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According to the Fiction:
A Metaexpressivist Account

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ABSTRACT. I outline the standard picture of fiction. According to this picture, fiction is centred on making believe some truth-apt content. I take a closer look at everyday usage of the expressions 'according to the fiction' and 'in the fiction' to countervail the streamlining tendencies that come with the standard picture. Having outlined highly variegated use patterns, I argue for a metaexpressivist picture: 'according to the fiction' does not primarily report fictional truth but a complex pattern of reactions the fiction seems intended to elicit. In the corresponding expressivist picture of the act of fiction-making, the latter is not primarily modeled on stating and believing truth but on the variegated pattern of intended reactions.

Since its early days, analytic philosophy has paid much attention to the guidance use of everyday expressions may provide to philosophical inquiry. 'According to the fiction' is one such expression, which has been used to inquire into the philosophy of fiction. In particular, the expression has been used to articulate 'what is fictional' viz. 'fictional truth'. Some philosophers define a corresponding operator on propositions which they paraphrase by 'true according to the fiction' or 'true in the fiction'. The preoccupation with fictional truth without doubt has greatly advanced the philosophical understanding of fiction. And defining a fictional operator has given rise to great hopes for deflationary ways of dealing with ontologically problematic pieces of discourse like morals, modals, abstract objects, accounting for the epistemological significance of thought experiments and so on. Promising as these endeavours are, they come with a certain danger of unduly streamlining the philosophy of fiction. I shall try to outline a picture of what is true according to/in fiction which overcomes some of the undue streamlining tendencies. My method is to take

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a closer look at our use of expressions like 'according to the fiction' or 'in the fiction'. Use of these expressions will turn out to be rather variegated. I shall take it as a starting point for roughly outlining a more comprehensive picture of fiction into which the current focus on fictional truth may be integrated.

My argument has three parts: In the first part, I shall start with outlining what I call 'the standard picture' of fictional truth: fictional truth and our attitude towards it is modeled on approximating what is actually true and what is believed to be true modulo what is explicitly asserted in a fictional speech-act. While I refrain from precisely attributing the standard picture to one author in particular, I think it percolates much current theory of fiction. One may feel that I am attacking a strawman. However, my aim is not to attack the picture I draw but to differentiate it in light of a shifted paradigm. As a method to motivate my shift in paradigm, in the second part I shall consider use of 'according to the fiction' and 'in the fiction', assembling some intuitive examples of this use (without aiming at a comprehensive survey). Drawing on these illustrative examples, I shall argue that what is embedded under 'according to the fiction' diverges from fictional truth as described in the standard picture. There are fictional truths which are not true according to the fiction, and there are things that are true according to the fiction but not fictionally true. Moreover, I shall argue that 'in the fiction, it is true that' comes closest to what is targeted by the standard picture. In the third part, I shall draw some conclusions for the role of fictional truth. I shall try to account for the use data, drawing a comparison to expressivism in ethics. Expressivism (or my toy variant) treats moral assertions not so much as statements of moral truths but as aiming at a certain reaction on the part of an addressee. In a similar vein, I shall argue that fictional assertions are not so much in the business of stating fictional truth than of bringing across a certain reaction pattern to a sympathetic audience. Pretense and more precisely pretense belief will play a key role in this pattern. Pretense being constituted by mimicking certain contextually salient features of some target, pretense belief is determined by contextually relevant similarities to actual belief. Approximating belief in actual truth is only one way of mimicking actual belief. There are others which only remotely have to do with truth-apt content. Summarising, I recommend shifting the paradigm

of understanding fiction from simulating belief in actual truth to a broad pattern of attitudes and behaviours, prominent among them simulating behaviours and attitudes like pretense belief.

1. The Standard Picture

The standard picture portrays fiction as something rather well-regimented. It is therefore attractive to philosophers who want to put fiction to all sorts of cognitive uses, for instance in fictionalism or a fictional analysis of thought experiments. The common thrust may be characterised as follows: an author performs an act of story-telling or fiction-making which is modeled on the act of sincerely asserting truths. One may talk of fictional assertions. The prime and uncontested candidates to be embedded under 'according to the fiction' are the propositional contents that are explicitly told in this way. The aim of sincere assertion usually is that the addressee believe something. In a similar vein, story-telling seems to aim at an attitude of the addressee that is modeled on belief. There are other things which are untold but which are essentially to be treated in the same way as the explicit fictional assertions. They bear on evaluating the fictional truths in the same way as actual truths bear on evaluating other actual truths. Thus they are true according to the fiction, too.

I shall mention some representational analyses along these lines. One may be called the conditional analysis. For instance, in a somewhat simplified version of Lewis's (1983) classical analysis, p being a proposition,

> According to the fiction F, p is true iff p in the closest world where
> F is sincerely told as known fact.

This analysis renders fiction a special case of counterfactual reasoning. In a variant, Lewis adds that certain beliefs of some relevant community have to be true. In at least one variant of Nichols and Stich's (2000) closely similar analysis, we get something like that:

> According to the fiction F, p is true iff adding the fictional assertions
> to the belief system of some representative recipient leads her to

believing p.[1]

Kendall Walton takes defining truth in a fictional world to be the most important task of a theory of fiction. In his highly influential analysis (1990, I am following Woodward 2014),

> According to the fiction F, p is true iff F authorises a game of make believe where it is imagined that p.

Walton is a pluralist about the authorising principles of generation. And he explicitly rejects modeling the content of the fiction on actual truth:

> '"Truth in a fictional world" must be distinguished from "truth in the real world". But the temptation to regard both as species of a single genus is manifest. I resist. What we call truth in a fictional world is *not a kind of truth*.' (Walton 1990, 42, emphasis mine)

Still Walton maintains that truth in a fictional world is the key to understanding fiction. And his account in terms of a norm of make believe is modeled on actual truth as the norm of belief. Moreover, actual truth is the standard in Walton's reality principle, which is defined by a counterfactual roughly corresponding to Lewis's analysis (Walton 1990, 147), and the mutual belief principle which he offers as an amendment of the reality principle (Walton 1990, 152).

Fictional truth as the object of make believe looms large in accounts of fiction-making and fictional speech-acts. I mention two approaches, a Gricean one, which has been advocated by Gregory Currie (1990, 33; I am following Garcia-Carpintero's more tractable presentation):

> (FMD) To fiction-make *p* is to utter *S* thereby R-intending audiences of a given kind to take the utterance as a reason to think that the speaker intends them to make-believe *p*. (Garcia-Carpintero 2013, 341)

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[1] There are major problems with Nichols and Stich's analysis: firstly, they sometimes talk in terms of belief revision and sometimes in terms of counterfactual reasoning. But these things are different, as the classical Oswald-Kennedy examples show. Secondly, they do not make room for the phenomenon of adornment that is prominent in their empirical findings.

An R-intention is a reflective intention which is fulfilled by the audience apprehending the intention.

    An alternative is Garcia-Carpintero's normative account:

> (FMN) For one to fiction-make *p* is correct if and only if *p* is worth imagining for one's audience, on the assumption that they have the relevant desires and dispositions. (Garcia-Carpintero 2013, 351)

While I find the proposal clearly needs amendment, I am confident something like it could be made to work.[2] What interests me here is that it is natural to read both proposals as focusing on a notion of the fictional speech act that is modeled on actually asserting propositional truth and a notion of the apt reaction modeled on believing propositional truth. I note that (FMD) and (FMN) seem even narrower than the accounts of fictional truth mentioned. In talking of fiction-making instead of, say, fictional assertions, they confine the role of fiction to conveying content for make believe, while accounts of fictional truth are neutral with respect to other roles of fictions that are not truth-centred. One may take (FMD) and (FMN) as an example of an undue streamlining tendency as far as other functions of fiction do not play a role in fiction-making. Yet, firstly, there may be other correctness conditions an act of fiction-making underlies, depending on what is intended by the author. Secondly, as we shall see, there may well be fiction-making without make believe (what I take to be meant here by imagining).

    To give an initial assessment of the standard picture, it may provide a good approximation to fictional truth as the content of both fictional assertion and make believe. And there is plenty of room to make it more flexible. Thus, my point is not that the standard picture is misguided. I want to argue for a shift of paradigm, embedding the standard picture into a more comprehensive perspective on fiction. 'According to the fiction' provides guidance to this perspective.

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[2] One main problem of this approach is that it is either trivial, if the relevant beliefs and desires are determined in turn by what makes the act of fiction-making correct, or false, if we insert normal candidates like having an enriching aesthetic experience guided by the act of fiction-making. A bad piece of fiction may not be worth imagining. But that does not make the act of making it incorrect.

To further characterise my approach, I shall distinguish it from a theory which shares the common objective of countering certain streamlining tendencies that come with the standard picture. Stacy Friend defines the standard picture as I did: 'The most popular position today defines fiction as necessarily involving an invited response of imagining or make-believe...' (Friend 2012, 180). She is more critical of the standard picture than I am. To her, a theory of fiction should be able to tell apart fiction and non-fiction, and she denies that the standard picture lives up to this task. My aspirations are somewhat different. I do not aim at elucidating the difference between fiction and non-fiction but at providing a more comprehensive picture of the workings of fiction. Nevertheless I shall draw some conclusions what the specifics of fiction might be. And one may try a working characterisation of fiction as that whose content can be reported by 'according to the fiction'. A further difference between Friend's and my own approach is that she focuses on examples of fiction and non-fiction which seem to blur the boundary, while I focus on the linguistic evidence from use of 'according to the fiction'. I think that both approaches are interesting applications of analytic methodology in their own right.

I shall introduce some terminology: let 'standard fictional truth' stand for truth as defined by the standard picture. Since the idea of a unified standard picture is itself a fictional entity, the same may go for standard fictional truth. But I think there is some cliché to be spotted. Let 'fictional truth' simpliciter stand for what we upon sufficient reflection would intuitively accept as true 'in the world of the fiction', the content of make believe and so on. Fictional truth is what standard fictional truth is after, of course. Finally, let 'according to the fiction' stand for whatever felicitously embeds under 'according to the fiction' such as to form a true assertion. I shall try to show that the three terms, 'standard fictional truth', 'fictional truth', and 'truth according to the fiction' diverge.

I shall close this section with motivating my focus on 'according to the fiction'. As I said, one may feel that I am conjuring up a red herring. The standard picture does not depend on using 'according to the fiction'. So even if there is a certain lack of fit, this lack of fit is no problem for the standard picture. At best it just shows that one should weigh one's words in representing fictional truth. I am well aware that the standard picture in no way *depends* on an unidiomatic use of 'according to the fiction'.

The unidiomatic use is just a symptom of the streamlining tendencies that come with the standard picture. I think my approach via use data has three advantages.

Firstly, it starts in the midst of the standard picture. The standard picture is focused on truth-apt content, and one main purpose of 'according to the fiction' is to represent precisely such truth-apt content. Although 'according to the fiction' is deeply entangled with fictional truth as the standard picture has it, it preserves some independence. As a natural and pretheoretical way of talking about fiction, upon closer inspection use data may provide some unbiased bedrock evidence from which the philosophy of fiction may start.

Secondly, as far as 'according to the fiction' is used to represent the fictionality operator and the like, it also becomes a tool of streamlining the picture of fiction by introducing certain theoretical precisifications of everyday talk. If one is worried about narrowing tendencies that come with the standard picture, it is at this point where one should expect symptoms of these tendencies to emerge. I have already indicated that one of these symptoms may be the unidiomatic use of 'according to the fiction' that comes with certain precisifications.

Thirdly, since the function to communicate something surely is a key feature of fiction, and 'according to' has the function of reporting content and intentions that are related to a piece of communication, there are good reasons that 'according to the fiction' captures a large portion of the overall role of fiction. Hence it can be expected to provide a good heuristic approach to inquiring into this role more broadly.

One curious point about 'according to the fiction' has to be mentioned. The expression mostly appears in the work of philosophers discussing fictionalism about numbers, composition, morals or whatever. And although it is not an especially theoretical notion, it has acquired a semi-technical status. I think that while we have clear intuitions how to use 'according to' to talk about fiction, the expression is used quite rarely. This does not mean that we should not take seriously our intuitions how to use it, and indeed philosophers who use 'according to the fiction' themselves are committed to do so.

2. According to

I shall now take a closer look at how we use 'according to the fiction' and neighbouring expressions. I shall rely on my own linguistic intuitions, occasionally checked with those of fellow philosophers. I shall refrain from attempting a thorough linguistic classification of the feelings of oddity or infelicity triggered by some examples, my aim just being to use them as a guideline to understanding fiction and not a linguistic analysis of 'according to'. But my results may be checked against more precise linguistic accounts. The selection of examples is in no way intended to be exhaustive. I shall start with some observations on the use of 'according to...' in non-fictional contexts. I think the most prototypical use is to report the content of a message, broadly conceived:

(1) According to the weather report, it will rain today.

It may also be used to report the content of a speech act or a belief attitude:

(2) According to the weatherman, it will rain today.

In the most typical use, the ascription will be based on an assertion. But it may also be based on, say, seeing the weatherman wearing a raincoat. 'According to...' is also used to report and ascribe attitudes and speech acts more generally, including pro-attitudes, wishes, commands:

(3) According to Stèphane Hessel, one ought to be outraged.

(4) According to my Mother, I must not eat candy.

'According to...' can also be used to report the intention that one takes to come with some communicative act, broadly conceived, taking into account the content of the act or the resulting message, for instance a letter or a sign:

(5) According to the letter, we ought to meet in Paris.

The message may be in a non-propositional format, for instance pictorial:

(6) According to the sign, one should turn left to reach the airport.

The intention reported may be very indirectly connected with the explicit message. Take a detective who examines a piece of manufactured evidence, a letter with a forged Paris address, luring the police into believing that Paris is the conspirators' meeting place. The detective:

(7) According to the letter, (we are to believe) the conspirators meet in Paris.

Normally 'according to...' is used to report content in indirect speech. Thus, there is a certain freedom of paraphrase. However, one may also add a direct quote:

(8) According to Hobbes, 'Man to Man is an errant Wolfe'.

The quotation marks may be left out, but then it is not clear whether the quote is literal. I note in passing that there are limits of quotation. One cannot say,

(9) #According to ML King, 'I have a dream'.

The possibility of embedding direct quotation under 'according to' may be used to explain further data which will be relevant to the fictional case: one may use 'according to' even where there is no content but only something that is relevantly reminiscient of a content. Assume Smith, poking fun at some colleague who is sleeping during a meeting, has produced the string of sounds 'chrrrrrrrrr' in a situation where one would have expected a contentful speech-act. Then one may say

(10) According to Smith, chrrrrrrrrr.

If Smith is snorting while sleeping at night, the above report would be infelicitous, except in highly ironic speech.

As my weatherman example (2) shows, one may use 'according to' to ascribe beliefs which have not been expressed. I now shall add some qualification, which will be relevant to fiction. Not anything one takes someone to believe is suitable for being expressed by 'according to'. In particular, beliefs which are common ground seem ineligible:

(11) #According to Hobbes, some humans have two legs.

However, while it is an intricate question how to confine common ground, the observation arguably does not only concern claims which are common ground. The observed infelicity is triggered even when the author of the communicative act reported knows something to be true but the addressee does not. Assume Edward Gibbon does not say anything from which one can conclude that Egypt was part of the Roman empire, that this fact is highly relevant to evaluating some of his judgements in *The History of the Decline and the Fall of the Roman Empire*, and you know that your interlocutor does not know anything about ancient history. Still it seems inappropriate for you to say:

(12) #According to Gibbon, Egypt was part of the Roman empire.

You ought rather to say:

(13) Egypt was part of the Roman empire.

While a full explanation of these findings is beyond the purview of this paper, I surmise that 'according to...' normally is used to convey something distinctive of a person's attitude or the communicative act under consideration. A truth which one takes to be independently established and universally acknowledged is not distinctive in this way, even if it is highly relevant to evaluating some attitude or communicative act. Things would be different if, for instance, Egypt having formed part of the Roman empire had been a contentious matter at the time of Gibbon writing.

3. According to the Fiction

3.1 Paradigm Uses

I now shall consider a subcase of using 'according to', use of 'according to the fiction'. I shall start with the standard cases. One may use 'according to the fiction' to state many uncontentious fictional truths as usually conceived, including what is explicitly said and what — in a sense yet to be qualified — more or less directly follows from what is said. I assume that it is not stated and does not logically follow from the Sherlock Holmes stories that a genius detective lives in Baker Street. Still:

(14) According to the Sherlock Holmes stories, (it is true that) a genius detective lives in Baker Street.

'According to the fiction' may even be used to embed highly contentious interpretive hypotheses. Cleanth Brooks says about *The Sound and the Fury*:

> "It is tempting to read it as a parable of the disintegration of modern man. Individuals no longer sustained by familial and cultural unity are alienated and lost in private worlds." (Cited from Gibson 2006, 444)

I take this to be a strong interpretation which is at best indirectly supported but is in no way implied by what is explicitly said in the novel. Brooks may have said:

(15) According to *The Sound and the Fury*, (it is true that) individuals no longer sustained by familial and cultural unity are alienated and lost in private worlds.

I think (15) is idiomatic even if one adds something like: 'though this is not intended by Faulkner...'[3] The resulting claim is that the fiction is written in a way that, taken in isolation, makes the diligent recipient believe that the interpretation conforms to Faulkner's intentions.

(15) can be read in two ways: firstly, it can be read as a fictional truth. One is authorised (to use Walton's term) to make believe or imagine that individuals... But Brooks seems to endorse a stronger claim. *The Sound and the Fury* tells us something about the actual world: the actual alienation of modern man. (15) can be read as stating this. One may make this reading explicit by adding 'actually':

(16) According to *The Sound and the Fury*, (it is true that) individuals no longer sustained by familial and cultural unity actually are alienated and lost in private worlds.

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[3] I do not intend to take stance in the intentionalism-textualism debate on whether it is the author's intention or the text that determines the content of the fiction. As we have seen, what is true according to the fiction may deviate from the content of the fiction as addressed in the debate.

If (16) is acceptable, 'according to the fiction' may be used to report claims about the actual world the fiction is intended to make actually plausible to the audience.

In sum, 'according to the fiction' may be used to report fictional truths the audience is intended to make believe when engaging with the story, judging from the story (and – within limits – other evidence). And it may be used to report content the audience is intended to actually believe upon engaging with the story, judging from the story. As a consequence, at least one use of 'according to the fiction (it is true that)' reports truths that belong to a different category than fictional truth. This is perfectly compatible with the standard picture, albeit not yet covered by it.

We have already seen that 'fictional truth' at most covers part of what is true according to the fiction. There are many kinds of truth according to the fiction which belong to a completely different category. I now come to examples which do not report the content of a belief-like attitude at all. Often a fiction invites an emotion-like attitude towards the fictional content, e.g. the fictive character uncle Tom.

(17) According to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, (it is true that) one ought to feel compassion for uncle Tom.

One may use (17) to state a fictional truth: it is indeed to be *made believe* that one (for instance the protagonists of the novel) ought to feel compassion. But one may as well use it to state how the audience should actually react. This can be made explicit by replacing 'one' by 'the audience':

(18) According to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, (it is true that) the audience ought to feel compassion for uncle Tom.

The intended reaction reported by (18) is not make believe. It is a matter of further debate whether, in the latter case, the attitude in question is a real emotion or rather some sort of pretense emotion (as perhaps more clearly in Dreyer's *Joan of Arc* or *Ordet*).

Whatever the status of emotions towards fictional characters, sometimes real emotions are in play. In one plausible interpretation, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* aims at real compassion with the slaves' lot. I think it is perfectly apt to say

(19) According to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, (it is true that) one ought to feel compassion for actual slaves.

From (19) we learn that the fiction is intended to bring across a moral request to take a certain emotional attitude towards reality.

Summing up, it has to be noted that 'according to the fiction' is not only used to state standard fictional truth. It more generally tells us something about what the fiction is intended to bring across, judging from the fiction.

In light of these findings, one may wonder how to distinguish fictional truth. At least in some variants of the standard picture, it is characterised by some belief-like attitude, be it conditional belief or Walton's imagination/make believe. However, there are things one is to make believe though they are false according to the fiction. Arguably the audience of *Planet of the Apes* at the beginning is intended to imagine the protagonist on a distant planet:

(20) According to *Planet of the Apes*, (it is true that) one ought to imagine/make believe that the protagonist is on a distant planet.

However,

(21) According to *Planet of the Apes*, it is false that the protagonist is on a distant planet.

(22) According to *Planet of the Apes*, the protagonist is not on a distant planet.

(20) may be contested. The details of the film do not matter much; we may vary the example such as to provide the protagonist and the audience with arbitrarily strong evidence as long as the latter is misleading. Yet there is a fundamental objection: in line with the standard picture, one may insist that fictional truth remains the only norm of make believe. And fictional truth must be determined by considering the full story. For instance, in the conditional account, the conditional premiss is the full story. One may be excusable or even justified in forming a hypothesis about the fictional truth at some earlier point: the protagonist is on a distant planet. Still there is something wrong in this exercise of make believe, just as when

one's belief is justified but fails to be true. I am not moved by this argument. Someone in the situation of the protagonist would have full belief that she is on a distant planet. And it is important to appreciating the story that the audience takes a corresponding viewpoint. This is not to say that the audience has to take the viewpoint of someone in the scenario or to become immersed such as to ignore the pretense status of the game. Nor is it to say that the epistemic standing of clues in a piece of fiction is the same as the standing of relevantly similar actual clues. Still it is not always appropriate for the audience to cautiously form a hypothesis what the fictional truth may be like and then wait to the end to see what is to be made believe. There will be situations where the audience is to take an attitude that resembles full-fledged belief in something that is not a fictional truth.

There is a connection to the much-discussed phenomenon of unreliable narrators. Yet the case is special. Often you are not supposed to trust the unreliable narrator and to make believe what she tells you. In *Planet of the Apes*, you are to make believe what is false in the fiction, though you are not told in any way that the protagonist is on a distant planet (or so I assume). You just get certain clues, among them the rational beliefs of the protagonist, which justify your interpreting the scenario as taking place on a distant planet.

What one is to make believe and what is true according to a fiction may come apart. While I think that this result indeed spells trouble for some versions of the standard picture, they may be easily mended, for instance by explicating fictional truth as what one is *ultimately* to make believe once all evidence is in. A further challenge to the standard picture arising from the example is how to informally characterise fictional truth. Is there some idiomatic expression which tracks fictional truth? Looking for other ways of characterising the content captured by the standard picture, one may use '*in* the fiction'. For this move to work, it should not be the case that, *in Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the audience is to pity actual slaves. And it should not be the case that, *in Planet of the Apes*, one ought to make believe that the protagonist is on a distant planet. I feel that 'in the fiction' indeed is more restricted than 'according to the fiction', and it may be read as restricted in the right way to express content according to the standard picture. But I am not sure how robust that reading is. In contrast to 'according to the

fiction' and 'according to the fiction, it is true that', 'in the fiction' and 'in the fiction, it is true that' differ in use. For instance, one may say 'in the Sherlock Holmes stories, Conan Doyle depicts a genius detective at work'. For this reason, 'in the fiction' as such is not confined to fictional truth. However, one may not say 'in the Sherlock Holmes stories, it is true that Conan Doyle depicts a genius detective at work'. So if 'in the fiction' is to track precisely fictional truth, we have to add 'it is true'.

While 'in the fiction, it is true' may be suitably confined to carve out those uses of 'according to the fiction' which report fictional truth, use of both expressions is too narrow to express standard fictional truth. Many philosophers admit that fictional truth is incomplete (it is neither the case that the number of hairs on Sherlock Holmes head is even, nor is it the case that it is uneven). But they tend to include into the content of the fiction those actual truths which bear on evaluating the scenario in the same way actual truths bear on evaluating certain other actual truths. This is obvious in the conditional analyses, which are very generous in admitting additional content, and it is part and parcel to Walton's reality principle, which is defined by a counterfactual roughly corresponding to Lewis's analysis (Walton 1990, 147), and the mutual belief principle which he offers as an amendment of the reality principle (Walton 1990, 152).

Let us see how 'according to the fiction' and 'in the fiction' behave with respect to such purported fictional truths. As far as I remember, it is not stated in *Portrait of a Lady* or can be deduced from it that Rome is in Italy (if the assumption is false, replace the example). But it is important to evaluating the fiction that Rome is in Italy. It tells us something about Isabel Archer and Gilbert Osmond that they live in Rome, and that Rome is part of Italian culture, Italy being the preferred country for 'sterile dilettantes' like Osmond and so on. However, it would be inappropriate to embed the fact that Rome is in Italy under 'according to/in the fiction':

(23) #According to *Portrait of a Lady*, (it is true that) Rome is in Italy.

(24) #It is true in *Portrait of a Lady* that Rome is in Italy.

One may react to these findings by distinguishing between the truth and the assertibility of 'according to the fiction' claims. It would after all be true that, according to *Portrait of a Lady*, Rome is in Italy. But pragmatic

principles of informativity prevent asserting it. Thus, instead of (23)/(24), one had better assert

(25) Rome is in Italy.

Yet the pragmatic principles do not seem to play a role in

(26) It is neither the case that, according to/in *Portrait of a Lady*, Rome is in Italy, nor is it the case that, according to/in *Portrait of a Lady*, Rome is not in Italy/it is not the case that Rome is in Italy.

For this reason, I do not think that (23)/(24) are true but unassertable. It rather seems that 'according to the fiction' and 'in the fiction' are not in the business of reporting which background assumptions bear on evaluating fictional content. There is a parallel to the Gibbon example (12). I have conjectured that 'according to' normally is used to convey something distinctive of a person's attitude or the communicative act under consideration. A truth which one takes to be independently established and universally acknowledged is not distinctive in this way, even if it is highly relevant to evaluating some attitude or communicative act.

I close this section with a last challenge to the standard picture: fictions which test the boundary of truth-apt content, for instance ungrammatical and nonsensical poems. Take Gertrude Stein's famous verse *Rose is a rose is a rose*. The verse is ungrammatical and hence does not seem to have truth-apt content. Still one may report:

(27) According to *Sacred Emily*, (it is true that) Rose is a rose is a rose.

Alternatively, take a poem by Christian Morgenstern in Max Knight's translation (1964):

> The Winglewangle phlutters through widowadowood,
> the crimson Fingoor splutters and scary screaks the Scrood.

The content of the poem may be reported by

(28) According to the poem, it is true that the winglewangle...

These cases correspond to the snorting example

(10) According to Smith, chrrrrrrrr.

There is a fictional assertion, but no decipherable content is asserted. (27) and (28) lead to the question what attitude one is to take towards the non-truth-apt content reported. My conjecture is that, just as one can fictionally assert such content, it can also become the content of make believe. I shall come back to the issue in the last section.

3.2 An Attempt at a Paraphrase

I now shall try to characterise 'according to the fiction...'. I shall try to give an informative albeit rough paraphrase what is said in different usages of the expression. Following my method of considering paradigm uses of 'according to the fiction', my paraphrase shall be guided by a reflective equilibrium between certain general ideas and the example cases. My paraphrase is not intended to say what one has in mind or expresses by 'according to the fiction'. Its purpose is to approximate circumstances that normally obtain when one successfully uses the expression. 'According to the fiction' clearly comes with the presupposition that there is a piece of fiction and there is some content in a very broad sense. Content might be a mere string of letters without any conventional meaning. Moreover, what is reported is not restricted to what is fictionally asserted or thereby implied. All that is required is a suitable connection to the fiction. One especially eligible candidate for such a connection is the author's intention. However, it seems that not any intention of the author counts, and some things may be true according to the fiction even contrary to the author's intentions. What counts is what the fiction brings across as intended. Moreover, I assume that the intentions at stake are '*reflective* communicative intentions – intentions fulfilled in their own recognition'. (Garcia-Carpintero 2013, 341). 'According to the fiction' reports what intentions are conveyed by the fiction as standing in a suitable connection with the fiction. One may harbour doubts about such free-floating intentions which do not have to be attributed to someone. In reply, in talking of intentions coming with the fiction, I relativise these intentions to a suitably idealised audience. 'According to the fiction...' reports what the

audience, being given the fiction and relevant background information, concludes that the fiction is best suited to communicate.

Let me consider my first example case:

(14) According to the Sherlock Holmes stories, (it is true that) a genius detective lives in Baker Street.

One challenge is to distinguish things which are true from things which are false but believable according to the fiction as in the *Planet of the Apes*-example (18). One may talk of ultimately making believe, i.e. making believe once the whole story has been told:

(14*) The content of the Sherlock Holmes stories is suitable for the audience to conclude that the stories come with an intention to invite a certain game of make believe: one is to ultimately make believe that a genius detective lives in Baker street.

One may feel concerned that this is over-reflective. Shouldn't it be sufficient for something to be true according to the fiction that the audience in a normal context is disposed to *immediately* react to listening to the story by making believe that a genius detective lives in Baker street? Couldn't the audience be so disposed without the stories being suitable for making the audience conclude that there is an intention of…? In reply, the audience in (14*) is idealised what concerns general linguistic competence and reflectivity. Moreover, I do not take it to be a prerequisite of truly and justifiedly asserting (14) that one actually checks whether (14*) is true. I add that, since 'according to the fiction' is somewhat detached from an author's actual intentions and an audience's actual reactions, it is perfectly compatible with my paraphrase that there is no one to intend to convey or to recognise what is true according to the fiction, although the actual author and the actual audience are perfectly successful in their artistic communication.

I shall not go through all modifications of (14*) for the different examples. The common pattern is that the content of the fiction is suitable for making the audience conclude what intention the fiction comes with. The intention thus reported varies greatly: In one variant of (15), one is to make believe that individuals no longer sustained by familial and cultural

unity are alienated and lost in private worlds. In another, one is to *actually* believe this. In (17), one ought to feel compassion/pretend compassion for uncle Tom, in (19) one ought to feel compassion for actual slaves. 'Ought' can be interpreted along several lines, as a moral requirement, as an imperative and so on. In (20) the intention is that one imagine/make believe that the protagonist is on a distant planet. In (21), one is to make disbelieve that the astronaut is on a distant planet. In (26), it is denied that the fiction is suitable to make the audience conclude it comes with certain intentions. The intentions in question would be to make belive that Rome is in Italy, and to make disbelieve that Rome is in Italy. Coming to non-truth-apt content of make believe, the intention reported in (27) is to make believe that Rose is a rose is a rose.

4. A Metaexpressivist View of 'According to the Fiction'

A closer inspection of data about using 'according to the fiction' shows, on the one hand, that the contents embedded under 'according to the fiction' are much more variegated than fictional truth/standard fictional truth. They may comprise many intentions which are revealed to the audience by use of fiction. Perhaps almost any intention can be vested in a fiction and be reported by 'according to the fiction'. On the other hand, the scope of 'according to the fiction, (it is true that)' excludes some standard fictional truths. While 'according to the fiction' covers what is explicitly said and many implicit interpretive claims, it does not cover inexplicit background truths which bear on evaluating the fiction but are common ground.

This is not to say that the standard picture is false. It just does not capture fictional truth and truth according to the fiction. I can imagine that someone who focuses on the standard picture may go further. She may dismiss my findings. She may say that while truth according to the fiction underlies all sorts of linguistic irregularities, the standard picture is the most eligible systematic account. The view may be supported by a metasemantic theory according to which, in order to find out what our terms mean, use data have to be balanced against theoretical virtues of a systematic account (Weatherson 2003). Perhaps truth according to the fiction is amenable to such a treatment, too. Or we may dismiss 'according to the fiction' as revealing the overall role of fiction.

However, I shall pursue a reaction which is more sympathetic to the use data assembled. It promises to correct the streamlining tendencies that may come with the standard picture. I shall start from the use data and try to define the corresponding role of fiction. 'According to the fiction' makes explicit that an act of story-telling reveals certain intentions to the audience. It takes a meta-perspective; it is about some other communicative act. My examples of intentions reported have been make believe, but also other pretense and real attitudes. I add pretense behaviour and real actions:

(29) According to Uncle *Tom's Cabin*, one ought to free actual slaves.

Yet there are some intended reactions which fiction seems especially or even uniquely suited to incite. They presumably define some core role of fiction. Pretense stands out, and prominent among exercises of pretense is pretense belief. But the prominence of pretense belief in itself does not yet force us to model fiction on actual belief, as it is done in the standard picture.

Therefore, instead of starting with a model focusing on the relationship to actual belief, I shall start from the variety of uses of 'according to the fiction'. My pluralistic perspective shall be inspired by a theory paradigm which involves a similar shift from believing truth to a somewhat different pattern of indended reactions: expressivism in metaethics.

Take

(30) Kicking dogs is wrong.

Just as asserting 'the sun is shining' serves to state the truth that the sun is shining, (30) seems to serve to state the truth that kicking dogs is wrong. However, philosophers have pointed out several problems with this view. Among other things, it seems difficult to reconcile the role of stating an independent fact with the role of directly motivating a certain set of feelings and/or actions. As a consequence, some have been attracted by expressivism. I do not commit myself to any version of expressivism in metaethics. I just use the theory pattern to motivate a similar albeit (somewhat) independent move in aesthetics. Expressivism comes in many variants. According to my toy version, in spite of its surface form, (30) does not really

serve to state a truth. Rather, by uttering it, one normally conveys that one intends the addressee to respond in a certain way, emotionally, behaviourally (not kicking dogs) or whatever. The meaning of (30) is conventionally bound to this role. An addressee who understands the utterance realises that there are certain ways of complying with it, and that the utterance is intended to make her comply in these ways. Truth comes only in as a way of regimenting these ways: for instance, they are connected by inferential relations comparable to those connecting truth-apt statements. If kicking dogs is wrong, so is kicking cats; kicking dogs is wrong; thus…

Just as in ethical discourse, there are statements about, say, fictional characters which look perfectly true.

(31) Sherlock Holmes lives in Baker street.

(31) is a fictional truth, a standard fictional truth, and a truth according to the (Sherlock Holmes) fiction. However, we have seen that there are cases where the three categories do not perfectly overlap. 'According to the fiction' felicitously embeds contents which are clearly neither fictional truths nor standard fictional truths, e.g. intended emotional reactions. Even if we confine attention to candidates for fictional truth, we easily find queer ones. Some candidates are incomplete, some are inconsistent. For instance, one may write a story where someone has refuted Gödel's Theorem (Currie 1992, 87). One may even write a story where this is not explicitly said but an implicit fictional truth. Moreover there are 'nonsense' contents which nevertheless seem candidates for fictional truth like 'Rose is a rose is a rose'.

While statements like (31) invite modeling truth according to a fiction on the basis of truth-apt content, starting from the nonsense poems, one may feel tempted by a different approach. Instead of asking first how their content relates to truth-apt content, one may start from considering how one is intended to react to them.

We have seen that firstly, 'according to the fiction' may report a whole range of intentions. The intentions mostly concern how the audience is supposed to react to the fiction. The intended reactions reported by 'according to the fiction' can be many and varied. Pretense will loom large among them. But pretense, too, can take many and varied forms. Some-

times it concerns attitudes, sometimes it concerns behaviours. One platitude to start with: the core of pretense is some sort of simulation or mimicking of actual non-pretense attitudes and behaviours. One adopts an attitude or behaviour that is relevantly similar to the attitude or behaviour to be simulated. What counts as relevantly similar is highly context-dependent. I doubt that there is always some threshold of *essential* common features that must be shared by the original and the simulation. So simulation of X is compatible with failure to instantiate all essential properties of X (think of some completely different stuff simulating the surface qualities of water).

I think that the best way of accounting for our attitude towards the queer examples is that, even when it comes to make believe, ways of simulating belief are many and varied. Sometimes they only remotely resemble the attitude towards truth-apt content. This leads to a certain shift of paradigm: in the standard picture, the attitude towards fiction is modeled on pretense belief, and pretense belief is modeled on belief in actual truth. I propose to break with both features. The standard of our reaction to fiction is not pretense belief. Surely pretense looms large in the pattern of reactions to fiction. But pretense belief is just one in a great many attitudes and behaviours to be simulated. And the standard of pretense belief is not similarity of the content to be made believe to what is actually true or mutually believed but similarity of *the attitude* taken to actual belief. Actual belief has many more features than just what is believed. We have seen in the *Planet of the Apes*-example that standard fictional truth only within limits can serve as a guide to make believe. What is simulated is not belief in what is true but belief in what one takes to be true. The difference is not manifest at the beginning, but it becomes manifest at the end of the story. Then it becomes clear that, though one did believe in a fictional falsehood, one did not miss any standard (as in actual false belief) but rather successfully complied to what the fiction was intended for. Moreover, there is the indirect role of background beliefs like *Rome is in Italy*, which seems rather different from the role of such common beliefs in our actual belief system. They play a belief-like role in fixing the content of the fiction but are not to be made believe. One may wonder how they can fall short of being made believe if they stand in the very same relations to the content of make believe than other things made believe. But it may be just

a peculiarity of pretense belief compared to actual belief that something plays a belief-like role in fixing the content to be made believe and is nevertheless excluded from that content. In the case of the nonsense poems, the resemblance may be based less on sharing truth-apt content than on dispositions on the part of the subject to react as one would react to contentful assertions. What could these dispositions consist in? Think of a sincere statement in a radically foreign language. Without a translation manual, you are at a loss what the statement invites you to believe. But you may still recognise it as a sincere assertion and be prepared to revise your belief system upon getting the translation. Mimicking these features may be sufficient in a certain context to mimick a belief-like attitude.

I have focused on belief-like attitudes because here the departure from the standard picture has to be developed in detail. Yet other parts of the intended reaction pattern reported by 'according to the fiction' also matter to determining the overall role of fiction. It may well be that some sort of pretense game is essential to fiction (but see Friend 2012, 13). No pretense game, no fiction. But this is not to say that the pretense game has to involve belief-like attitudes, nor is it to demote other roles of fiction to second importance. In fact, those other roles may prove more important than the essential function of pretense, and it may be one key function of 'according to the fiction' to report these roles. For instance, it may have been the key role of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to make people feel compassion for actual slaves and engage in the abolitionist movement. This is what the novel arguably was intended to do, and this is what it is appreciated for rather than for its value in a game of make believe.

In sum, reporting fictional truth is just one aspect of the broader meta-expressive role of 'according to the fiction'. 'According to the fiction' is used to report an expressive artistic act (broadly confined). One may call the latter fiction-making or story-telling. The function of the artistic act normally is to mark a certain reaction pattern as intended, just as, according to some expressivist theories of moral discourse, *kicking dogs is wrong* does not convey a truth but is intended to provoke a certain reaction (not kicking dogs, feeling repelled by kicking dogs). The pattern of apt reactions may comprise a great manifold of attitudes and behaviour, which display both significant similarities to and differences from attitudes and behaviour in non-artistic contexts.

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