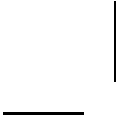PART IV

Fiction

11

Fictional Worlds and Fiction Operators

Mark Sainsbury

The total content of a novel or play is not to be identified with the strict and literal meaning of the words that make it up, i.e. with what I call its 'verbal content'. Sometimes the total content is less, for example when the words belong to dialog, and the speaker is saying something false. Sometimes the total content is more, as when, told that a character moved between non-adjacent places, we properly infer that she went to some places in between. The task of hermeneutics is to extract total content from verbal content, using collateral information of various kinds, for example, relevant features of history and geography and of the assumptions and social customs prevailing at the time the work was written.

It is tempting to think of the challenge in this way: we should specify a relation on verbal content that will transform it to total content. Verbal content is the strict and literal meaning of the sentences that compose the work; total content includes everything that the fiction says is so. The transformation will include subtraction as well as addition, for the reason noted in the previous paragraph.[1] As part of this project, we need a better understanding of the nature of total content. A familiar proposal is that we should identify it with what is true in, or according to, the fiction, and that we should in turn understand this in terms of what obtains in any world which reflects the facts of the story. Adding a little more detail, a suggestion prevalent in the philosophical literature is that we can test for the correctness of a hermeneutic suggestion by appealing to a fiction operator, perhaps 'According to fiction f, s', where 'f' names the work in question; such sentences are true iff the s-position is filled by something that belongs to the total content of the work. Then, the idea is, we can increase our understanding of what it is for a sentence to belong to the total content

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[1] A simple (and inadequate) model might be in terms of two relations. First one applies a filter to verbal content, eliminating material that occurs within explicit or implicit speech or thought, irony, and so on; then one applies a closure relation to this reduced content, adding in the material that in some appropriate sense 'follows'. One will need to filter again, and close again, and so on, until no changes are made.

of a work by regarding the operator as a quantifier over worlds. Putting a well-known version very roughly, and so as to bring out the two-part structure:

A. A sentence s expresses part of the total content of a fiction f iff according to f, s.

B. 'According to f, s' is equivalent to 'In all those possible worlds in which f is told as known fact, s' (Lewis 1978).

Applying the conditions together: faced with a sentence s that's a candidate for specifying part of the total content of a fiction, f, we ask whether, in all possible worlds in which f is told as known fact, s.

Some idea of fictional worlds is fairly intuitive. With no philosophical axe to grind, people will happily speak of the world of *Little Doritt* or of *Othello*, and this chapter offers no objection to such thoughts. By contrast, the worlds-based project characterized in the previous paragraph seems to me confused, and to involve unattainable elements. The aim of this chapter is to disperse the confusion, and liberate the hermeneutic project from a concern with operators interpreted as quantifiers over possible worlds.

The first task is to show that there are many kinds of fiction operator with manifestly distinct semantic contributions, so that no single worlds-based treatment will do for all. Later I'll suggest that no worlds-based treatment will do for any.

11.1 Variety

Let's say that a sentence-forming operator is an expression that takes a sentence to make a sentence, and that a fiction sentence-forming operator (fiction operator, for short) is a sentence operator that refers to a fiction and that forms a true sentence when it embeds a sentence that reveals something appropriate about the fiction's content. By this rather vague standard, it can't be doubted that 'In *War and Peace*' and 'According to *War and Peace*' are fiction operators. Can they be used in determining the total content of *War and Peace*? The envisaged test is that s expresses part of the total content of the novel iff 'In *War and Peace, s*' and 'According to *War and Peace, s*' are true.

It's easy to see that this test fails, since the operators deliver different truth-values for the same embedded sentence. The first of the following is true, and the second false:

(1) In *War and Peace*, there are both fictional and real characters.
(2) According to *War and Peace*, there are both fictional and real characters.

Napoleon is both a real person and also a character in the novel, and Prince Andrei is a character in the novel who is not a real person; so (1) is true. But (2) is false: both Prince Andrei and Napoleon are presented as real, and there is no mention of fiction or fictional characters.

'In' and 'According to' differ fairly systematically, with 'In' permitting a more distanced stance with respect to the fiction. Compare:

(3)   In the play *Othello*, Othello often speaks in magnificent blank verse.
(4)   According to the play *Othello*, Othello often speaks in magnificent blank verse.

Intuitively, (3) is true whereas (4) is false. To verify (3) one has only to look at the text, which indisputably places in the mouth of the Moor blank verse which many critics have found magnificent (possible disagreements of taste are not relevant here). For (4) to be true, the play would have to *tell us* that Othello speaks in verse. For example, Iago might have said something like 'How smoothly the verses flow from my master's silver tongue'. But nothing like this is said; and even if it were, Iago might be a mere flatterer rather than a reliable witness. Verse is put in Othello's mouth without commentary. By some standards, speaking in verse is highly unrealistic, not at all the sort of thing to be expected even from aristocrats, let alone from a rough battle-hardened soldier. The verse plays a role rather like a costume. It's appropriate to dress Othello in general's gear, even wildly anachronistic gear (depending on the overall design of the production), because this tells us something about his occupation and status; it doesn't have to tell us that this was how he was in fact dressed. Likewise, it's appropriate for Othello to speak in magnificent blank verse, as this reveals that he is 'great of heart'; had he been otherwise, the tragedy would simply be a hothead's dismal folly.[2]

This variety of fiction operators, and in particular the inadequacy of 'According to' as a way of specifying total content, shows that stage (A) of the project needs to be reformulated. Perhaps this can be done very easily: replace 'According to *f*' by 'In *f*'. One difficulty is that, although (1) is true, it is intuitively not part of the total content of *War and Peace* that there are both real and fictional characters. This relates to a further difficulty: the analog of (B) seems unpromising, for it's hard to find a good account of 'In *f*' in terms of quantification over worlds. Let's take the notion of 'a *War and Peace* world' for granted: it's a world in which things occur as described in the novel. In *War and Peace* worlds, Prince Andrei is not fictional, so he—along with all the other fictional characters—does not constitute good grounds for the claim that there are fictional characters in *War and Peace* worlds. Given that (1) is true, because there are fictional characters in *War and Peace*, this makes it problematic to analyze 'In *f*' in terms of truth in *f*-worlds.

Likewise it seems to me arguable (the question is more social and cultural than philosophical) that in *Othello* worlds Othello does not speak in blank verse (and does not wear a twentieth-century general's uniform). So, given the truth of (3), there is a

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[2] This attempt at a literary observation must be regarded as merely illustrative, and not taken seriously. One would need to set an appropriate observation within the context of the use of verse in Elizabethan drama in general; to compare the role of verse as used by other characters in the play, including Iago; to compare with Shakespeare's use of verse in other plays; and we would have to explain Othello's own declaration, 'rude am I in my speech', as false modesty or lack of self-knowledge.

tension between the view that 'In *f*' is well adapted to selecting out the total content of a work of fiction, and the view that such an operator can be analyzed in terms of what happens in fictional worlds. When we abandon the conjunction, we abandon the relevant instances of either (A) or (B).

A natural thought is that what the author of a fiction says, in producing the fiction, is a central guide to the content of the fiction. Among other problems, this fails to make room for fictional irony. Jane Austen says, in *Pride and Prejudice*, that it is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. This is certainly part of the verbal content, but not part of the total content: in *Pride and Prejudice* worlds, the more sensible characters like Mr Darcy and Mr Bennett are counterexamples to the universality of the acknowledgement. Perhaps we should readjust our goal: perhaps we should be trying to figure out both the literal and the ironical content of a work. Later, we'll consider an attempt in this direction within a fictional worlds framework.

Some fiction operators place specific requirements on the actual world, and so cannot be treated by quantifications over worlds all of which are non-actual:

(5) It is argued in *Remembrance of Things Past*, but not in *Pride and Prejudice*, that love is an illusion.

(6) Most readers of *Pride and Prejudice* ?nd Elizabeth Bennett charming.

The arguing of (5) is supposed to take place in the actual world, and that is where the readers of (6) are said to be, but the actual world is not a world of either fiction. These operators may score well as content-indicators, but score poorly as quantifiers over worlds of the fiction, which do not contain the arguing mentioned in (5) or the twenty-first-century readers mentioned in (6).[3]

The variety of fiction operators suggests that fictional worlds will not tell us all we would like to know about fiction and the perspectives we can take on it. That's consistent with their telling us something central and important, for example, what truth in fiction is. That view is undermined in the remainder of the chapter.

11.2 Stability

Partial fiction operators (as I shall call them), like 'In book I of *Remembrance* …', are useful in registering fictional content. Typically, we arrive at our total view incrementally, and later content is to be extracted in the light of knowledge of earlier content, as is generally the case in extended discourse, fictional or non-fictional. But some features of the use of such operators cannot be modeled by quantification

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[3] Lewis (1978), citing Kripke, argues that the actual world should be excluded from the domain of quantification, when truth in fiction is being analyzed. This is because if, by some coincidence, and unknown to Conan Doyle, an actual detective resembled Sherlock Holmes in every detail, including having the same-sounding name, it would be wrong to say that Doyle's use of 'Sherlock Holmes' referred to that man. This somewhat controversial claim is taken for granted here.

over worlds. In Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, the narrator is Dr Sheppard, who lives with his sister Caroline.

> The telephone rings.
> I ran downstairs and took up the receiver.
> 'What?' I said. '*What?* Certainly, I'll come at once.'
> I ran upstairs, caught up my bag, and stuffed a few extra dressings into it.
> 'Parker telephoning', I shouted to Caroline, 'from Fernly. They've just found Roger Ackroyd murdered.'

It is tempting to suppose that it is part of the content of this passage that Dr Sheppard's interlocutor on the telephone said that Ackroyd had been murdered. Twenty-two chapters pass before we are disabused of this interpretation. This makes it hard to treat the operator 'In the early chapters of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*' in terms of possible worlds. A fictional world needs to contain material going beyond mere verbal content; that's what justifies our attributing to the total content of a fiction whose verbal content is that she went from A to distant B, that she went to places in between. So a world that reflects the events of the early chapters of *Ackroyd* should be one in which Dr Sheppard was told on the telephone that Ackroyd had been murdered, call this M. Certainly, M is something Christie wished readers to believe. If we go along with this, and also allow that 'According to' operators are to be modeled by quantification over worlds, we have a conflict between the partial operator and the full operator:

(7) According to the early chapters of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, M.
(8) According to *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, not-M.

No doubt there are inconsistent fictions, but *Ackroyd* is not one of them, at least in this respect. So (7) must be withdrawn; hence the application of its partial fiction operator should not be guided by the fact that, in worlds reflecting what is said in the early chapters, M.

For consistent fictions, one would expect the set of fictional worlds that reflect how things are in the story to be related by the following kind of persistence condition:

> if *p* belongs to the worlds of the fiction as determined by an initial segment of the story, then it belongs also to the worlds of the fiction as determined by the total story.

But that's not how interpretation works. Later stages force us to revise interpretations of earlier ones, as made vivid in the case of *Ackroyd*. Perhaps one could engineer a worlds account to do justice to this, but worlds would then be used not as a source of insight but as a device to model features of fiction discovered independently. It would then be an open question whether worlds were of any value in characterizing the hermeneutic project.

11.3 Interpretive Cues from our World

It is well recognized that extending verbal content to total content requires allowing features of the world of the telling of the fiction, i.e. our actual world, to penetrate a world of the fiction, a world in which things occur as the fiction says. Most people are convinced by Lewis's example: Holmes lived nearer to Paddington than to Waterloo. As Lewis stressed, it's not so easy to say which actual features are allowed to penetrate in this way.

   We should distinguish this relation between the actual world and fictional worlds from another constraint on interpreting fiction: interpretation often leans heavily on features of the world of the telling that are emphatically not to penetrate a fiction's world. One of these is genre. In a traditional western movie, it's legitimate to expect the John Wayne character to be quicker on the draw, and the Clint Eastwood character to ride off into the sunset alone; in a Jane Austen novel, it's legitimate to expect an ending graced by at least some form of happiness, conferred as a reward for virtue and good sense. One who thinks, half way through a first reading of *Pride and Prejudice*, that Elizabeth and Darcy will marry has detected something in the text: it's true that they *will* marry (not merely that they do marry, an indisputable judgment on the basis of the entire novel). The world of the fiction conspires to make this unlikely, given their very different social standing and their misunderstandings. Something that helps to make it likely is external to Pemberton Hall and Longbourne, something about the author's sensibility, something that belongs to our world and not to any *Pride and Prejudice* world. We could register the point using a partial fiction operator:

   (9)   It's clear (at least to the discerning reader) by half way through *Pride and Prejudice* that Elizabeth and Darcy will marry.[4]

Even if in every *Pride and Prejudice* world Elizabeth and Darcy marry, that can't be what makes (9) true, for then it would also make true the following manifest falsehood:

   (10)   It's clear (at least to the discerning reader) by the first page of *Pride and Prejudice* that Elizabeth and Darcy will marry.

These kinds of fiction operator are beyond the scope of analysis in terms just of fictional worlds. One would need to turn to more complex operators like 'it's justifiable by page N to believe that, according to the fiction …', and then apply the worlds-based analysis of 'according to the fiction' within the scope of the belief operator. This adds a further complication to the question whether worlds will have any analytic role to play, since even if q constitutes an analysis of p, the claims 'S believes that p' and 'S believes that q' may differ in truth-value.

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4 The operator in (9) does double duty, both reporting a possible reading of a work and also what the work says.

11.4 Circularity

As Lewis says, even if it's not false to hold that truth in fiction is truth at 'exactly the worlds at which the plot of the fiction is enacted', 'there is a threat of circularity': extraction of plot from text is no trivial or automatic task (Lewis 1978: 265). Rather, it's a task that involves figuring out what is true in the stories (the plot)—the very thing Lewis aimed to explain.

There is an epistemic circularity: to find out at which worlds the plot of the fiction is enacted, we need first to find out, on the basis of the text, what the plot is, i.e. what is true in the story.

There may be a metaphysical circularity: the facts about worlds being thus were to make it the case that the facts about the plot are thus. But it's more natural to think that it is the plot facts being thus that make it the case that the worlds facts are thus.

Lewis's response to the threat of circularity shows that he has a more ambitious aim than simply providing a correct equivalence. The right side of the equivalence should illuminate the left. Here I shall not quarrel with the view that there is a correct equivalence,[5] but I shall suggest that it cannot be illuminating.

Lewis aims to avoid this circularity by thinking of the worlds of the fiction as those at which the fiction is told as known fact. According to his first analysis (the difference between this and the second analysis will play no role in the present discussion):

> [setting aside the vacuous case] 'In the fiction f, φ' is true iff some world where f is told as known fact and φ is true differs less from our actual world, on balance, than does any world where f is told as known fact and φ is not true.

Circularity is supposedly avoided, on the grounds that the notion of a fiction being told as known fact does not require a prior extraction of plot from text; in my terminology, it does not require a determination of total content on the basis of verbal content. This is the claim to which I object.

We've already seen that there are uses of 'In the fiction f' for which an analysis of this kind could not work (In *War and Peace*, there are real as well as fictional characters), but let's ignore that (perhaps by pretending the analysandum is 'According to the fiction f', and that this operator works in a less equivocal way than in fact seems to be the case). Lewis's account trades one fiction operator for another. In analyzing 'In fiction f, φ' the account presupposes 'In telling f as known fact, it is told that φ'. But is it justifiable to think that we can apply this operator without first moving from verbal content towards total content? Lewis's original worries about circularity still seem apt. Echoing his original presentation: the determination of what is told, in telling a fiction as known fact, is not a trivial or automatic task. There is a threat of circularity, for perhaps only by interpreting the fiction (figuring out what is true

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[5] There are familiar problems even for the less ambitious claim of correct equivalence. E.g. Proudfoot (2006) shows that it is incorrect for inconsistent fictions, given standard logic. Even for consistent fictions, the equivalence (whether given by analysis 1 or by analysis 2) is threatened by the importation into fictional worlds of widely believed but irrelevant facts from the actual world (e.g. that the Battle of Hastings took place in 1066).

in it) can we determine what would be told in a telling as known fact. I'll show that this suspicion is well founded. The general point is that not every element of verbal content will be told in a telling of the fiction as known fact, and interpretation of the fiction is required in order to determine just what is to be told.

11.5 Sources of Circularity

Many elements of verbal content need to be omitted or finessed in a telling of a fiction as known fact. I have already mentioned irony. *Pride and Prejudice* worlds are not ones in which it is a truth universally acknowledged .... A telling of the novel as known fact should not tell that it is a truth universally acknowledged .... Likewise unannounced but detectable dialogue, internal or external, should not be told as known fact, since the sentence may well state nothing of the kind. To attain something known, additional qualifiers need to be inserted, like 'He thought to himself ...', 'She said aloud: ...'. As we'll see, we won't know whether to insert such an indicator, or which indicator to use, until we have made progress with the task of interpretation. Hence the notion that Lewis takes as primitive, telling as known fact, presupposes what he was trying to explicate, interpretation or truth in fiction.

It's natural to suggest that 'telling as known fact' should be regarded merely as one among several speech-acts to which a Lewis-style account should appeal. Following Hanley (2004: 118) let's revise the beginning part of the first analysis to read:

> A*   what is true in the fiction is what is true in all the worlds in which the teller really does what the actual author merely pretends to do [and ...][6]

For narrative fiction, telling as known fact will typically be appropriate, for this is what many a narrative author mostly pretends to do. But the emendation promises to do justice to some of the issues mentioned in the first paragraph of this section, in particular irony. It's natural to suggest that irony in the fiction should be reflected by irony in the envisaged telling, so we should not count worlds as *Pride and Prejudice* worlds if someone in them tells it as known fact that it is a truth universally acknowledged. Rather, the right worlds are ones in which this is said ironically.

Two issues arise. One is that we may well doubt that Jane Austen merely pretended to be ironic when she produced the sentence we are discussing, so there is room for doubt about the applicability of A*. She is an ironical writer, not merely a writer pretending to be ironical. The best way to deal with this point is to revise A*, so as to deliver the result that authorial irony ensures that the only worlds that enter

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[6] Hanley points to the following footnote in Lewis by way of exegetical justification: 'In these exceptional cases also, the thing to do is to consider those worlds where the act of storytelling really is whatever it purports to be—ravings, reliable translation of a reliable source, or whatever—here at our world' (Lewis 1978, n.7).

into the truth conditions are worlds in which the ironical passages are said ironically. Following this hare would take us too far afield.[7]

More relevant to our present purpose is the second issue: what constraint does an ironical saying that p place on worlds in which it is said? Telling as known fact ensures truth; we need to find an analog for ironical saying. Just as worlds in which it is told as known fact that p are worlds at which p, we need to discern how the content that p shapes the worlds in which it is said ironically that p.

A simple-minded idea is that it can properly be said ironically that p iff not-p. The amended analysis (as I envisage it) would then deliver that the closest *Pride and Prejudice* worlds are ones in which it is not a truth universally acknowledged that ...; and hence that, according to *Pride and Prejudice*, it is not a truth universally acknowledged that .... The reason is that the proper saying of an ironical sentence can occur only in worlds in which the sentence is false.

One might feel somewhat anxious about this upshot, but perhaps that springs more from the simple-minded idea about irony than from the Lewis-style analysis. However that may be, there is a more directly problematic methodological defect: the approach presupposes that we can determine the right speech act on the basis of verbal content alone, but in fact this cannot be done. I proceed to give various examples to substantiate this point. We find a circularity similar to the one that Lewis was trying to avoid: we need to complete some or all of our hermeneutic task before we can tell how to apply a Lewis-style analysis to sentences dominated by fiction operators.

Unless one has been tipped off (for example, by previous contact with Austen), one could be forgiven for not taking the first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* as ironical, before one has read further. The second sentence should sow the seeds of doubt, for it shows that the fixation of the 'truth' is impervious to a natural source of possible contrary evidence;[8] these doubts would be confirmed by the immediately following exchange between Mr Bennett and his lady. It is beyond my power to say anything useful about how the words on the page justify the interpretation of the first sentence as ironical. The detection of irony is a complex social and theory-of-mind interpretive skill, not reducible to any simple formula.[9] The same applies to the entire project of interpreting a novel. That's precisely what creates a problem for Lewis's approach. These cognitive skills have to be engaged before we can settle what would be told as known truth, or more generally what a proper saying of a given sentence

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[7] As the next paragraph suggests, we might look for the appropriate generalization not in terms of pretense but rather in terms of some notion of 'proper saying'. If the speech act is presented in the fiction as assertion, the act in a fictional world is proper iff what is asserted is known; one then works through the other speech acts (ironical assertion, posing a question, and so on).

[8] 'However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.'

[9] 'Understanding irony requires first-order intentionality about the speaker's belief (to avoid interpreting irony as a mistake), as well as second-order intentionality about the speaker's beliefs about the listener's beliefs, to avoid interpreting irony as a lie' (Shamay-Tsoory et al. 2005, 288).

would involve, a saying appropriate to the reality of the world of the fiction. Hence we cannot count on Lewis's analysis to guide us in our exegetical task. We must find out what's true in the fiction, distinguishing the ironical from the non-ironical, before we can apply Lewis's analysis of truth in fiction.

Words that belong to dialog are to be excluded from a telling as known fact, at least without the qualification that they do belong to dialog. If the dialog is explicitly marked as such, this feature can reasonably be assigned to pre-interpretive verbal content. But dialog is not always explicitly marked. Consider this sentence from Cormack McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men*:

> Everyone just walks away.

There are no quotation marks, no 'he said' or other overt indicators that this is dialog: we have to work out that it is a forlorn and entirely unrealistic hope expressed by Carson Wells to the person who is about to kill him. In a telling as known fact, this sentence should not be uttered in the unqualified form in which it occurs on the page. If we are following the story, we know full well that Wells is not going to walk away. The methodological point is that, in determining how to treat the verbal content, in working out what to tell in a telling as known fact, we must already have gone some way to determining total content. Interpretative tasks need to be accomplished before the text can be prepared for telling as known fact.

No Country contains many similar instances. The following passage (p. 115) reveals a more complex example of dialog detection, along with some further similar phenomena.

> Moss realized that he [the man who had come into the room] was not going to open the bathroom door. He was going to turn around. And when he did it would be too late. Too late to make any more mistakes or to do anything at all and that he was going to die. Do it, he said. Just do it.
>
> Dont turn around, he said. You turn around and I'll blow you to hell.

We have to work out that the first 'he said' introduces inner speech (Moss is silent, but is saying 'Do it' to himself as encouragement) and the second is outer speech (he is addressing his visitor). Nothing explicit in the text tells one that this is so: an extraction of the plot is required. In particular we have to appreciate that it would have been absurd to address the visitor with 'Just do it' before issuing the threat, since the visitor could not tell what had to be done.

Moss does not die in this incident. How is this to be reconciled with the words 'he was going to die' (or their occurrence within a factive construction: 'Moss realized')? (Obviously they are to be interpreted non-platitudinously.) They are interior monologue, and not part of the action description. But again this is not manifest in the words on the page. We have to get into the story to see that this is so. In a telling of *No Country* as known fact, the relevant sentence should not be told without qualification.

Tellings of *No Country* as known fact will not include telling that everyone walks away, that Moss uttered 'Do it' out loud, or that Moss realized he was going to die. To figure this out, we need to understand aspects of the total content of the novel that go beyond the verbal content. Hence one cannot without circularity appeal to 'In telling *f* as known fact, it is told that *p*' in an account of total content.

11.6 Reconfiguring the Task

Worlds-based approaches suffer the following deficiencies:

1. Worlds-based approaches do not accommodate the variety of fiction operators.
2. In Lewis's version, the fiction operator 'In, *f*' is analyzed in terms of another fiction operator 'In a telling of *f* as known fact, it is told that'. It's unclear what is to be gained: we still have a fiction operator, as much in need of analysis as the original.
3. Worlds-based approaches are circular: in order to select the right worlds, one needs first to interpret the text.
4. Worlds-based approaches run together general questions about the interpretation of language, whether put to factual or fictional uses, with questions specific to fiction.

Many of the acts of interpretation required by a fiction are the same as those required outside fictional contexts: they involve the same interpretive skills. They are not distinctive of fiction. Here are some kinds of interpretive imperative common to both cases:

1. Distinguish irony from literal assertion.
2. Recall earlier stages in the discourse (e.g. in order to fix anaphoric reference, to make sense of motivation).
3. Make charitable hypotheses about what the speaker is doing at a given stage (e.g. we must distinguish her speaking in her own voice from presenting the words of another).
4. Interpolate. Three examples:
   a. if it is said (in factual or fictional narrative) that someone went from A to distant B, infer that, according to the speaker or author, the person went to places in between
   b. if it is said (in factual or fictional narrative) that someone lives in Baker Street, infer that, according to the speaker or author, the person lives nearer to Paddington than to Waterloo
   c. if it is right to infer that Holmes wears underpants (as Lewis is confident it is[10]), then it is right to infer the same for any male from a similar social stratum who figures in a (non-fictional) history of the nineteenth century.

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[10] However, Queen Victoria's diary mentions that Prince Albert did not always wear anything under his 'elegant white pantaloons'.

5. Don't apply Explosion if you encounter inconsistency (Priest 2005: 125–33): an inconsistent speaker of factual or fictional narrative is not committed to every proposition.

6. Subtract. Examples:
   a. be sensitive to markers of dialog (e.g. the teller of a fictional or non-fictional narrative may put on another's accent to show that the words she is uttering belong not in her mouth, but in that of the person she is mimicking) and subtract the content of the dialog from the content of what the teller has affirmed (there will then be something to add, of course);
   b. be sensitive to retractions; normally, subtract retracted content.

A very large part of the hermeneutic task regarding fictional narration coincides with the task of interpreting factual narration (which explains how accessible fiction is, even to very young children). In this area of overlap, quantification over worlds is no more appropriate to interpreting fiction than to interpreting factual narration. Fiction-specific interpretive strategies come into play only after the main interpretive work has been done. Then the interpreter can properly take notice of such issues as genre, casting, relevant literary conventions, and the author's other works. Many of these considerations will not show up as a matter of 'truth in fiction'. We may properly expect the John Wayne character to be quicker on the draw, but this has no bearing on whether or not, according to the movie, he is. Knowing that the author of a novel is a lapsed Catholic may properly add poignancy to a description of loss of faith, but it has no impact on what is true in the story. Knowledge or speculation about an author's sexual orientation may suggest putative explanations of plot or character, but it is a stretch to imagine a case in which this contributes to figuring out what the story says. The kinds of interpretive activity specific to fiction are not essential to it: readers without the relevant resources can enjoy and appreciate fiction, and can figure out what is going on, by applying the same skills they apply to any other interpretive act. Finding out what the speaker said, on the basis of the words uttered, is much the same task whether the case is one of fact or fiction. It's not that we need a different answer to the question 'What is truth in fiction?' We need different questions, including: what resources should be brought to bear in interpreting narrative (fictional or non-fictional)? What fiction-specific resources (e.g. knowledge of genre, author's intentions, social background in which work was written, and so on) can enhance our appreciation of narrative fiction? To what extent is it legitimate to assume that facts which obtain in our world (e.g. geographical ones) also obtain in the story?[11]

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