**Fictional Truth in Digital Cinema:**

**A Criticism against John Dilworth**

In digital cinema, the ambiguity in the concept of representation asks us: How do moving pictures represent fictional objects? I am more concerned in the veracity of fictional objects than the representational theory of how fictional objects are generated. I claim that John Dilworth’s framework is uncritical; consequently, I will offer a solution to the issue at hand: by adopting an account of truth in fiction according to David Lewis. So, the purposes of this paper are: (1) to criticize John Dilworth’s framework, and (2) to provide Lewis’s theory as an alternative solution in understanding the veracity of fictional objects while, at the same time, avoiding uncritical reasoning.

Keywords: Digital cinema, fiction, philosophy of film, David Lewis, John Dilworth

1. **Introduction**

In the philosophy of film, there are a number of theories that explain the concept of representation. During the 1900’s, most of them ascribe to the realistic features of film because moving pictures are essentially photographic, thus it stands for actual things or persons we know or recognize that is of reality.[[1]](#footnote-1) But nowadays the art of film is rapidly changing and growing. About a decade ago, a new type of cinema was introduced—digital cinema. Examples of digital films are “Toy Story” (1995) and “Jurassic Park” (1993). As opposed to traditional (photographic) cinema, digital cinema is considered to be composed of computer-generated images. These images could be alterations of any kind of pictures (like photographs, drawings or paintings), or assignments of integer values to all the pixels in a gridded picture plane. Digital imaging then entails an illusion of existence.[[2]](#footnote-2) It creates a verisimilitude of reality that is capable of deceiving the viewer into thinking that what he or she is viewing is something real, or at least perceptually real.

So, this paper investigates the concept of representation in digital cinema, specifically on the issue of *ambiguity*: How does a picture represent a fictional object, or fiction in general? I claim that John Dilworth’s framework is circular, and to compensate for it, the second and final part of my paper is to offer an alternative solution by using David Lewis’s framework in “Truth in Fiction.” I am limiting the scope of my paper to fictional truth and thereby I won’t ascribe or be committed to any sort of representational theory.

The ambiguity manifests itself in the different senses of the fictional object, but ultimately it also concerns the nature of the movie (i.e. how the movie is capable of generating truths about fictional objects). The issue then is parted in two ways: How it generates truths and what justifies such truths. The former presupposes a representational theory whereas the latter focuses on the veracity of fictional objects. The paper will just focus on the latter.

To better understand the issue, let’s suppose that Stacie is watching a movie: Marvel’s “The Avengers” (2012). She recognizes that the movie represents an object which is The Hulk. The movie represents the object, even though there is no actual object or no actual Hulk to represent. So, if there is no actual Hulk, then there is no Hulk to *re-present* in the movie. But, clearly, the movie still represents the object despite the fact that there is no actual object or Hulk. The movie might refer to itself as the object’s denotation, and, also, it might probably not because it might be denoting something outside the movie—in our world or perhaps a possible world. But it is impossible to render the reference of The Hulk, let alone the whole fictional movie, in our world. If it doesn’t refer anything in our reality, what determines fictional truths?

To see the bigger picture, let’s take another example. In “The Dark Knight” (2008), the Joker blew up Gotham General Hospital. The fictional object in the movie is the Joker. In one sense, one could say that the fictional object refers to Heath Ledger. But, it doesn’t seem right because Heath Ledger was not a crazy maniac who wore heavy make-up and killed civilians and cops, who, at the same time, played a part in the movies “Brokeback Mountain”(2005)and “Casanova”(2005). In another sense, one could argue that the fictional object refers to the movie itself. This seems to be a safe answer, however how could we ascertain whether the fictional object is true or false apart from the movie itself? And lastly, suppose that if the referent doesn’t seem to be Heath Ledger nor the movie itself, perhaps there is a possible world where the Joker is a real person of flesh and blood. In that possible world, he blew up Gotham General. But, some would ask: How was he able to put the bombs in the hospital? Did he do it by himself? Did he hire lunatics from the Arkham Asylum to do it for him? It is reasonable to ask these questions because they were not explicitly shown in the movie. Nevertheless, we still couldn’t verify who put the bombs in the hospital. So truth in fictional movie, in this sense, is also indeterminate. How can we justify fictional truth in digital cinema? In the three versions of this example, the ambiguity in the concept of representation shows that the fictional object both is and is not the case: it is true in the story, yet it is false in reality.

We fall back to the issue: How does a picture represent a fictional object? Two problems arise from this, one is of a logical implication and the other is an ontological one. I have mentioned that the ambiguity is shown by the different senses (or indeterminate denotations) of the fictional object, thus, the logical problem: *What establishes the truth of fictional objects, or fiction in general?* It investigates the veracity of fiction, and it could thus procure a solution to the ambiguity. On the other hand, the ontological problem, which I won’t be discussing in this paper, attempts to explore the nature of moving pictures of fictional objects. The concern here is not so much now on the object but on the concept of pictorial representation itself. It asks: *What is a picture? Or how does a picture generate truths about fictional objects?*[[3]](#footnote-3) To ascribe a theory of representation is to make sense of how moving pictures stand for the truth-value of fictional objects.

Some philosophers of art offer different sorts of representational theories and each of them supported it with a criteria that substantiate the truthfulness of pictorial representation. Noel Carroll (1990) asserts that instead of postulating the existence of a fictional object in reality, we could entertain it in thought, a mental representation. Accordingly, he follows a Fregean framework such that the senses of fictional propositions determine our thought contents about fictional objects.[[4]](#footnote-4) This conclusion on the veracity of fictional objects is anchored on his representational theory of recognition.[[5]](#footnote-5) Therefore, through his representational theory, it generates what determines fictional objects and that is, for Carroll, our thought contents or mental representations.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Thus, to start, this paper will focus on the frameworks of John Dilworth (2004) and David Lewis (1983). Dilworth formulated two kinds of representation (internal and external representation), unified by the recognition theory, to offer as a solution to the ambiguity of representation. He asserts that, logically, there are two truth-conditions for fictional truth which are about the same fictional object. What is fictionally true in an internal statement denotes the fictional object in the picture or internal representation, and what is fictionally true in an external statement denotes the picture or external representation.[[7]](#footnote-7) Lewis, on the other hand, contends that logically what is true in the fictional picture is what would be true according to the fictional picture’s explicit content, background of consisting of either facts about our world or of the beliefs prevalent in the community of origin, and inter-fictional and intra-fictional carry-overs.[[8]](#footnote-8) A thorough discussion of Dilworth and Lewis’s frameworks are found in the third and fourth sections respectively.

The objectives of this paper then are to identify the circularity in John Dilworth’s framework, and to offer Lewis’s framework as an alternative solution in understanding the veracity of the concept of representation.

I’m assuming, first of all, that films are representational and depictive because the scope of this paper is focused on the genre of narrative fiction in digital films. Films that are non-representational and non-depictive will not be discussed here.[[9]](#footnote-9) Before I proceed to the first part of the paper, I will make a short prelude to the significance of fictional motion pictures by contrasting it to fictional literature and by motivating what results it brings about. Since the main focus is directed not only to fiction but also digital cinema, the following section shall serve as an introduction of how fiction is conveyed differently according to the applied artistic medium.

**II. The Significance of Fictional Truths in the Movies**

In terms of artistic medium, the arts each have a distinct and powerful way in representing their objects. In this section, I will show (1) how fiction in digital films are different from fiction in literature using Noel Carroll’s distinction, and (2) what makes fictional truth in digital cinema significant.

Noel Carroll (2008) contrasts the cinematic image from language for three reasons: (1) first is that the disanalogy between the cinematic image and language stems from the fact that their neural bases are different, hence they are distinct communicative systems. For example, an adult Westerner is shown a Japanese picture of an alien in a floating-point-of-view style. Upon viewing two or three more pictures of it, the Westerner will be able to identify the object in the following pictures, however if it were linguistic symbols of the Japanese language and he was only shown two or three symbols of it, the Westerner won’t be able to catch up with identifying all or some Japanese words that will follow.[[10]](#footnote-10) (2) The second is that words are arbitrary while cinematic shots aren’t; say, a book might represent a dog but in the reader’s mind he could be imagining a bulldog while the other reader could imagine a poodle. On the other hand, a movie-goer might watch a movie that represents a particular black labrador. A competent shot of a black labrador cannot be mistaken to be either a bulldog or a poodle. (3) The last is that cinematic shots can’t be decomposed into smaller units unlike sentences that have verbs, nouns, and the like. For instance, the statement “The chicken is about to cross the road” is not analogous to a cinematic shot of it because how can it account for “the”, “is”, or “to”?

Therefore, when discussing about fiction, there may be some disparate elements in every artform. In this case, movies and literature generate their representations differently according to their artistic medium.

When it comes to digital cinema, there is much to learn about its nature and truth for it is a relatively new art compared to painting and literature.[[11]](#footnote-11) A digital image can be generated through non-photographic means; that is, it is not causally connected to its subject. To illustrate, Mitchell (1992) states that just as painting a picture is through a brush stroke, digital imaging is through assigning an integer value to a pixel, and when integer values are assigned to all pixels, it creates a complete image. That is one way to create a digital image. A concrete example of a full digital movie is “Toy Story”. A digital image may also be a “part scanned photograph, part computer-synthesized shaded, and part electronic painting.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Such an example of which is called a partial digital movie, “Jurassic Park.” So, a digital image is a hand-made picture that seems to have no referent whatsoever, as compared to traditional, photographic pictures.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Although it is important to note how digital pictures represent because not only do they tell us the manner how fictions are conveyed and understood, to some extent how we come to evaluate and interpret pictures is sufficiently dependent on how they are represented and, most of all, what truth they want to establish. Critics and art appreciators wonder and often identify the fictional truths pictures generate. Artists even execute it themselves. The significance of this paper is to determine what is true in the fiction in order to hopefully appreciate fictional movies more (by ascertaining their truths), than just to merely enjoy what is prescribed to the senses.

In the next section, Dilworth offers an answer to the issue by formulating two aspects of representation: internal and external representation. His concept of representation derives from a theory of recognition wherein it links the two aspects of representation together. After discussing his framework, I will show my criticism against him.

**III. John Dilworth’s Theory Debunked**

Dilworth (2004) distinguished two different aspects or categories of representation (namely: internal and external representation), and argued that these two kinds of representation, whose joint recognition promises, provide a unified account of both pictorial representation and fictional reference that does *not entail* an actual object represented by a picture. It is done by debunking cases of external representation that *entails* an actual object by a picture because such a representation militates the ambiguity in question.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The first kind of representation is called external representation and the other is internal representation. The former, he defines as such that: “There is some actual object X, normally external to the representing object P, that is represented by P.”[[15]](#footnote-15) On the other end, the latter is more controversial, in that he defines it as: “There is an object X’, that is internal to the object P, and that is represented by P.”[[16]](#footnote-16) To illustrate, take for example the movie “The Avengers.” In the scene where Loki is dressed as an uninvited guest in a banquet, he suddenly transforms his commoner clothes into his original garb with the headdress and cloak. The internal representation is Loki because, as the definition suggests, it is internal to and represented by the movie. It is internal as long as it is concerned with content. Whereas the external representation is the movie itself. It is an external representation insofar as it is concerned with worldly reference.

Given this, logical and metaphysical problems are raised that involves (1) a reference to and re-identification of the object and (2) an ontological implication of its existence. To ensure the validity of internal representation, he justified it through the veridicality of the concept of seeing and recognition: if a picture is successful in representing an object, it means that there is an object in the picture. And if there is an object in the picture, then the object is an internal representation of the picture. Therefore, if a picture is successful in representing an object, the object is an internal representation of the picture. One might ask: How is a picture successful in representing an object? How can one determine whether it is an internal representation and not something else? According to Dilworth, a picture is successful in representing its object through the recognitional ability of the viewer. In other words, if the viewer who has normal perceptual abilities and is under normal lighting conditions sees the object in the picture, then she recognizes the object.[[17]](#footnote-17) This means that the only perceptual and evidential support for internal representation is one’s recognition. So, when Stacie watches “The Avengers,” the movie externally represents Loki, not because of some independent actual entity outside the movie, but because it externally represents the internal representation of Loki, and that is achieved by recognizing him. Thus the theory of representation used in his framework is recognitional in which the veracity of the fictional object is generated.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Furthermore, he holds that any denotation of fictional objects must be construed as internal representation—an internal object (that does not correspond to any actual object). Fictional truth is understood under the distinction of internal and external statements (that yield two truth-conditions for each): (1) what is fictionally true in an internal statement is true according to the internal representation (e.g. “Thor is from the world Asgard”); and (2) what is fictionally true in an external statement is true according to the external representation (e.g. “Thor is one of characters in ‘The Avengers’ movie”). Both statements are about the same fictional character. Therefore, the ambiguity is clarified: what is true in the stories (internal representation) is also true in the actual world (external representation).

I object to the core of his framework where the bulk of his paper is dependent on: internal representation. It is the logical implication of his framework: that what establishes fictional truths is internal representation.[[19]](#footnote-19) It is shown through one’s recognition of the object as the internal representation, and that, in turn, generates the verity of fictional objects. I argue that internal representation is circular for the following reasons: (1) its definiens and definiendum are the same: “There is an object X’, that is internal to the object P, and that is represented by P.” It easily translates into: to internally represent X in the picture is to internally represent it in the picture. But how about the evidential support for internal representation? (2) The evidential support for internal representation, which is one’s recognition, does explain how fictional truths are generated, but it does not justify the veracity of such truths (i.e. whether those “fictional truths” are true or not). To say that recognition stands as the evidence for internal representation is shown in this short dialogue: Stacie watches “The Avengers” and recognizes that Loki manages to escape the pod where he was briefly imprisoned. Dan, Stacie’s brother, sits beside Stacie. Upon watching some of the scenes, he recognizes the fictional objects. He retorts, “There is no such thing as The Hulk or Iron man! It’s full of crap!” Stacie, who appears to be a proponent of internal and external representation, says “You’re right, there’s no such thing as an actual Hulk or Iron Man. What they refer to then are just their images because those are what we see or recognize. That’s what makes them true.” Dan, who seems to be a bit skeptical, replies, “Just because I see or recognize them in the movie does not make them true. My recognition or perception of them does not justify what those things are.” Stacie, who is getting annoyed, answers, “Well, as long as the movie represents those things, then those things are true.” Dan, unsatisfied says, “I know, I see them too, but how can you be so sure?” Stacie, gives up and ends the conversation saying, “Just watch the damn movie.”

As a result, not only does internal representation commit a fallacy, but it also rests on uncritical ground: Since Dilworth’s framework wholly depends on internal representation, his entire framework collapses with it.

Suppose that Stacie is watching “The Avengers,” she sees or recognizes that Loki manages to escape the pod where he was briefly imprisoned. According to Dilworth, the fictional truth (as defined by internal representation) is: In “The Avengers,” Loki manages to escape the pod where he was briefly imprisoned. How can one correctly justify fictional truth if it refers back onto itself? As I have mentioned earlier, this sort of truth in fiction has no way of verifying whether it is true or not because it always reverts back to the object without explaining what that object is or how it could be determined.

I have established why Dilworth’s framework won’t work in determining truths in fiction. In the next section, I will offer David Lewis’s framework to provide as a solution to the issue.

**IV. Solution: “Truth in Fiction” by David Lewis**

Previously, I discussed the framework of Dilworth and showed its inadequacy. Here, I will use David Lewis’s framework on truth in fiction to countervail the circularity identified.

There are fictional worlds possible not just in literature, but also in the movies. According to Lewis (1983), fictional truth is closed under implication. It is prefixed with an intensional operator that is analyzed to be quantifier over possible worlds.[[20]](#footnote-20) Thus: “a prefixed sentence ‘In fiction *f*, *Φ*’ is true (or, as we shall also say, *Φ* is true in the fiction *f*) iff *Φ* is true at every possible world in a certain set, this set being somehow determined by the fiction *f*.”[[21]](#footnote-21) In other words, what is true in a, say, particular fiction would be true in all the possible worlds where the characters have similar traits and do the similar deeds that they do in that particular fiction. Two problems arise: one is of circularity and the other is an observation by Saul Kripke (1972a).

(1) “In ‘Toy Story’*,* Woody meets Buzz Lightyear.” And “In ‘Jurassic Park’, a Tyrannosaurus killed Gennaro.” These prefixed sentences alone beg the question because there is no way to determine their truth-value. According to this, what is true in the fiction is what would be true in the fiction. The fallacy is found in Dilworth’s framework, specifically on his formulation of internal representation that: to internally represent X in the movie is to internally represent it in the movie (Section III). If, for example, a director extrapolates a story from a movie and creates from it another motion picture, then Lewis is saying that there must be something more than just mere extrapolation from the artwork, that there must something more than just straightforward chronicles or movies. For Lewis, perhaps the director is practicing his tacit mastery in the truth in fiction that we are investigating.

(2) However, what if the director makes a fictional movie about Batman that, unbeknownst to him and out of sheer coincidence, there really is a Batman in our world, is the director referring to the Batman in our world? This is the observation made by Saul Kripke.[[22]](#footnote-22) The answer is no because we must first make a distinction between homonyms (e.g the name “London” [England] is distinguishable from “London” [Ontario]): (a) in the story, it is false that in our world Batman refers to someone, and (b) it is true in the story that Batman refers to someone.[[23]](#footnote-23) The ambiguity remains: it is false at one of the worlds where the plot is established, yet it is true in the story.

In order to avoid those two problems, Lewis shifts to storytelling wherein the storyteller purports to be telling truths about matters where he or she has knowledge. By knowledge, it means that it is about matters of fact. But in fiction, the storyteller is not telling truths about such, he or she is only *pretending* that they are true. So, the act of fictional storytelling then purports to a world where fiction is told as a matter of fact. Therefore, even if there is coincidentally an actual Batman in our world, it would not have been the same Batman in the movie because they are not the same stories. The name Batman then is understood in a non-rigid sense: (1) in any world *w* where the Batman story is told as known fact, “Batman” refers to the inhabitant of  *w* who plays the role of Batman; and similarly, (2) in any world *w* where the Batman is not told as known fact (even if the fiction is established by the inhabitants of *w*), “Batman” is denotationless (it also does not denote the coincidental real-life Batman if there is one).[[24]](#footnote-24)

In accordance to storytelling, Lewis reached his first proposal: “A sentence of the form ‘In fiction *f*, *Φ*’ is true iff *Φ* is true at every world where *f* is told as known fact rather than fiction.”[[25]](#footnote-25) The problem with the first proposal is it disregards the background: the interpreters of the fiction could reason out what is not explicitly stated in the material, and thus it engenders too many possible yet bizarre worlds. For example, in “The Dark Knight”, the Joker blew up Gotham General Hospital. Again, how was he able to put the bombs in the hospital? Was he helped by the mob? Does Joker have five twins who helped him? Did he teleport the bombs that’s why no one noticed him? Is he an alien?

To avoid such bizzare worlds, the remedy, according to Lewis, is to analyze statements of fictional truths as counterfactuals: “’If it were that *Φ*, then it would be that *Ψ*’, is non-vacuously true iff some possible world where both *Φ* and *Ψ* are true differs less from our actual world, on balance, then does any world where *Φ* is true but *Ψ* is not true. It is vacuously true iff *Φ* is true at no possible worlds.”[[26]](#footnote-26) In other words, in the possible worlds *Φ* and *Ψ*, to say that they differ less from our world pertains to the matter of closeness or similarity of those worlds from our actual world. His second proposal therefore is anchored upon his treatment of counterfactuals:

A sentence of the form “In the fiction, *Φ*” is non-vacuously true iff some world where *f* is told as known fact and *Φ*  is true differs less from our actual world, on balance, than does any world where *f* is told as known fact and *Φ* is not true. It is vacuously true iff there are no possible worlds where *f* is told as known fact. (Lewis 1983, 269)

It means that fictional truth depends on matters of contingent facts about our world (i.e. our world is the contingent fact on which all the other worlds depend on whether those worlds differ more, less or the very least from ours). So to speak of the world of Batman is to consider theworld wherein the story is told as a matter of contingent fact. Is it a matter of fact that Batman plucks his eyebrows every night? Is his favorite color blue or red? What is his blood type? Again, it is reasonable to ask these questions in order to determine truths in fiction. So, the best explanation to these questions is to take into account that there *are* possible worlds of Batman and that each world might offer different answers to the mentioned questions. So the Joker, in a possible world, might have been helped by the mob. In another possible world, he might have done it alone.

However, two difficulties arise: The Russell’s Viper example and the psychoanalysis of fictional characters. Carl Gans’ (1970) example of the movement of snakes, particularly the Russell’s Viper snake, is as follows: in the Sherlock Holmes fiction, a Russell’s Viper is a constrictor. A constrictor is capable of concertina movement that is able to climb a rope. When, in our world, Russell’s Viper is not actually a constrictor.[[27]](#footnote-27) That means, in our world, Holmes won’t have been able to solve the case concerning the Russell’s Viper because his evidence is wrong. Thus, Holmes infallibilty in the fiction can’t compensate for his resemblance in our world because “our world contains no infallible Holmes.”[[28]](#footnote-28) The psychoanalysis of fictional characters, on the other hand, shows that facts about human psychology are applied to fictional characters. Critics use this to reason to conclusions about the childhood or adult mental state of such characters. Similarly, little-known or unknown facts of psychology that is represented in the fiction would depart from actuality if countervailing considerations are found (just like in the Russell Viper’s example).[[29]](#footnote-29)

Despite those difficulties, Lewis begins to suppose that, in fictional truth, little-known or unknown facts about our world are irrelevant. It follows from that supposition that our little-known or unknown errors of shared opinions are irrelevant as well. But what if Joker was an alien and he did teleport to put the bombs in place, and we just didn’t know it except to some people who kept it to themselves. Because of this, we now shift to a truth in fiction as “the joint product of explicit content and a background of generally prevalent beliefs” which is his final proposal:

A sentence in the form ‘In the fiction *f*, *Φ*’ is non-vacuously true iff, whenever *w* is one of the collective belief worlds of the community of origin of *f*, then some world where *f* is told as known fact and *Φ* is true differs less from the world *w*, on balance, than does any world where is told as known fact and *Φ* is not true. It is vacuously true iff there are no possible worlds where *f* is told as known fact. (Lewis 1983, 273)

He qualifies that the proper background is composed of a background of generally prevalent beliefs where the fiction is originated, i.e. “the beliefs of the author and his intended audience.”[[30]](#footnote-30) So, the possible worlds where the prevalent beliefs are true are called collective beliefs worlds of the community. This is Lewis’s answer to the example of Carl Gans and the psychoanalysts: that, if those stories were told as known fact, then what is true in the Holmes stories is what would be true given the prevalent beliefs of the community of origin.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Another qualification is a carry-over from other truth in fiction which are regarded as: intra-fictional and inter-fictional.[[32]](#footnote-32) The former is a carry-over from the nature of the attributes of fictional characters, society and the like. The latter is a carry-over from what is true of fictional characters or situations, etc. in the other stories. So, to recapitulate, truth in fiction is the joint product of (1) explicit content, (2) a background of either facts about our world or generally prevalent beliefs in the community of origin, and (3) intra-fictional and inter-fictional carry-overs.

**V. Conclusion**

Pictorial representation engenders an ambiguity that concerns the veracity of fictional truths by investigating the denotation of fictional objects corresponding to actual truths in reality. For me, I think it would be nice to offer a representational theory to motivate my claim further, but considering the issue at hand, testing the verity of fictional objects is sufficed to answer the ambiguity. So, how do moving pictures represent fictional objects, or fiction? Specifically, what establishes truths in fiction?

What I have established so far are: (1) I explained the significance of fictional truths in digital cinema, (2) identified the circularity in the framework of John Dilworth, and (3) adopted the fictional truth account of David Lewis as a solution to the circularity.

Firstly, the significance of fictional truth in digital cinema is directed to art appreciation because it deals with the evaluation and/or interpretation of movies. By distingushing between fictional movies and fictional literature, I have shown how truths are generated differently. The purpose of this is is to show how it affects the way fictional truths are generated and consequently, as well as how we evaluate and/or interpret movies and literature.

Secondly, John Dilworth’s framework concerns the non-entailment of internal and external representation supported by our perceptual or recognitional capability. The evidence that X represents Y is the fact that we recognize the fictional object (internal representation) in the movie (external representation). Therefore, what is true in the fiction is what would be true according to internal representation (because that is what the external representation is dependent on, and what our perception is directed to). I argued that his framework is circular due to (1) the parts of the definition (definiens and definiendum) of internal representation are the same, so it doesn’t really explain anything; and (2) also because our perceptual capability does not serve as an evidential support for internal representation (it explains how it generates truth but not how it makes them true).

Thirdly, as a solution to the circularity and an answer to the ambiguity, I offer David Lewis’s framework in truth in fiction. He identified a “threat of circularity”, which was evident in Dilworth’s internal representation, in a prefixed sentence, “’In fiction *f, Φ’* is true iff *Φ* is true at every possible world in a certain set, this set being somehow determined by the fiction *f.*”[[33]](#footnote-33) The circularity entails an uncritical and uninformative account of fictional truth. Lewis thinks that fictional truth is not just in a form of straightforward chronicle or movie. Therefore, after a series of proposals, he concludes that truth in fiction is a product of (1) explicit content, (2) a background of either facts about our world or generally prevalent beliefs in the community of origin, and (3) intra-fictional and inter-fictional carry-overs.

As a result, to use the framework of John Dilworth to verify fictional truth is not only uncritical, but it is also superficial when used in evaluating fictional movies. To start, there are a lot of ways wherein you could evaluate movies according to the fictional truth it generates, and surely it is not just about examining the movie alone. Some of the ways to evaluate movies are comparing and contrasting a movie with other movies of its genre, questioning the auteur’s intentions, and gathering the historical or cultural context of the movie.[[34]](#footnote-34) All of which could be answered using Lewis’s framework because he construes the plot of the movie (explicit content) in such a way that it could be used to identify the stylistic preferences of movies (e.g. in cinematography and editing); a background of either facts or overt beliefs that could be used to evaluate the historical or cultural context of the movie and to question the director’s intentions; and the intra-fictional and inter-fictional carry-overs that may be used to compare and contrast other movies of their genre or the elements in a particular movie.

Finally, other than evaluation, fictional truths contribute to the understanding of the logical implication of pictorial representation, and in philosophy of film in general—what denotes digital, fictional objects and what makes them true.

**Works Cited**

Arnheim, Rudolf. 1956. *Film as Art.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press

Bazin, Andre. 1967. *What is Cinema? Vol. 1 and 2*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press

Carroll, Noel. 1990. The *Philosophy of Horror; or, Paradoxes of the Heart*. New York: Routledge

\_\_\_\_\_. 1996. “The Power of Movies” in *Theorizing the Moving Image*. New York: Cambridge University Press

\_\_\_\_\_. 2008. *Philosophy of Motion Pictures*. UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd

Cavell, Stanley. 1979. *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*. London: Harvard University Press

Dilworth, John. 2004. “Internal versus External Representation,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 62:23-26

Garrett, Brian. 2011. *What is Thing called Metaphysics?* New York: Routledge

Gaut, Berys. 2010. *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art.* New York: Cambridge University Press

Hallström, Lasse. 2005. *Casanova*. Touchstone Pictures

Kripke, Saul. 1972a. “Addenda to Saul Kripke’s Paper ‘Naming and Necessity’,” in *Semantics of Natural Language*. Edited by Donald Davison and Gilbert Harman. Boston: D-Reidel Publishing

\_\_\_\_\_. 1972b. “Naming and Necessity,” in *Semantics of Natural Language*. Edited by Donald Davidson and Gilbert Harman. Boston: D-Reidel Publishing

Lamarque, Peter. 1981. “How can we Fear and Pity Fictions?,” *British Journal of Aesthetics,* 21.4:291-304

Lasseter, John. 1995. *Toy Story.* Walt Disney Pictures

Lee, Ang. 2005. *Brokeback Mountain*. Focus Features

Lewis, David. 1983. “Truth in Fiction,” in *Philosophical Papers: Volume 1*. New York: Oxford University Press

Mitchell, William. 1992. *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era*. Cambridge: MIT Press

Nolan, Christopher. 2008. *The Dark Knight*. Warner Bros. Pictures

Scruton, Roger. 2006. “Photography and Representation,” in *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology.* Edited by Noel Carroll and Jinhee Choi. UK: Blackwell Publishing

Sheppard, Anne. 1987. “Imitation” in *Aesthetics: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Spielberg, Steven. 1993. *Jurassic Park.* Universal Studios.

Walton, Kendall. 2008. “Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism,” in *Marvelous Images: On Values and the Arts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Whedon, Joss. 2012. *The Avengers*. Paramount.

1. cf. Stanley Cavell, “The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film,” (London: Harvard University Press, 1979), Andre Bazin, “What is Cinema?,” vols. 1 and 2 (Berkeley: CA: University of California Press, 1967), Roger Scruton, “Photography and Representation,” in Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology, ed. Noel Carroll and Jinhee Choi (UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), Rudolf Arnheim, “Film as Art,” (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1956) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. William Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. I will use picture, moving pictures, films, motion pictures and movies interchangeably throughout this paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Noel Caroll, *Philosophy of Horror* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 80, 83, 84 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. He states that “pictorial representations.. refer their referents by way of *picturing*, by displaying or manifesting a delimited range of resemblances to their referents. By recognizing these similarities, the spectator comes to know what the picture depicts...” (Carroll 1996, 487) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For a similar and yet more detailed account on mental representation, see Peter Lamarque, “How can we Fear and Pity Fictions?,” in *British Journal of Aesthetics* 21.4 (Autumn 1981) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. John Dilworth, “Internal versus External Representation," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 62 (Winter 2004), 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. David Lewis, “Truth in Fiction,” in *Philosophical Papers: Volume 1*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 273, 274 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. A kind of representation that may be able to investigate on non-representational art is a seeing-as theory by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations*. Edited by Anscombe and R. Rhees (Oxford: Blackwell) [Available from http://gormendizer.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Ludwig.Wittgenstein.-.Philosophical.Investigations.pdf]. In Anne Sheppard, “Imitation” in *Aesthetics: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 12-13 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Noel Carroll, “Power of Movies,” in *Theorizing the Moving Image* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 487 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. It is, however, debatable whether digital cinema is an art form or not. That issue does not concern this paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. William Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era*, 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Berys Gaut defines a digital image as such. See Berys Gaut, *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 56. Furthermore, to clarify, what makes traditional pictures different from digital pictures is that traditional pictures are mechanically recorded by a camera, hence the object of the picture is causally connected to the object. It refers to something outside the picture, and that something exists or existed. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The objections against the framework of John Dilworth are: the seeing-through thesis (which states that in looking at a picture, one actually sees the object itself) and the non-referential thesis (which states that one postulates a group of properties that the object is having). I will not delve into these objections because, first, the non-referential thesis was not thoroughly explained in his article and, second, the seeing-through thesis. The idea here is, in cases where X represents Y, one literally sees the actual objects. See Kendall Walton, “Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism,” in *Marvelous Images: On Values and the Arts*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. John Dilworth, “Internal versus External Representation," 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Recognition is used loosely in Dilworth’s framework. He states that “recognition can be achieved simply from perception of a picture itself.” (Dilworth 2004, 29) [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Dilworth’s recognition theory is different from Carroll’s in such a way that Caroll uses a Fregean account in verifying fictional truth whereas Dilworth derives it from his formulation of internal representation. See Noel Carroll, “Philosophy of Horror,” (New York: Routledge, 1990) [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. John Dilworth, “Internal versus External Representation," 32 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Possibilists hold that there are possible worlds and possible objects, and regard them as non-existent. David Lewis, however, is a non-standard possibilist which means, he holds that, in the same way that actual worlds and objects exists, possible worlds and objects exist also. (Garrett 2006, 46) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. David Lewis, “Truth in Fiction,” 264. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Saul Kripke, “Addenda to Saul Kripke’s Paper ‘Naming and Necessity’,” in *Semantics of Natural Language*. Edited By Donald Davison and Gilbert Harman (Boston: D-Reidel Publishing, 1972), 764 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. David Lewis, “Truth in Fiction,” 265 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. A non-rigid designator means: in every possible world, it does not designate the same object. (Kripke 1972b, 200) [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. David Lewis, “Truth in Fiction,” 267 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Ibid., 269 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Carl Gans, "How Snakes Move," *Scientific American*, 222 (1970). In David Lewis, “Truth in Fiction,” 271 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. David Lewis, “Truth in Fiction,” 271 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Ibid., 272 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Ibid., 273 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Ibid., 274 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Ibid., 264 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Carroll, “Chapter 7: Evaluation,” in *Philosophy of Motion Pictures* (UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008) [↑](#footnote-ref-34)