

Real People in Unreal Contexts, or Is There a Spy Among Us?

I. Introduction

Recent decades have seen an increase in interest among analytic philosophers in the problem of fictional reference. Philosophers of language are concerning themselves more and more with our discourse about fiction, including statements of what is “true in fiction,” assertions about our responses to fiction, true nonexistence claims, and so on. The rise of “direct reference” theories of names is in large part responsible for this trend, since the use of Fregean senses or Russellian descriptions are not available to deal with our apparently meaningful use of empty names (names that seem to lack referents). The names of fictional characters, being among the most commonly used empty names, therefore present a challenge to theories of language that utilize direct reference. A number of philosophers, concerned not only with truth and reference but also with the phenomena surrounding intentionality, have concluded that such issues require us to find room in our metaphysics for some type of fictional object. In opposition to this line of thinking are theories that explain fictional discourse without appealing to fictional objects, among which are theories that invoke purely linguistic solutions (paraphrase, quantification, etc.), as well as various pretense, or make-believe, theories.

For the purposes of this paper, I am going to assume that there are only two diametrically opposed camps in the theory of fictional reference: make-believe theories and fictional-object theories.¹ The fictional-object theories take our talk about fictional characters to involve genuine reference to real, usually nonexistent, objects of one sort or another. Ed Zalta’s theory invokes abstract objects, and Terence Parsons’ theory invokes incomplete Meinongian objects. In contrast, Kendall Walton’s make-believe theory denies that there is genuine reference to fictional objects. On this theory, such talk involves make-believedly referring to an existent object. We pretend that there are such people, and then within the context of this pretense, but not outside it, we refer to them. These are the views I will be contrasting throughout most of this paper. Walton’s theory attempts to explain all features of our talk about fiction without countenancing

¹ See the partial bibliography at the end of this paper for the authors discussed here.

any fictional objects; Zalta's and Parsons' views attempt to explain all such talk with as little pretense as possible. There are, however, some "mixed" views of fictional reference, such as Peter van Inwagen's and Amie Thomasson's, which countenance a type of fictional object, but which require pretense to explain many of our responses to fiction. I will return to these below.

While both the make-believe and the fictional object theories seem to account equally well for some of our talk about fiction, there are certain areas of our discourse that look better for one side or the other. Here I want to address an area that has been taken as a significant point against Walton's theory: discourse about our attitudes in response to fiction. These are the feelings and emotions we experience when we are engaged with a piece of fiction. We may admire Sherlock Holmes, feel compassion for Anna Karenina, fear Freddie Kruger, and so on. It is interesting that such attitudes have sometimes been invoked as evidence for the fictional object theory. For instance, one might maintain that if it is true that real detectives admire Sherlock Holmes, then it follows that there is someone real detectives admire.² In the debate over such inferences it appears to be an *assumption* that real detectives really admire Holmes. But coming from a different perspective, what appears problematic here is the attitude itself. How can we have such emotional responses to fictional characters? This has been the subject of heated controversy in the aesthetics of fiction for some time.³ It is the answer to that question which will occupy me for the rest of this paper.⁴

Let's focus on the statement "I pity Anna Karenina." Both the make-believe and the fictional object theories share the assumption that in this statement there can be no genuine attitude if there is no real object of the attitude. According to the fictional object theory, there is such a real object, so the attitude is genuine. On that view the analysis of "I pity Anna Karenina" is straightforward: it is true so long as I pity Anna, who in some sense has the property of having suffered.⁵ But on the make-believe theory there is no such object as Anna; I only make believe

² This case comes from Zalta, who uses versions of it in Zalta (1988), p.4 and pp. 123-29, and in Zalta (1998).

³ See Walton (1990), esp. Chapters 5 and 7, and bibliography. See also Hjort and Laver (1997).

⁴ I am going to be discussing what Kroon (1994) calls "*reflective* appreciator attitudes," which one has toward a person based on that person's nature and circumstances (e.g., admiration, pity), rather than attitudes based on how the other person might affect one directly (e.g., fear, jealousy).

⁵ Defining in what "sense" Anna Karenina has the property of having suffered differentiates Parsons' and Zalta's theories. Zalta argues for a distinction between two ways of having properties, so that the abstract object "encodes" the properties it has according to the story, while it "exemplifies" such properties as being a fictional character. In

that Anna exists, and I only make believe that she has suffered. As a result, I cannot literally pity Anna. Rather, this must be make-believe, or fictional, or pretend, or imagined, or quasi-pity. And the same goes for other such attitudes.

Now the claim that my pity for Anna is not genuine, but only make-believe or imagined pity, has met with a great deal of resistance.⁶ For example, the claim seems to deny the phenomenology of my attitude: my pity of Anna does not feel any less genuine than my pity of actual people. It doesn't *feel* as though I am pretending to pity. Furthermore, the whole notion of "make-believe" or "pretend" pity seems to imply that I am play-acting. But clearly I am not pretending to pity Anna in the sense that an actor pretends to have an attitude or emotion. Now, Walton never calls these attitudes "make-believe" or "pretend" attitudes himself, although that is how they are usually discussed in the literature. But Walton's terminology⁷ does not make matters that much better. Calling my attitude "quasi-pity" also implies that it should feel different from genuine pity. Saying that "it is fictional that I pity Anna" makes it sound as though I am part of the fiction. And Walton's most preferred terminology — "I am imagining myself pitying Anna" — still sounds too deliberate, when my compassion seems spontaneous. To some extent the criticism of Walton's theory has rested on confusion over the implications of the terminology. However, at the risk of perpetuating that confusion, I will for the remainder of the paper refer to the attitudes in question as "make-believe" attitudes, for reasons that will become clear below.

Given this resistance to positing apparently strange and implausible make-believe attitudes, the fictional object theory may look more attractive. But I don't think it is. I think make-believe attitudes have gotten a bad rap. So the objective of this paper will be to persuade you that make-believe attitudes are not nearly so bizarre as some have thought. The purpose is *not* to argue that the make-believe theory is better than the fictional object theory, although of course my conclusions will have consequences for the debate. However, since the implausibility of make-believe attitudes is often seen as a reason to prefer the fictional object theory, then if I can make such attitudes seem more respectable, this reason loses its force.

contrast, Parsons distinguishes two kinds of properties that objects can have, "nuclear" and "extranuclear." See Kroon (1992) for a discussion of the differences. Van Inwagen (1977) and (1983) draws a distinction between "having" and "holding" properties that appears to parallel Zalta's.

⁶ Walton addresses his critics on this issue most recently in Walton (1997).

The impact of this argument for the more general debate among theories of fictional reference is in a sense not very substantive, since it is a negative conclusion. However, it should be clear by the end that I believe the make-believe theory offers a more promising picture of our emotional responses to fiction than the fictional-object view. And although I approach this issue from a different angle than does Walton himself, I take myself in this paper to be defending his basic view. As for my own view, I am not sure that Walton's precise proposals will, in the end, be entirely satisfactory, but I do think that the pretense approach to fiction is truer to our experience with fiction than other approaches.

II. Strategy

My strategy will be to develop and analyze one case in which make-believe attitudes are not only plausible, but also quite explanatory. This case, unlike those usually discussed, involves our responses to a piece of fiction containing so-called "real" names. These are names like 'Napoleon' and 'London,' which, in contrast to so-called "fictional" names, have concrete, existent referents in ordinary contexts. Since this terminology has unwanted implications for the metaphysical status of the names themselves, I will use different terms. I call the names "connected" and "unconnected" names. 'London' and 'Napoleon' are connected to actual, concrete objects in ordinary contexts; 'Anna Karenina' and 'Sherlock Holmes' are not. I will claim that in the example I analyze, the connected names refer to their ordinary referents. I will argue that this is the case, not only in statements about what is true in the fiction, but also in statements of our attitudes. In other words, my claim is that our attitudes in response to this particular piece of fiction are directed toward the real people mentioned in the story. I will show that objections to this claim, including one proposed by Fred Kroon,⁸ are unsuccessful. Based on that conclusion, I will argue that we need some notion of make-believe attitudes to account for this reference to real people. This will be a very minimal notion of make-believe attitudes, one that does not yet cover the rich range of emotional responses we have to fiction. I will return to the issue of emotional complexity after I have defended the minimal notion.

⁷ Walton uses this terminology in Walton (1990) and Walton (1997).

⁸ Kroon (1994).

Since my conclusion does not follow unless I can show that our attitudes in response to fiction really *can* be directed at real people, the bulk of the paper will be devoted to showing that they can. This is no small task, because the claim is highly controversial. For example, suppose that in response to reading Shakespeare’s play, I say, “I despise Richard III for murdering the princes.” Now, historians tell us that Richard most likely did not murder the princes. Let’s suppose he didn’t, and that I don’t believe that he did. Then how can I really despise the actual Richard for something he didn’t do? The fictional-object theorist would say that the name ‘Richard’ in the statement of my attitude is disconnected from the real person, and instead refers to a fictional character. However, as we will see when we come to Kroon’s argument, there is a different way to interpret the position that the name is disconnected, more in line with the make-believe theory. But until we get there I will talk as if the disconnection of names like ‘Richard III’ involves the claim that they refer to fictional objects. Which interpretation you prefer does not matter, since I will argue that these names are not necessarily disconnected. At the end I will bring the discussion back to make-believe attitudes.

Let me turn now to the example I will be discussing. It is a short story, first told at the Empty Names Conference at Stanford University’s Center for the Study of Language and Information (CSLI).⁹ The story is about one of the organizers of the conference, a Stanford graduate student named Anthony Everett, who was present at the talk. Here it is:

Anthony Everett, whom you all know as one organizer of this conference, isn’t just a philosopher. It turns out that he is also a secret agent with Great Britain’s MI6, code-named ‘Periwinkle.’ For many frustrating years, British agents were tracking the clever and deadly spy from Italy known only as ‘Porcini.’ Several years ago there was a breakthrough when the Brits discovered the secret of Porcini’s success in eluding them: his disguise as a well-known philosopher of language. The agency recruited Everett because they needed someone who could infiltrate the underworld of philosophy espionage. On Everett’s side, this was an opportunity, not only to be a real-life, jet-setting James Bond, but also — considering the academic job market — to make sure he had a more secure career to fall back on. Now all that Everett had to go on, apart from knowing about Porcini’s evil deeds, was that the Italian has never been known to tell a joke or to laugh at one. So it has taken years for Everett to track him down. Over these years Everett has come to despise Porcini more and more. It is precisely Porcini’s

⁹ The full title of the conference is Empty Names, Fiction, and the Puzzles of Non-Existence, held at CSLI March 22-24, 1998.

brilliance that causes Everett's contempt, since he can find nothing admirable in intelligence used for evil. So Everett can think of nothing else but his goal: to rid the world of the most diabolical spy it has ever known. In fact, this search has become an obsession, and the only person who cannot see the pitiful wreck he's made of the rest of his life is Everett himself. Now, finally, the Empty Names Conference is the culmination of Everett's master plan to trap the elusive Porcini. The trap has been set in CSLI. If anyone can catch this grim, deadly man, it's Everett. But will he succeed? You'll have to wait and see. The End.

So much for the story itself. Notice that I used several connected names in telling it, for example 'Everett' and 'CSLI.' But most of what I said was made up, and I didn't expect you to believe it. It is not true that Everett is a secret agent chasing a spy named Porcini, that there is a trap set in CSLI, that Porcini never tells a joke, and so on. All of these are statements of what is true *in the story*, not of what is actually true. Reports of what is true in the story are not usually the kinds of statements that enter into the debate over whether or not connected names remain connected.¹⁰ Fictional object theorists, such as Parsons and Zalta, agree that in these statements, the names refer to their ordinary referents. This does not endanger the truth of such statements for the object theorist, because we can just prefix them with an "in the fiction" operator. Then it might just be true that *in the story* Everett is chasing an Italian spy, even though it is not true *simpliciter* that Everett is chasing an Italian spy. I will leave aside here the question of whether or not "truth in the story" is really any species of truth.¹¹

III. Responses to the story

The prefix will not help, however, with the discourse about fiction that concerns me here, which involves reports of how *we* respond to what we imagine based on the story. I follow Walton in thinking of statements of what is true in fiction, like those above, as prescriptions of what we are to imagine.¹² Works of fiction are not created so that readers and audiences can assess and tally what is true in some distant fictional world. Rather, the audience is expected to engage

¹⁰ At least, not among philosophers of language and metaphysicians concerned with fiction. Those who come from aesthetics or literary theory are more likely to question whether any names in works of fiction refer to reality. I think arguments against the claim that works of fiction never refer to reality are unsuccessful for a variety of reasons.

¹¹ Kroon (1992) discusses the various positions on this question on p. 516, n. 22. Zalta takes the unprefixing statements to be literally false and the prefixed ones literally true. The issue is more complicated on the pretense theory.

¹² This is Walton's proposal in (1990). For Walton, this involves entering into a "game of make-believe" with the work of fiction as a prop.

imaginatively with the work. In short, the proper response to the fiction is to *imagine*, to *make believe*, that what is true in the fiction, really is true, that the events it narrates really have taken place, and so on. We imagine that we are discovering the facts about real people and events, and we respond to these. Applying this to the story, I might report some of my responses as follows:

(1) I envy Everett because he's living the life of a jet-setting secret agent.

(2) I pity Everett because he is too obsessed with Porcini.

I will call such statements as (1) and (2) "Attitude-Reason Statements." The question is whether or not the name 'Everett' in (1) and (2) remains connected to the real Everett. Notice that, in contrast to statements of what is true in the fiction, these statements about my attitudes cannot be prefixed by an "in the story" operator, because I am not in the story. The problem is the same as the one I brought up at the beginning about Richard III: how can I really envy or pity the actual Everett for such reasons?

It is crucial to recognize that the problem is *not* the same as the worry over how I can pity Anna Karenina. That was a concern about the nature of the object of my pity. In the case of Everett, there is no problem with the object — he's an ordinary, concrete, existent person. Certainly I can envy or pity him. Rather, the problem is that the reasons for my attitudes are not the *sort* of reasons that justify, or explain, genuine attitudes toward Everett. This will be better understood if we divide each Attitude-Reason Statement into two parts:

(1a) I envy Everett [because]

(1b) Everett is living the life of a jet-setting secret agent.

(2a) I pity Everett [because]

(2b) Everett is too obsessed with Porcini.

I call (1a) and (2a) the "Attitude Reports," and I call (1b) and (2b) the "Reason Reports." The Reason Reports provide the fictional characteristic of the object that explains the Attitude Reports. Since Everett is a perfectly respectable object of envy and pity, there is no evident problem with the Attitude Reports by themselves. So it must be the Reason Reports that determine whether or not the name 'Everett' remains connected to the real person.

To see what the problem with the Reason Reports might be, let's consider ordinary attitudes in ordinary, non-fiction contexts. Say that I like Everett because he is easy-going (I do). We can divide this claim into an Attitude Report and a Reason Report as well:

(3a) I like Everett [because]

(3b) Everett is easy-going.

Clearly there's no doubt that the object of my liking is Everett, and that this attitude is explained by my belief that Everett is easy-going. Notice that it is *not* explained by the truth of the statement, "Everett is easy-going," but rather by my *belief* that he is.¹³ Suppose I have a false belief about Everett, for instance that he spread rumors about me. Then I might well be angry with him, and this anger would be explained by my belief, even though the belief is false.¹⁴ Therefore, if the Reason Reports in (1) and (2) are problematic, that must be because I *don't* believe them. Since the correct response to a fictional story is that we imagine that what is fictionally true really is true, my reasons are statements of what I *make* believe, not of what I believe. I am *imagining* that Everett is a jet-setting secret agent, and I am *imagining* that he is obsessed with capturing Porcini. But of course I don't believe either of these claims. The reasons for my attitudes come from the way Everett is portrayed in the fiction, and fictional reasons are not the kinds of reasons that could justify a genuine attitude directed at the real person. That is why it cannot be straightforwardly true that I envy Everett because he is a jet-setting secret agent: *not* because there is no Everett, but because I do not really believe the reason that explains my attitude.

We have seen that the question of whether or not the real Everett is the object of my attitude hinges on whether or not it is the real Everett to whom I make reference in my reason for the attitude. That means we need to look more closely at the Reason Reports. Take (1b). I am imagining that Everett is a jet-setting secret agent, and I am reporting the content of what I imagine. Is this a case of imagining, *of* the actual Everett, that he is as described in the story? Or is it imagining that a fictional character, the "Everett-of-the-story," is as the story describes him

¹³ There is some debate over the claim that a genuine attitude requires belief, which usually comes up in this context with the issue of fearing fictions. Do we literally fear movie monsters, even though we don't really believe that we are in danger? Does genuine fear require the belief that one is in danger? Walton (1990) discusses this issue in Chapter 7. Whatever one might say about such possibly irrational attitudes as fear, I think it remains clear that for those attitudes that require a reason (the reflective attitudes), this reason must be believed.

¹⁴ This is, for example, why the Greeks' worship of Zeus is not at issue here. More on this below.

to be? The contrast is between a case of *de re* imagining about the real person, and a case of imagining about a fictional character.¹⁵ If we are imagining *de re* about the real Everett, then we can infer that “Everett is such that we imagine, of him, that he is a secret agent.”¹⁶ In such a case, the parallel between make-believe and belief is evident. In this report of the content of our imaginings, as in a *de re* belief report, the name ‘Everett’ can be replaced with any co-referring expression.¹⁷ Of course none of this is to say that the Everett-of-the-story would be completely unrelated to the real Everett. Presumably the Everett-of-the-story would be based on the real Everett in some close way. Even with that caveat, it seems to me that this is clearly a case of imagining *de re* about the real Everett.

Assume that you are at the Empty Names Conference, listening to the story. You would probably look at Everett while I tell it. If you did not take the story to be about the real person, one of the organizers of the conference, you would not find it so amusing. The fact that what I’ve said of Everett in the story isn’t true of him should not be a problem. After all, though Everett may not really be a secret agent, it is not so difficult to imagine that he is (he’s British, he travels a lot, etc.). In fact, if you know Everett well, you are probably imagining even more than what is true in the story. Perhaps you are considering how Everett has managed to keep up his secret agent skills right under your noses. Consider some other responses you could have. After the story is told, you might go up to Everett, and in a joking tone inquire as to whether he’s caught any spies lately. Similarly, just as a tourist might go to Baker Street in London to be on the street where Holmes lived, you might be imagining yourself in the very building (CSLI) where there is a spy trap. In these cases it looks as though the imaginative engagement with the story is an engagement with the real person and the real place mentioned in the story. Now, I don’t want to overestimate what these examples show. They are intuition pumps, not

¹⁵ Walton discusses imagining *de re*, and the generation of *de re* fictional truths about real objects, in Walton (1990), esp. Chapter 3.

¹⁶ It should be noted that on Thomasson’s theory, imagining what is prescribed by the story involves *de re* imagining about fictional characters. For Thomasson, Sherlock Holmes is an abstract cultural artifact that has such properties as having been created by Conan Doyle, being anchored in certain texts, being a fictional character, etc. In the Holmes stories, other properties are “ascribed” to Holmes: being a detective, being a man, living in London, etc. We imagine, of Holmes, that he has these properties, apparently in much the same way we imagine, of Everett, that he has the properties ascribed to him in the story. See Thomasson (1996) and esp. Thomasson (1998).

¹⁷ This claim has been disputed by Lamarque and Olsen (1994), who argue that reference to real objects in fiction is only under the modes of presentation authorized by the fiction. I do not find their argument convincing for a variety

knockdown arguments. If you prefer the fictional object theory, you can probably reinterpret these points in terms of fictional objects related in the right ways to the real things. But I do think the examples at least make it quite plausible, pre-theoretically, that you are imagining about the real Everett and the real CSLI, rather than about fictional objects based on them.

To sum up where we are right now. As we have already seen, since there is a real object for the attitudes, the Attitude Reports are unproblematic. So if we are to say that the name 'Everett' is disconnected from the real Everett in (1) and (2), that would have to be because it is disconnected in the Reason Reports. But consideration of how we respond to the story indicates that it is the *real* Everett about whom we are imagining, and therefore that it is the *real* Everett to whom the Reason Reports refer. It will turn out that if it is, indeed, the real Everett about whom we are imagining, it is most plausible to think of our attitudes as make-believe attitudes. But before I explain why, I will turn to some objections to what I have said so far.

IV. The Porcini Objection

I have argued that it is the real Everett about whom we are imagining in response to the story. Now I want to focus on an objection to this claim that arises from conflicts in our abilities to imagine what is fictionally true. Broadly speaking, this objection points to cases in which, *if* we assume that in the Reason Reports we are imagining about real objects, we cannot explain how it is even possible to imagine what is true in the fiction. After I have dealt with a counterexample to my claims along these lines, I will show how my analysis applies to interesting and related cases brought up by Fred Kroon. To illustrate the objection, let's suppose that in response to the story I say this:

(4) I dislike Porcini because he never tells a joke.

Now allow me to let you in on a part of the story I didn't tell. I am sure you have been wondering who Porcini really is. Suppose that we add to the story the following sentence: "Little did Everett know, Porcini was really his own advisor at Stanford, the author of a number

of reasons, most importantly its practical obliteration of the difference between reference to real people and reference to fictional characters, esp. in terms of our attitudes.

of influential works in the philosophy of language: John Perry.” If Porcini is Perry, then my Attitude-Reason Statement would be:

(5) I dislike John Perry because he never tells a joke.

As usual, we divide the Attitude-Reason Statement into an Attitude Report and a Reason Report:

(5a) I dislike John Perry [because]

(5b) John Perry never tells a joke.

Once again there is no problem with the Attitude Report, because Perry is a perfectly respectable object of dislike. But the Reason Report appears problematic. Remember that the Reason Report states what you imagine that explains the attitude. That means you are being asked to make believe that *John Perry* is a diabolical Italian spy who has no sense of humor and never cracks a joke. Even if you can get yourself into the imaginative frame of mind that Perry is an Italian spy, you may be hard-pressed to think of him as someone who has never cracked a joke. Perry is well known for his joke-telling propensities. So, the objection goes, if you *can* imagine that Porcini never tells a joke, that must be because Porcini is not the real Perry, but only the John-Perry-of-the-story. If the only way to imagine what is true in the fiction is to imagine about a fictional character, then it must be fictional characters about which we are imagining. And, since what we imagine is the Reason Report that explains the attitude, then the attitude should also be to a fictional character. Call this the “Porcini Objection.”

I think the Porcini Objection does not entail this conclusion, although it points to an interesting phenomenon. You found the sentence I added to the story amusing precisely because it’s supposed to be Perry you are making believe never tells a joke. If I took out the connected names in the story, a good part of the humor would have been lost. It is pretty clear that this story was designed for a certain audience who would appreciate the allusions. So if we deny that we are supposed to be imagining, of Perry, that he never tells a joke, or of Everett, that he is a secret agent, then it seems as if we lose the point of the story altogether. So I think that the difficulty we have in imagining that about Perry, while apparently an objection to my view that the names remain connected in our attitudes, actually provides support for my claim. It is precisely *because* you recognize that you are supposed to be imagining, of *John Perry*, that he never tells a joke that you experience a kind of humorous tension. My proposal will be that such obstacles to imagining what is true in this fiction are problems for the *psychology* of our

imagining, and not for the semantics of the reports of what we imagine. We can make perfect sense of the problem in (5b) without saying that the name ‘John Perry’ is disconnected from the real Perry.

We can see this if we consider the response of someone who does not know Perry well enough to be aware that he tells a lot of jokes. The difficulty many of us have in imagining (5b) would not even arise for this person. Unless you think that the reference of a name is secured by the descriptions or conceptions associated by a speaker with a name — and I don’t — it is safe to say that someone can refer to John Perry without knowing that he tells lots of jokes. So such a person can certainly imagine, *de re*, of Perry that he never tells a joke. Why should the difficulty of those of us who know Perry well preclude others from imagining this about him? It seems evident that what is at issue here is a conflict between modes of presentation of Perry.¹⁸ The reason we have difficulty imagining (5b) is that many of us think of Perry in a certain way: as someone who tells a lot of jokes. This mode of presentation of Perry, if it is in the front of our minds, will interfere with our thinking of Perry under the mode of presentation of the fiction. The fiction presents Perry in a way exactly opposed to the way we normally think of him. But the conflict here is psychological, not semantic. Certainly it is no part of the meaning of his name that Perry tells jokes. And we don’t have to be thinking of Perry in exactly the same way, for it to be Perry we are imagining about. Someone who doesn’t know that Perry tells jokes will presumably be thinking of Perry in some other way that does not conflict with the portrayal in the fiction. Two more points need to be made. First, the fact that many of us usually think of Perry as a joke-teller, does *not* mean that we cannot still imagine of him that he never tells jokes. To do that requires, as Walton has suggested, that we not explicitly, or occurrently, keep in our minds our knowledge of Perry.¹⁹ This is a purely psychological maneuver, and the fact that we may resort to it just shows that we recognize that we are supposed to be imagining about the real Perry. The psychological conflict would not arise unless it was Perry who was the referent in the Reason Report. And second, the point of this particular story depends on the expectation that we won’t resort to this maneuver. If we manage to suppress the way we normally think of Perry, the

¹⁸ I discuss “modes of presentation” in more detail below.

¹⁹ Walton draws the distinction between occurrent and nonoccurrent imaginings in Walton (1990), pp. 16-21. He suggested, in correspondence, applying this notion to Kroon’s argument.

story wouldn't be as amusing. This is a case where we are sacrificing illusion for the sake of humor.

Let me add that such psychological obstacles to imagining what is true in a fiction are not unique to this particular story. In fact, the phenomenon is quite pervasive. It happens, for example, when you see bad movies, where the special effects cause you to laugh rather than fear the aliens. Or in a work intended to be realistic, but where the inaccuracies are too blatant. This is not to say that we are *never* able to imagine what is unreal, but merely that in some cases what is too unrealistic can interfere with our imaginings. I suggest that the same thing may occur when we know enough about a particular subject or person that is portrayed in a work of fiction, such as John Perry. In such cases the crucial point is that this happens not in spite of, but *because*, we recognize that we are supposed to imagine about a real person. For instance, historians of England often have trouble buying into some of Shakespeare's plays. If a historian has in the front of her mind the knowledge that Richard III really wasn't so evil, she may not be able to enter fully into the make-believe. Similarly, if Hitler were portrayed as a loveable, misunderstood fellow in a movie, it might still be very difficult for us to imagine him that way. But again, it is because we recognize that we are supposed to be imagining about the real Hitler that we have this difficulty.²⁰

So, far from showing that connected names are disconnected in the Reason Reports, it turns out that the Porcini Objection lends *support* to this view. Maintaining that these names remain connected explains the psychology of the situation better than the denial of this claim. The obstacles to imagining would not come up if the referent were not the real person. But before we conclude that we are imagining about the real people, and that our Reason Reports refer to the real people, I want to consider another objection.

V. The Kroon Objection

This objection, which I call the "Kroon Objection," involves versions of two puzzles offered by Fred Kroon (1994). Kroon uses his puzzles to show why make-believe theorists should give up

the assumption that connected names in attitude reports refer to real people. Wherever the fictional object theorist would say that the disconnection of the names involves reference to fictional objects, Kroon himself would interpret such claims in terms of pretend-reference. So he handles the name 'Everett' in the same way as Walton handles the name 'Anna Karenina,' except that we can bring in more information about the real Everett in our imaginings.²¹ I want to indicate how I think my analysis of Reason Reports handles Kroon's Objection as well.

Here is the first puzzle. Since, according to the story, Porcini is brilliant in diabolical scheming, I imagine that he is such. And, since I admire brilliant people, regardless of the use to which they put their intelligence, I may have the following attitude in response to the story: "I admire Porcini because he is brilliant in diabolical scheming." Now consider Everett, who is listening to the story right along with you. Perhaps he too finds himself admiring this clever spy for the same reason. So we can report his attitude as follows: "Everett admires Porcini because he is brilliant in diabolical scheming." But now we have a problem, since according to the story, Everett *despises* Porcini for his brilliance in diabolical scheming. In fact, the story is *explicit* that Everett cannot bring himself to admire Porcini for just this reason. If we maintain that in both attitude reports, the names refer to the actual people, then we seem to have a contradiction: (6) Everett admires Porcini because he is brilliant in diabolical scheming, and Everett despises Porcini because he is brilliant in diabolical scheming.

The problem here is not with the object of the attitude, of course, since Porcini is John Perry. Rather, the puzzle is that we have the very same fictional reason giving rise to contradictory attitudes.

The second case is even more complex. According to the story, the rest of Everett's life has been ruined by his obsession with Porcini. Everyone except Everett pities Everett, but Everett is too

²⁰ Of course, as Anthony Everett pointed out to me, in the Hitler case the problem might be a moral disdain for imagining this way, rather than an inability to imagine it. However, this moral disdain is itself evidence that we recognize it's Hitler about whom we are supposed to imagine.

²¹ This qualification turns out to be rather significant, in fact, that it is sometimes hard to tell if we are really disagreeing. In Kroon (1994), he proposes to explicate this idea by saying that the pretend reference to a real object, which imports information about the real object into the game of make-believe, can be seen as "relative reference." Kroon says, "we might say that there is a real person, [Everett], whom the speaker refers to *relative to, or from the perspective of, her pretense that [the story] yields reliable information*" (219; replaced the names used by Kroon). However, Kroon has since given up this explication in favor of an appeal to the idea of 'shallow pretense,' as proposed in Crimmins (forthcoming). See n.24 below.

blinded even to pity himself. Let's say that I particularly pity people who cannot manage to pity themselves, they are so wretched. So I have the following attitude in response to the story: "I pity Everett because Everett does not pity himself." Once again consider the real Everett listening to the story. Perhaps he feels just the same way. So we can report his attitude like this:
(7) Everett pities Everett because Everett does not pity himself.

Now the contradiction is even more blatant. It is not merely that Everett has two conflicting attitudes grounded on the same reason, but that the reason for the attitude appears to contradict the attitude itself. We analyze it this way:

(7a) Everett pities Everett [because]

(7b) Everett does not pity himself.

The Attitude Report (7a) is supposed to be explained by the Reason Report (7b), but surely that does not happen here. As usual the Reason Report is a fictional reason, since it is according to the story that Everett does not pity himself. But that is no bar to the Attitude Report's making reference to Everett, as we have seen. So what is the problem?

Kroon suggests rephrasing (6) and (7) along the following lines:

(6') Everett admires Porcini because he is brilliant in diabolical scheming, and *in the story* Everett despises Porcini because he is brilliant in diabolical scheming.

(7') Everett pities Everett *as he is in the story* because *in the story* Everett does not pity himself.

When we rephrase this way, it looks as though in each case the first occurrence of 'Everett' refers to the real Everett, while the other occurrences of the name refer to a fictional Everett, the Everett-of-the-story. In other words, we get rid of the contradiction in (6) if we say that that the first 'Everett' refers to the *real* Everett admiring the *fictional* John Perry, much any reader might admire Sherlock Holmes. Then we would say that the second 'Everett' refers to the *fictional* Everett despising the fictional John Perry, just as Holmes might despise Moriarty. Similarly, when we rephrase (7), it looks as though Everett is pitying a fictional character, rather than himself. In both cases Kroon reinterprets this to mean that only the first occurrence of the name 'Everett' refers in the standard way to the real person; in the other cases it pretendedly-refers (and the same goes for 'Porcini'). So, if we said that the name 'Everett' is disconnected from the real person in all but the first occurrence in (6) and (7), we would seem to get rid of the contradiction. But we do not need to do that.

Once again I want to say that although there may be psychological difficulty in Everett's imaginings, it is not a semantic difficulty. There is a simple way to account for the semantics, while retaining the position that in every occurrence in (6) and (7) the name 'Everett' remains connected to the real person. I will number the occurrences of the name to make this clear:

(6) Everett₁ admires Porcini because he is brilliant in diabolical scheming, and Everett₂ despises Porcini because he is brilliant in diabolical scheming.

(7) Everett₃ pities Everett₄ because Everett₅ does not pity himself.

There is no doubt on anyone's part that 'Everett₁' and 'Everett₃' refer to the real person, since he's the person doing the imagining in response to the story. The doubt is raised by 'Everett₂,' 'Everett₄,' and 'Everett₅,' and of course the "himself" refers to whatever 'Everett₅' refers to. If I am going to say that all of these occurrences of the name remain connected to the real Everett, I will have to provide an account that explains the difference between the two sets of names, while dealing with the apparent contradictions.

Following Walton, and along the lines of my response to the Porcini Objection, we just distinguish the modes of presentation of the real Everett. So 'Everett₁' and 'Everett₃' refer to the real Everett under whatever mode of presentation you are thinking of the real Everett. This would probably be a *de re* mode of presentation, a perceptual one if you were at the Empty Names Conference. 'Everett₂,' 'Everett₄,' and 'Everett₅' then refer to the real Everett under the mode of presentation of the fiction. We think of Everett as he is portrayed in the fiction. As for Everett himself, in (6), Everett thinks of himself *de se* as admiring Porcini, and *de re* as despising Porcini. In (7), Everett thinks of himself *de se* as pitying someone, and the someone he pities is himself, thought of as presented by the fiction. In other words, Everett himself would report his attitudes as follows:

(8) I admire Porcini because he is brilliant in diabolical scheming and Everett despises Porcini because he is brilliant in diabolical scheming.

(9) I pity Everett because Everett does not pity himself.

In these statements, the occurrences of the name 'Everett' refer *de re* to the real Everett, of whom Everett is imagining that he is as described in the story. Notice that the rest of us would report our attitudes in just the same way.

A word should be said about the use to which I am putting these various “modes of presentation.” I do not have a theory about what modes of presentation are: abstract objects, concrete particulars, etc. However, it should be clear what they are not: part of the semantics of the names used in reports of what we imagine. That is why the conflict that arises for some of us when we try to imagine John Perry as someone who has never told a joke is a psychological conflict, rather than a semantic contradiction. That is a conflict between whatever way we normally think of Perry, and the way the story presents — or rather, represents — him. In the cases described by Kroon, another important distinction is between *de re* and *de se* modes of presentation. The *de se* mode is marked by immunity to error through misidentification, to use Shoemaker’s term.²² In (7), for example, Everett cannot be wrong that it is he who is imagining, though it is conceivable that he could be mistaken that he is the object of his imaginings (e.g., he might be wrong to think that he is the Everett the story is about). That is why the other occurrences of ‘Everett’ cannot refer to him *de se*, even though it is the real Everett of whom he is imagining.

However, distinguishing between first- and third-person modes of presentation will not suffice to resolve the puzzle in Everett’s situation. Consider the following (non-fiction) scenario. Ellen is a poor student who lives in pitiful conditions. However, she does not realize what she is missing, and so she does not pity herself. When she overhears her teachers talking about her situation, she learns for the first time that she is someone to be pitied. She comes to pity herself in a third-person way, looking at herself “from the outside,” so to speak. But even if that is the route to Ellen’s recognition of her own situation, if she understands that it is she who is being discussed, she will come to think of *herself* as pitiable, in the first-person way. If Ellen fails to make the transfer between the third-person perspective and the first-person perspective, then she has not recognized that she is the subject of the conversation. This failure of recognition gives rise to the puzzles Perry and Kaplan use to show that there is a difference between the first and third persons, as when one says, “that man’s pants are on fire,” without realizing that one is looking in a mirror.²³

²² Shoemaker (1968). Walton discusses *de se* imagining in (1990).

²³ See Kaplan (1989) and Perry (1993).

Things are different with the Everett case. As noted above, if there is a fictional portrayal of a person there is always the possibility that one might not recognize that one is being portrayed. But that is not the situation in this example; Everett knows perfectly well that it is he who is being described in the story. So it would seem that within the pretense Everett should be doing what Ellen does in the non-fiction case: making the transfer from the third person to the first. But Everett cannot do that, because to do so would be for him to think of himself in a contradictory manner. If he is aware, in the course of his imaginings, that it is *he himself* who both pities and does not pity himself, he will not be able to imagine as the story prescribes. But once again this is a psychological difficulty, not a semantic one. As Walton has suggested, he might not be able to imagine both at the same time occurrently, to keep both in the front of his mind. He can imagine both that he pities Everett, and that Everett does not pity himself, so long as he doesn't explicitly imagine that he and Everett are the same person. The fact that Everett has to resort to this psychological trick, the fact that he experiences this tension between the two ways of imagining, again supports the claim that he is supposed to be imagining about himself.²⁴ I return to the disanalogy between the non-fiction case and the fiction case below.

VI. Back to Make-Believe Attitudes

We have seen that the issues that arise in the Porcini Objection and the Kroon Objection can be resolved without saying that the names are disconnected. To assume otherwise would force us to give up some basic intuitions, and would not explain why we have trouble imagining some of what is fictionally true. But it is not merely the case that we can, if we want, maintain the view

²⁴ Kroon has recently suggested (in correspondence) that the distinction between modes of presentation indicates 'shallow pretense,' as proposed in Crimmins (forthcoming). For example, when we talk about Hammurabi's beliefs about Hesperus and Phosphorus, we are pretending (in a very shallow way) to talk about two different things; the pretense is that thoughts about Venus under the Hesperus-mode are thoughts about a different thing from thoughts about Venus under the Phosphorus-mode. The pretense account is then utilized to determine the truth conditions of these statements. If all that Kroon means by saying that the reference to Everett is pretend-reference is that it involves shallow pretense, then the difference between our views is negligible, since shallow pretense is invoked in cases where we are clearly referring to one thing (e.g., Venus) in ordinary belief contexts. The fact that we imagine about things under modes of presentation does not preclude genuine reference to those things. What interests me in the paper is how Kroon's argument might be used to deny this genuine reference to real objects, even if Kroon's own understanding of it goes in a different direction.

that the names are connected. Rather, I think this story indicates that we *should* maintain that view. That is because the justification for denying that our attitudes directed at the real people would be that my *reasons* for these attitudes do not make reference to the real people. But we have seen that that is not the case — clearly it is *Everett* about whom I am imagining, in response to this story. So it would be rather strange, I think, to say that although it is *Everett* about whom I am imagining that he is a jet-setting secret agent, it is *not* Everett of whom I am envious. To say that would mean to say that my response is like this: First I imagine that the real Everett is a jet-setter. Then I envy a fictional character for being a jet-setter. Surely that is not the correct explanation. If it is Everett who is the jet-setter of my imaginings, then it is Everett, thought of as a jet-setter, of whom I am envious.

But then we return to the original problem. If this reason is not something I believe, then how can I *really* envy the real Everett? I don't think I can. Notice that this question has two parts: either I *really* envy a *fictional* Everett; or the attitude isn't *real* envy. Since it's not the first, it must be the second. In other words, if it isn't a fictional Everett I'm really envying (which I have argued it is not), then it must be that the attitude isn't genuine envy. Let's think of this non-genuine attitude as one of Walton's make-believe attitudes. My argument is not how Walton himself derives his account, but I think what I've said indicates a way to understand such attitudes so that they are perfectly plausible. The reason the attitudes are make-believe, does not necessarily have to do with the phenomenology of my attitude, nor am I play-acting that I envy Everett. Rather, what it means to say that I make-believely envy Everett is merely this: My envy depends on a reason that I don't believe, but only imagine. There is a two-stage process: first I imagine Everett, the real Everett, to be a jet-setter. Then, with that presupposed, in the context of my imagining, I envy him. This envy, once again, cannot be genuine envy because it is not explained by my beliefs about the real person. Since it is explained, rather, by my *make-beliefs*, it is in just that sense make-believe envy.

Of course the parallel between belief and make-belief is not so straightforward. It is well known that problems for the theory of reference arise in consideration of belief attributions. To recycle an old example, it seems that "Ken believes that Phosphorus is rising" could be true while "Ken believes that Hesperus is rising" was false, even though 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' refer to the

same thing (Venus). Similarly, it seems that “Everett imagines that Everett is pitiful” could be true while “Everett imagines that he himself is pitiful” is false, even though ‘Everett’ and ‘he himself’ refer to the same person. The difference is that if Ken finds out that Hesperus is Phosphorus, he will adjust his beliefs so as to avoid the contradiction. If Ken were to suppress this knowledge and continue believing as before, he would be irrational. But not only does Everett already know that he is the object about whom he is imagining, it is not irrational for him to suppress this knowledge. In fact, he needs to suppress this knowledge in order to imagine as the fiction prescribes.

Furthermore, in the case of ordinary belief attributions, one might say that the same belief content is believed (or not) under different modes of presentation. So Ken believes that Venus is rising under one mode of presentation, but not under another. I have talked as though, in the Everett case, the fiction provided just another mode of presentation along the same lines. If that were so, it would seem that Everett could simply *believe* that he is a secret agent under that mode of presentation. But the fictional mode of presentation clearly changes the attitude in question from belief to make-belief. There is no mode of presentation under which Everett believes that he is a secret agent; he only imagines that he is. The same applies to anyone else’s imagining that of Everett. And reports of what we imagine, I have claimed, are *de re* in the sense that we can substitute co-referring expressions for ‘Everett.’ We imagine *of Everett* (thought of however you might think of him) that he is a secret agent. But then, when we envy him for this, we envy him under the mode of presentation of the fiction (i.e., our envy is grounded on make-belief rather than belief), since it is only thought of as a secret agent that we would envy him.

Since genuine envy, pity, and so on (reflective appreciator attitudes) require a belief that the object possess the trait that explains the attitude, we have make-believe attitudes wherever we have make-beliefs as the explanation for the attitude. This is a very minimal notion of these attitudes, and tells us nothing about the richness or complexity of our emotional responses to fiction. For all that I have said, our make-believe pity of Everett could be just as intense, if not more intense, than any genuine pity for a real person might be. It could feel exactly like genuine pity.²⁵ I have argued simply that there is a condition on an attitude’s being a make-believe

²⁵ See Walton (1997) for a discussion of the intensity and variety of our emotional responses to fiction.

attitude: that it be grounded on what we imagine rather than what we believe. This is so no matter what the outward aspect of our emotions may be, how deeply we feel them, and so on. It is a minimal requirement, but it rules out cases that are clearly not make-believe, for example the Greeks' worship of Zeus. Presumably the Greeks believed (falsely) that Zeus was an existent, powerful god. Therefore, their worship was not make-believe worship.

Considerations of connected names, then, show that some notion of make-believe attitudes is viable and useful. It seems, in fact, that we need such attitudes to explain at least the story I have discussed, a case where there are connected, rather than unconnected names. If I am right that the best explanation of such a case is one that invokes make-believe attitudes, then it looks as if any theory of fiction would make use of these attitudes, since connected names occur throughout fiction. Let's assume the fictional object theorist grants that make-believe attitudes have a place in a theory of fiction when it comes to explaining our responses to some stories with connected names. He still could maintain that our attitudes toward purely fictional characters, such as our pity of Anna Karenina, are genuine, on the grounds that these characters really have the properties that explain our attitudes. That would be the case on Zalta's and Parsons' views (especially for Parsons, since the sense in which Anna suffers is exactly the same sense in which any actual person might suffer). In contrast, since for Thomasson Anna does not literally have the property of having suffered, we cannot genuinely pity her. Van Ingwagen also argues that our attitudes toward fictional characters are pretend attitudes, on the grounds that one does not admire, or pity, or envy things that are non-rational, non-sentient beings (such as abstract objects).²⁶ It seems to me that it would be a more consistent treatment of our responses to fiction to extend the make-believe analysis to purely fictional characters. In this respect Thomasson's account would be more consistent than Parsons' or Zalta's. On her view, our imagining of Everett that he is a secret agent and our make-believelly envying him for that, would be just like our imagining of Anna Karenina that she suffers and our make-believelly pitying her for that.

²⁶ This is although van Ingwagen does not appear to agree with Thomasson that we only imagine Anna to have the property of having suffered. He makes a distinction in line with Zalta's, between 'having' (exemplifying) properties and 'holding' (encoding) them. But Zalta thinks our attitudes toward abstract objects based on the properties they encode are genuine, while van Ingwagen thinks attitudes based on the properties such objects hold are pretend attitudes.

Pushing this line far enough could lead one to see how the make-believe theory becomes more attractive as an explanation of other aspects of our discourse about fiction.²⁷ Of course there are other considerations that may favor a fictional object theory, and I do not claim to have addressed all such considerations. Even so, I hope I have made clear that make-believe attitudes are not implausible. Therefore we should not view the commitment to these attitudes as a drawback for the pretense theory of fiction, or as a particular reason to favor a fictional object theory.

²⁷ Kroon (1992) argues that Meinong held a mixed view involving pretense about non-existent objects, and that he should have abandoned the commitment to non-existent objects in favor of a pure pretense account. The point is that once make believe is doing the explanatory work in one's theory, there is little point in positing such objects. But this is, of course, a very contentious claim.

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