictional characters are created, *how* does the creation happen? Although most creationists do not directly approach this issue, they seem to endorse the idea that a fictional character is created by a concrete linguistic activity performed by the author of the fiction in which it originally appears: the activity of 'pretending to refer'. By pretending to refer to real people (and places, animals, events, etc.) in the act of storytelling authors genuinely bring fictional characters into existence.

An original formulation of the creation of fictional characters understood in terms of pretence is found in Searle (1975). For him, throughout the work of fiction, Doyle pretends to refer to an individual by means of 'Sherlock Holmes' and he pretends to recount events about him by means of pretend assertion: in pretending to refer and in pretending to assert, Doyle *creates* the fictional character Sherlock Holmes. In Searle's words:

> By pretending to refer (and recount the adventures of) a person, [Iris] Murdoch creates a fictional character. Notice that she does not really refer to a fictional character because there was no such antecedently existing character; rather, by pretending to refer to a person she creates a fictional person. Now once that fictional character has been created, we who are standing outside the fictional story can refer to a fictional person. (1975: 330)

Very similar intuitions are found in Schiffer, who argues that by using a fictional name in pretence the author thereby creates the fictional character that bears the name:

> (…) the fictional entity Jonathan Pine was quite literally and straightforwardly created by John Le Carre's use of 'Jonathan Pine' in order to pretend, in the way definitive of fiction, to refer to a real person. (1996: 157)

Thomasson (1999) is possibly the only creationist to give an accurate account of the process of creation of a fictional character. She likens the creation of fictional

characters to other conventional or effective illocutionary acts such as appointing, resigning, adjourning and marrying, in which the linguistic act brings about what it describes. The idea is that just as an utterance of 'I promise to [. . .]' or 'I hereby resign from [. . .]', thereby brings about the state of affairs in which someone has promised or resigned (respectively), a fictional character is created by being represented in a work of literature (1999: 13). The core of Thomasson's account is that a fictional character comes into existence as the purely intentional object of a particular intentional act of the author who writes about it. Since the creating of a fictional character is an intentional act, then fictional characters should be incorporated into a view about other intentionally created objects. Let us see how.

According to the view of intentionality invoked by Thomasson, every intentional act involves an object and a content (what is thought or judged about the object).[29] For example, if I think that Stephen King is a great novelist the object to which my intentional act is directed is Stephen King; the content is given by my thinking of him as being in a certain way (namely as being a great novelist). Of course Stephen King as a person exists independently of my intentional act. Things work differently with respect to authors' intentional acts towards fictional characters. Thomasson thinks of intentional acts as potentially creative, so she can argue that certain kinds of authorial act bring into existence new intentional objects. For example, when Doyle writes the name 'Sherlock Holmes' for the first time in the novel, his intentional acts are directed at a putative object. While my intentional act about Stephen King is directed at a previously existing – act-independent – object, the act underlying Doyle's creation of the fictional character Sherlock Holmes is directed towards an intentionally created – act-dependent – object. Thomasson states that 'because according to the intentional object theory every intentional act has an object as well as a content, if there is no pre-existent object that the thought is about, a mind-dependent object is generated by that act' (1999: 88). For character creation to succeed the author of a work of fiction must perform an ontologically creative intentional act that is directed towards a previously non-pre-existing object; furthermore, the sentence that corresponds to the creative act of the

[29] Thomasson mainly follows the act-object theory of intentionality defended first by Roman Ingarden (1973). According to him, roughly, fictional objects are a subset of purely intentional objects that survive their own creating mental acts.

author must be part of the set of sentences that compose a work of fiction. I shall come back to this issue in the next chapter, where I offer my own view about the creation of a fictional character, partly relying on Thomasson's ideas.

3.2 KINDS OF PRETENCE

If creationists seem to agree that language and pretence play a major role in the creation of fictional characters, they mainly disagree on the *kind* of pretence involved in storytelling activities. There are two forms of pretence to which creationists make appeal to account for storytelling activities: *de dicto* and *de re* forms of pretence. A *de dicto* form is one in which it is pretended that there is an object where in fact there is not (as, for example, when I pretend that there is a starving wolf under my bed, when actually there is nothing – no object or individual – that is the object of my pretence). Applied to fiction, a *de dicto* form of pretence is one for which I pretend that in the story there was a man such that he was called 'Sherlock Holmes' smoked the pipe etc. A *de re* form of pretence is one in which an object stands for another (as, for example, when I pretend that a banana is a telephone), or in which there is the pretence that a certain property applies to an object (as, for example, when I pretend that an empty cup is full). Applied to fiction, a *de re* form of pretence is one for which *of* the abstract character Sherlock Holmes I pretend that in the novels it has the properties of 'being a detective', 'living in London' etc. Depending on the kind of pretence embraced, creationists mainly disagree on the issue of *when* a fictional character is created.

Most creationists (Kripke, Schiffer, Searle and Thomasson[30]) understand works of fiction as involving a *de dicto* form of pretence. For example, in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories Doyle does not pretend of Sherlock Holmes – the abstract artefact – that it is a detective. Instead, Doyle's pretence has the form: there once was a man, such that he was called 'Sherlock Holmes', was a detective, was very smart, etc. (…). This pretence is what the creation of Sherlock Holmes amounts to. The underlying intuition of endorsing a *de dicto* kind of pretence is that the whole process of writing a work of

[30] While Thomasson (1999) originally endorses a *de re* form of pretence to account for fictionalizing discourse, in later work (2003a) she defends a *de dicto* account of the pretence involved in fictionalizing discourse.

literature is a sort of performative act bringing a character into existence: rather than making reference to fictional characters, within the storytelling process the author *enables* future reference to them. When an author is merely pretending to refer to a human being (or animal, place, etc.) in using a fictional name, that pretence does not involve naming a fictional character – rather, it is the pretence itself that is involved in the creation of the (yet unnamed) fictional character.

For other creationists, Doyle's act of writing about Sherlock Holmes creates it as an abstract entity; once the fictional character is created the author pretends *de re* to recount things about it. For example, Salmon (1998) defends the view that works of fiction involve a *de re* kind of pretence about fictional characters, although he does not think this means that authors are ever referring to anyone or even ever *using* fictional names within storytelling. Thomasson (1999) thinks that while the first use of the name must be a sort of performative bringing the character into existence, later references by the author within the novel simply refer back to the character and ascribe to it certain properties (by pretending to assert more things about it). I shall go back to the difference between Salmon's and Thomason's views in more detail in section 4.1.2. What counts for present purposes is that for those who endorse a *de re* form of pretence the fictional characters are already present within the storytelling process – the sentences of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories involve the pretence, of the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes, that he (it) is a man, plays the violin etc.

The view one embraces about the pretence involved in the creation of a fictional character affects the analysis of fictionalizing discourse. Indeed, given that the creation of a fictional character is, as seen, essentially tied to a linguistic activity – the writing of a work of fiction, usually in association with a fictional name under a *de dicto* or *de re* form of pretence – the disagreement over the kind of pretence ultimately leads to a disagreement over the analysis of fictionalizing discourse. There are two strictly related sources of disagreement: one concerns the analysis of fictional names, the other the analysis of fictionalizing sentences. The creationists that endorse a *de dicto* form of pretence take fictional names in fictionalizing discourse as being non-referring expressions, and fictionalizing discourse as involving mere pretend assertions. By contrast, the creationists that endorse a *de re* form of pretence have it that fictional

names refer to fictional characters within fictionalizing discourse, and that the sentences in which they occur express propositions about the abstract entities they name. Both views face their own problems, which I outline in detail in section 4.1 of this chapter.

3.3 THE METAPHYSICAL NATURE OF A FICTIONAL CHARACTER

Following Thomasson (1999), fictional characters turn out to be ontologically dependent on two categories of things: the intentional, creative acts of their authors, and the literary works in which they originally appear. Although fictional characters are dependent on the creative acts of authors to begin their existence, they can go on existing after their authors are dead: for their continued existence they ultimately depend upon literary works. For example, Doyle died in 1930, but Sherlock Holmes still exists today because the work of fiction in which it originally appears, the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, does. In addition, literary works, like fictional characters, depend on the creative acts of their authors: just as fictional characters depend upon authors to bring them into existence, the literary works in which those characters appear must be created by an author or authors at a certain time in order to come into existence.[31] Furthermore, literary works also depend on the fact that some copies of them are available, and on the existence of an audience capable of understanding them. If a copy of a fictional work happens to survive, but there are no surviving individuals who can understand it, then all that is left of the fictional work or of the fictional characters represented in it is 'some ink on paper' (cf. 1999: 11). The ontological dependence of fictional characters on fictional works provides criteria for determining when a fictional character ceases to exist. If all copies of a literary work about a particular fictional character are destroyed, then the fictional character is destroyed as well. For example, should all instances of the fictional work featuring the adventures of the smart detective Sherlock Holmes, the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, be destroyed and should there no longer be an audience capable of remembering or understanding it, the fictional character Sherlock Holmes

[31] For Thomasson, just as characters are not Platonic entities waiting for some author to instantiate them into a story, a literary work is not an abstract sequence of words or concepts waiting to be discovered (cf. 1999: 8).

would no longer exist. Thus, fictional characters cannot exist without literary works and audiences that recognize and understand them.

According to creationism, none of the things stated in a work of fiction determine the metaphysical status – existence, identity and survival conditions – of fictional characters, but it is rather the practices of those who competently deal with works of fiction (i.e. the practices of thinking, writing, reading and talking about fiction) that do it. By contrast to other forms of realism (like, for example, Meinongianism), creationism does not take the properties that the fictional character Sherlock Holmes is ascribed in a work of fiction to determine *which* object we are talking about when talking about Sherlock Holmes. Sherlock Holmes, the abstract entity, does not really have the properties that characterize it in the stories in which it appears: it is ascribed by many properties the work of fiction but it possesses them only *according to the story*. The only properties that Sherlock Holmes genuinely possesses are the properties that are predicated of it as abstract artefact, e.g., properties like 'being created by Doyle', 'being introduced for the first time in *A Study in Scarlet*' or even 'being a detective according to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories'. Having said that, let me remark that, although Sherlock Holmes is an abstract object and thus cannot be a human being (let alone a brilliant detective), the properties it is ascribed in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories are *tied* to it in an important way, for they play a role in determining the identity of a character *within* a work of fiction. Thomasson provides the following sufficient condition for the identity of a fictional character within a work of fiction: if x and y appear in the same literary work, and x and y are ascribed exactly the same properties in the work, then x and y are identical (cf. 1999: 63). The relationship between Sherlock Holmes – the actual, abstract object – and the properties it is ascribed in a work of fiction are addressed by creationists when discussing the analysis of internal discourse, which I address in section 4 of the present chapter.

According to Thomasson, the identity conditions of a fictional character are given by *historical continuity* rather than by the properties ascribed to it in the relevant work of fiction: this allows the same fictional character to appear in sequels, parodies, translations, revised versions, etc., of the work in which originally appears. She allows that an author may ascribe new properties to a preexisting fictional character, provided

the author is familiar with that character and intends to refer back to it and ascribes it new properties. She provides a necessary condition for the identity of a character across works of fiction: x in literary work K and y in literary work L are identical if the author of L is completely acquainted with x of K and intends to import x into L as y (1999: 67). The reason why Thomasson thinks this cannot be a sufficient condition is that an author does not succeed in importing x from K into L as y if he attributes properties to y that are too radically different from the properties that were attributed to x in K (1999: 68).

4. THE SEMANTICS OF FICTIONAL NAMES AND FICTIONAL DISCOURSE

4.1 FICTIONALIZING DISCOURSE

Fictionalizing discourse seems to be intelligible right away, but are fictional characters available as referents in such a discourse? There are two main types of answers given by creationists, which ultimately rely on the type of pretence involved in fictionalizing discourse. On the one hand there are those creationists that take the pretence involved in storytelling activities as being *de dicto:* Doyle pretends that in the story there was a man such that he was called 'Sherlock Holmes', smoked the pipe etc.; when Doyle pretends this, rather than referring to the character Sherlock Holmes, he seems instead to do something that allows *later references* to the character. The creationists that endorse this view put forward a 'two-tier approach' to fictional names: even though fictional characters exist as abstract entities, an author's own inscriptions of a fictional name are non-referring expressions; however, is the very same activity of pretending to refer and assert that creates a fictional character to which we later refer in internal and critical claims. According to such an approach, the referring use of 'Sherlock Holmes' as the name of the abstract entity is *parasitic* on the non-referring use in pretence. Prominent upholders of such an approach are Kripke (1973/2013), Searle (1975), Schiffer (1996) and van Inwagen (1977) [32].

[32] Van Inwagen is not really committal on a specific view on the kind of pretence involved in fictionalizing discourse, or on whether fictional names are ambiguous names. But his position is not so

On the other hand there are those creationists that take the pretence involved in storytelling activities as being *de re: of* the abstract character Sherlock Holmes, Doyle pretends that in the fiction it has the properties of being a detective, smoking a pipe etc. The creationists that endorse this view put forward a 'uniform approach' to fictional names: in fictionalizing discourse, the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes is already available as the referent of the name 'Sherlock Holmes'. Prominent upholders of such an account are Salmon (1998) and Thomasson (1999). Let me briefly remark here that although both Salmon and Thomasson defend a uniform approach to fictional names in fictionalizing discourse, there is an important difference between their views. According to Salmon, Doyle never genuinely refers to the fictional character Sherlock Holmes in fictionalizing discourse, as he is merely pretending to do so; nonetheless, the fictional name 'Sherlock Holmes' genuinely refers to the character throughout its occurrences in fictionalizing discourse. By contrast, Thomasson thinks that Doyle pretends to refer (to a concrete individual) when he first introduces 'Sherlock Holmes' (thereby creating the fictional character Sherlock Holmes), and that he genuinely refers to the character in the rest of the text (1999). I will address Salmon's and Thomasson's views in more detail in Section 4.1.2.

4.1.1 THE TWO-TIER APPROACH TO FICTIONAL NAMES

One of the first well-developed articulations of creationism comes from Kripke (1973/2013). On his view, when authors engage in fictionalizing discourse, they pretend to assert propositions, using names in the pretence that they have a determinate reference. He takes quite a radical position concerning the use of fictional names within storytelling: fictional names are not really names, but only pretend names that are part of the general pretence engaged by the author of the fiction. By pretending to refer to someone by using 'Sherlock Holmes', and to be expressing propositions about him in storytelling, Doyle opens the way for a future reference to the fictional character Sherlock Holmes. There is indeed also a non-pretend, 'secondary' sense in which a

distant from the others as he claims that discourse about fictional characters involve certain rules 'for talking about fiction' according to which a creature of fiction may be referred to by what is (loosely speaking) the name it has in the story (1977: 307)

name like 'Sherlock Holmes' can be used, without appealing to the pretence that underlies the *Sherlock Holmes* stories – in this latter use our ordinary language supplies a reference for fictional names by postulating an ontology of fictional characters that exist in the reality as abstract entities. Kripke seems here to formulate the view that fictional names such as 'Hamlet' or 'Sherlock Holmes' have two kinds of use: they can be used as pretend names of pretend fictional people and also as names of those abstract entities that are created as the fiction is created. According to him, nothing more is required in ordinary discourse to allow us to refer to a fictional character than the fact that in a given work of fiction some claims are made involving the name of the fictional character (cf. 1973/2013).

A very similar position is defended by Schiffer (1996 and 2003). For him, there are two ways in which fictional names can be used, what he calls 'pretending use' and 'hypostatizing use'. The pretending use of 'Sherlock Holmes' is the one in which the name is used by Doyle in writing the relevant novels; what characterizes the author's use of language is that, in writing the stories, he does not assert anything and does not purport to refer to anything – he just pretends to do both things. It is our ordinary linguistic practices (as readers and critics of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories) that allow us, from a pretending use of 'Sherlock Holmes', to make a hypostatizing use of the name to refer to the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes. From the fact that 'Sherlock Holmes is a fictional entity' we can infer that 'Sherlock Holmes is an entity'. Such inference is guaranteed by the fact that the existence of fictional entities *supervenes* on the pretending use of their names:

> Whenever one of us uses a name in the fictional way (…), then that use automatically enables any of us to use the name in the hypostatizing way, in which case we are referring to an actually existing fictional entity. (1996:156)

A slightly different view is put forward by Van Inwagen (1977): he argues that fictional names refer to fictional characters in critical discourse, but he is non committal on whether fictional names are non-referring terms when occurring in fictionalizing discourse – simply there are no examples in which 'Sherlock Holmes' is *used* in fictionalizing discourse, and the fictional work, the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, says

absolutely nothing about the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes. Authors of works of fiction never assert anything about fictional characters. Since sentences in fictionalizing discourse are not used to make assertions, they are not about anything at all and, in particular, not about fictional characters. For van Inwagen fictionalizing discourse does not consist of assertions, is not to be evaluated as true or false, and does not even put forward propositions.

There are two drawbacks of the two-tier approach, which have been pointed out mainly by Salmon (1998). To begin with, such an approach fails to give an independent account of the sentences that the author pretends to assert: if fictional names are non-referring as occurring in fictionalizing discourse, what is the content of the pretend assertions that constitute fictionalizing discourse? Such a question is connected to the important issue of the indeterminacy of truth-conditions for sentences that occur in internal discourse: if one denies that fictional names refer in fictionalizing discourse, one must also deny that the sentences in fictionalizing discourse, and, in turn, in internal discourse, can express propositions, let alone true ones. In Salmon's words:

> On the account provided by Kaplan, Kripke, and van Inwagen, object-fictional sentences, like 'Sherlock Holmes plays the violin', have no genuine semantic content in their original use. This renders the meaningfulness of true meta-fictional sentences like 'According to the Sherlock Holmes stories, Holmes plays the violin' problematic and mysterious.[33] (1998: 297-298)

I endorse Salmon's worry that a *de dicto* pretence account of fictionalizing discourse has to face the question of how the sentences occurring in this type of discourse can be meaningful: what is the content that authors and readers entertain while engaging with a work of fiction?[34] However, I do not endorse Salmon's worry concerning the supposedly mysterious meaningfulness of sentences of internal discourse, as I believe that Kripke and van Inwagen offer a plausible account of the meaningfulness of claims

[33] What Salmon calls object-fictional sentences and meta-fictional sentences I call, respectively, fictionalizing and internal sentences.

[34] Although I am not sure that van Inwagen would endorse the *de dicto* understanding of his view on fictionalizing discourse, he nonetheless denies that these statements express propositions, leaving open the question of what is the content of the pretend assertions that constitute fictionalizing discourse.

of internal discourse that is independent of the meaningfulness of claims of fictionalizing discourse. I shall come back to this latter issue in section 4.2.2.

In the second place, Salmon points out a problem in the purported ambiguity of fictional names stipulated by the approach. The main target of Salmon's criticism is Kripke's view. He points out that for Kripke the name 'Sherlock Holmes' must be ambiguous:

> In its original use as a name for a human being – its use by Doyle in writing the fiction, and presumably by the reader reading the fiction – it merely pretends to name someone and actually names nothing at all. But in its nonpretend use as a name for the fictional character thereby created by Doyle, it genuinely refers to that particular artifactual entity. In effect, there are two names. (1998: 294)

According to Salmon's formulation of Kripke's view, there are two different names spelled the same way, respectively, what Salmon calls 'Sherlock $Holmes_1$' and 'Sherlock $Holmes_2$'. By uttering 'Sherlock $Holmes_1$' in the pretence of reporting the adventures and misfortunes of a flesh-and-blood detective, Doyle expresses nothing. And yet, Doyle's' use of 'Sherlock $Holmes_1$' in pretence licenses an initial *metaphysical* move in which we postulate the existence of an abstract entity as the product of the author's pretence. At a later stage, stepping out of the pretence that characterizes storytelling, there is a *semantic* move, which takes place when we engage in serious assertions about the fictional character Sherlock Holmes by using the name 'Sherlock $Holmes_2$'. Apart from stipulating an ambiguity in fictional names that for Salmon is unnecessary, such an approach seems to offer no explanation of how the two names, 'Sherlock $Holmes_1$' and 'Sherlock $Holmes_2$', relate to each other. He writes:

> The problem with saying that 'Sherlock Holmes' is non-referring on Doyle's use is that in merely pretending that the name had a particular use, no real use was yet attached to the name on which it may be said to refer or not to refer. (1998, 299)

Salmon's concern is about name-using practices: it is only according to a given use – and a pretend use is not a use – that a name is associated with conditions that determine

the semantic value of the name. In pretending to use 'Sherlock Holmes' within storytelling, Doyle does not establish a name-using practice for the name, according to which it can be said to be non-referring or referring. In a nutshell, the problem with Kripke's view is that there seems to be *no justification* for the non-referring use of 'Sherlock Holmes', on which the referring use would be parasitic on.

4.1.2 THE UNIFORM APPROACH

Contrary to the mainstream, Salmon (1998) and Thomasson (1999) argue for a uniform account of the semantics of 'Sherlock Holmes': there is no pretend use of 'Sherlock Holmes' for which it can be said to be non-referring or referring – the semantic content of fictional names in fictionalizing discourse is provided by abstract entities. Let us start with Salmon's analysis of fictional names and fictional discourse, which is mainly motivated by his endorsement of Millianism. Roughly, according to Millianism, the semantic value of a proper name is simply its bearer. Associating such a view with the one according to which utterances of assertive sentences express propositions, a name's contribution to the determination of the proposition expressed by sentences containing it is exhausted by its bearer.[35] Thus, from a Millian perspective, if one denies that fictional names refer in fictionalizing discourse one must also deny that the sentences in such a type of discourse can express propositions. According to Salmon, there is no non-referring use of 'Sherlock Holmes': since its first inscription in storytelling, the name already refers to the character Sherlock Holmes (yet to exist), under the pretence that it refers to a flesh-and-blood detective. However, this is not to say that Doyle ever used the name 'Sherlock Holmes' to refer to the character, for he only pretends to use the name, and in so doing no genuine use is attached to the name. And if 'Sherlock Holmes' in fictionalizing discourse, far from being non-referring, refers to the character Sherlock Holmes, sentences in fictionalizing discourse express propositions having Sherlock Holmes – the abstract entity – as constituent. The motivation of having 'Sherlock

[35] Strictly speaking, Millianism is committed only to the view that the semantic value of a name is simply its bearer. However, Millianism is often taken to be committed to a further claim: the proposition expressed by an assertive utterance of a sentence containing a proper name is a 'singular proposition', namely a proposition containing the bearer of the name as constituent (given, of course, that the name has a bearer).

Holmes' to refer to the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes even in fictionalizing discourse is that it provides an account not only for the meaningfulness of claims of fictionalizing discourse, but also – and more importantly – for the meaningfulness of sentences of internal discourse.

Although I'm sympathetic with Salmon's analysis of fictionalizing discourse, I see some tensions in it, which, I believe, are enlightened by the following passage:

> On the view I am proposing there is a sense in which a fictional character is prior to the fiction in which the character occurs. By contrast, Kripke believes that a fictional character does not come into existence until the final draft of the fiction is published. This severe restriction almost certainly does not accord with the way fiction writers see themselves or their characters. Even if it is correct, it does not follow that while writing a fiction, the author is using the name in such a way that it is thoroughly non-referring. It is arguable that the name already refers to the fledgling abstract artefact that does not yet exist. There is not already, nor will there ever be, any genuine use of the name as the name of a human being; that kind of use is make-believe. (1998: footnote 43)

What worries me is that Salmon seems to provide a notion of semantic reference for a fictional name that is independent of any use of the name itself: within storytelling, a fictional name seems to refer independently of any kind of use. In denying that Doyle ever uses 'Sherlock Holmes' within storytelling, Salmon also denies that he ever establishes a naming practice for the name while writing down the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. However, for a name to have a semantic reference there should be a practice of using the name; but no such a practice is established by Doyle in fictionalizing discourse, for he is only pretending to use the name, and in so doing he does not secure reference for 'Sherlock Holmes'. A point that I think is worth clarifying is how the *pretend use* and the *genuine use* relate to each-other. When does Doyle stop to merely pretend to use 'Sherlock Holmes' and start to genuinely use it? [36] The notion of pretend use is quite obscure in Salmon's view, and seems to be doing nothing to explain how the genuine use – and thus reference to the abstract entity – is established. How do we

[36] For a detailed discussion of Salmon's view and tensions in it see David Braun (2005).

get from Doyle's pretence of reference in fictionalizing discourse to the genuine reference in internal discourse, under the pretence which enables us to talk about the character from a perspective internal to the fiction? I believe that in order to give coherence to his view, Salmon should concede that there is a *referring use* of the name 'Sherlock Holmes' within storytelling. In the next chapter I present my own view, which, although inspired by Salmon's, establishes a *genuine use* of 'Sherlock Holmes' in fictionalizing discourse.

I now turn to Thomasson's view. Like Salmon, Thomasson argues that a fictional character comes into existence through the creative activities of the author during storytelling, and that fictional names already refer to abstract entities within fictionalizing discourse (1999). The pretence invoked in fictionalizing discourse is of a *de re* kind, as defended by Salmon. In more recent work (2003a), she prefers the view according to which in fictionalizing discourse fictional names do not refer throughout the storytelling process, and that the pretence invoked is of a *de dicto* kind. In this section I do not present Thomasson's latter view, given that it is very similar to the one put forward by upholders of the two-tier approach, and, as such, shares the same difficulties; instead, I present her original view, given that I believe that, with revisionary work, it offers a plausible analysis of the semantics of fictionalizing discourse.

According to Thomasson (1999), and in contrast to Salmon, if Doyle pretends to refer when he *first* introduces 'Sherlock Holmes' – thereby creating the fictional character Sherlock Holmes – then he *genuinely refers* to the character in the rest of the text when using its name. To explain how the mechanism of reference works in fictionalizing discourse, for which a practice of using a name like 'Sherlock Holmes' becomes established, Thomasson appeals to Kripke's theory of reference. As seen in Chapter 1, Kripke's theory is about reference fixing and reference transmission: while reference-fixing concerns the conditions according to which a name is introduced into the language and a practice is established for the use of the name, reference transmission concerns the conditions under which a name is passed from speaker to speaker within a given community. Thomasson's proposal focuses on the process of *reference-fixing* for fictional names, namely on the process by means of which we

manage to introduce a name, together with a name-use practice, for an abstract entity such as a fictional character. Thomasson notes that given that fictional characters have no spatio-temporal location, 'it seems they must also be causally inert, making it inconceivable how causal or historical circumstance could play any role in the reference of fictional names' (cf. 1999: 43). Whereas a fictional name cannot be *directly* related to its referent (a causally inert fictional character), Thomasson proposes that it can nonetheless be directly related to a spatio-temporal object, the text, which constitutes the 'foundation' of the referent of the name, the fictional character:

> (…) Although there can be no direct pointing at a fictional character on the other side of the room, the textual foundation of the character serves as the means whereby a quasi-indexical reference to the character can be made by means of which that very fictional object can be baptized by author or readers. (1999: 47)

In this picture, the most typical way in which a character is referred to is the 'official baptism', in which an author writes a story and, in so doing, fixes the reference of the name, within the writing process, by inscribing the name of the character in conjunction with descriptions of the character. Thus the naming ceremony generally is a part of the writing of the text. As example, Thomasson mentions the following piece of fictionalizing discourse, from Jane Austin's novel *Emma*:

> 'Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite one of the best blessings of existence, and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her'

A possible difficulty to the idea of an official baptism for fictional characters, which Thomasson herself considers and dismisses – correctly, I think – is that, in general, there is no *explicit* formulation of such a ceremony in works of fiction as it happens in ordinary situations. Literary works do not usually present us with evidence of fictional characters having been baptized, for authors hardly ever utter 'I dub this character N'. Thomasson's point is that even in the case of concrete individuals there

may not be a single event that we can identify as 'the naming ceremony', for the procedure by which a name can be applied to an individual is, in many cases, a long and diffuse process. The baptism of a fictional character can occur in later occasions, after the original story has already been written: an author can baptize a character while revising a story previously written, in which the character was left unnamed, or she can decide to re-name a character in one of the sequels of the original story, in which the character is originally introduced and baptized. At any rate, the recording of a naming ceremony seems to satisfy the requirement that such ceremonies be public. Once the name is attached to a character via its being founded on the words of a text, it seems that the name may be passed along chains of communication like other names. Just as we learn names through communicating with other individuals, including learning the names of those individuals, we can learn the names of fictional characters through talking to other persons.

What is essential to Thomasson's proposal is that all the possible ways in which a character is baptized rely on the mechanism of *quasi-indexical reference*: via the textual use of the name of a character in the context of a description within a literary work, a quasi-indexical reference to fictional characters can be achieved, and fictional characters can thereby be baptized. The use-chain of the name of a fictional character must lead back to the spatio-temporal foundation of the character in copies of the story, which is ultimately based in the mechanism of quasi-indexical reference.

But what is 'quasi-indexicality' exactly? Thomasson explains how the mechanism of quasi-indexical reference works by drawing an analogy with ordinary speech cases of deferred ostension, in which we refer to abstract entities by means of the spatio-temporal entities to which they are connected, by means of relations such as exemplification, representation or dependence:

> (…) quasi-indexical references to abstract entities (such as types of car) and represented objects (types of car, painted figures) via instances of them or plans and representations of them form an essential part of our use of language (…). The ability to refer directly to a fictional character by means of a copy of the text in which it is represented is no different in principle than our ability to refer to a

> type of car represented in a blueprint, or a figure represented in a painting. (1999: 52-53)

More in detail, Thomasson appeals to examples of deferred ostension cases involving abstract artefacts and concrete entities, in which context and intentions play a central role in individuating the intended referent. For example, if, by pointing to a car, say a Studebaker, speeding by on the street I utter

(23) Now there's a great car!

I manage to refer to the car model; or, if by pointing to a blueprint depicting a Studebaker model, I utter

(24) That's a work of genius!

I also manage to refer to the car model. By simply pointing to a physical, spatio-temporal object of the world I can manage to talk about something which is not spatio-temporally located. The point of the examples is that just as we cannot refer by ostension to abstract artefacts such as a models of cars directly, but rather via ordinary concrete instantiations of them (such as in the first example), or via representations of them (such as in the second example), similarly we cannot refer directly by ostension to fictional characters, but nonetheless we can appeal to spatio-temporal entities on which fictional characters depend, i.e. books.

I here have a worry concerning the alleged analogy Thomasson draws between quasi-indexical reference and deferred ostension. As seen, the general idea underlying the mechanism of deferred ostension is that one can designate an entity by pointing to a different entity, which is related in an appropriate (or relevant) way to the entity she wants to designate, through some qualifier like, for example, 'that…' or 'this...'. Although there is an ostensive gesture, what seems to matter in cases of deferred ostension is not the object primarily ostended, but rather some further object, not available for direct ostension, and connected to the ostended object by means of some contextually recognized relation. Thus, in deferred ostension cases there are essentially two distinct entities involved: the one we ostend to and the one referred to, and we usually succeed in picking out an entity we intend to refer to just in the case that entity

is connected with an *appropriate* relation to the entity that is pointed at. And there are many different types of relation that can hold between two entities involved in deferred cases: even if some kind of causal relation is the most common one, we also find type-token, mereological, spatio-temporal and pictorial/representative relations. Lets' consider the following sentence:

(25) This is my favorite one

uttered by pointing to a copy of, say, *A Study in Scarlet.* The relation between what is pointed to and what one intends to refer is here relatively ambiguous: I could be referring to many different things, such as, for example, the copy of the book I am pointing to (as for example in a collection of expensive leather-bound books), the color of the book I am pointing to etc. However, speaker's intentions and the context of the utterance usually come to help in resolving the ambiguity: if I were to utter (25) within a discussion on literary authors, it would be clear that the entity I intend to refer to it is not the one indicated, but rather one related to it, namely the author, by a specific relation that is contextually salient, namely that of *authorship*. Let us suppose now that, in holding an open copy of the same book, and pointing to a specific passage within it, I utter (25) with the intention to refer to my favorite character, Sherlock Holmes: once again, as Thomasson correctly remarks, context and intentions must come to help to clarify the salient relation.

Even if I agree that it is very hard to make an exhaustive list of all the possible different ways in which an object may come to be used for indicating another object, related to it in a certain way, I think that in the case of fictional characters we encounter a further difficulty. In many ordinary cases of deferred ostension we have to face the '*qua* problem', namely the problem of individuating what it is we want to refer to by pointing to something, among the different things connected to what is ostended to – as when, for example, in attempting to refer to a concrete individual by means of an ostensive gesture, there are many things we can be in causal contact with, as for example her body or just a part of it, like hairs, nose etc. However, I believe that in the case of fictional characters there is a further difficulty concerning the *type of relation* holding between the entities involved in the deferred ostension, for it seems that *none* of

the relations commonly holding between entities involved in deferred ostension covers such a case of alleged deferred ostension. Let us see why.

Let us recall that, for Thomasson, a fictional name becomes attached to a fictional character via its being founded on the words of a text, after which the name may be passed along chains of communication like other names. We thus have to find a suitable type of relation holding between fictional works (and, more specifically, words composing the works) and fictional characters, in order to account for the mechanism of quasi-indexical reference involving fictional characters. The causal and spatio-temporal type is easily dismissed, for, as previously said, fictional characters, as abstract artefacts, are not to be found anywhere in space and are, thus, causally inert. The mereological type can also be dismissed, for there is no relation here between a part and the whole, nor between two parts of the same whole: fictional characters can be understood as 'being part of a novel' only in a very rough metaphorical way, for it is clear that a fictional character cannot be a part of a novel in the way a chapter or a sentence are. We are thus left with the token-type type of relation, and the representative one. The token-type relation can also be dismissed, for, by pointing to written words in a text, I point to physical (graphic) inscriptions: in one step, I can succeed in picking out only type inscriptions, such as sentences. On this, perhaps one can argue that in pointing to a passage in a copy of the *Sherlock Holmes stories* I am pointing to a *token description* of the fictional character Sherlock Holmes, and thus manage to refer, in a deferred way, to a type description of the fictional character. However, a fictional character is not a type description, at least not according to creationism. Let us see if the representative type of relation fares any better. Let us consider an example in which reference is carried out by pointing at a representation of something, such as when, by pointing at a spot on a geographical map of the world, one (with the right authority as, say, a government official) says 'call this depicted region X'; this way, a region is referred to by pointing at a depiction. Another example that comes to mind is when a creative in an advertising company refers to a car model by pointing to a drawing of the car and says 'call the depicted car model 'Ford Fiesta''. What is relevant in the examples is that the region and the car model (both abstract entities) are referred to not by pointing at them directly, but rather by pointing at a depiction or representation of

them. I am not sure that we can say that sentences in a novel really represent a fictional character, at least not in such a straightforward way as in the above mentioned examples. A sentence represents a proposition, not a fictional character; therefore the expression ‘the relevant object represented by the object the speaker pointed to’ would not do either.

I find it more plausible to say that type of relation between words or sentences in a fictional work and a fictional character is given by the fact that the character is *created* by the use of a particular sentence token in penning down the story about the character (i.e. the sentence token in which the name of the fictional character is originally introduced, under the pretence that it – usually – refers to a concrete individual). I think that we may need to postulate a new, different kind of relation in order to properly account for the mechanism of quasi-indexical reference when fictional characters are concerned, the relation being something of the sort ‘being the entity brought into existence by a particular use (by the author of the literary work) of a token of the sentence (the speaker is pointing at)’.

4.2 INTERNAL DISCOURSE

4.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Suppose that, in discussing the Sherlock Holmes stories with a friend, I were to utter

(26) Sherlock Holmes lives in London

By using ‘Sherlock Holmes’ and the predicate ‘lives in London’ we appear to refer to the individual Sherlock Holmes and to a property that he supposedly has, and, in so doing, we seem to say something true. Thus, the utterance of a sentence like (26) apparently asks for a semantic account similar to the one of ordinary assertive and true statements like

(27) Mick Jagger lives in London

According to the semantic framework adopted here, the proposition expressed by (27) is a singular proposition, having as constituents the referents of the names 'Mick Jagger' and 'London'. However, exactly what proposition is expressed by an utterance of (26)? And, if any proposition is expressed, is it true or false? Given that, according to creationism, fictional names are genuinely referring terms, the answer to the first question would seem an easy one: an utterance of (26) expresses a proposition with the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes as constituent. More controversial is whether the proposition is predicted to be true or false by creationism: if Sherlock Holmes is an abstract entity, then the predication 'lives in London' cannot be given the semantics one expects, for abstract entities can hardly live anywhere. It seems to follow that claims containing fictional names cannot always be analyzed as straightforward attributions of a property to an abstract object. There seems indeed to be an important difference between an utterance of (26) and an utterance of

(6) Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character

Both sentences express a proposition that has an abstract entity as constituent; however, if in uttering (26) we talk of Sherlock Holmes as if it were a real person, in uttering (6) we talk of it *qua* abstract entity. Given that Sherlock Holmes is an abstract entity and nothing else, the truth of claims of critical discourse like (6) is easily accounted for. However claims of internal discourse like (26) usually also strike us as intuitively true. In analyzing internal discourse, the question that creationists have to face is the following: what is the relationship between Sherlock Holmes—the actual, created abstract entity—and the property of living in London? The answer commonly given by creationists is that Sherlock Holmes, the abstract entity, is predicated the property of living in London, but only according to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. Where creationists disagree is in the way in which they understand the notion of predication according to a given fiction.

4.2.2 THE SPECIAL PREDICATION VIEW

An early articulation of the analysis of internal discourse from a creationist perspective can be found in Kripke (1973/2013). I quote here the passage (in full, despite its length, as I take it to be crucial) where I believe he articulates the analysis:

> There are two types of predication we can make about Hamlet. Taking Hamlet to refer to a fictional character rather than to be an empty name, one can say ‘Hamlet has been discussed by many critics’, or ‘Hamlet was melancholy’ – from which we can existentially infer that there was a fictional character who was discussed by many critics and was melancholy, given that Hamlet is a fictional character. These two predicates should be taken in different senses. The second predicate, 'is melancholy,' has attached to it the implicit qualifier fictionally, or in the story. Whereas of course the first ‘is discussed by many critics’ does not have this implicit qualifier. (1973/2013: 74-75).

Kripke seems to be taking predications that appear in sentences of internal discourse like

(11) Sherlock Holmes is a detective

as belonging to a ‘special’ kind of predication: Sherlock Holmes has the property of being a detective in a ‘special way’, the way being different from the way in which ordinary people can be detectives. The point is that (11) should be read as saying *of* the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes that it is a detective, for which the use of the predicate ‘is a detective’ is clearly not on a par with the use of ‘is a detective’ when predicated of real people. As I understand Kripke’s view, the predicate ‘is a detective’ in (11) would carry an implicit qualifier of the sort ‘in the story’. More precisely an utterance of (11), despite its apparent grammatical form, should be read as:

(11a) Sherlock Holmes$_2$ has the property of being a detective$__{\textit{in the story}}$

On this reading, (11a) means that the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes is ascribed the property of being a detective in the relevant fiction.

The idea that claims of internal discourse involve a special kind of predication has been fully articulated by van Inwagen (1977: 299-308). For him, a fictional character like Sherlock Holmes is a 'theoretical entity of literary criticism'; as such, it can have properties such as 'being the main character in a novel', 'being a literary icon', etc. Strictly speaking, a fictional character cannot have properties like 'having great deductive abilities', 'solving crimes', and sentences of internal discourse only apparently predicate such properties to a fictional character – in fact, they only 'ascribe' them to a fictional character, where 'ascription' corresponds to a special kind of predication. More precisely, 'ascription' is a primitive, three place relation obtaining between a property, a fictional character, and a work of fiction (or some part of it). The logical form of a sentence of internal discourse is typically 'R (x, y, z)', where: 'R' stands for the ascription relation, 'x' stands for a property (say, 'being a detective'), 'y' for a creature of fiction (say, Sherlock Holmes), and 'x' for a place in a work of fiction (say *A Study in Scarlet*). Van Inwagen's proposal is thus to reformulate straightforward claims of internal discourse like (11) as saying that the property of 'being a detective' is ascribed to the literary character Sherlock Holmes at a certain place in its home fiction. On such a view, fictional characters typically appear in works of fiction as the kinds of things that they are not (as, for example, persons) and are attributed properties they not possibly have. For van Inwagen, the relation of ascription is analogous to that which, on Descartes' view, is asserted in sentences like

(28) John is six foot tall

Roughly, for Descartes, John is a mind and does not have physical properties like 'being six foot tall'; the sentence should be rather understood as

(29) John animates a body that is six foot tall

John, as immaterial substance, does not literally have the property of being six foot tall, but rather that of 'animating a body that has the property of being six foot tall'. Understood as (29), the original sentence (28) expresses a true proposition about John because there is some entity, related in an appropriate way to John, which has the properties that we say John has: John's body. Similarly, Sherlock Holmes is a fictional

character and as such cannot have the property of 'being a detective'; and yet, a sentence of internal discourse like (11) expresses a true proposition about Sherlock Holmes – proposition that is analyzed in terms of the primitive notion of ascription.

It has been argued by Sarah Sawyer (2002) that van Inwagen's analogy with Cartesian dualism is not really helpful in clarifying the primitive notion of 'ascription' and the way it works. The argument goes as follows. If in Cartesian dualism we understand and truth-evaluate (28) by appealing to John's body, which has the property of 'being six foot tall' and to which John is properly related, in van Inwagen's view there is *nothing* related to the fictional character Sherlock Holmes that supposedly has the properties ascribed to the character in the fiction, such as 'being a detective' or 'smoking the pipe', which can be of any help in the understanding (11). In other words, there is nothing that plays the role of John's body in van Inwagen's distinction between 'having a property' and 'being ascribed a property'. I do not find Sawyer's argument compelling, for the following reason. The Cartesian example in van Inwagen's is intended just as an example of another clear case of what looks like a simple predication of the type 'Pa' that can sensibly be analyzed as actually involving a more complex predication, R (P, a). As I understand it, there is no claim that (11) and (28) are completely analogous – that is, that 'R' is the same in both cases.

4.2.3 THE STANDARD PREDICATION VIEW

An alternative strategy to account for sentences of internal discourse is to take them as prefixed by the 'according to the story' locution; this strategy is endorsed by creationists willing to avoid postulating a primitive or special notion of predication for fictional characters (Salmon 1998 and Thomasson 1999).[37] By adopting such a strategy, a

[37] This strategy is also endorsed by irrealists (see, for example, Sainsbury's irrealist view in Chapter 2 of this dissertation). The underlying idea here is that while a sentence of internal discourse like (11) seems to ontologically commit us to (the existence of) Sherlock Holmes, the prefixed version gets around this by qualifying the statement as being true *in the given fiction*. For irrealists, the main appeal of the 'according to the story' strategy is that it allows one to treat sentences apparently about fictional objects (to which such sentences would be committed, if taken literally) as sentences that bear no unwelcome ontological commitments: in order to make sense of the singular terms that occur within such a discourse, there is

sentence of internal discourse like (11) does not express a straightforward truth, given that it does not describe a real property of the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes but, rather, how it is said to be *according to the story*, for which in uttering (11) in internal contexts, speakers continue the author's pretence that there is such a detective. In Salmon's words:

> The name 'Sherlock Holmes' was originally coined by Doyle in writing the story (and subsequently understood by readers reading the *Holmes* stories) as the fictional name for the protagonist. That thing – in fact merely an abstract artefact – is *according to the story*, a man by the name of 'Sherlock Holmes' . . . At a later stage, use of the name is imported from the fiction into reality, to name *the very same thing* that it is the name of according to the story. That thing – now the real as well as the fictional bearer of the name – is according to the story a human being who is a brilliant detective, and in reality an artefactual abstract entity created by Doyle. (1998: 300)

On this view, an utterance of a sentence like (11) has two readings. Uttered as a sentence of fictionalizing discourse, (11) reads

(11c) Sherlock Holmes is a detective

while understood as a sentence of internal discourse (11) reads

(11d) *According to the story*, Sherlock Holmes is a detective

In 11d, 11c comes embedded under the 'According to the story' locution. The truth conditions seem clear at first sight: (11d) is true if and only if an utterance of (11c) is a true sentence according to the story at issue. Most importantly, (11d) can be true even though (11c) is false. It is actually true that Sherlock Holmes is a purely fictional character created by Doyle. Only in the context of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, and not in the real world, is it true that Sherlock Holmes is a detective – and rightly so: abstract objects cannot literally be detectives. Basically, this move allows creationists to treat the

---

really no need to postulate a special class of actually existent objects as their referents; and yet, such sentences come out with a truth-value that agrees with our pre-theoretical intuitions about fiction.

predication of a property to fictional characters as an affine with the predication of a property to ordinary, concrete individuals.

There are pros and contras with what I have called the ‘special predication’ and the ‘standard predication’ views, but I believe that for present there is no need to examine the relative merits of each of the two views in detail.[38] What matters for purposes of this dissertation is that both views allow us to make the claim that Sherlock Holmes *has* – where ‘has’ must be understood as ‘a special predication’ or ‘has *according to the story*’ – the property of being a detective, and both say that such a claim is true. Both views say that what is true is that Sherlock Holmes is predicated (either in the special or in the standard way) the property of being a detective in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, which meets our pre-theoretical intuitions about the truth-vale of claims of internal discourse like (11).

4.3 NON-EXISTENCE DISCOURSE

4.3.1 INTRODUCTION

A prominent problem for upholders of creationism is posed by negative existentials: given that a creationist accepts the existence of Sherlock Holmes as an abstract entity, she needs to explain why we have intuitions that negative existentials like

(10) Sherlock Holmes does not exist

are true. Irrealists have profusely argued that creationists cannot meet the explanatory challenge posed by negative existentials (e.g., Yagisawa (2001) and Everett (2007)). The intuitive problem behind a negative existential like (10) is that it is uttered to say of the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes, whose existence is merely pretended in fiction, that it does not exist in reality. In other words, it is because Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character that intuitively his existence is truthfully denied. But creationists are forced to explain away this intuition: for them, the fictional character Sherlock Holmes is very much existent as abstract artefact – for which (10) is false. A very broad body of

[38] Hanley (2003: 127-128) offers an interesting comparative of both views.

literature has been produced by creationists to account for the problem of negative existential statements, but it is beyond the scope of the present work to explore all the proposals offered. The goal of this section is to report the ways of analyzing the problem by what I believe are the most prominent creationist theories. Here I will discuss the views of Kripke (1973/2013), Salmon (1998), Thomasson ((1999), (2003a) and (2003b)), and van Inwagen (1977)).

4.3.2 THE NO PROPOSITION ANALYSIS

An original analysis of negative existentials is to be found in Kripke (1973/2013), who acknowledges the difficulty of providing an account of negative existentials as follows:

> The original problem is: what can someone mean when he says that Sherlock Holmes does not exist? Is he talking of a definite thing and saying of it that it doesn't exist? The reason the problem becomes somehow more acute on my view is that is has been universally regarded in the literature as unproblematic to make a negative existential statement using a predicate. (1973/2013: 144)

According to him, when someone utters a negative existential like (10), she does not mean to refer to a fictional character, since the character Sherlock Holmes *does* exist. A claim like (10) can be true only if 'Sherlock Holmes' is disambiguated so that it is taking as being a non-referring name: 'Sherlock Holmes', in the context of (10), is an empty name, not a name for a fictional character. Given that in (10) 'Sherlock Holmes' does not refer 'there is no proposition *that Sherlock Holmes exists*'. In other words, as I understand Kripke's view, (10) must be taken as saying that there is no proposition expressed by

(30) Sherlock $Holmes_1$ exists

given that 'Sherlock $Holmes_1$' does not refer. But then if (30) does not express a proposition it is hard to see how negating that there is such a proposition would yield something true or even meaningful.

4.3.3 THE NON LITERAL ANALYSIS

Handling negative existentials does not seem so smooth for creationists. A tentative proposal put forward by van Inwagen is the following:

> [The speaker of ‘Mr. Pickwick does not exist’] would probably be expressing the proposition that there is no such man as Pickwick, or, more precisely, the proposition that nothing has all the properties ascribed to Pickwick. (1977: 308)

On this proposal, an utterance of (10) is interpretable as *expressing* the proposition that there is no thing that has all the properties that Sherlock Holmes has according to the fiction. Though this proposal can handle some standard cases of negative existentials, it has trouble when a speaker is confronted with a real man who has all the properties that Sherlock Holmes has according to the novels – a situation that, although very unlikely, is possible. In encountering a real man who has all the properties that Sherlock Holmes has according to the novels, the speaker would probably withdraw her utterance of (10) immediately. But this would not be correct. Even if there were someone who has all properties Sherlock Holmes has according to the relevant work of fiction, the private detective of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories still does not exist.

Along these lines, Salmon (1998) suggests that in negative existentials like (10) speakers use ‘Sherlock Holmes’ in a descriptive way, as a disguised improper definite description:

> (…) We may use ‘Sherlock Holmes’, for example, to mean something like: *Holmes more or less as he is actually depicted in the stories, or Holmes replete with these attributes [the principally salient ones ascribed to Holmes in the stories], or best, the person who is both Holmes and Holmesesque.* (…) In uttering [Sherlock Holmes does not exist] one would then mean that the Holmes of fiction, Holmes as depicted, does not exist in reality, that there is in reality no such person, no person who is both $Holmes_2$ and sufficiently like that (as depicted in fiction). This is not a use of 'Holmes' as a thoroughly non-referring

> name, but as a kind of description that invokes the name of the fictional character (1998: 303-304)

As seen, for Salmon the only genuine use of 'Sherlock Holmes' is as a name of an abstract entity. Thus, literally, an utterance of (10) expresses the following semantic content:

(10a) Sherlock Holmes (the abstract entity) does not exist

which is literally a falsehood, for Sherlock Holmes exists in reality. This is the reason why Salmons proposes a more charitable reading of (10): a speaker who utters (10) expresses the *non literal* content that there is no one who is both like Holmes (the character) and sufficiently like that (as depicted in fiction), a content true with respect to circumstances in which there is a unique individual who is Sherlock Holmes and who has many of the crucial properties that Doyle attributed to his fictional detective. The use of 'Sherlock Holmes' as a disguised definite description like 'Holmes more or less as he is actually depicted in the stories' is parasitic on the genuine use as the name of an abstract entity. It is then completely acceptable to state that Sherlock Holmes – as he is actually depicted in the fiction – does not exist. In uttering (10) what a speaker means is something like

(10b) The abstract entity Sherlock Holmes$_{\text{as he is depicted in the story}}$ does not exist

(10b) is not the semantic content expressed by an utterance of (10) – for we should not forget the only genuine use of a fictional names is a name for the abstract entity; rather it is *pragmatically conveyed or implicated* by a speaker who intends to use 'Sherlock Holmes' as a disguised description. The straightforward intuition that (10) is true comes then from the fact that speakers confuse the semantic content of (10) with the descriptive content pragmatically conveyed or implicated, that is (10b). However, under this pragmatically conveyed content (10) is not a genuine negative existential.

4.3.4 THE RESTRICTED QUANTIFICATION ANALYSIS

According to Thomasson (1999), a speaker who utters (10), rather than claiming that there is no such thing as Sherlock Holmes at all, is claiming that Sherlock Holmes is not to be found in the domain of *concrete objects*, for it is an abstract thing. She explicitly proposes to interpret true denials of existence for fictional characters as cases of implicitly restricted quantification[39]:

> The intuition that there is no Lear nor any unicorns, and the fact that we quite naturally deny their existence, are easily accommodated without denying that there are such fictional characters. Statements like 'there is no Lear' or 'there are no unicorns' are quite naturally interpretable as claims that, despite what the story says, 'there is no (real) person who is Lear' or 'there are no such animals (they are mythical figures). (1999: 112)

But such an analysis of negative existentials does not convince irrealists after all. The point is that there seems to be a pretty clear distinction between

(10) Sherlock Holmes does not exist

and

(31) There is no real person who is Sherlock Holmes

When we use expressions such as 'there is' and 'there is not' we often have implicitly restricted quantification, while in the case of pure negative existentials we do not. If, while visiting the zoo in Barcelona, I utter

(32) There are no crocodiles

I would probably be understood as taking into account only the species of the zoo of Barcelona, which has no crocodiles. So my utterance would be understood as

(33) There are no crocodiles *in the Barcelona zoo*

---

[39] Thomasson is here relying on an earlier proposal made by Parsons (1980).

But of course it would be different if I were to utter

(34) Crocodiles do not exist

Here I would probably be taken as uttering that crocodiles do not exist, *full stop* (namely that they are extinct for example – in which case of course my utterance would be false), and not that they are not to be found in a domain of existent animals of a specific specie, or located in some specific place (the Barcelona zoo). As pointed out by Walton (2003), although domain restrictions on quantified 'there is no' and 'there are no' constructions are perfectly common, ordinary, predicative statements concerning existence do not admit of correspondingly restricted readings. The existence predicate in negative existentials cannot be implicitly or explicitly restricted in the same way that quantificational expressions can. More importantly, it cannot be restricted in the way we would expect if it were really a quantificational expression. For example, those who deny the existence of Santa or the Big Bad Wolf do not seem to have such restriction in mind (cf. Walton 2003: 240-241).

Everett (2007) suggests an interpretation of Thomasson's analysis of negative existentials along the following lines:

> A (speaker) may use an utterance of 'a does not exist' to convey the claim that a is not a real *K*, where (i) *K* is a conversationally salient kind and (ii) a is fictionally characterized as being a *K* in a conversationally salient fiction. (2007: 65)

This understanding of negative existentials relies on the idea that fictional characters are usually described, in their home fictions, as belonging to *some kind*: as detectives, women, kings, dragons and so on. And Thomasson's proposal (on Everett's reading) does indeed appear to make the right predictions with respect to negative existentials like (10). In (10), there is a *salient kind* (a real person) to which Sherlock Holmes belongs in its home fiction, and to which we can fix the value of *K* in order to obtain that a speaker who utters such claim speaks truly. However, following Everett, there are examples of negative existentials containing fictional names in which we would have trouble in coming up with a conversationally salient kind *K* in terms of which we can

interpret the negative existentials. To begin with, Everett asks us to consider the case of a work of fiction featuring the fictional character Yugo. The fiction remains silent about the kind to which Yugo belongs. In order for Thomasson's analysis to give the right predictions for the truth-conditions of

(35) Yugo does not exist

we need the fictional character in question to be described as belonging to some kind in the fiction. But Yugo's fiction does not meet this requirement. A further counterexample for such an analysis would be the case of a fiction whose main character, let us say 'Mr. X', is described as being a fictional character. According to the relevant fiction, Mr. X is fictionally ascribed the property of being a fictional character, that is the salient kind in this case would be 'fictional character'.
But then in uttering

(36) Mr. X does not exist

I could be interpreted as saying that no real fictional character is identical to Mr. X. But for creationists Mr. X is a real fictional character. Then Thomasson's proposal commits the creationist to hold that (36) is false. In the next chapter, I shall take up Thomasson's analysis of negative existentials and show how it can be improved so as to deal with Everett's counterexamples.

4.3.5 THE METALINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

In later research (2003), Thomasson rejects the restricted quantification analysis of negative existentials in favor of a metalinguistic analysis for which, generally speaking, a fictional name N (occurring in a negative existential claim) refers to a prior use of N that the speaker regards as wrong. Such an analysis is inspired by Donnellan's work:

> If N is a proper name that has been used in predicative statements with the intention to refer to some individual, then 'N does not exist' is true if and only if the history of those uses ends in a block. (1974: 25)

On Thomasson's view, in uttering a non-existence claim like (10), the speaker does not herself intend to use the name 'Sherlock Holmes' to refer to a person; rather she exploits prior uses of the name that she thinks were made with a *wrong* intention:

> [The metalinguistic view] suggests that non-existence claims presuppose and implicitly comment on a separate range of prior uses of the name by speakers with, perhaps inappropriate, intentions to refer to a thing of a certain ontological kind. Non-existence claims involving fictional names are generally made where the speaker suspects that some mistake has been made, e.g. where past speakers have intended to use the name (in predicative statements) to refer to a person, as when a child has exclaimed 'Santa Claus is coming tonight!' and we correct him by saying 'Santa Claus doesn't exist'. In making a non-existence claim, the speaker does not herself intend to use the name 'Santa Claus' to refer to a person; rather, she indicts prior uses of it that (she thinks) were made with that intention. (2003a: 217)

Thus, despite appearances, in uttering (10) we are actually talking of the name 'Sherlock Holmes', and we are saying something like the following: the dominant uses of the name do not trace back to any real individual – which could be summarized along the lines of

(37) 'Sherlock Holmes' does not denote

But the metalinguistic analysis has its own limits. According to Kripke (1973/2013), a major problem for proponents of the metalinguistic analysis seems to be that of confusing cases of *using* a name with cases where the name is merely *mentioned*. For example, an anthropologist who sees a written occurrence of a name 'Santa Claus' and asks whether it refers, is, according to Kripke, asking an entirely different question to that asked by a child who asks his father whether Santa Claus exists. The answer to both questions is 'no', but as Kripke points out, the anthropologist may not learn thereby what the child learns, namely that Santa Claus doesn't exist. In fact, even though the anthropologist is grown up, she may still believe in Santa Claus, referring to him by a different name (cf. 1973/2013: 153).

According to Sainsbury (2010), Thomasson's metalinguistic account of negative existentials has to face two further difficulties. First of all, a negative existential like (10) can be true even if there is no background of erroneous use, for it is doubtful that anyone ever used the name 'Sherlock Holmes' thinking that Sherlock Holmes is a real person. A second difficulty is that Thomasson's account 'represents a mistake about ontological category as a mistake about whether something exists' (cf. 2010: 109). As I understand it, Sainsbury's objection is that if a person mistook something abstract for something concrete to which she refers via the name 'N', I would probably not correct her by saying 'You are mistaken: N does not exist', but rather by saying 'You are mistaken: N is abstract'.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As seen, the starting point of creationism is that the sentences that we utter in critically commenting on works of fiction (from a perspective external to the fictions) seem to strongly suggest that fictional characters exist and are genuine objects of reference and predication; and once we enlarge our ontology so to include fictional characters as abstract existent entities, it does not seem to make much sense to deny that fictional names refer to them. Creationism relies on an ontology of fictional entities (Sherlock Holmes, Hamlet and the like, which exist as abstract objects) the acceptance of which seems to provide the best explanation for the truth of sentences in which we apparently make reference to fictional characters and quantify over them: when we utter these sentences we intend to speak truthfully as, for example, when in a university lecture on mystery novels, the lecturer says that

(38) Sherlock Holmes is surely one of the most famous fictional characters in novels of mystery

However, as we saw that if creationists can account for claims of critical discourse in a way that seems to preserve our straightforward intuitions about such claims, they face difficulties in preserving our pre-theoretical intuitions when other types of fictional discourse are involved. The analysis of fictionalizing discourse given

by abstract realists differs depending on the kind of pretence they invoke at the base of storytelling (*de dicto* or *de re*), which ultimately affects the account of fictional names and of claims of fictionalizing and internal discourse. Furthermore, irrealists argue, all creationists have to face the problem of negative existentials, with a reinterpretation of their surface appearance, violating the quite common intuition that these claims are straightforwardly and literally true *simpliciter*. In the next and last chapter I assume the metaphysics of creationism and I present my own account of fictional names and fictional discourse from such a realist perspective; specifically, I put forward a semantic and cognitive analysis of the mechanisms that underlie our mental and linguistic uses of fictional names in the context of fictional discourse.

CHAPTER 6
FICTIONAL NAMES AND SINGULAR THOUGHTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 DATA

We have plenty of conflicting intuitions when fictional names are involved: we intuitively think that it is true that Sherlock Holmes is a brilliant detective, although we know that Sherlock Holmes could not help the British police to solve mysterious crimes as, after all, he is just a fictional character, created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's authorial activity. We might not know exactly what kind of things we are thinking and talking about when using fictional names – namely we might be ignorant about the metaphysical status of their referents, if any. And yet, while thinking and talking about the smart detective that lives in the London of Victorian age, I have strong intuitions that I am thinking and talking about Sherlock Holmes, the main character of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. Intuitively, it seems that you and I can think and talk about the same fictional character, Sherlock Holmes, and agree or disagree about the properties it (he) has; we can also engage in counterfactual imagining by considering whether Sherlock Holmes may have been otherwise, e. g., whether he might have been a sailor. If we think and talk about something when using fictional names, *what is it* that to which we are thinking and talking about? I assume in this chapter that in using fictional names like 'Sherlock Holmes', 'Anna Karenina' and 'Don Quixote of La Mancha', we do think and talk about *something*, namely about the fictional characters Sherlock Holmes, Anna Karenina and Don Quixote of La Mancha, conceived as having a metaphysical status of created abstract artefacts, as creationists say.

1.2 DESIDERATA

As seen in Chapter 5, the focus of most theorists of creationism is the issue of how and when linguistic reference to fictional characters takes place. I claim that, in order provide a full account of fictional names and fictional discourse, this issue must be addressed in combination with the issue of how and when *mental or cognitive* reference to fictional characters takes place. In this chapter I provide an analysis of the semantics of fictional names and fictional discourse, assuming that our thought and discourse involving fictional names refer to created abstract artefacts. Together with the semantic analysis, I put forward a cognitive analysis of fictional names. The cognitive analysis aims at explaining why, *prima facie*, an account of the truth-conditions of claims involving fictional names seem to pull our pre-theoretical intuitions in different directions; moreover, it aims at accounting for the intuitions of aboutness and singularity we have when using fictional names.

1.3 THE SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

In this dissertation I endorse a direct reference view on the semantics of fictional names. The fundamental thesis common to all theories of direct reference is that the sole semantic function of a proper name is to refer to an individual. It is generally assumed that this thesis – together with the further thesis that sentences as used in appropriate contexts express propositions – entails that the contribution made by a proper name to the proposition expressed by any sentence where it occurs is the individual bearing the name. In this chapter I do not give arguments in favour of a direct reference view. I just assume that a direct reference view offers a satisfactory account on the mechanisms of reference, and I focus on the matter of what a direct reference theorist has to say about the semantic contribution of fictional names when combined with a metaphysical view like creationism.

The metaphysical claim that fictional characters exist as abstract created artefacts leaves open several semantic issues, which can be roughly summarized by asking the following question: do all inscriptions of the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ refer to the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes in all the prominent types of fictional discourse?

If upholders of creationism agree that 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to the abstract artefact Sherlock Holmes in utterances of critical discourse, they disagree on whether utterances of 'Sherlock Holmes' also refer to the abstract artefact in the remaining types of discourse (see Chapter 5 – Sections 4, 5 and 6). Let me briefly summarize why. Creationism about fictional characters is supported by sentences of critical discourse, which seem to explicitly quantify over fictional characters. However, if claims of critical discourse seem like good candidates for truth and often strike us as *literally* true, not all sentences containing fictional names seem to demand a realm of existing fictional characters. To start with, when we engage with fictionalizing discourse it seems that we are pretending that there are people who have undergone the experiences described in the work of fiction, rather than pretending of some abstract object that it has properties only concrete objects can possess. Furthermore, compare a claim of critical discourse like

(7) Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character created by Scottish author and physician sir Arthur Doyle in 1887

with the following claim of internal discourse:

(11) Sherlock Holmes is a detective

According to our pre-theoretic intuitions there does not seem to be a difference in truth-value between (7) and (11): they are both true. However, I think that there is difference in the way we *tend to think* that (7) and (11) are true: we intuitively do not think that (11) is true in the same way that (7) is, for Sherlock Holmes is just a fictional detective – it is not a detective in reality. A final problem for creationists is to account for the fact that it is part of our ordinary practices to deny the existence of fictional characters, like when we say that

(10) Sherlock Holmes does not exist

In this chapter I present a semantic account of fictional names according to which 'Sherlock Holmes' is a directly referential expression that refers to Sherlock Holmes, the abstract artefact, in *all its occurrences* in the four main types of discourse

that are the targets of this dissertation. This account avoids indeterminacy and ambiguity in the reference of fictional names, even if we can detect indeterminacy and some inconsistencies in speakers' intentions in using a fictional name. In section 5, while providing a semantic analysis of fictional discourse, I will show that ordinary speakers do not always have a direct reliable access to what their intentions are when using a fictional name.

1.4 THE COGNITIVE ANALYSIS

Works of fiction clearly seem to introduce us to specific fictional characters (that in the fiction are usually persons, places, animals etc.) and we seem to engage in singular thinking or imaging about them: in imagining that Sherlock Homes smokes the pipe, I have the intuition that I am not imagining about some individual or other who smokes the pipe, but that I am rather imagining *about* Sherlock Holmes – the fictional character of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories – that he (it) smokes the pipe. My thought and talk about Sherlock Holmes seem to be about Sherlock Holmes and nothing else; all the same, my thought and talk about Sherlock Holmes seem to be about something different from my thought and talk about Dr. Watson. But why do we have such intuitions of singularity and aboutness when fictional characters are concerned? To answer this question from a creationist perspective, I appeal to what I take to be a necessary implementation of the semantic analysis of fictional names, namely the cognitive analysis.

Ordinary speakers seem to have inconsistent and thus unreliable views on the semantics of fictional names and fictional discourse. In my work, the inconsistencies – namely the seeming truth of many sentences containing fictional names in which fictional characters appear to have properties of opposite or incompatible nature (e.g. 'being a fictional character' and 'being a detective') – are explained away by appealing to the *cognitive* contribution of fictional names to the sentences in which they occur.[40] Although I contend that fictional names refer to abstract rather than concrete

[40] One of the central claims of a direct reference view is that what directly referential terms contribute to propositions is nothing but their referent, which might seem to be in conflict with a cognitive approach. I do not believe that there is such a conflict: direct reference, as originally formulated, is a semantic theory, not a cognitive one, and it is not attempting to discover what goes on in the mind, but rather what goes on into the truth conditions.

individuals, I also claim that they trigger cognitive mechanisms which parallel those triggered by ordinary names of concrete individuals: a fictional name is treated as a directly referential expression that leads to a *singular thought*, where a singular thought is roughly understood as a thought that is directed at some specific object or individual. In using fictional names we engage in singular thinking. In order to account for the singularity of thoughts triggered by fictional names, I appeal to Robin Jeshion's theory of singular thought – I present her view in the following section.

2. THE COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK

2.1 SETTING THE SCENE

A widespread view among philosophers of language is that there are two ways in which a cognitive agent can think about a particular object: with conceptual mediation by descriptive content, or directly, without conceptual mediation by descriptive content. These two different ways of thinking about a particular object translate into different kinds of thought an agent can entertain about an object: descriptive (or *de dicto*) vs. singular (or *de re*) thoughts. For example, my thought that 'the smallest dog in the world has the size of a mouse' is intuitively different from my thought that '*that* dog– the dog I see in the park – has the size of a mouse'. In the former case my thought is descriptive and does not seem to be about a specific dog; in the latter case my thought is not mediated by a descriptive condition (that of being the smallest dog in the world) and seems to be about a specific dog (the one I see in the park). Descriptive and singular thoughts are usually distinguished in terms of their content. The content of a descriptive thought is commonly taken to be a general proposition, composed exclusively of concepts or properties; by contrast, the content of a singular thought is commonly taken to be a singular proposition, containing as its constituents individuals and properties.

What conditions underpin descriptive and singular thoughts? Philosophers of language generally agree that in order to entertain a descriptive thought a cognitive agent must have a grasp of the properties or concepts that compose the general

proposition that constitute the thought, and does not need to stand in any special relation to the individual that makes the proposition true. There is not so much agreement, though, about what it takes to entertain a singular thought. The central debate on singular thought focuses on the *conditions* under which it is possible to entertain a singular thought. The traditional position in philosophy of language is that in order to think a singular thought about an object the agent of thought must be *acquainted* with the object the thought is about.[41] However, in a number of recent articles, Robin Jeshion has developed a theory of singular thought known as 'Cognitivism' (2002, 2004, 2009, 2010a, 2010b and 2014) according to which we can entertain singular thoughts without acquaintance. She endorses the standard view according to which the content of singular thoughts are singular propositions, but she also argues that it is a *limitation* to define singular thoughts uniquely in terms of their (singular) content, for such a definition does not explain *what* it takes, cognitively, to *think* such thoughts (2010: 108). For Jeshion, all singular thoughts have a particular *cognitive role*, which is that of being thought *through a mental file*.[42]

The mental file metaphor has been elaborated by several philosophers in different ways.[43] The shared intuition is that when we form a mental representation of some object, we open a mental file on that object; a mental file is a structure for the storage of information that a subject takes to be, internally, about one and the same object. A mental file is not individuated simply by the information stored in it: the same mental file can persist through changes of the information; information can be further added, deleted, or taken out of the mental file and placed elsewhere. The information contained in a mental file need not be true, that is to say our mental files can contain information which is false; what is relevant is that *we take* the information we store in a mental file *to be about* the object the mental file is about. In the section to follow, I address Jeshion's theory of singular thought in more detail.

---

[41] See, for example, Recanati (1993 and 2010).

42 By contrast, for Jeshion, descriptive thoughts occur *discretely* in cognition, disconnected from any mental file. This attributes to singular thoughts a cognitive significance not shared by descriptive thoughts (cf. 2010:129).

[43] See, *inter alia*, John Perry (1980), Kent Bach (1987) and François Recanati (2010).

2.2 JESHION'S COGNITIVISM

According to Jeshion, the singularity of thoughts is explained by the cognitive role thoughts play in the agents' mental organization: cognition creates singular thoughts by creating mental files, in which information that is intended to be about a certain individual or object is stored. She stipulates the following conditions under which one can think a singular thought about an object:

[1] Thinking about an object from a mental file is constitutive of singular thinking about that object. (2010: 132)

[2] A mental file is initiated on an object only if that object is *significant* to the agent with respect to her plans, projects, affective states, motivations. (2010: 136)

On Jeshion's view, we can think singularly of objects through mental files even if we are not acquainted with those objects, because our minds – not necessarily ourselves-as-agents – create such files (cf. 2010: 130). Mental files are triggered by cognitive processes and, in particular, by significance; the significance of an object for me, as cognitive agent, is not under my direct control but is rather determined by the independent structure of my values and desires. She gives several examples in which the singularity of a thought does not depend on acquaintance but rather on significance. Here is one example. Someone who has been adopted as a child forms the deep desire to meet her biological mother, and she expresses her thoughts by saying 'I would do anything to meet *my mother*'; in this case, there is a particular person the child's thoughts are directed about, although there is no acquaintance with this person, for the cognitive fix on the object of thought is mediated by description. On this example, Jeshion's claim is not that a mere act of descriptive reference-fixing entails that a mental file is opened and maintained; she rather appeals to significance as a condition on the possession of a (non-perceptual) mental-file (cf. 2010: 136).

A mental file is typically labeled with a *mental name*[44], where a mental name is conceived as a mental representation of an object, as much as a name in language is a public representation of an object. Without the introduction of a mental name, there can be no introduction of the corresponding name into the language. The introduction of a mental name (and the initiation of the corresponding mental file) is not under direct control of the thinker; it rather depends on whether the relevant object is cognitively significant to the thinker. A mental name can be introduced and a mental file thereby initiated, not only in the absence of an acquaintance relation, but also in the absence of an object that bears the name. For example, one can introduce a mental name when one (mistakenly) believes that there is an object that bears the name, as when the scientist Le Verrier introduced the name 'Vulcan' for the planet that he (mistakenly) postulated to exist. Or one can also introduce a mental name when one knows that there is no object, as when a child names 'Susanne' her best imaginary friend. Remarkably, significance can *transfer* quite rapidly through our cognitive minds, especially when *proper names* are concerned. Jeshion writes:

> (…) our minds are attuned to regard proper names as the 'abstract linguistic faces' of significance. This helps explain why singular thoughts about named individuals are transferred so rapidly in communication-chains. Within even minimally enriched communicative contexts, hearing a proper name triggers creation of a mental file in the individual. (2010: 138)

In the following section I present my own semantic analysis of fictional names, and in section 4 I complement it with a cognitive analysis that relies precisely on Jeshion's Cognitivism.[45]

---

[44] Jeshion borrows the term 'mental name' from the work of a semantic instrumentalist, Gilbert Harman (1977).

[45] Let me clarify here that Jeshion would not endorse my view on fictional names, as she takes them to be empty, non-referring names.

3. THE SEMANTICS OF 'SHERLOCK HOLMES'

3.1 'SHERLOCK HOLMES' ALWAYS REFERS TO SHERLOCK HOLMES

As we saw in Chapter 5, most creationists argue that authors can bring fictional characters into existence merely by writing about them: when an author is *pretending to refer* to a person – though she is really not doing so – the pretence does not amount to naming a fictional character; rather, it amounts to *creating* a fictional character. And most creationists defend that fictional names in fictionalizing discourse are non-referring because authors are not intending to refer to anything. They make sense of authors' behavior invoking a *de dicto* kind of pretence: authors in fictionalizing discourse pretend to say things about the putative referent – where, in fact, there is no referent (Kripke, Searle, Schiffer and van Inwagen). The alternative to this view is to argue that fictional names in fictionalizing discourse already refer to full fledge abstract entities, of which authors pretend *de re* things about (Salmon (1998) and Thomasson (1999)).

In this chapter I reject the view according to which 'Sherlock Holmes' in fictionalizing discourse is a non-referring expression. On my view, there is no ambiguity in the reference of fictional names: fictional names *always* refer to abstract entities, even when they occur in fictionalizing discourse. In the remaining part of this section I will give four main reasons for wanting to have a theory (like the one I put forward) that takes fictional names to refer to fictional characters since their first use in fictionalizing discourse. In the first place, if we deny that occurrences of fictional names within fictionalizing contexts refer – while we allow that they refer in other contexts of discourse – we are committed to say that fictional names behave in a different semantic way and are, thus, *ambiguous* names. Most creationists defend that fictional names like 'Sherlock Holmes' are ambiguous between two uses: a non-referring use originating in pretence, and a referring use outside the pretence. But a legitimate question is whether there is such a kind of non-referring use at all, e.g., whether there is a use of 'Sherlock Holmes' besides the one on which it refers to the fictional character Sherlock Holmes. I don't think that upholders of the two-tier approach of fictional names have really shown

that there is such a use (see Salmon's criticism on Kripke's view – Chapter 5, section 3.1). Moreover, such ambiguity in fictional names seems to be introduced *ad hoc*. Indeed, I believe that one reason for which upholders of the two-tier approach postulate that fictional names in fictionalizing discourse do not refer is to avoid the problem they would face if they said that they do refer: they would have to say that fictional names in fictionalizing discourse refer to abstract entities that do not yet exist, given that fictional characters, on their view, do not come into existence until the process of storytelling is over. By contrast, my proposal will appropriately deal with this problem without postulating any ambiguity in the semantic content of fictional names. I believe that any semantic theory should aim at *uniformity*: if one assumes (as I do) that the correct semantic analysis for ordinary proper names is provided by a theory of direct reference, one should aim at giving an account of the semantics of *fictional* proper names within such a framework.

In the second place, I believe that the account of the semantics of proper names I put forward in this chapter would allow us to have a simple, straightforward account of the semantics of other referential expressions, like indexicals and demonstratives. Indexicals and demonstratives work in such a way that, in order to correctly account for their semantic behavior in fictionalizing discourse, we need a referent even for their very first use in pretend reference.

In the third place, a semantic account in which fictional names are treated as directly referential expressions since their very first use would treat fictional names as semantically behaving in much the same way as non-fictional proper names when appearing in storytelling. In the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, 'Sherlock Holmes' directly refers to its referent, the abstract entity, since its first inscription, as much as 'London' refers to its referent, the city of London, since its first inscription.[46] I believe that this treatment of fictional names on a pair with non-fictional proper names in fictionalizing discourse better captures our pre-theoretical intuitions when engaging with fictional works: *prima facie*, when a proper name appears in a work of fiction, be it fictional or

[46] It is generally assumed, in the literature about fiction, that non-fictional proper names make the same semantic contribution – their referent – when they are used in fictional as much as non-fictional contexts of discourse. I also assume such a view here.

non-fictional, readers are invited to assume that there is an individual the name rigidly refers to.

In the fourth place, treating fictional names as referring in fictionalizing discourse accounts for the intuitions of what an author is doing in writing a sequel or an adaptation of a pre-existing work of fiction about a given fictional character: the author is picking up a pre-existing and *referring* use of the name of a fictional character, and, in so doing, she 'imports' the fictional character into the new work of fiction; she uses the name as referring to the antecedently created fictional character, of which she might say certain things about. The point is that there is *fictionalizing* discourse even in sequels and adaptations, and upholders of the two-tier approach would have to say that fictional names are non-referring when occurring in this type of discourse, thus failing to account for the intuition that the *same* fictional character can literally appear in sequels or adaptations of its home fiction. Kripke, despite defending that fictional names are non-referring expressions in fictionalizing discourse, seems to share this intuition:

> A fictional character, created in a given corpus, may later appear in other works. For example, Sherlock Holmes appears in various films. One should think of this case as similar to the appearance of Napoleon or George Washington in fictional works. (2013: 78, footnote)

For creationists, the analysis of fictional names in fictionalizing discourse is strictly related to an account of the creation of fictional characters. I address this issue in the next section.

3.1.1 THE CREATION OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

In this section I sketch an account of the process of creation of fictional characters according to which the authorial activity is genuinely creating.[47] My account will focus on the creation of fictional characters in *written* works of fiction; furthermore, I restrict

[47] This is a rough account of the process of authorial creation, but I think that it is enough for the present purposes.

my account as to cover the creation of fictional characters that bear fictional proper names, like Sherlock Holmes and Anna Karenina, given that this dissertation focuses precisely on the semantics of fictional names. I shall address the following questions: how do authors create fictional characters by *writing* fictional stories? When do they do that? To answer these questions, I here mainly rely on Thomasson's intentional object theory of intentionality (as presented in Chapter 5, section 3.1). According to her, a fictional character presents us with an example where the object of the intentional act need not exist independently from the intentional act directed towards it, but it may be created in the act itself. If there were no pre-existent entity 'Sherlock Holmes' before Doyle thought about him, a mind-dependent intentional Sherlock Holmes was generated by that act. The character was created by the intentional act itself (cf. 1999: 88).

On the present view, it is thanks to Doyle's cognitive faculties and his inscription for the first time of the name 'Sherlock Holmes' (not picking-up or relying on any antecedently use of the name) that Sherlock Holmes is created. The fictional character Sherlock Holmes is created and thereby named altogether: Doyle's first thought about Sherlock Holmes, together with the corresponding linguistic object, the sentence token in which the name 'Sherlock Holmes' appears for the first time, is what brings the character into existence and names it at the same time. Let me briefly point out here that in most fictions authors do not utter 'there is a fictional character named 'NN'' as part of the fiction, given that authors' creative acts are not part of the fiction itself, and also because a fictional character is usually depicted in its home fictions as being something other than a fictional character (e.g., a human being).[48] In the next section, I present in more detail my own view about the linguistic aspect involved in the act of creation of a fictional character. In section 4, I shall address the cognitive aspect of the authorial creative activity, focusing on the issue of how and when an author comes to have singular thoughts about a specific fictional character.

[48] Sainsbury points out that with perfectly referential uses of names there are also associated tacit acts of naming; most nicknames, for instance, are introduced in such a way. Sainsbury writes: 'inadvertent baptism is common, for example with nicknames: a parent calls a spindly child a beanpole, using the word as a common noun and with no intention to originate a practice, but it sticks as a nickname and for years is used as a proper name of the child' (2005:11).

3.1.2 THE NAME-USING PRACTICE FOR ‘SHERLOCK HOLMES’

Consider the following piece of fictionalizing discourse, from Franz Kafka’s well known literary work *Metamorphosis*:

> As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect. He was lying on his hard, as it were armor-plated, back and when he lifted his head a little he could see his dome-like brown belly divided into stiff arched segments on top of which the bed quilt could hardly keep in position and was about to slide off completely. His numerous legs, which were pitifully thin compared to the rest of his bulk, waved helplessly before his eyes.

When Kafka wrote the sentences in the quoted passage, he brought the fictional character (and not, of course, a gigantic insect) named ‘Gregor Samsa’ into existence. Along the lines, with the first inscription of ‘Sherlock Holmes’ in the first novel of the series, *A Study in Scarlet*, Doyle created the fictional character Sherlock Holmes. Doyle almost always presented the *Sherlock Holmes* stories as a form of autobiographic reminiscences reported via Dr. Watson, thus giving them a tone of reality: by pretending to be Dr. Watson and to recount the events in first person, with the first use of ‘Sherlock Holmes’ Doyle establishes a *semantic assumption within fiction*: there is a unique individual (a man) that the (type) fictional name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ rigidly refers to in the text, and such an individual satisfies (among others) the predicate ‘is a detective’. In uttering the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’, Doyle is exploiting its semantic features: in ordinary discourse names rigidly refer and are used to express propositions – therefore names have a similar role on fiction. Let me stress here that this is not to say, in any way, that the author is merely pretending to use the name. Even if I agree that fictionalizing discourse is a matter of pretence, it does not follow from this that fictional names are non-referring names: by inscribing for the first time the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’, Doyle is genuinely *using* the name and all the same pretending that the name

works as an ordinary name of a concrete individual (or, at least this is the pretence of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories).

I claim that it is the establishment of the fictional semantic assumption associated with 'Sherlock Holmes' within storytelling – namely that it rigidly refers to a concrete individual, presumably baptized 'Sherlock Holmes' by his parents – that brings the *name-using practice* of 'Sherlock Holmes' into existence. This name-using practice is historically individuated in Doyle's storytelling activity: a different author's activity involving the name 'Sherlock Holmes' would be involving a different name (type); unless, of course, the explicit intention of the author is to write about the already existing fictional character Sherlock Holmes created by Doyle, as, for example, might happen in a parody.

Let me clarify at this stage that, according to the present view, the name-using practice for a fictional name gets established even if, supposedly, the work of fiction in which the name originally appears as the name of a given fictional character never gets published. Let us suppose that Doyle, before starting to pen down the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, wrote a short fictional story about a fictional character named 'Mr. Clumsy', which in the story is described as a clumsy and obtuse detective that never solves any crimes. The story never gets published, as Doyle decides in second thought that a series of stories about a smart detective could sell far more copies, and perhaps make him famous. Nonetheless, 'Mr. Clumsy' comes to refer to the fictional character Mr. Clumsy, and a name-using practice for the name is established – only, it is not publicly established, as the story never gets published. By contrast, given that the *Sherlock Holmes* stories did get published, 'Sherlock Holmes' is given a *publicly* established use, in the real world linguistic community and through Doyle's literary activities, as the name of the fictional character Sherlock Holmes (*A Study in Scarlet,* in which Sherlock Holmes is originally introduced, was first published in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* of 1887).

One may object at this stage that if an author's intentions in using a fictional name are confused – for example between pretending to refer (to a person, for example) and intending to refer to a particular fictional character – then the reference of the name is also indeterminate; and that the indeterminacy of an author's intention about the

reference of a fictional name may be also transferred to the reference of the name on a speaker's use in the same name-using practice. This seems to be, for example, David Braun's view (2005: 611). Even if I agree with Braun that most of the times ordinary speakers have inconsistent and thus unreliable views on the semantics of fictional names and sentences in which they occur, I reject the view according to which an author's (perhaps indeterminate) intentions on using a given fictional name determine the reference of the name. In this dissertation, a fictional name is a name introduced as the name of a fictional character, and *all uses* of a given fictional name refer to a particular fictional character. True, an author usually pretends that her uses of a fictional name in fictionalizing discourse refer to concrete rather than abstract entities; nevertheless, I wish to argue that when an author introduces and uses a fictional name in storytelling she is typically intending to refer to a fictional character; in other words, the author typically has a fictional character *in mind*. This holds, I believe, even if the author that originally introduces the name is not clear about the metaphysical status of the putative referent of the name – namely, an author does not need to explicitly know that the fictional character she is writing about is in fact an abstract entity.

Literary practices related to fiction do not only concern authorial activity, but also the activities of those who appreciate and evaluate works of fiction, i.e. readers and critics. A reader or critic of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories participates in the name-using practice for 'Sherlock Holmes' established by Doyle if she intends to accept the use of 'Sherlock Holmes' as originally initiated by the author: the name 'Sherlock Holmes' used by readers and critics refers to the fictional character Sherlock Holmes because it is not an *ad hoc* use; rather it is a use connected to Doyle's previous use(s) of 'Sherlock Holmes'. In other words, in using the name 'Sherlock Holmes', readers and critics refer to the fictional character Doyle was referring to when he wrote the *Sherlock Holmes* stories.[49]

Summing up, Sherlock Holmes is an abstract created artefact, which has a certain kind of causal-historical dependence on the physical world: in 1887, Doyle's authorial activity created it as abstract object. This dependence on Doyle's authorial activity (and the work in which it appears) is what allows Sherlock Holmes *qua* abstract

[49] I mainly rely here on Kripke's view about reference transmission (1982).

artefact to be the referent of the name 'Sherlock Holmes' introduced by Doyle. I have argued that one fact that is crucial in determining the reference of a fictional name is the author's participation in the practice of creation of a fictional character as described above: if the conditions for the creation of a fictional character are satisfied, from then on the name used in the creation rigidly refers to the fictional character – an abstract entity, on the present view.

One may object at this stage that if 'Sherlock Holmes' is used by Doyle during the practice of creation of the fictional character, in this very first use the name must fail to refer, for it is used by Doyle before the alleged referent of the name has come into existence. But, from what we already saw, it should be clear that the response to this objection is that a fictional character exists from the moment when the author first introduces a name for it in the relevant work of fiction, and that the name refers to the fictional character even upon the first use by the author. As soon as Doyle inscribes for the first time the name 'Sherlock Holmes', the corresponding fictional character, Sherlock Holmes, is at that very same time an entity already and uniquely identifiable by a particular relation to the author. For example, when Doyle inscribes for the first time the name 'Sherlock Holmes' in *A Study in Scarlet*, the character Sherlock Holmes is already identifiable by the relation of *being named 'Sherlock Holmes'* by Doyle.

4. FICTIONAL NAMES AND SINGULAR THOUGHTS

4.1 SETTING THE SCENE

The semantic thesis I defend in this chapter is that there is no ambiguity in the reference of a fictional name. A given fictional name has the same reference in all the different kinds of discourse where it might appear: fictionalizing discourse, internal discourse, critical discourse or non-existence discourse. In particular, regarding fictionalizing discourse, there is no non-referring use of 'Sherlock Holmes' – the name refers to the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes. On the other hand, if fictional names are directly referential expressions in all their occurrences, as much as non-fictional proper names,

can fictional names also sustain singular thoughts? My answer is positive. The aim of this section is to apply ideas from Jeshion's theory of singular thought to account for the intuitions of singularity we have when using fictional names. Let me briefly summarize here the main tenets of Jeshion's view, to which I will appeal to in order to provide a cognitive account of fictional names.

As addressed in section 2, traditional views on singular thought explain the singularity of a thought in terms of features of its content: a thought is singular if the object of thought is a constituent of the thought's propositional content. Jeshion's cognitive approach, by contrast, explains the singularity of thought in terms of features of the thought itself: a thought is singular if it has a specific cognitive function, namely that of thinking about an individual (or object) through a mental file. Mental files are cognitive mechanisms that allow us to think about specific individuals that we may or may not have directly perceived. Mental files' function is not only to store information, but also to organize our goal-directed thinking – our plans and projects. A mental file is typically labeled with a mental name, which serves as a representation of the individual the file is about: we think about the individual that the file is about by thinking with the mental name, and we use the mental name as our mode of accessing the mental file contents.

The linguistic correspondents of mental names are *proper names*, which play a key role as a mechanism for the generation of singular thoughts. First of all, proper names extend the range of our singular thinking to individuals that are beyond our perceptual grasp: through the use of proper names in language we are able to think singular thoughts that would otherwise be unavailable to us because we lack direct perceptual acquaintance with the object of thought (for instance, with the current use of the name 'Aristotle' we are able to think singular thoughts about the no longer existent Aristotle). In the second place, they dominate our singular thinking about individuals that matter: we usually give proper names to significant individuals. In the third place, proper names can serve as vehicles for the transfer of singular thought: the tokening of a mental name is the very essence of a singular thought, and since the tokening of a mental name is expressed by the use of the corresponding linguistic name in language (e.g. in conversation), this can in turn prompt the initiation of a singular thought in another cognitive agent.

4.2 SINGULAR THOUGHTS ABOUT SHERLOCK HOLMES

According to the picture I've sketched so far, when Doyle gets about to write *A Study in Scarlet*, with the intention to write a story about the fictional character Sherlock Holmes, he has *singular thoughts* about Sherlock Holmes: Doyle's cognitive system creates a singular thought about Sherlock Holmes by means of the introduction of the mental name 'Sherlock Holmes_m', and of the corresponding mental file. In order to express this singular thought in language, Doyle inscribes for the first time the name 'Sherlock Holmes', with the intention to introduce the name as a *fictional* name – namely the name is 'made-up' by the author for the purpose of being the name of a given fictional character, and the author does not intend to use the name to pick out any pre-existing concrete individual. The singular thought is the original content of Doyle's creative act about Sherlock Holmes. Let me clarify here that Doyle's mental file about Sherlock Holmes is not the constituent of the singular thought about Sherlock Holmes, but it is rather the *way* in which the information about Sherlock Holmes is stored and organized. The content of the mental file about Sherlock Holmes is the object of Doyle's manipulations during storytelling: as the story develops, the information stored in the mental file is updated and modified. By saying that the information associated to 'Sherlock Holmes' in the file may change within storytelling, I do not mean to say that the semantic content of 'Sherlock Holmes' changes throughout the layout of the story: what changes is the information associated to the name which, as previously said, is not part of the semantic content of 'Sherlock Holmes'.

Let me address here an objection one may raise about what I have said so far. If a theory of singular thought takes on board the mark of cognitive *significance*, it must allow for mental files to be created even for named fictional characters that play a minor role, which are introduced in storytelling at a certain point. As we saw in Section 2.2, according to Jeshion's theory of singular thought, one necessary condition for a subject S to have a mental file of an individual I is that I be significant for S. But clearly, not all fictional characters in a given fiction seem to be significant for the author, even if repeated reference is made to them. Moreover, a fictional character may be introduced and named in a fictional story and be never mentioned again later on; for example, it

may be a minor fictional character, one that plays no relevant role in the unraveling of the story. My reply to this objection is that a work of fiction is, in the first place, significant for its author – therefore all characters that are created together with the fictional work, and that depend on it, are. Given that the plan of creating the *Sherlock Holmes* stories is relevant for Doyle's cognitive system, all 'in construction' mental files that play a role in crafting the fictional work will be mental files that are significant for Doyle, including mental files about main fictional characters as much as mental files about minor ones.[50]

In the view I defend in this dissertation, fictional proper names – as much as ordinary non-fictional proper names – play two crucial roles, one semantic and the other cognitive: on the one hand, they provide some particular individual as their semantic contribution to the meaning of the sentences in which they appear; on the other hand, they are triggers of significance for our cognitive minds. By means of the use of the name 'Sherlock Holmes' the *significance* condition is *transmitted* from Doyle to readers and critics of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories: in reading or hearing the name 'Sherlock Homes', readers and critics will come to have singular thoughts about Sherlock Holmes, which will inherit their referent from Doyle's utterances of 'Sherlock Holmes', and hence from Doyle's singular thoughts about Sherlock Holmes. Readers and critics may, in turn, use the name 'Sherlock Holmes' to express singular thoughts involving their mental files which, in turn, can prompt the formation of new mental files in those towards whom their use of sentences containing the name 'Sherlock Holmes' are directed, and that competently participate in the practice of using the name. Upon hearing the physical token of the name 'Sherlock Holmes', the hearer will infer that the speaker is thinking via a singular, non-descriptive mode of presentation, and that the speaker wants her to think about the object in the same way. This is due both to linguistic and cognitive features of names.

Summing up, if a cognitive agent intends to use the name 'Sherlock Holmes' in the same way as Doyle does – that is, she is conforming to the name-using practice of

[50] According to Jeshion's Cognitivism, mental files, in addition to storing and organizing information about the object they are purportedly about, have the function to organize our goal-directed thinking about particular plans and projects, and so are initiated for objects under construction, however abstract they may be (cf. Jeshion 2014).

'Sherlock Holmes' as initiated by Doyle and does not intend to introduce a new use of the name (as, for example, the name of her dog) – then she invokes the use on which 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to the fictional character Sherlock Holmes, and her cognitive system creates a mental file about Sherlock Holmes. Two speakers count has having singular thoughts about Sherlock Holmes if their thoughts are thought via mental files (whose content is suitably, although necessarily, derived by the information associated to the name 'Sherlock Holmes' in the relevant work of fiction) and their origin is ultimately traceable to the content of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories written by Doyle.

5. FICTIONAL DISCOURSE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As we saw, fictional discourse is the object of much debate because there seems to be some inconsistencies in the ways in which people think and talk about fiction and its characters. For instance, we sometimes want to say that Sherlock Holmes doesn't exist, and all the same, in other contexts, that there are fictional characters, and that some of them, like Sherlock Holmes, have become very famous. The challenge of handling fictional discourse is that of finding a way to treat the conflicting intuitions that arise when fictional names are involved.

In order to account for the apparent inconsistencies in ordinary discourse involving fictional names, I distinguish a semantic account of the main types of sentences of fictional discourse, from a cognitive account of the pre-theoretical intuitions of their truth or falsity. To be a possible user of a name one must have a mental file associated to the name – this, I maintain, applies in the case of non-fictional names as much as in the case of fictional names. Every time we think and talk of a fictional character, i.e. an abstract artefact, we need to access a mental file of that character, labeled by the character's name, as much as every time we think or talk of a concrete individual we need to access a mental file of that individual. The mental file

that corresponds to a fictional name is what helps us collect, store and cognitively trace back the information that we take to be about the referent of the name.

5.2 FICTIONALIZING DISCOURSE

A central way in which we gain information about objects or individuals is by hearing and/or *reading* things about them. In this section, I am interested on how information about certain individuals, i.e., fictional characters, is gained by means of reading about them. In reading a piece of fiction, readers perform cognitive tasks that involve processing the syntax and the semantics of the linguistic expressions that occur in the sentences they read. While reading the story, there is a first 'cognitive grasp' of the names and the sentences in which they occur, in which readers make semantic assumptions about the referents of the names involved. When the first token of 'Sherlock Holmes' is processed by a reader's cognitive system, significance is triggered and a mental file associated to the name is thereby initiated. The reader then comes to store certain information or descriptive content in the mental file, which comes from what is written about the putative referent of 'Sherlock Holmes' in the text. For every reference that is made in the text to 'Sherlock Holmes', the reader needs to access the corresponding mental file, where she stores the information that is progressively gathered from the text. The mental file about Sherlock Holmes is what allows a reader to recover information associated to the name 'Sherlock Holmes' previously mentioned in the text, and it explains how information that it is being provided at an earlier point can be recovered and thus supplement the literary content.[51]

The descriptive content provided by the text is not the only kind of information that a reader is likely to store in the mental file about 'Sherlock Holmes': unless the reader is not aware that the text she is reading is a work of fiction, she will also know that, for example, 'Sherlock Holmes' is the name of the main character of the *Sherlock*

[51] I do not really want to enter here on a discussion of how the explicit content of a given fiction generates what the readers take as its full content; what matters to me for present purposes is that readers can infer different information from the explicit content of a given fiction, depending on their background knowledge.

Holmes stories. Let me briefly remark here that the descriptive content associated to fictional names in a story is what allows to empathize with the characters; moreover, is what also gives us a sense of semblance with reality – that is, if the descriptions are based on 'real life' properties, like it happens in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. Let us see in the sections to follow what happens when fictional discourse is intuitively judged for its truth (or falsity). In section 5.3 I shall focus on internal and critical discourse, while in section 5.4 I will address the case of negative existentials.

5.3 INTERNAL *VS.* CRITICAL DISCOURSE

5.3.1 TRUTH-CONDITIONS

The ways in which we think and speak of fictional characters reflect that the apparatus of predication or ascription of properties to fictional characters is ambiguous. In Chapter 1, I have distinguished between 'intra-fictional' and 'extra-fictional' ascriptions of properties to fictional characters. Examples of intra-fictional property ascriptions are given by sentences of internal discourse, while examples of extra-fictional property ascriptions are given by sentences of critical discourse. Consider the following piece of critical discourse:

(6) Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character

Taken at face value, (6) expresses a true singular proposition about Sherlock Holmes, and so seems to commit us to the existence of Sherlock Holmes. Creationists agree that extra-fictional ascriptions can typically be taken literally: it is literally true, for instance, that Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character created by Doyle and introduced for the first time in *A Study in Scarlet*. Now consider the following piece of internal discourse:

(11) Sherlock Holmes is a detective

Again, taken at face value, this expresses a singular proposition about Sherlock Holmes, and so seems to commit us to there being such a thing as Sherlock Holmes. But there is

an important difference between (6) and (11). (6) tells us something about what Sherlock Holmes is really like, outside the pretence of storytelling, while (11) tells us something about what Sherlock Holmes is like according to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. Intra-fictional property ascriptions cannot be taken literally by creationists: if it is literally true that Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character (that is, an abstract entity) it cannot be literally true that he is a detective. But then how can we possibly account for the intuitive truth of many claims of internal discourse, in which we seem to ascribe intra-fictional properties to fictional characters?

As we saw, a popular strategy to account for claims of internal discourse is to distinguish two kinds of ascription or predication. The idea is to draw a distinction between having a property and being ascribed a property: Sherlock Holmes has but is not ascribed the property of being a fictional character; he is ascribed but does not have the property of being a detective (Chapter 5, Section 4.2.2). A different, though related, strategy is that of taking intra-fictional property ascriptions like (11) as having parts that remain unspoken in ordinary communication. The strategy appeals to a prefix along the lines of 'according to the story': when we say that Sherlock Holmes is a detective, in reporting the content of the Sherlock Holmes stories, we usually omit that *only according to the story* Sherlock Holmes has that property (Chapter 5, Section 4.2.3). Both strategies can account for the intuitive truth of claims of internal discourse like (11), which accurately report the content of a given work of fiction.

I wish to endorse the second strategy, according to which what is literally true of the fictional character Sherlock Holmes is that, according to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, it is ascribed the property of being a detective living at 221B Baker Street. On this view, the name 'Sherlock Holmes' is originally introduced by Doyle as the name of the fictional character Sherlock Holmes. That fictional character – an abstract created artefact – is, according to the fiction, a human being who happens to be a brilliant detective. A claim of internal discourse like (11*) is true if the sentence prefixed by the 'according to the story' locution occurs is the relevant fiction – that is, if (11) syntactically occurs in the fiction.

Let us now turn to the intuitive truth of claims of internal discourse that do not explicitly occur in a given fiction, like for example

(39) During his career, Sherlock Holmes works for the most powerful monarchs and governments of Europe

Recall that, according to the view that I defend sentences of fictionalizing discourse express propositions about the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes. This allows us to make the following proposal: a sentence of internal discourse like (39) is true according to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories if and only if the proposition it expresses follows from the conjunction of the propositions expressed by all the sentences that syntactically occur in the Sherlock Holmes stories. Never mind that Sherlock Holmes, the abstract entity, did not work for any monarch (he could not: he is an abstract entity). It is still true that if all the propositions expressed by the sentences in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories were true, then Sherlock Holmes would have worked for the most powerful monarchs and governments in Europe. And this is what makes (39) true. It think, then, that one advantage of my view (that, recall, provides a uniform treatment of the semantics of proper names in all the different kinds of discourse, and that claims that sentences of fictionalizing discourse express propositions) is that it allows us to offer the simple treatment that I just suggested of 'true according to the fiction F'.

In what follows I complement the semantic analysis of 'Sherlock Holmes', as occurring in internal and critical discourse, with a cognitive one.

5.3.2 THE COGNITIVE CONTRIBUTION OF 'SHERLOCK HOLMES'

Once Doyle has instituted a name-using practice in fictionalizing discourse, readers of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories take the term 'Sherlock Holmes' to be a particular name (type), that very name introduced by Doyle in writing the stories. Other users of the name that have picked up the use of the name 'Sherlock Holmes'

from competent readers of the stories proceed to use the name conforming to the same name-using practice. All these competent users of the name 'Sherlock Holmes' participate in the same name-using practice, and (tacitly) assume the same (fictional) semantic assumption stipulated by Doyle. There is a normative relation between the content of an author's pretence and what a reader is intended to pretend: the author of a work of fiction determines the content of the pretence, while the reader aims to be faithful to it. An author's pretence usually involves pretending that fictional names refer to concrete individuals, and that the individuals have many properties they don't actually have. Lets' call it *constitutive pretence*: it is a pretence to the effect that an individual is constituted a certain way that may differ from the way that individual is (thought to be) actually constituted. And it is this constitutive pretence that readers engage into when reporting the content of a given fiction. When describing fictional characters in internal contexts, readers follow the author's pretence, and talk about the fictional characters as they are described by the relevant works of fiction.

Let us suppose that I am a reader of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, and a competent user of the name 'Sherlock Holmes'. When I utter a token of (11) in faithfully reporting the content of the novels, in uttering 'Sherlock Holmes' I'm participating in the naming practice supporting the name that originated in Doyle's work. I also continue the author's pretence associating Sherlock Holmes with the properties it is ascribed in the relevant fictional work. The mental file associated to the name 'Sherlock Holmes' contains the properties it is ascribed in the fiction: 'Sherlock Holmes is ascribed property P *according to the fiction F*': what is stored in the mental file associated to 'Sherlock Holmes' is not the properties ascribed in fictionalizing discourse, but it's rather the properties that are ascribed to the mental file's referent *according to the relevant fiction.* In other words, there is only one type of property that is stored in the mental files associated to fictional names: the properties the characters genuinely posses according to their status as fictional characters. Let us call this type of properties 'character-properties'. For example, the character-properties stored in a typical reader's mental file about Sherlock Holmes are of the sort: 'being a fictional character created by Doyle', 'being a literary icon'

and 'being a private detective according to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories'. Thus, the uniformity of the file system is preserved.

Let me remark that we should not take the information stored in the mental file as the semantic content of 'Sherlock Holmes'. The semantic content is given by the semantic analysis: on the present account, the semantic content of 'Sherlock Holmes' is an abstract artefact. But the semantic content of 'Sherlock Holmes' is something that may go beyond any information that the reader may have about the referent of the name. The reader might not focus on the essential, basic properties of the referent of 'Sherlock Holmes' (e.g. 'being abstract', 'being a fictional character') and she might focus instead on those characteristics that she has stored in the mental file that she associates with 'Sherlock Holmes' (e.g. 'being ascribed smoking the pipe according to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories').

I think that the account I am sketching also holds for fictional works that feature fictional characters *as such* in their plots. An example often mentioned in the literature on fiction is the fictional character Gonzago in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In *Hamlet*, the fictional character Hamlet is represented as a man that really exists, but Gonzago is represented as a purely fictional character. For 'Gonzago' we also have the exploitation of the fictional semantic convention, namely that there is an individual – a purely fictional character – that the name rigidly designates, with the introduction of the corresponding name-using practice for which 'Gonzago' refers to an abstract entity. Only, the fictional character is described in *Hamlet* as a purely fictional character. Even in this example there is a distinction between intra-fictional and extra-fictional ascriptions of properties. The name 'Gonzago', under the fictional semantic assumption established by Doyle, designates an individual that is a purely fictional character. Intra-fictional property ascriptions stored in the mental file labeled by the name 'Gonzago' would be of the sort 'Gonzago is a purely fictional character, according to *Hamlet*'. In reality, the name 'Gonzago' rigidly refers to the fictional character (an abstract entity) Gonzago, created by Shakespeare, which has character-properties like 'being created by Shakespeare in *Hamlet*' and 'being a purely fictional character *according to Hamlet*'.

5.4 NON-EXISTENCE DISCOURSE

If fictional characters exist, how can realists account for the truth of singular negative existentials involving fictional names? A response available to the creationist is to say that on the true reading of

(10) Sherlock Holmes does not exist

'Sherlock Holmes' does not refer to a fictional character, but it is rather empty (and to couple this with a semantics for 'exists' that yields the value 'True' when this predicate is combined with an empty name). This allows maintaining a uniform account of singular negative existentials, and one that respects the intuition that non-existence goes hand-in-hand with reference failure. But such a realist response posits an ambiguity in fictional names that I think is undesirable, and which I think we should reject. I think we can contend that 'Sherlock Holmes' uniformly refers to Sherlock Holmes in all its occurrences, even in non-existence claims. On the present view, an utterance of a sentence like (10) is, strictly speaking, *false,* given that Sherlock Holmes exists as fictional character (i.e. as abstract entity). One may object to this by saying that (10) is rather true, given that it is precisely because Sherlock Holmes is a purely fictional character that its existence is truthfully denied. However, I believe that this account of the truth-conditions of (10) does not really capture ordinary speakers' intuitions about the truth-values of negative existentials. It is undeniable that ordinary speakers' uses of the name 'Sherlock Holmes' are often mixed or inconsistent: for example, a speaker may use the name as if it fails to refer, but at the same time, have in mind the fictional character Sherlock Holmes. To show that ordinary speaker's intuitions about the truth-values of sentences in which fictional names appear are sometimes inconsistent, consider the following. We usually tend to accept the negative existential claim (10). But if Sherlock Holmes doesn't exist, then he cannot be a detective, since the property of 'being a detective' entails being a concrete existing individual. Thus, if we accept that Sherlock Holmes

doesn't exist, we seem to have to accept that an utterance of (11) is false, or possibly neither true nor false, which goes against our pre-theoretical intuitions.

Why then we seem to have strong intuitions of truth-fullness with respect to negative existentials like (10)? In this section I take up and, I believe, improve, Thomasson's 'restricted quantification analysis' of negative existentials, which relies on the idea that fictional characters are usually described in the fictions in which they appear as belonging to some kind *K* (see Chapter 5, section 4.3.3). I suggest that a speaker who utters a negative existential like 'a does not exist', with a fictional name in subject position denoting a fictional character, should be regarded as conveying the claim that 'a does not exist as *an entity of type K*', where: (i) *K* is a conversationally salient kind, (ii) a is fictionally characterized as being a *K* in a conversationally salient fiction and (iii) the conversational relevant kind *K* when uttering a negative existential with a subject denoting a fictional character is by default *'non-fictional entity'*. This analysis of negative existentials overcomes, I believe, the difficulties with Thomasson's own analysis, which were pointed out by Everett. In the first place, it can account for negative existentials involving fictional names of fictional characters whose kind *K* is never made explicit in the relevant fictions (like in the 'Yugo' example – see Section 4.3.4, pag. 113); in the second place, it allows a speaker to convey that in some contexts an utterance of a negative existential with a fictional name in subject position is false – those contexts in which the object denoted by the fictional name is characterized as belonging to kind *K* '*fictional entity*' (like in the 'Mr. X' example – Section 4.3.4, pag. 113).

6. SINGULAR THOUGHTS AND ABSTRACT ARTEFACTS

6.1 AN ABSTRACT ARTEFACT SMOKING THE PIPE?

In this section I address one of the main arguments against creationism about fictional characters, which is of cognitive nature. Roughly, the argument goes as follows: if we assume creationism, works of fiction like the *Sherlock Holmes* stories should invoke the

(quite absurd) pretence that the abstract created artefact Sherlock Holmes is, for instance, a living, breathing detective smoking the pipe. Readers' response to a work of fiction is typically a response to what is being presented or described in the text. Usually, even when readers know that a text is a text of fiction, they cannot help but respond, *unreflectively*, as though what they are reading is actual – or, at least, this is what happens in response to most works of fiction, which pretend to be a report of real (past or present) facts about concrete individuals. For example, readers of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories typically have certain basic responses to the stories: they admire Sherlock Holmes's cleverness, they hope that he can solve more crimes etc. But according to a creationist view, as seen, Sherlock Holmes is an abstract entity created by the literary practices of Doyle and, as such, cannot really be clever and solve crimes. If fictional names refer to abstract entities, how can we explain speakers' uses of these names to ascribe properties to fictional characters which they normally would predicate of real people?

In response to this argument, Salmon (1998) argues that, while engaging with the content of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, authors and readers do not pretend that Sherlock Holmes is both abstract and human, but rather *of* the abstract object Sherlock Holmes they pretend that it has properties predicated of flesh-and-blood individuals, such as being a detective, smoking the pipe etc., which is exactly what it means to pretend *de re*:

> In reading a piece of fiction, do we pretend that an abstract entity is a prince of Denmark (or brilliant detective, etc.)?...Taken *de dicto* of course not; taken *de re*, exactly. That abstract entities are human beings is not something we pretend, but there are abstract entities that we pretend are human beings. (1998: 316, footnote 45)

According to Salmon there is nothing special about a *de re* form of pretence, given it is not so strange to pretend of something that it is something else, even when such a pretence involves properties incompatible with a certain kind of thing as when, for example, in a theatrical performance we pretend, of an actor, that she is a swan or The

Number Three. These intuitions are supported also by Thomasson (2003a). Although ultimately defending a *de dicto* view of fictionalizing discourse, she recognizes that:

> (…) cross-category ascriptions are made all the time about real people in discussions of theatrical performances, where we may say *de re,* of an actor, that we are to pretend that he is a cat, or an angel or even (in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*) a fictional character, (in amorality play' (the property) of Charity, or (in a children's play about mathematics) the number three. (2003a: 212)

The idea is that when we read about Sherlock Holmes we do not imagine the abstract entity Holmes in a hat or smoking a pipe – this indeed seems quite absurd. What we rather seem to imagine is, firstly, that there is a fictional character; secondly, *of* this fictional character we imagine that it is something else, namely a real person smoking a pipe, wearing a hat and so on. This two-step pretending is at the basis of children's games: children imagine that tree stumps are frightening bears, and so, for fear of being attacked, run away from them and. In so doing, they do not imagine that the stumps will attack them; they imagine, firstly, that the stumps are bears, and, secondly, that the bears are going to attack them.

The appeal to a *de re* form of pretence does not seem to convince Sainsbury: he points out that creationism cannot explain the *singularity* of imaginings required by fiction, given that the nature of the objects that are the targets of the fictional imaginings are *resistant* to the possession of the properties fictions invite us to imagine. If in relation to fictional works we pretend about any objects, the objects need to be ones that undeceived writers and readers can use as targets for their imaginations. That means that the nature of the objects should not be resistant to the possession of the properties imagination ascribes to them (cf. 2009: 113).

To see the complication I want to address here let us consider what a reader does in reading a novel. In reading the first of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories, *A Study in Scarlet*, one of the first things a reader gets to know about the character Sherlock Holmes is that he is a pipe-smoker; in order to do so, the reader must entertain the thought that Sherlock Holmes smokes the pipe. But what kind of entity is involved in

this thought? According to creationism, in imagining that Sherlock Holmes smokes the pipe the reader should imagine *of* Holmes, the abstract entity, that he smokes the pipe. However, though it is quite clear what it means to imagine an individual (or an object) to be different than she is, it is far more difficult to grasp what it means to imagine that an *abstract* entity has the kind of properties that can only belong to a *concrete* entity. In Friend's words, this sounds rather like asking us to imagine, of the number Three, that it visits Lisbon; or that the Constitution is stubborn (cf. 2007: 16). Everett makes a similar point in arguing that, although we loosely speak of authors as imagining fictional characters, as creating the characters they imagine, we cannot take author's initial imaginings to be about the sort of fictional objects postulated by creationists (cf. 2010:180). This criticism undermines one of the main advantage of creationism, i.e., that of accounting for the singularity, or aboutness, of thoughts about fictional characters. In the following section I present a line of defence in favour of creationism, deploying the account of singular thought sketched in the previous sections.

6.2 *DE RE* PRETENDINGS ABOUT ABSTRACT ARTEFACTS

As we saw, according to Jeshion's Cognitivism the singularity of thought is explained by the cognitive role the thought plays in the agent's internal mental organization – this makes it a cognitive theory. As seen, an agent's cognitive system creates a singular thought about an individual by creating a mental file, in which information that is intended to be about the individual – although it may turn out to be about various individuals or about none – is stored. I have argued that when Doyle introduces for the first time in a work of fiction the name 'Sherlock Holmes', he establishes a use of the name on which it refers to the fictional character (an abstract entity) Sherlock Holmes. Suppose that (11) is the first sentence in which Doyle ever uses the name 'Sherlock Holmes', and by which Sherlock Holmes is named and thereby created. In uttering (11), Doyle entertains a singular thought about Sherlock Holmes. Anyone who reads (or hears) 'Sherlock Holmes' as occurring in (11) has singular thoughts about Sherlock Holmes. In (11) the name refers to the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes, according to the

account provided here. However, this does not mean that Doyle or readers in entertaining (11) pretend that the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes is a detective. Let us see how.

Doyle's singular thought in using the name 'Sherlock Holmes' (mentally or linguistically) has the abstract entity as constituent; however, this thought is thought *via* a mental file (attached to the mental name Sherlock Holmes_{m}) that stores information that characterizes the fictional character *under the pretence* licensed by the work of fiction. The same goes on when readers' engagement with fiction is concerned: when readers cognitively grasp or utter claim (11), they *unreflectively* work under the fictional assumption established by Doyle, namely that there is a concrete man to which the name 'Sherlock Holmes' rigidly refers to. Here there is a shift from the real world to the (loosely talking) 'fictional world', or 'world of the story'. The name 'Sherlock Holmes' in (11) refers to the abstract artefact Sherlock Holmes. Nevertheless, I suggest that a piece of theoretical knowledge about the semantic functioning of fictional names (namely that they refer to abstract entities) should not be part of the content of authors' and readers' pretendings. What the exact nature of the object denoted by 'Sherlock Holmes' is might be something that Doyle and his readers not fully aware of. The fact that 'Sherlock Holmes', under the fictional semantic assumption created by Doyle, works as rigidly designating a concrete man, implies that, *unreflectively*, by using the name 'Sherlock Holmes' (mentally or linguistically) Doyle and readers think or pretend in a *de re* way about Sherlock Holmes: of the fictional character Sherlock Holmes, they pretend that it is a man, a brilliant detective etc. This is due to the fact that, as previously seen, Doyle associates the name 'Sherlock Holmes' with a great deal of descriptions that draw from *realistic* properties, namely properties that would typically apply to concrete individuals.

Authors and readers can have *de re* pretendings about a fictional character without having a clear idea of what kinds of properties *being a fictional character* brings with it. Typically, fictional characters are created with the special purpose of being represented as, or playing the role of, *something quite different*. I believe the following passage from Salmon perfectly captures this intuition:

> *It is of the very essence of a fictional character to be depicted in the fiction as the person who takes part in such-and-such events, performs such-and-such actions, and thinks such-and-such thoughts*. Being so depicted is the character's raison d'être. As Clark Gable was born to play Rhett Butler in Margaret Mitchell's Gone with the Wind, that character was born to be the romantic leading man of that fiction. (1998: 302 – italics mine)

My point is that I need not know that Sherlock Holmes is an abstract entity to imagine that it (he) is a detective smoking the pipe. The fictional character Sherlock Holmes as so little baggage of properties (of the type that are given in extra-fictional ascriptions) we know of that it is relatively easy for us to engage in the sort of pretendings triggered by the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. Furthermore, most people (including most authors and readers I would say), pre-theoretically, do not have the concept of 'abstract entity' and they might be thinking of abstract entities without being aware of their metaphysical status. I might for example imagine the abstract entity Sherlock Holmes as a possible individual that has the properties that the abstract entity is represented as having in a given work of fiction. So although it is impossible that Sherlock Holmes be a detective, authors and readers might pretend – *unreflectively* – that he is.

6.3 NON-FICTIONAL NAMES IN FICTIONAL WORKS

I believe that an argument in favor of the idea that fictional names can sustain singular thinking – that is, thinking through mental files – derives from the occurrence of non-fictional proper names in fictional works. I assume that non-fictional names in fictional discourse semantically behave as they do outside it: they designate nothing but their referent. For example, 'London' in the *Sherlock Holmes* stories designates the real city of London: 'London' is intended to pick out an object (a real city) to which the reader might already be acquainted with. Doyle naturally takes advantage of many of the facts he assumes his readers know about the actual London. The competent reader would take the use of the name 'London' by Doyle to denote the actual city: the reader pretends *de re* about the actual city.

If I (as example of a typical reader of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories) know that Doyle's literary work is fiction, I am not, of course, committed to believing that, e.g., a smart detective called 'Sherlock Holmes' lived in it. However, it is undeniable that the set of information I associate to the name 'London', which I store in my mental file about London, does play a role while I imaginatively engage with the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. Consider the following piece of fictionalizing discourse:

(3) Sherlock Holmes lives in London at 221B Baker Street

In the *unreflective* processing of the sentence, while in engaging with the pretence that characterizes the work of fiction, I take the descriptions stored in my mental file about London as characterizing the city of London in the 'fictional world': *of* London I pretend that is the city where the smart detective Sherlock Holmes lives and solves amazing crimes. According to the cognitive framework developed before, in reading the *Sherlock Holmes* stories I entertain a singular thought about London (the actual, concrete city) through the mental file associate to 'London', in which London is ascribed, among others, properties it does not actually have – these are intra-fictional property ascriptions of London, namely properties the city is ascribed only according to the pretence triggered by the fiction. My mental file will also contain extra-fictional property ascriptions of London, like 'London is the capital city of England' (that is, if I recognize Doyle's intention to refer to the real city of London). The point I want to stress here is that when proper names appear in a work of fiction – be they fictional or non-fictional – they automatically trigger singular thoughts, which are thought via mental files.

Having said that, let's consider again the objection that in the case of fictional names the intra-fictional property ascriptions stored in the mental files are *typically incompatible* with the metaphysical nature of fictional characters, as creationism conceives them (the intra-fictional property ascriptions of Sherlock Holmes are incompatible with its status as abstract artefact). I believe that the kind of pretending triggered by a fictional name like 'Sherlock Holmes' does not involve some kind of *distinctive pretending* from the one triggered by a non-fictional name, like 'London' in

the example above. True, ‘London’ is the name of a concrete place, while, on the present view ‘Sherlock Holmes’ is the name of a fictional character, an abstract object. But I don’t think that the distinction between concreteness and abstractness affects our pretendings or imaginings when works of fiction are concerned. As said before, the occurrence of a proper name in a fictional work typically triggers a singular thought, which means that the name is associated (under significance) a mental file where the information one has about the referent of the name is organized and stored. Here I am referring at the stage of engagement with fictional works that is unreflective*:* when the author or reader pretends that an object or entity (whose name appears in the work of fiction) is such and such, she has a certain cognitive relation to the object in question, which is explained here in terms of mental files. This cognitive relation does not need to be interpreted as the cognitive agent’s ability to classify the object – as concrete or abstract for example – according to a certain theoretical point of view.

CONCLUSIONS

In contemporary analytic philosophy, the analysis of fictional names (e.g., 'Sherlock Holmes', 'Anna Karenina', 'Emma Woodhouse' and 'Don Quixote of La Mancha') brings together different domains of research. From a cognitive point of view, the research focuses on how we understand our thought involving fictional names. From a semantic point of view, the research focuses on how we understand our discourse involving fictional names. And from an ontological and metaphysical point of view, the research focuses on what, if anything can be referred to by fictional names. In this dissertation I have provided an account of fictional names that cover the three domains of research. In particular, in chapter 6 I have proposed an original semantic and cognitive analysis of fictional names and fictional discourse, assuming that fictional names refer to fictional characters, understood as created abstract artefacts. Specifically, from a semantic point of view, I have claimed that fictional names make the same semantic contribution on any occasion of use in fictional discourse (i.e., fictionalizing discourse, internal discourse, critical discourse or non-existence discourse): they contribute their bearer, an abstract entity. This makes some difference with respect to those creationist accounts of fictional characters in which authors of fictional works are taken as just merely pretending to refer by originally using a fictional name, for in writing their stories they just produce pseudo-assertions (i.e. pretend assertions). Thus, a clear advantage of my view over other creationist views is that it does not postulate any ambiguity in the reference of a fictional name: a given fictional name has the same reference in all the different kinds of discourse where it occurs. From a cognitive point of view, I have claimed that explaining the truth-conditions of utterances of sentences containing fictional names it is not enough to give a plausible explanation of the relation between thought and language when fiction is involved, for it leaves out the cognitive mechanisms by which we get engaged with fictions and respond to them. I have complemented the semantic analysis with a cognitive analysis of fictional names, and of the mechanisms that undergo our uses of fictional names, based on Robin Jeshion's cognitive theory of singular thought (2002, 2004, 2009, 2010a, 2010b and 2014). In the

view I defend in this dissertation, fictional names – as much as ordinary non-fictional names – play two crucial roles, one semantic and the other cognitive: on the one hand, they provide some particular individual as their semantic contribution to the meaning of the sentences in which they appear; on the other hand, they are triggers of significance for our cognitive minds. Fictional names are rated as directly referring expressions, leading to *de re* or singular thoughts and pretendings about fictional characters. This view on fictional names accounts for the object-directedness of thoughts and discourse about fictional characters.

Summing up, in order to account for the apparent inconsistencies in ordinary discourse involving fictional names I have distinguished a semantic account of the main types of sentences of fictional discourse, from a cognitive account of the pre-theoretical intuitions of their truth or falsity. I have accommodated some ordinary speakers' intuitions about the truth-values of fictional sentences involving fictional names through the cognitive analysis of fictional names. As a result, the semantic and cognitive account of fictional names I have developed in this dissertation provides a consistent account of fictional discourse, assuming the realist view on fictional characters known as *Creationism*.

REFERENCES

Bach, K. 1987: *Thought and Reference*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Braun, D. 2005: ‘Empty names, fictional names, mythical names’. *Noûs* 39: 596-631.

Braun, D. 1993: ‘Empty Names’. *Noûs* 27 (4):449-469.

Brock, S. and Everett, A. 2015: (eds.) *Fictional Objects*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Currie, G. 1990: *The Nature of Fiction*. Cambridge University Press.

Donnellan, K. 1974: Speaking of Nothing, *The Philosophical Review* 83(1): 3-31.

Evans, G. 1982: The Varieties of Reference. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Everett, A, 2013: *The Nonexistent*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Everett, A, 2007: ‘Pretence, Existence, and Fictional Artifacts’. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. LXXIV (I), 56-80.

Frege, G. 1892: Über Sinn und Bedeutung, *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Philosophische Kritik* 100. Reprinted in Frege, *Collected Papers*, McGuinness B. (ed.). Basil Blackwell 1984.

Friend, S. 2011: ‘The Great Beetle Debate: A Study in Imagining with Names’. *Philosophical Studies* 153 (2):183-211.

Friend, S. 2007: ‘Fictional characters’. *Philosophy Compass* 2/2: 141-156.

García-Carpintero, M. 2010: ‘Fictional Singular Imaginings’. Jeshion, R. (ed.), *New Essays on Singular Thought*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 273-299.

Hanley, R. 2004: ‘As Good As It Gets: Lewis on Truth in Fiction’. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* Volume 82, 2004 - Issue 1

Hanley, R. 2003: ‘Much Ado About Nothing’. *Philosophical Studies* 115: 123–147.

Harman, G. 1977: 'How to Use Propositions' *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14:173-776.

Howell, R. 1983: ‘Review of Nonexistent Objects’. *Journal of Philosophy* 80:
163-73.

Howell, R. 1979: ‘Fictional objects: How they are and how they aren't’, *Poetics*
8: 129-177.

Iacona, A. And Voltolini, A. 2002: 'Review of A. Thomasson, Fiction and Metaphysics'. *Dialectica* 56, 284-287.

Ingarden, R. 1973: *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*. Evanston [Ill.] Northwestern University Press.

Jacquette, D. 1996: *Meinongian Logic. The Semantics of Existence and Non-existence*. Berlin-New York: de Gruyter.

Jeshion, R. 2014: 'Two Dogmas of Russellianism', in Manual Garcia-Carpintero and Genoveva Marti (eds.) *Empty Representations: Reference and Non-existence*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Jeshion, R. 2010a: 'Singular Thought: Acquaintance, Semantic Instrumentalism, and Cognitivism'. *New Essays on Singular Thought*, Robin Jeshion (ed.) Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Jeshion, R. 2010b: 'The Significance of Names'. *Mind and Language* 24: 372-405. 21.

Jeshion, R. 2009: 'The Significance of Names'. *Mind and Language* 24 (4): 370-403.

Jeshion, R. 2004: 'Descriptive descriptive names'. M. Reimer and A. Bezuidenhout (eds.) *Descriptions and Beyond*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jeshion, R. 2002: 'Acquaintanceless de re belief', in Campbell, O'Rourke, and Shier (eds.) *Meaning and Truth: Investigations in Philosophical Semantics*.

Kaplan, D. 1989: 'Demonstratives'. In Joseph Almog, John Perry & Howard Wettstein (eds.), *Themes From Kaplan*. Oxford University Press 481-563.

Kripke, S. 1973/: *Reference and Existence: The John Locke Lectures for 1973*. New York: Oxford University Press

Kripke, S. 1980: *Naming and Necessity*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

Kroon, F. 1994: 'Make-Believe and Fictional Reference' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52.2 (Spring): 207-214.

Lamarque, P. & S. H. Olsen 1994: *Truth, Fiction, and Literature: A Philosophical Perspective*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Lewis, D. K. 1983a. Postscripts to 'Truth in Fiction'. *Philosophical Papers* Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 276-80. Australian National University.

Lewis, D.K. 1978: 'Truth in fiction'. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15: 37-46. Reprinted in Lewis (1983).

Mill, J.S. 1843: *System of Logic*. Third ed. London: Parker.

Meinong, Alexius 1904, Über Gegenstandtheorie. In Alexius Meinong (ed.) *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandtheorie und Psychologie*, Leipzig: Barth. Translation by I. Levi, D.B. Terrell, and R.M. Chisholm, in Roderick Chisholm (ed.) *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology*. Glencoe: Free Press, 1960, 76-117.

Parsons, T. 1980: *Nonexistent Objects*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Perry, J. 1980: 'A Problem about Continued Belief'. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 61: 317–22.

Priest, G. 2005: *Towards Non-Being: the Semantics and Metaphysics of Intentionality*. Oxford University Press.

Quine, W. van O. 1948: 'On What There Is', *Review of Metaphysics*: 21-36.

Recanati, F. 2010: 'Singular Thought: In Defense of Acquaintance'. In Robin Jeshion (ed.), *New Essays on Singular Thought*. OUP Oxford 141.

Recanati, F. 1993: *Direct Reference: from Language to Thought*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Routley, R. 1980: *Exploring Meinong's Jungle and Beyond*: Department Monograph 3, Philosophy Department, Canberra.

Russell, B. 1912: *The Problems of Philosophy*. Reprinted New York: Oxford University Press, 1997: 7-26.

Russell, B. 1905: 'On denoting', *Mind* 14: 479-93.

Salmon, N. 1998: 'Non-existence'. *Noûs* 32, 277-319.

Sainsbury, M. 2009: *Fiction and Fictionalism*. Routledge.

Sainsbury, M. 2005: *Reference without Referents*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Sawyer, S. 2002: 'Abstract Artifacts in Pretence'. *Philosophical Papers* 31 (2):183-198.

Schiffer, S. 1996: 'Language-created language-independent entities'. *Philosophical Topics* 24/1: 149-67.

Searle, J. 1975: 'The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse'. *New Literary History* 6: 319–32.

Thomasson, A. L. 1999: *Fiction and Metaphysics.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Thomasson, A. L. 2003a: 'Speaking of fictional characters'. *Dialectica* 57/2: 207-26.

Thomasson, A. L. 2003b: 'Fictional characters and literary practices'. *British Journal of Aesthetics* 43: 138-57.

van Inwagen, P.2003: 'Existence, ontological commitment and fictional entities', M.J. Loux and D.W. Zimmerman(eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 131-57.

van Inwagen, P. 1977: 'Creatures of Fiction'. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14: 299-308.

Voltolini, A.: 2006, *How Ficta Follow Fiction*. Dordrecht, Springer.

Walton, K. L. 2003: Restricted quantification, negative existentials, and fiction. *Dialectica* 57 (2):239–242.

Walton, K. L. 1990: *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Yagisawa, T. 2001: 'Against Creationism in Fiction'. *Philosophical Perspectives* 15, 153-172.

Zalta, E.N. 2003: 'Referring to Fictional Characters'. *Dialectica* 57 (2):243–254.

Zalta, E.N. 1983: *Abstract Objects: An Introduction to Axiomatic Metaphysics.* Dordrecht: D. Reidel.