

PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF NARRATIVE

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Dedicated to my parents

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ABSTRACT

The thesis concerns certain philosophical issues that arise in connection with the notion of ‘narrative’. First, what is narrative? Second, if some narratives are fiction, what makes them so? Third, what can one learn from narrative art? Fourth, what is the difference between experiences that are lived and experiences that are conjured up through empathy by narratives? Fifth, how should narratives be interpreted, and do they need to be interpreted based on the communicative intentions of their makers? Sixth, what is the role of narratives in everyday life and in connection to one’s identity? And lastly, seventh, what is the role of the imagination in creating and comprehending narratives? These are all central issues in the study of narrative, and both the problems and the answers branch out into core areas of philosophy: metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind and philosophy of action. After the definition of narrative, the six chapters are divided into three groups: truth, meaning and mind.

First then, even though ‘narrative’ is a widely used term in a variety of disciplines, it is an elusive one. I make a distinction between narrative artworks and elements, argue that most narratives artifacts are patchworks of narrative and non-narrative elements, and I approach narrative artifacts in three steps: 1) as representations; 2) ones that typically make sense of what they represent; and 3) as products of intentions.

Second, many philosophers draw the line between fictional and non-fictional narratives based on the claim that the contents of fiction are intended to be imagined by the audience – this is what defines fiction irrespective of truth and falsity. In contrast, I argue that fictional narratives cannot be true, and I consider some difficult cases which would warrant the opposite view. I maintain that ‘being fictional’ and ‘being true’ are incompatible for narratives.

Third, it is contentious whether art is an appropriate vehicle of learning, or, whether it has ‘cognitive value’ that is significant in an aesthetic way. My argument is that the most important lessons of art are not truths in propositional form, rather, art provides one with experiential knowledge, with knowing, to a degree, what it is like to be in certain situations.

Fourth, while narrative artworks have the capacity to evoke certain experiences (and thus provide experiential knowledge), it is not clear what the difference is between experiences as lived and experiences as evoked by narrative artworks. I defend the view that, in contrast to experiences as lived, experiences evoked through empathy by narrative artworks are meaningful in a specific way.

Fifth, philosophers have long been debating whether artists’ intentions should play a role in interpreting artworks. In this chapter, I carve out a qualified position: when it comes to what story a narrative artworks tells, one should refer to intentions, however, one need not do so when understanding what themes are developed by the work or when examining the functions of details that contribute to developing these themes.

Sixth, many claim, not just in philosophy but in psychology as well, that narratives are important when it comes personal identity. Some think they constitute one’s ‘self’ or, at the least, make actions and events in one’s personal history intelligible. I argue for a different view: narratives are important for personal identity because they communicate, intentionally and unintentionally, who one is, and they provide access to self-knowledge and opportunity for self-shaping.

Seventh, as mentioned, philosophers tend to think that fictional narratives are distinguished by their prescribing the imaginings of their contents. In this last chapter, the position developed is that certain kinds of imagination are necessary for both creating and comprehending narratives irrespective of their fictionality.

All in all, the thesis provides much needed conceptual clarifications, and it develops novel and original arguments and views regarding central topics in the study of narrative, making the study of narrative relevant beyond aesthetics for other areas of philosophy.

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Some material in the dissertation has been published independently. A version of Chapter II is forthcoming in *Philosophical Studies* (Kajtár forthcoming), and the main ideas of Chapter III are developed in an article in *Ratio* (Kajtár 2016). I chose the format of the thesis in order to facilitate

publishing articles, and it has been worth it so far. Publishing in philosophy has not been easy, to say the least. I have received numerous rejections, and even though I am now desensitized, some of them are still painful. However, on the flipside, I have had the chance to work with comments and suggestions that were often high quality, some of them generous even, and they were frequently useful (sometimes in spite of their destructiveness or offensive tone), and so I here would like to take the chance and thank the anonymous referees and reviewers for engaging with my work.

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PREFACE

The doctoral thesis is about philosophical issues that arise in connection to the notion of ‘narrative’ and the phenomenon of storytelling – the production and comprehension of stories. It does not follow the proto-monograph model, rather, it is a collection of strongly related but independent articles on a small but important selection of topics. For this reason, it has proven difficult to come up with the ‘elevator ride’ version of what the thesis is about since it has no central argument to push through. But this difficulty is not significant in view of the article publications this format allowed for. Nevertheless, the thesis presents topics in a way as to tie the investigation of narrative to central areas of philosophy besides the philosophy of art: philosophy of mind, metaphysics, philosophy of language and epistemology, among others. It is straightforward to see why narrative and storytelling are important to study when it comes to the arts, as many works of art tell stories. However, it is less obvious that studying narrative would be relevant for other areas. One of the aims to the thesis is to make these connections explicit and to demonstrate why the great theoretical interest in narrative is justified.¹

The theoretical interest in storytelling is understandable. Ever since Roland Barthes’s (1975) landmark essay, there are some, like the philosopher of history, Hayden White (1984), who believe that narrative is a human universal that is present in every culture. Alasdair MacIntyre (1981/2007) states the extreme view that human beings are ‘story-telling animals’ (p. 216) and Mark Turner (1996) goes as far as to theorize that stories are basic to how the mind works. Following in the steps of Jerome Bruner (1990), Daniel D. Hutto (2007) argues that human folk psychology, our everyday explanations of behavior, is actually a narrative practice, which might be culturally universal. The pallbearer of cognitive narratology, David Herman (2013) considers narrative to be a fundamental resource of the

¹ Moreover, the study of narrative puts philosophy in touch with other disciplines where narrative is important, such as literary and film studies, psychology, sociology and history, to mention the more obvious, but also with digital humanities, medicine, education and business. The interdisciplinary field of narrative studies was used to be called ‘narratology’, but as there are numerous ‘narratologies’ and a diverse body of literature related to the study of narrative, it is now more often labelled as ‘narrative studies’.

mind making sense of its environment. Narrative is important in debates about literature and fiction (e.g., Lamarque 2014; Matravers 2014), personal identity (e.g., Strawson 2004; Schechtman 2007; Schroer & Schroer 2014) and history (e.g., White 1984; Carroll 2001, pp. 133-156) to mention only a few.

Underlying some sweeping, often radical claims about the universality of narrative, there is actually a ubiquitous storytelling practice. Some, particularly those in the so-called 'literary darwinist' camp, are inclined to explain literature, fiction and narrative in terms of evolution (see Sugiyama, 2001; Boyd, 2009; Gottschall, 2012). Without subscribing to their manifesto, they do have good reason to do so because if storytelling provides no evolutionary advantage, then there is a lot of 'noise' in contemporary human society and culture. Most of the time we probably do not notice but we are engaged in producing and comprehending stories in various forms. By 2 years of age, children begin to have storytelling capacities, and by 3 and 4, they tell various stories from autobiography to fiction, and so on, which is shown to have positive psychological effects (see e.g., Mallan 1992). Waking up, we relate our dreams in storytelling, we talk about our plans forming narratives, we read news stories, listen to narrative radio broadcasts or podcasts, we are bombarded by stories made up by marketing teams, we choose to be challenged by artistic narratives, and albeit rarely but we tell the stories of our lives to people we get to know. We do not even know how a human world would look without stories, but it would be less intelligible, more boring and significantly 'smaller' in terms of imaginative possibilities. Losing stories would be a true 'disenchantment of the world'.² As Paul Ricoeur (1984-1988, Vol. 2) writes in one of the most significant studies of narrative: 'we have no idea of what a culture would be where no one any longer knew what it meant to narrate things' (p. 28).

But why is it that storytelling is so important? Philosophers occupy themselves with numerous subjects that have a much stronger claim for the 'big question' ('big answer'?) throne. Time, free will, consciousness, justice... Compared to these titans of the history of philosophy, storytelling seems to

² The expression of Friedrich Schiller, made famous by Max Weber.

be on the very margins. Even though storytelling is ubiquitous, one might argue, it is just entertainment, there are no puzzling questions about it or at least no philosophical ones. I think there is something to say to the skeptic impersonated above. It is entertaining to produce and consume stories but it is not just that. To narrate is to *make sense* of what happens, of time's passing, to ascribe meaning through structuring and organization, often while representing the complexity of experience, which can sometimes seem chaotic.

I take it for granted that human beings have a desire to acquire knowledge and to understand certain things and that they do it in a variety of ways. One of the ways is through coming up with hypotheses and theories. This is paradigmatically scientific but not exclusively so. If I want to know why the ice caps are melting so damn fast, a theory that points to global climate change makes sense of it and helps me to know the reasons and to understand why it is happening. To the question, 'what is a dolphin?' an answer might be 'a cetacean mammal'. This explains which biological category dolphin belongs to, what dolphins are, and so it makes sense of why people call certain animals 'dolphins'. If I want to know where Venezuela is, someone might help me by showing me on the map. I will then understand, so to speak, which area of the world it belongs to. Such locating also makes sense. If I want to know what 'ubiquitous' means, someone might open up a dictionary and show the definition to me or use it in a sentence or two. In this way, I get to know the meaning of a word. All of these are ways of making sense, of making things intelligible and available for reflection, which is intimately related to knowledge and understanding.

Storytelling is yet another way of making sense, and a prominent one at that. It is prominent because, as indicated above, it is intimately connected to the human experience of time and action. Knowing and understanding the important 'who', 'what', 'when', 'how' and 'why' dimensions of events and actions often necessitates storytelling. If I want to know why one of my friends has spent the night in jail, it does not make sense to give a complicated causal story about the physics of her getting there. The way to make sense of the events and actions that led to the moment of my friend's incarceration

(I am sure she is innocent) is by telling a story about it. There are more and less appropriate ways of making sense, depending on the phenomenon in question. Narrating is an appropriate way to make sense of happenings in the world and of the behavior of living beings. But also, narratives, especially in art, are often confusing. There is a tendency in the literature to emphasize how narratives make certain phenomena intelligible at the expense of considering how narratives themselves often require effort to be understood and even if they are understood to some degree, they refuse to yield easy answers or straightforward morals.

The thesis begins with the definition of the key term: ‘narrative’. Following that, the six chapters are grouped by twos. Chapter II and III are about the connection of narrative and truth. Chapter II discusses fiction and history: what it means for a narrative to be true and whether fiction can be true. Chapter III argues that narratives in literature have significant cognitive value, but they do not impart truths, rather, they allow readers to acquire experiential knowledge. Chapters IV and V are about meaning. Chapter IV claims that in reading a fictional, literary narrative, it is possible to empathetically imagine undergoing the experiences of a character. However, there are differences between the character having the experiences and the reader imagining having the experiences: the latter are imbued with meaning. Chapter V is about meaning in a different sense. It is typically thought that the interpretation of narrative art is about the meanings of artworks. I argue that the situation is more complicated: some interpretations do target meanings, but not all of them do. Moreover, I argue, not all interpretation needs to be guided by what artists intend to convey. Chapters VI and VII concern narrative and the mind. Chapter VI is about the role of narratives for personal identity, establishing the Communicative View of Narrative Identity. Chapter VII is about the robust role that imagination plays in the creation and comprehension of narratives.

Even though each chapter is ultimately independent, there are numerous interconnections. For instance, Chapter I sets up a basic tension of telling stories: narratives often make sense of what they are about, however, due to their representational complexity, they sometimes confuse or perplex

their audiences. The possibility of confusion and being perplexed is the reason that Chapter V goes into the details of the interpretation of narrative art and questions whether artistic intentions are the best guides to works of art. Narratives in art are significantly different from narratives produced in everyday, conversational contexts, but as then Chapter VI argues, all narratives reveal their creators: who they are and who they take themselves to be. Moreover, as Chapter II explains, it is often argued that fiction is defined by the imaginative attitude it calls for as opposed to belief. However, as Chapter VII claims: narrative requires imagination both in production and in comprehension. Furthermore, Chapter III is about the idea that literary narratives provide experiential knowledge that is aesthetically significant – that is, some works lacking such opportunity for experiential knowledge are less valuable aesthetically. This argument is complemented in Chapter IV, which investigates how narratives evoke experiences, how it is that audiences can empathetically share the experiences of characters, and how these imagined experiences differ from the experiences that are had by the characters. This is not an exhaustive list, but it is time to move on.

I. DEFINITIONS: THE NARRATIVE PATCHWORK

1. Introduction

I hope the above demonstrates that narrative is a prominent way of making sense, and if it is, it is very important to better understand what narrative is. In this first chapter, my aim is to get clear on the notion of ‘narrative’.³ Narrative is often thought to be nothing more than a fancy synonym of ‘story’, which is a tale or an account of events or something that has a plot. In any case, ‘narrative’, ‘story’,

³ For great introductions to these issues see Ryan (2007), Herman (2007, 2009) and Abbott (2007, 2008).

‘tale’, ‘event’ and ‘plot’ is a complicated set of concepts, neither of its members is well-defined.⁴ This indicates that for the project of defining narrative, one cannot just rely on these more or less synonymous terms as they are not better understood than narrative itself.

Paisley Livingston (2001) states: ‘In sum, even with regard to the basic elucidation or construction of a reasonably well delimited concept of narrative, controversy reigns supreme’ (p. 278). In order to make progress, my method is to make some distinctions that might not be in accordance with the nebulous everyday use of the concepts, but I want to employ them in a way that they will be theoretically useful. The first distinction is between narrative artifacts and narrative elements. What are some narrative artifacts? My neighbor’s telling me what happened yesterday; *The Brothers Karamazov*; Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; the film *Alien*; *Little Red Riding Hood*; and a popular account of the French Revolution. These are all artifacts that intuitively fall into the category of narrative. The question then is: what are the criteria for falling into the narrative category?⁵ Consider some non-narrative artifacts in contrast: numerous questions after philosophy talks; Mark Rothko’s ‘Number 7’ (an abstract painting from 1947-1948); Bach’s Violin Sonata No.1 in G minor; Galen Strawson’s (2004) article ‘Against Narrativity’; many popular TED talks; and Jorge Luis Borges’s poem ‘Remorse for Any Death’. Is there any systematic difference between these classes of artifacts?

This is where the distinction between narrative artifacts and narrative elements is handy. Most of the time, narrative artifacts are not purely or completely made up of narrative elements. I define a narrative element as an atomic representation of a transformation.⁶ To begin with verbal instances, consider an utterance such as ‘Gregor Samsa is asleep’. It is not a narrative element but can be the foundation of one: ‘Gregor Samsa is asleep as he begins to change into an insect’. Now this sentence

⁴ In the *Poetics*, Aristotle places great importance on plot when it comes to drama, and argues that a plot by necessity has a beginning-middle-end structure (1450b27).

⁵ Carroll (2001) differentiates between various ‘story forms’: annals, chronicles and narratives. Annals list a number of unconnected events (without having the same subject) while chronicles list events about a same subject. What chronicles lack and narratives possess is a form of causal connection (p. 126).

⁶ For an early and rich inquiry into narrative transformations, see Tzvetan Todorov (1978), who actually coined the term ‘narratology’.

is indeed a narrative element as it represents a transformation of Gregor Samsa, which is quite literally a physical transformation. In 'Gregor Samsa is asleep', Gregor Samsa is described 'statically' as being in a certain state. In 'Gregor Samsa is asleep as he begins to change into an insect', the description becomes dynamic: Gregor Samsa is not just in a state, he is undergoing change.⁷ Another example is this: 'Anna Karenina is content', which describes Anna Karenina's mental state, and the sentence is not a narrative element. However, 'Anna Karenina felt the sadness slowly taking hold of her' represents a transformation. This shows not only that events are needed but that events that happen to or are effected by a persisting subject. For a narrative element then, the same subject's changing of state (broadly construed) needs to be represented. Such a representing statement might be called 'dynamic'. As Gérard Genette (1988) claims: 'For me, as soon as there is an action or an event, even a single one, there is a story because there is transformation, a transition from an earlier state to a later and resultant state' (p. 19). When a transformation is represented, there is a narrative element.

Descriptions are the foundation of narrative elements, but this makes the account difficult to apply to films, many of which are narrative but not primarily verbal. Still, even without language, films can and often do represent a transformation or a changing of state of the same thing. As long as a scene represents that something happens or that an action is carried out, it should be considered as a narrative element. And even though many would accept that films are typically narratives, Bence Nanay (2009) goes further: paintings that represent an action or an event should be considered narrative as well. According to Nanay, there is no need to represent two or more events, one event or action can suffice. On Nanay's view, '[a] picture is a narrative picture if and only if a suitable informed spectator is supposed to undergo the experience of engaging with narrative I characterized above' (p. 127). The bulk of Nanay's article is dedicated to explaining what the engagement of narrative consists

⁷ But see Herman (2009): 'Precisely because descriptions can focus on temporally emergent phenomena, the boundary between description and narration should be thought of as porous and variable rather than as impermeable and fixed felt' (p. 91). Also Schmid (2003) says: 'As well as represented changes of state, which are dynamic elements, a story includes static elements, which are the states or situations themselves, the settings and the agents or patients within them. Thus, by necessity, the presentation of a story combines narrative and descriptive modes' (p. 21).

in: 'it is a crucial (maybe even necessary and sufficient) feature of our engagement with narrative pictures that an action of one of the characters in the picture is part of what we are (supposed to be) aware of when looking at the picture' (p. 124). Even though I cannot agree with the emphasis on action as I think that the representation of events without agents can count as a narrative element, Nanay's proposal definitely shows that even pictures such as paintings can have narrative elements and be considered narrative.

The notion of a narrative element does not entail that narrative artifacts are composed of narrative and non-narrative elements like constructions out of Lego blocks. I am not now concerned with the exact psychological process of creating narrative artifacts, but I can say this: making distinctions between narrative and non-narrative elements in artifacts is a conceptual issue. It does not follow from the distinction that a storyteller, a novelist or a filmmaker has a 'bag' of elements and he or she combines them in order to come up with a narrative. The process is probably a lot more seamless and organic. To use an analogy, some elements in buildings can be identified and distinctions can be made based on them, perhaps between structurally necessary and structurally unnecessary ones. The distinction is conceptual, and making it does not mean that the architect, in designing the building, has to combine the Lego blocks of foundation walls, doors and decorative arches.

To go on, I think that narrative artifacts are categorized as narrative because their narrative elements are dominant. In contrast for example, numerous poems contain narrative elements, representations of a transformation, however, they are not classed as narrative artifacts because representing transformations of a single subject is not their dominant mode of discourse. An argument that inspired the current account is given by Greg Currie (1990) in his *The Nature of Fiction*. Currie argued that what we commonly call fictional works, novels, films and so on, are not purely and completely fictional. In fact, these works are 'patchworks', stitched together of 'truth and falsity, reliability and unreliability, fiction-making and assertion' (p. 49). Similarly, a narrative artifact is a patchwork of narrative elements, descriptive elements, dialogues, reflections and so on.

Is a work fictional if even one of its statements is fictional in this sense? Must the greater proportion of the whole be fiction? These are bad questions. One might as well ask how many grains of sand make a heap. If we wanted to, we could define a numerical degree of fictionality, but it would be artificial and unilluminating. What is illuminating is a precise account of the fictionality of statements. For in some perhaps irremediably vague way, the fictionality of works is going to depend upon the fictionality of the statements they contain. As long as we are clear about what water molecules are, it hardly matters for purposes of definition that most things we call 'water' actually contain much else besides (Ibid.)

I return to the details of Currie's account of fiction in the next chapter, but what is now important is the analogy: just as fictional works are fictional because they contain a vague but sufficient amount of fictional statements, narrative artifacts are narrative because they contain a vague but sufficient amount of narrative elements. Most narrative artifacts are patchworks of narrative and non-narrative elements.

To illustrate, below is a really short short story written by the contemporary author, Neil Gaiman (1998), titled 'Nicholas Was...':

older than sin, and his beard could grow no whiter. He wanted to die.

The dwarfish natives of the Arctic caverns did not speak his language, but conversed in their own, twittering tongue, conducted incomprehensible rituals, when they were not actually working in the factories.

Once every year they forced him, sobbing and protesting, into Endless Night. During the journey he would stand near every child in the world, leave one of the dwarves' invisible gifts by its bedside. The children slept, frozen into time.

He envied Prometheus and Loki, Sisyphus and Judas. His punishment was harsher.

Ho.

Ho.

Ho.

(p. 48).

It is evident that there are narrative and non-narrative elements in this ingenious short piece, which was designed for a Christmas card. It begins with a static description of Nicholas and there are no narrative elements until the dwarves who ‘conversed on their own’ and ‘conducted incomprehensible rituals’. The narrative elements become dominant when the work represents the repetitive ritual of the ‘Endless Night’, which is the punishment of Nicholas.

This leads to the second distinction: between narrative and narrativity. ‘Narrative’ is an either-or property that applies to artifacts and to elements. However, while an element is not more or less narrative, it is plausible to suppose that an artifact can indeed be more or less paradigmatically narrative. This is where the graded property of ‘narrativity’ comes in:

Narrativity is constituted by (or increases with) the representation of (1) events (2) as temporally ordered, (3) as causally related, (4) as unified (for example, as involving the same substance or topic), and as (5) actions where (6) the agent(s) encounters and contends with nonroutine obstacles to the realization of his or her goals (Livingston 2009, p. 28).

For instance, the Borges poem, ‘Remorse for Any Death’, contains the stanza, referring to the ‘dead one’:

We rob him of everything,
we leave him not so much as a color or syllable:
here, the courtyard which his eyes no longer see,
there, the sidewalk where his hope lay in wait

This clearly has narrative elements that represent transformations, and so it has a certain degree of narrativity, however, it is not a narrative artifact because representing transformations is not the dominant mode of discourse in the poem. So then, with more and more narrative elements, the narrativity of an artifact rises, and with enough of them, it becomes reasonable to classify the artifact as a narrative. However, narrativity is not just a matter of narrative elements. Narrative elements, to recall, are atomic representation of a transformation. Here are two examples: ‘the leaves are falling off the tree’ and ‘Odysseus kills the suitors’. These are both narrative elements, however, since the latter element about Odysseus represents ‘actions where the agent(s) encounters and contends with nonroutine obstacles to the realization of his or her goals’, a narrative artifact with such an element is higher in narrativity than the one which contains the sentence about the leaves.

All in all, in this section, I have made two distinctions, one between narrative elements and narrative artifacts. A narrative element is minimal representations of a transformation, while a narrative artifact is an artifact in which the dominant mode of discourse is determined by narrative elements. The other distinction is between narrative and narrativity. Narrative is a category of elements and artifacts: if an element represents a transformation, it is a narrative element, and if an artifact’s dominant mode of discourse is determined by the narrative elements, it is a narrative artifact. As elements cannot have less or more narrativity, narrativity is a graded property of artifacts: depending on narrative elements, but *not only* on narrative elements, artifacts can have more or less narrativity. With the exception of artifacts that contain only narrative elements, I conclude that most ordinary narrative artifacts, are patchworks of narrative elements and non-narrative elements. In what follows, I focus on narrative artifacts and even though I do not always explicitly mention elements, I am interested in what narrative are in virtue of their narrative elements. I approach narrative artifacts in three steps: 1) narratives, through their narrative elements, represent events, and the events they represent make up the stories they tell; 2) narratives, typically, represent events in a way as to make sense of them (with some interesting exceptions); 3) narratives are products of intentional action: the action of telling someone that something happened with the categorial intention to do so.

2. Narrative Representation: Events and Stories

After the distinctions above, the third one I make is between story and narrative. It should be clear above that representation is central for artifacts that are categorized as narrative. Currie (2010) argues: ‘Narratives [...] are distinguished from other representations by what they represent: sustained temporal-causal relations between particulars, especially agents’ (p. 27). What is representation in general? Representation is a relation between what represents and what is represented. Saying that ‘x represents y’ means that x is not identical to y, but they have a special relationship: x is, in a sense, a stand-in for y. Here are Tim Crane’s (2003) examples:

The data structures in a computer can represent text or numbers or images. The rings of a tree can represent its age. A flag can represent a nation. A political demonstration can represent aggression. A piece of music can represent a mood of unbearable melancholy. Flowers can represent grief [...] Sentences, like the sentence ‘Someone is in my house’, can represent what we might call facts, situations or states of affairs: in this case, the fact that someone is in my house (pp. 11-12).

Representation is taken to be definitive by many theorists of narrative. As the narratologist Gerald J. Prince (1982) claims, ‘narrative is the representation of at least two real or fictive events in a time sequence, neither of which presupposes or entails the other’ (p. 4). Also, the literary scholar, H. Porter Abbott (2008) states: ‘Simply put, narrative is *the representation of an event or a series of events*’ (p. 13).

Besides representation then, the key term in many definitions is that of an event. To go into what events are would require another investigation in metaphysics, but some basic assumptions need to be explicit. Some examples of events are ‘the assassination of John F. Kennedy’, ‘the forming of the Milky Way’, ‘Joyce’s writing of *Ulysses*’, ‘the detection of gravitational waves by the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory’. An event, unlike an object, occurs or happens. In

fact, if something occurs, there is an event. Events, since they occur, take time and they have a duration. Events have varying durations and magnitudes: some last a millisecond and some take millions of years. They have various impacts, depending of course on the context: in the history of the United States, the assassination of J.F.K. has had a strong impact, however, it seems irrelevant in the history of our solar system. Some events can be broken down into events: the forming of the Milky Way galaxy contains the forming of our solar system, for instance, the French Revolution begins with the Assault on the Bastille, and the assassination of J. F. K. has the assassin pulling the trigger.

As time passes, things happen, events occur. However, as large variation in duration, magnitude and part-whole relations shows, whether some occurrences are taken as events depends on the context. The historian and theorist Hayden White is often and sometimes justifiably accused of postmodern extravagancies regarding his claims on the inherently fictional nature of all stories and narratives (on this see Carroll 2001, pp. 133-156). But White seems to be right – and his moderate claims are defended by Lamarque (2014, pp. 1-32) – in that, for example, the entity named ‘The French Revolution’ has no mind-independent existence in the real world that was waiting to be found by historians like the treasures of archeologists or the dinosaur bones of paleontologists.

But it does not follow from this that the Bastille was not attacked or that there was no march on Versailles. The claim that The French Revolution is a construct of historians does not mean that the events are imaginary or that there are no facts of the matter. Even if there are events that really happened, the events that are described and connected are, in some sense, constituted by the narrative *as* they are described and *as* they are connected. ‘The assault of the Bastille’ is a valid description of events that really transpired, but the description itself is an artifact or construct of historians that constitutes the seemingly singular entity ‘the assault of the Bastille’ that figures prominently in the narrative about The French Revolution. Altogether, in representing events (e.g., a historical account of The French Revolution), sometimes the representation constitutes what it represents (e.g., ‘The French Revolution’), however, this does not mean that the representation has to

be inaccurate or that what it represents (e.g., The French Revolution) is imaginary. Even though ‘The French Revolution’ has no tangible denotation, as an event, it is as real as my typing at my laptop right now.

Narrative is neutral with regards to the real or imaginary nature of its content. For instance, historical narratives can be said to represent events that occurred in the past. Saying that ‘The French Revolution had begun in 1789 and ended in 1799’ is an historical narrative, supposedly representing the events of beginning and ending, transformation of the same unified subject, the French Revolution. Narratives that represent imaginary events follow the same model: ‘The Galactic Empire was established in 19 BBY (before the Battle of Yavin) and has fallen in 4 ABY (after the Battle of Yavin)’. These are imaginary events in the *Star Wars* universe, represented by my minimal summary narrative. A good reason to think that both narratives are representations is that historical narratives are representations of actual events.

To go on, narratives represent events, so what is the role for the notion of ‘story’ to play? In this section, I argue that ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ need to be distinguished. But why? To illustrate, let me consider a question: does Irvine Welsh’s novel *Trainspotting* tell the same story as the film by Danny Boyle? I think the intuitive commonsensical answer has to be ‘yes’. Taking this as an assumption, it is clear that the novel and film are not identical *even* if they tell the same story. So in order to explicate the difference, ‘narrative’ seems to be an appropriate notion. Even though the novel and film tell the same story, the ways of telling the story are different, most obviously because they employ different media. The novel and film tell the same story, however, they tell it differently – they are different narratives. While story is what is told, narrative stands not only for what but also for how: narrative is a story told.⁸

⁸ One of the founding insights of classical, structural narratology is that there is a difference between the ‘what’ of telling, the story, and the ‘how’ of telling, the narrative or discourse (originating from the ‘fabula’ and ‘sjuzhet’ distinction of Russian Formalism, see Herman 2009, p. 27).

According to Currie (2010), narratives are ‘intentional-communicative artefacts; intentionally fashioned devices of representation that work by manifesting the communicative intentions of their makers. The representational content of a narrative is the story it has to tell’ (p. 17). Stories comprise events and narratives represent these stories. A story is told through representation. ‘Telling’ here is meant to be broad in scope and not restricted to verbal expression. In everyday contexts, someone telling something seems to imply spoken or written language, and narrative is often understood as something that necessarily involves language, written or spoken. But following the footsteps of structuralists, recent research into narrative and media has established narrative as a ‘transmedial’ phenomenon (e.g., Ryan 2005). Transmedial means that narrative can be applied to artifacts that take a variety of media: besides language, to mention a few examples, stories can be told through pictures (comic books, films, video games), bodily movements (pantomime, dance) perhaps even music, and the multimedia combinations of these. Telling a story is done through representing events, and even though language is the most widely used medium, representation can take many forms.⁹

Why would one want to preserve the distinction between story and narrative? As mentioned above, a story can be told in a variety of ways. To explain this was the original intention behind many structuralist approaches. As Chatman (1978) claimed, stories are ‘*transposable*’ (p. 20). On such a view, *The Lord of the Rings* novel and *The Lord of the Rings* film are different narratives that could be said to share the same story. On a basic level, reading that ‘Frodo drew the Ring out of his pocket again and looked at it’ (Tolkien 1954/2004, p. 60) and seeing a scene depicting this action causes us no problems in identifying that the same events transpire. However, story sameness on a more general level (when, for instance, some episodes related in one telling are missing from another) is far from uncontroversial.¹⁰

⁹ According to Goldie (2012) even thoughts can serve to represent events and actions in narrative thinking.

¹⁰ Based on Roland Barthes, Chatman (1978) distinguishes ‘kernel’ and ‘satellite’ events. Kernel events are those necessary for story progression (and so identity), while satellites are disposable in this sense. See the debate between Herrstein Smith (1981) and Chatman’s (1981). For a recent discussion about story identity see Smuts (2009).

Despite the worthiness of the controversy, the issue need not concern the present chapter. The view I am explicating is about the nature of ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ and their connection. It seems that there is some consensus that narrative is the representation of story, however, this does not necessarily lead to either the position that a story can or cannot be told multiple times. It is clear though is that whatever ‘story’ might be, it cannot be accessed without the mediating narrative. So story should be seen as a construct and an abstraction (Chatman 1981, p. 260). Or to quote Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (2002): ‘Being an abstraction, a construct, the story is not directly available to the reader’ (p. 7).

By its narrative elements, a narrative represents events and actions. The selection of what is represented is a ‘story’, which is then synonymous with ‘plot’. In order to access a story, there first needs to be engagement with a narrative. As the story, the sequence of events, is abstracted from the narrative, following the narrative is logically prior to knowing what the story is. For instance, knowing what the story of *The Turn of the Screw* is, one has to comprehend some telling of *The Turn of the Screw*, a narrative. This applies to stories that comprise of real events as well. In order to know, beyond the obvious, what Simon Schama’s (1989) narrative history of The French Revolution is about, what the represented events are, one has to first read the work itself and follow the narrative through. Louis O. Mink’s (2001) conclusion, ‘there can be in fact no untold stories’ (p. 220), is quite correct. Even though events occur and people carry actions out, these events and actions do not assume story-structure by themselves because such a structure is nothing more than an abstraction from a telling that represents the events and actions in a certain way. The notion of an ‘untold story’ does not make sense because it puts the cart in front of the horse: story is an abstraction and if there are untold stories, there would have to be abstractions without anything to be abstracted from.¹¹ I return to this topic in the next chapter.

¹¹ For a discussion, see Carr (1986) and Dray (2001).

Some narratives deliberately obscure and make it difficult to know the stories they are telling, or in other words, to figure out what actually happened. For instance, Christopher Nolan's *Memento* from 2000 is a film that comprises two different types of scene progression: one in black and white, another in color. Even though what the black and white scenes represent occurs chronologically before what the color scenes depict, the two types are altered throughout, scene by scene. Now this would be enough for confusion but, since it is Nolan, there is more: despite being interrupted with color scenes, the black and white ones progress chronologically, however, the color scenes follow a reverse order. Because of this strange temporal structure, what actually happened in the film is not an easy question. The way the story is told by the film makes it difficult to understand what the story is. There are reasons for telling a story in this way, and in the case of *Memento*, they are primarily aesthetic ones: the reverse chronology of the color scenes conveys an experience to the viewer that mirrors, in some respects, the anterograde amnesia of the protagonist. Moreover, as *Memento* is a crime film, at the center of which is the supposed murder of the protagonist's wife, the strange temporal structure preserves the mystery at the heart of it. Narratives, such as *Memento*, demonstrate the curious fact that the aim of telling a story is not always or primarily to give a clear and easily accessible account of what happened. Clear and easy access, the lack of making an effort of understanding, would prevent the audience from realizing the significance of certain events and would not provide such an emotional and visceral experience.

3. Narrative as Making Sense: Explanation and Understanding

A narrative artifact is one in which the dominant mode of discourse is determined by narrative elements as it mostly depicts a sequence of events, related changes and transformations. As Shaun Gallagher (2014) argues, 'narrative is an interpretive account' (p. 405), and so one of the main purposes of a narrative artifact is explanation that attempts to convey understanding. An assumption here is

that not all explanations convey understanding, and defending it would require a lengthy detour into the philosophy of science, so I stick to illustration.¹² Suppose that neuroscientists now know the specifics of brain activity involved in intentional action and a criminal is spending a life sentence in prison for a crime too horrible to describe. ‘Why did the criminal do it?’ is an interesting question, and so the scientists hook the criminal up to an fMRI and do their tests. They come up with a complex causal explanation that concern certain groups of neurons firing in certain areas. In this case, the scientists’ explanation would be one that does not convey an understanding of the reasons. My working hypothesis here then is that an explanation that conveys understanding is one that makes sense of the *explanandum*.

In order to convey understanding, the form of explanation needs to fit whatever one wants to explain, or in other words, the appropriate form or forms of explanation depends largely on the *explananda*. In explaining why it is that ‘nothing can travel faster than the speed of light’, where the objects of understanding are the physical world and its laws of speed, motion and so on, a complex account of the physics involved is the appropriate form of explanation. But to explain why someone committed a crime, it is – most of the time – inappropriate. Instead, one of the common and effective ways to explain these phenomena is by telling a story. David Herman (2009) forcefully argues that narrative is ‘a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change – a strategy that contrasts with, but is in no way inferior to, “scientific” modes of explanation that characterize phenomena as instances of general covering laws’ (p. 2). When it comes to understanding time, process and change, narrative is an especially well-suited form of explanation, even though it is not the only one.¹³

To describe the understanding that narrative explanations convey, I will follow Alison Hills’s (2015) recent account about the characteristics and value of ‘understanding why’. Hills argues that

¹² For a detailed investigation into explanation see David-Hillel Ruben (1990).

¹³ This should not be taken to mean that human action cannot be explained or understood based on scientific or causal explanations. See Grimm (forthcoming) for an intriguing argument.

understanding why *p*, understanding, for example why Napoleon was (or was not) a great leader, one needs to go beyond mere true beliefs. One needs to have a set of abilities that allow for ‘cognitive control’:

More formally, if you understand why *p* (and *q* is why *p*), then you believe that *p* and that *q* is why *p* and in the right sort of circumstances you can successfully:

(i) follow some explanation of why *p* given by someone else.

(ii) explain why *p* in your own words.

(iii) draw the conclusion that *p* (or that probably *p*) from the information that *q*.

(iv) draw the conclusion that *p*’ (or that probably *p*’) from the information that *q*’

(where *p*’ and *q*’ are similar to but not identical to *p* and *q*).

(v) given the information that *p*, give the right explanation, *q*.

(vi) given the information that *p*’, give the right explanation, *q*’.

(p. 3)

So, for instance, if you understand why the criminal committed the crime, you have cognitive control over the fact that the criminal committed the crime and the relevant causes and reasons that contributed. Perhaps it was psychosis combined with a set of personal circumstances. Besides being able to follow and provide explanations about it, understanding how psychosis in such circumstances can motivate one to commit such a crime, it is also concluded that in similar circumstances psychosis could motivate one to commit a similar crime. Cognitive control offers a compelling account of understanding and one that distinguishes understanding from knowledge.¹⁴

¹⁴ Scope does not allow me to go into the differences of knowledge and understanding. See e.g., Grimm (2006, 2012), Kvanvig (2003), Pritchard (2009) and Zagzebski (2001).

Thus when it comes to providing ‘cognitive control’ over certain events and actions, especially those concerning human agents, narratives are typically an effective form of explanation. And this shows that cognitive control over events and actions is intimately tied up with capacities for producing and comprehending narratives as one in possession of cognitive control needs to be able to provide explanations and apply it to different cases – to tell stories. As Jerome Bruner (1990) argued, one of the main functions of narrative in the explanation of human action is to set up links between the ordinary and the exceptional. If an action is extraordinary in the sense of deviating from recognizable cultural and social norms of behavior, that is when a narrative is, if not necessary, the most apt form of explanation. For Bruner, narrative ‘requires a sensitivity to what is canonical and what violates canonicity in human interaction’ (p. 77). Narratives explain actions by representing them within a structure of other events and actions, and on the whole, the structure is one that is founded on well-established cultural and social patterns. The criminal’s horrible crime is perhaps explained by referring to psychosis and childhood trauma, and the fact that these mental issues can lead to criminal behavior is a widely recognized pattern.

Continuing in the spirit of Bruner, for Daniel D. Hutto (2007), narratives

are not bare descriptions of the current beliefs and desires of idealized rational agents. They are snapshots of the adventures of situated persons, presented in the kinds of settings in which all of the important factors needed for understanding reasons are described—that is, those that are relevant to making sense of what is done and why (p. 34).

As Hutto’s remark indicates, in explaining a person’s actions, it might not be sufficient to just provide a ‘bare description’ of beliefs and desires.¹⁵ Going back to the criminal’s case, explaining why the

¹⁵ Or to use Gibson’s (2011) expression, narratives are often ‘thick’ in that they are richly descriptive. See also Wilson (2011): ‘Narratives assign meaning or significance to the events they incorporate by situating them within an explanatory pattern that typically delineates both their causal roles and their teleological contributions to the needs and goals of the characters. They provide a global account of dramatically highlighted behavior by specifying salient causes of the agents’ actions, charting some of the consequences that those actions engender’ (p. 15).

criminal did what she did could take the form of: the criminal desired to commit the crime and believed that by doing particularly horrible things, the crime would be done. If the crime is to be explained by psychosis, then the intentional picture is of course complicated, and there are obviously more sophisticated belief-and-desire explanations, but a narrative, as Hutto argues, that represents a period of the criminal's life, represents how she has become who she is, why she suffers from psychosis and how her psychosis took control when she committed the crime, is likely an effective mode of explanation if one aims to convey understanding. Upon hearing such an explanation, it is quite possible that an appropriate audience would understand why the crime was committed. In this sense, J. David Velleman (2003) is correct to claim that a 'story [narrative in this sense] does more than recount events; it recounts events in a way that renders them intelligible, thus conveying not just information but also understanding' (p. 1)

Therefore, narratives typically make sense of events and actions that they represent. However, some narratives, especially in art, do not make sense of certain events or actions, they do not explain them, neither do they convey understanding. The reason for this is that some narratives are created partly to call attention to the limits of our cognitive abilities, to the fact that many things lie outside of our cognitive control, and even though it is tempting to embed some actions and events into recognizable patterns, doing so might lead to explanation and understanding at the cost of gross distortions.

To return to crime once more, take Lynne Ramsay's 2011 *We Need to Talk about Kevin* as an example.¹⁶ The film is about a fictional school massacre, committed by the teenager Kevin Katchadourian. Structurally, it begins after the massacre was committed and focuses on the flashbacks and memories of Kevin's mother, Eva. The most important theme of the film is their relationship, and the audience follows Eva in trying to figure out why Kevin did what he did. The film displays a complicated relationship between Kevin and Eva, Kevin's difficulties from childhood and Eva's

¹⁶ Based on Lionel Shriver's novel from 2003.

problems with assuming a motherly role. One of the main questions that the film asks but does not answer is whether there was something inherently ‘evil’ in Kevin that lead to the crime or whether it was because of the way he was raised: nature versus nurture. Even though the question is interesting in its own right, for the present purposes, what I want to focus on is this: by the end of the film, the audience does not acquire an understanding of why Kevin did what he did. The film resists easy answers and conventional explanations, which would have simplified and distorted the complex picture of a particular, fictional scenario. Of course, some presented episodes of Kevin’s life are suggestive of possible answers, however, they still do not amount to an explanation. At the end, visiting Kevin in prison, his mother asks what everyone watching the film wants to know: ‘Why?’ Kevin’s answer is simply: ‘I used to think I knew; now I’m not so sure’.¹⁷

Cases such as *We Need to Talk about Kevin* are intriguing for studying how narratives make sense because some narratives are designed especially to frustrate one’s need for explanation and for understanding. This shows that narratives are versatile, and writing about conversational narratives, Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps (2001) are on point: ‘All narrative exhibits tension between the desire to construct an over-arching storyline that ties events together in a seamless explanatory framework and the desire to capture the complexities of the events experienced, including haphazard details uncertainties and conflicting sensibilities among protagonists’ (p. 4). Whether all narrative exhibits such a tension is best put to the side here, however, it is true that in the literature, narrative’s explanatory power is often emphasized at the expense of, what we might call, its representational complexity, its power to put forth a vision of human life that can be and often is perplexing.

¹⁷ See Jukka Mikkonen (2015) on the value of confusion in reading literature: ‘Confusion makes us test and revise our conceptual resources. If our conceptual resources prove insufficient in explaining a given phenomenon, the resources might be reassessed. Although confusion may be a phase on the way to clarity – before getting back to our existing beliefs or adopting new ones – it does not need to lead to refinement and reorganization in order to be valuable. The procedure, whether it leads to conceptual revision or not, is already significant, as we notice the complexity of a situation, become aware of our conceptual restrictions and are encouraged to seek answers’ (p. 131).

In sum, in this section, I have approached narratives as artifacts that make sense of events and actions that they represents through their narrative elements. First, I have argued that the *explananda* determines (although not uniquely) the appropriate form(s) of explanation. Second, I have stated that an explanation that makes sense of its object(s) is one that leads to understanding. Third, I have referred to Hills's (2015) notion of 'understanding why' as having abilities that constitute cognitive control. Fourth, I have argued that in the case of events and actions, especially when it comes to understanding why a certain action was performed, narratives are effective at providing cognitive control – they are explanations that lead to understanding. Fifth, there is some tension in narratives, as Ochs and Capps (2001) claim, between desiring an over-arching structure and faithfully representing life's complexities. The tension demonstrates that too much emphasis on narrative as a way of making sense obscures the issue that some narratives deliberately avoid the easy path to understanding, and rather, they confuse or perplex their audiences because the visions of life they put forth are confusing and perplexing.

4. Narrative and Intentions

In this last section, I approach narrative as an intentionally created artifact, an 'intentionally fashioned devices of representation that work by manifesting the communicative intentions of their makers' (Currie 2010, p. 17). A narrative, in which the dominant mode of discourse is given by narrative elements, is the product of a successfully executed intention to tell a story. The question then is whether the successfully executed intention to tell a story is necessary, sufficient or both necessary and sufficient for producing a narrative artifact.

Take *The Turn of the Screw*. Now consider a version of a well-known thought experiment. In a world where there are no human beings, by an extreme coincidence, a super-parrot recites *The Turn of the Screw*. Is it a narrative? Suppose further that a fully grown English-speaking human being

appears where the parrot is, and she listens to the parrot's unintentional masterpiece. She experiences the puzzlement, the varieties of emotion from fear to anxiety, and when the parrot's finished, she has the strong suspicion that the governess is unreliable as a narrator. What we have here is an unintentionally produced string of sounds that is being comprehended as a narrative, having the same effects on the reader as does reading the book that was bought in the bookstore.

This brings me back to Currie's (1990) theory of fiction. As Currie argues for fiction, many things can be treated as fictions, however, treating something as fiction does not mean that it is. Not knowing its background, I can read Hemingway's (1964) memoir, *A Moveable Feast* as a fictional work, however, my reading it as such would not make it into one. Whether this is a convincing for fiction is a question I do not intend to address here, but I do want to apply the problem to narrative. Is there similarly a difference between treating something as a narrative and being a narrative? This is the topic of an intriguing debate between David Rudrum (2005, 2006) and Marie-Laure Ryan (2006). Take, for instance, a cooking recipe or an instruction manual for assembling furniture. What happens if someone reads either of them as a narrative, as telling a story by representing events and actions? If that is enough for something to be a narrative, the intention to tell a story is not necessary to producing a narrative.

But there is crucial difference between this account of narrative and Currie's account of fiction as Currie's account of fiction defines fiction on the level of pragmatics, the communicational situation between participants, and fictionality is mostly determined by intentions. What makes reading *A Moveable Feast* as fiction wrong, in a sense, is Hemingway's intention: unlike fiction makers, he wanted the audience to believe that it is a true account. Narrative is different: even though I am arguing that the successfully executed intention to tell a story is necessary for producing a narrative, it is not the intention that makes an artifact into a narrative artifact. Rather, it is the dominance of narrative elements. So narrative here is defined not on the level of pragmatics, but on the level of semantics because whether an element is a narrative element is determined by what it represents: if it represents

a transformation (which is its semantic content), it is a narrative element. Whether narrative elements are dominant in an artifact is also not given by intentions.

Nevertheless, at this point, it is useful to question the artifact at the center of the debate. What is one ascribing the property of ‘being a narrative’ to? Is it the parrot’s ‘utterance’, the page with the recipe or the booklet with the instructions? It is quite likely that neither of these were produced by the intention to tell a story, but all can be read as telling a story. My view on the matter is this: say there is artifact (or something artifact-like) *A* produced without the intention to tell a story and reader *R*, who reads artifact *A* as telling a story. Is *A* a narrative? I think it is not. There is a narrative here, but it is not *A*. *R*, in reading *A* as telling a story, produced a new artifact, *A**, that tells a story. It might not have been *R*’s explicit intention to produce a new artifact that tells a story, but it is an adequate description of what happened that *A* did so. Consider another example. A father sees his kid drawing animals on a page. Suppose that in this instance, the kid has no intention to tell a story by drawing the animals. To entertain the kid, the father takes the page and starts telling a story with the animals as characters based on how they were drawn by the kid. The drawing itself is not a narrative, the father took it and created another artifact that tells a story. If this is acceptable, then the necessity of storytelling intentions for producing narratives is safe.

An interesting case here would be an artifact that is not a narrative, but, unlike the kid’s drawing, it intentionally prescribes the telling of stories based on it. This might be a strange example, but take *Rory’s Story Cubes*, which is a dice-based game. It goes like this: a handful of players sit around a table and each turn, one of them takes a hold of nine six-sided dices. Each side of a dice has a picture: it could be symbol of an airplane, a speech bubble, a sheep, a camera, someone knocking on the door, and so on. So each turn, a player rolls the dices, which results in a random collection of these images. The task is then to make-up a story based on the images rolled, a story that ties together all the nine images in some order. The images are vaguely meaningful, open to interpretations, and there are multiple ways to associate them and incorporate them into the improvised story. So *Story Cubes* is not

a narrative artifact, by itself, it tells no story – it is a game. Each turn, the random collection of nine images is not a narrative by itself, not any more than the kid's drawings in the previous example. However, the main idea of the game with the images is to get the players to tell a story based on them, to create a narrative on the fly. It is different from the kid's drawings in that the game as a (non-narrative) artifact was designed to prompt people to create narrative artifacts. And this further supports the point that just because an artifact affords storytelling possibilities, it is not necessarily a narrative artifact.

The second issue, and I will be brief here, is sufficiency: are there cases when someone successfully executes the intention to tell a story but produces no narrative thereby? What is involved in telling a story, in creating a narrative? For Jim Phelan (2007), narrative is rhetorical act: 'somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purpose(s) that something happened' (p. 3).¹⁸ In order to tell someone that something happened, one needs to represent at least one transformation as there are no happenings without transformations. If a transformation is represented, there is, by definition, a narrative element. So the intention to tell a story cannot be executed without narrative elements. However, as there is a difference between narrative elements and narrative artifacts, a story can indeed be told by an artifact that does not fall into the category of narrative. For instance, consider a non-narrative poem, such as Borges's ('We rob him of everything, // we leave him not so much as a color or syllable: // here, the courtyard which his eyes no longer see, // there, the sidewalk where his hope lay in wait'). It contains narrative elements but it is not a narrative itself. By some of its parts, it tells a story, it tells someone else that something happened, however, there is no narrative artifact. Therefore, the successfully executed intention to tell a story is not sufficient to producing a narrative artifact, but it is sufficient for producing narrative elements.

¹⁸ See also Herrnstein Smith (1981).

5. Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, I have sought to offer a definition and an approach to narrative artifacts. This required making some distinctions: between narrative elements and narrative artifacts; between narrative and narrativity. Afterwards, I have approached narrative artifacts in three steps: 1) through their representational content, where 'event' is a crucial notion. In their narrative elements, narrative artifacts represent events, and the sequence of events abstracted from a narrative artifact might be called its 'story', which is then synonymous with 'plot'. 2) Narrative, as argued, is also a way of making sense: it explains events and actions to convey understanding. I took Alison Hills's (2015) recent account of understanding as abilities making up 'cognitive control' and argued that when it comes to events and actions, representing them in a narrative is an effective way of providing cognitive control and understanding. But some narratives do have different aims: they do not offer explanations, they do not convey understanding, rather, by displaying a complex vision of life, they frustrate one's need for explanation and understanding. This often serves aesthetic purposes. 3) I have argued that the successfully executed intention to tell someone that something happened (Phelan 2007), to tell a story, is necessary for producing a narrative artifact, however, it is insufficient. This is due to the distinction between narrative elements and narrative artifacts: some non-narrative artifacts contain narrative elements, and so they intentionally and partly tell stories, but these elements are not dominant, and so the artifact is non-narrative. All in all, the proposed distinctions and the three approaches make 'narrative' and some related notions clearer, which is a much needed development as the conceptual confusions in the literature on narrative are abundant.

II. TRUTH: FICTION AND HISTORY

1. Introduction

This chapter begins to investigate the issue of truth in connection to storytelling, especially as truth and falsity are intertwined with fictionality. There is a certain trichotomy when it comes to the relationship between narrative and truth. First, there is the question this chapter is concerned with, namely about the truth *of* narratives. Second, the question whether one can learn important truths (say about morality) *through* narratives in literature or film is another, and it is addressed in the next chapter. Third, the question whether Sherlock Holmes lives on Baker Street or on York Street is a question of what is true *in* a fictional or non-fictional narrative. This last question is not explored by the thesis. So let me move on.

To begin with an intuition pump, imagine J. R. R. Tolkien, the famous author of the celebrated fantasy novel, *The Lord of the Rings*, on his deathbed. Time travelling researchers from a project in the future are visiting him to unbelievably relate some unbelievable news. They tell him, ‘Mr. Tolkien, you will never believe this, we have just found a planet that has identical geography to Middle Earth. Superbly detailed historical documents indicate that all that you’ve written in your three volumes is true! Not to mention the extended universe!’¹⁹ What do you think is the reaction of the dying Tolkien? What should it be? Based on the fictional scenario above, it seems that *The Lord of the Rings* has just turned from fantasy fiction into history-of-another-planet. Everything in the novel is true. You might consider this line of thought silly, and you would certainly be well within your rights. It is not likely that

¹⁹ With the example of Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes, a similar possibility was raised by Kripke (1980, pp. 157-158) and addressed by Lewis (1978, pp. 39-40), among others.

you ever face such questions seriously. But despite its silliness, I think it leads to important considerations about the nature of fiction.

The most prominent philosophical position on the scenario above can be construed as follows. Fiction has nothing to do with truth or falsity. It has to do with the intentions of the author and with her process of creating the piece of work. The intentions and the process determine fictionality once and for all, and so, even if it turns out that, on a distant world, the whole three volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* describe things that have happened, thoughts that people have had, characters that exist or have existed, the novel still remains fiction. As a matter of fact, it is an *accidentally true* fiction. People often talk about fiction as opposed to truth, however, this should not dictate the ways we conceive of the fictionality of novels, movies, works of art or pieces of writing. Fictionality does not depend on truth or the lack of it.

This chapter argues against this prominent position. Consider the following propositions:

- (1) *The Lord of the Rings* is a work of fiction.
- (2) *The Lord of the Rings* – given the scenario above – happens to be true.

I deny (2) and I argue that (1) and (2) are incompatible. In general, I claim that a narrative's 'being fictional' and 'being true' are incompatible. This might seem ridiculous at first: on his deathbed, Tolkien should reply to the research team that if he wanted to write about that planet, everything he wrote would be true of it, however, since he did not at all want to write about that planet, not knowing anything about it, *The Lord of the Rings* is still not true. Short of Tolkien having the godly power of creation with words, the novel cannot be made true in any way. Even though there are many interesting issues about the connection of fiction and truth, such as what fiction can teach us about life, morality and human nature, I still think that this – rather undervalued – question is interesting and significant, especially in light of the prominent position that divorces the nature of fictionality from truth and falsity. The issue is especially intriguing as it is connected to speech act theory and the reference of fictional names. Both of these connections will be detailed later.

Section 2 is about the possibilities and conditions of a story being true, concentrating on history. In Section 3, I present theories of fictionality, with focus on the prominent view that fictionality is not influenced by truth or falsity. In Section 4, I outline some reasons for thinking that fictional narratives might be considered as accidentally true. In Sections 5 and 6, I present my arguments against claiming that fictionality is compatible with truth. I distinguish two cases based on whether a given narrative contains invented characters or not. If it does, for accidental truth, the narrative needs either to accidentally refer or state truths without reference, and I argue that neither is plausible. Such a narrative is fictional but not accidentally true. Moving onto narratives that do not contain invented characters but invite the audience to make-believe certain things about individuals who actually exist or existed, I argue that if such a narrative turns out to be true, it is not fiction. Fictionality and truth are incompatible.

2. The Possibility and Conditions of True Stories

Arthur Danto (1985) claims 1) historians aim to tell the truth about the past (p. 25) and 2) they tell stories (p. 111). In order to tell the truth about the past in the form of stories, to story the Industrial Revolution or the First World War, historians have to be able to tell true stories. In spite of this, one of the most influential trends of thought denies that truth can be ascribed to stories. As Richard Walsh (2007) describes this position: ‘all narrativity, from this point of view, shares in the properties of fictionality’ (p. 39). The trend is most strongly associated with the name of Hayden White, a provocative and radical philosopher and historian. His main argument can be represented and simplified as follows:

(P1) A narrative necessarily involves selectiveness and literary techniques of presentation

(P2) Selectiveness and literary techniques of presentation are fictionalizing

(P3) What is fictionalized cannot be true

(C) A narrative cannot be true

To start evaluating the argument, I distinguish between two main positions.²⁰ It seems to me that the more commonsensical position is *narrative anti-realism*. In this case, anti-realism entails that any narrative, a product of a storytelling act, a story told, is a construction. As Walsh (2007) says ‘all narrative, fictional and nonfictional, is artifice’ (p. 14). Telling the story of the First World War, the storyteller has to choose between countless of events, happenings and actions, describe them in a certain way and integrate them into a narrative that has a beginning, a middle and an end, and which explains why this and that occurred. The First World War is not a narrative out there in the real world waiting to be told. More clearly defined, narrative anti-realism is the position that narratives have no reality unless they are specifically constructed or told. There are no stories or narratives that are not constructed or told by someone. Events occur, actions take place, however, there needs to be a constructing or telling activity that organizes these events and actions into a narrative structure that they lack without such activity.

This is the point of many prominent theorists of history, like Hayden White and Louis O. Mink. To quote a famous statement: ‘Stories are not lived but told. Life has no beginnings, middles, or ends; there are meetings, but the start of an affair belongs to the story we tell ourselves later, and there are partings, but final partings only in the story’ (Mink 1970, p. 557).²¹ Mink’s anti-realism is striking in this passage. Since Aristotle, it was seen as crucial for stories that they have a beginning-middle-end arc. Mink denies that there is anything of the sort in life.

Mink would not deny that we validly describe certain events or occasions as beginnings or ends. However, he would argue that when we actually describe something as a beginning, we do so – often tacitly – by referring to a narrative for which it is a beginning. So when I say ‘I began learning to

²⁰ I am not concerned here with arguments against narrativist history (e.g., Goldstein 1976; Mandelbaum 2001) even though they are important in the historical development of the various positions with reference to the unity of science debate.

²¹ Similarly to Mink, White (2001) argues famously that ‘(w)e do not *live* stories, even if we give our lives meaning by retrospectively casting them in the form of stories’ (p. 228).

drive at a relatively late age,' there is nothing inherent in my actions at any time that would deem some of them as 'the beginning.' By describing it in this way, I am interpreting it as being the start of a story. According to Mink (2001), the description of an event itself is a function of the narrative structure. Furthermore, when I actually tell the story of my driving 'career' that can be seen as somewhat of a success in overcoming the challenges that learning late poses, I impose a form upon the flow of a myriad of events and actions that they did not possess when they actually occurred. There is a purposeful selectivity and a perspective on what I include in telling and how I choose to tell. In this respect, Mink attacks the sentiment that the actuality of the past is an untold story, the view that the story of the French Revolution is waiting there to be found by historians just as the 'New World' was waiting for Columbus or subatomic particles were waiting for physicists.²² Mink (2001) says in a probably unfortunate analogy that 'there can be in fact no untold stories at all, just as there can be no unknown knowledge' (p. 220). Mink could agree that it is better to say with William H. Dray (2001) that an untold story is like an undiscovered explanation and that there are 'unknown narrativizable configurations' for discovery in the past (p. 177). Differently put, Dray's point is that there are facts of the past that can be discovered and that these facts can be communicated in narratives that retain their factuality.

This leads me to a less commonsensical alternative, which is most prominently defended by David Carr (1986, 2014): *narrative realism*. Narrative realism denies the claim that stories or narratives only exist if they are constructed or told. According to the narrative realist, there are stories in the world without anyone ever having specifically constructed or told them. Contrary to the anti-realist, the narrative realist claims that certain events and actions hang together in a narrative pattern without someone specifically organizing them so. The reason that this view is initially less appealing is apparent: it is hard to swallow that stories, connected events and actions, would have some mind-independent reality. However, this is not Carr's point. Carr insists on a 'continuity thesis,' which states roughly that

²² This probably gives a crude picture about the mentioned discoveries, but the comparison is just there to indicate a dissimilarity.

historical narratives do not distort or falsify reality. Reality, in a way, extends into historical narratives. Based on Husserl's phenomenology of time consciousness and on reflections concerning the means-end structure of purposeful human action, Carr attacks the picture of life that is essentially meaningless and atomistic before human beings begin to work on it in their storytelling acts. So instead of forcing mind-independent reality to include stories, Carr (2014) broadens what is meant by 'reality':

This is the idea that in order to qualify as real the world must be utterly devoid of those intentional, meaningful, and narrative features we attribute to it when we tell stories about it. Reality must be a meaningless sequence of external events, and time must be nothing but a series of nows, and anything else we attribute to it is at best mere fantasy or wishful thinking, at worst imposition or distortion. What is somehow forgotten is that history is not about the physical but about the human world (p. 208).

So Carr would agree, at least here, that when it comes to the physical world, there is just a meaningless sequence of events. The reason why the narratives of history are not distortions of such meaningless sequences of events is that they are not just about the physical world. They are about the human world, a world in which the actions of agents have a means-end structure, and in which time is perceived not as the mechanical ticking of a clock but as something which has various meaningful qualities and durations. Narrative is woven into the fabric of human reality. Even though it is a valuable move on Carr's side to question the underlying assumption of narrative anti-realism, I think that a realist position has significant downsides, especially when it comes to historical truth.

According to Andrew P. Norman (2001), if one is inclined to think with Carr that the human past is already storied, then in writing history, the historian should aim at coming up with narratives that correspond to the stories the human past contains. Norman has misgivings about such a picture as it seems to misconstrue what historians actually do. He argues that the historian's stories about the past need to be true about the past and not merely about the experience of it. In other words, even if the experience of time is not of a meaningless sequence of atomistic events, the historian's task is not to write up a story that corresponds to the experience, but one that is true about the past.

Furthermore, if historiography is nothing more than looking at a storied past and writing up a story that corresponds to it, then the creativity that is usually ascribed to historiographic practice is denied without warrant.

In a devastating critical piece, Carroll (2001, pp. 133-156) grants many of White's claims about narratives, however, he reasonably doubts whether the qualities that White emphasizes make narratives fictional. According to Peter Lamarque's (2014, pp. 1-32) more charitable assessment, White identifies a certain opacity in the proper attitude to historiography: historical narratives should be read somewhat opaquely (as opposed to transparently), so they are understood to constitute what they are about. Opacity, as opposed to transparency, means in this context that historical narratives are not mere 'see-through windows' to historical reality on the other side. It does not follow, however, that the facts of history that William the Conqueror landed in Sussex in 1066 or that the assault of the Bastille took place in 1789 are invented, even though they are not straightforwardly 'real' (what is meant by 'landing' and 'assault'?). Rather, what is (or should be) at stake in White's historiographic theory is the invented or made up nature of the narrative structure that is rightly said to be imposed on the facts, as Lamarque sees it. Norman (2001) reasonably articulates: 'some narrative histories simply are true constructions' because 'construction does not entail falsification' (p. 192).

All in all, depending on assuming narrative realism or narrative anti-realism, one will take a different view on how historical narratives are true. The realist will have to say something about the possibility of the historian's reworking stories that are originally given in one's experience of the past, while the anti-realist will have to provide conditions for the truth of certain constructions such as narratives. Both have to disagree with White's radicalism. However, both also have to keep in mind that White's position indicates important difficulties in saying what is involved in a narrative's being true. To quote White (1984):

As thus envisaged, the narrative figurates the body of events that serves as its primary referent and transforms these 'events' into intimations of patterns of meaning that any literal representation of them as 'facts' could never produce. This is not to say that an historical

discourse is not properly assessed in terms of the truth-value of its factual (singular existential) statements taken individually and the logical conjunction of the whole set of such statements taken distributively. For unless an historical discourse acceded to assessment in these terms, it would lose all justification for its claim to represent and provide explanations of specifically 'real' events. But such assessment touches only that aspect of the historical discourse which is conventionally called its 'chronicle.' It does not provide us with any way of assessing the content of the narrative itself (p. 22).

To recall the argument:

(P1) A narrative necessarily involves selectiveness and literary techniques of presentation

(P2) Selectiveness and literary techniques of presentation are fictionalizing

(P3) What is fictionalized cannot be true

(C) A narrative cannot be true

Narrative anti-realists have the option to deny *P2*. Even though they might disagree with *P3* and the equating of fiction with falsity, they could argue that constructions can be true, so that is the reason why selectiveness and literary techniques do not fictionalize necessarily. Narrative realists, on the other hand, can deny *P1* because they claim that, through time-consciousness, historical human reality is experienced as a narrative in the first place, so there is no fictionalizing selectiveness and literary techniques, which would be required for the argument to go through.²³

An important take-away from the above discussion is that a narrative indeed can be true, however, its truth is not the same as the truth of a statement. I do not want to endorse a special species of 'allegorical truth' or 'narrative truth', but it seems right, as both Mink (2001) and White (1984) claim, if narratives are true, they are not true in the straightforward correspondence sense. 'Napoleon was average height' is a statement that is true in case Napoleon was average height considering the what

²³ *P3* can obviously be denied as well, however, White uses fictionality in a special sense. According to him, a narrative structure is imposed on reality, on the facts, and so it necessarily adds and modifies beyond the point where truth cannot be ascribed. On this point, again see the discussions in Carroll (2001, pp. 133-156) and Lamarque (2014, pp. 1-32).

was average in the 18th-19th centuries for men in Europe. If one wants to consider all of the statements about, for example, the Napoleonic Wars in a narrative, an easy way to assess truth is to assess the conjunction: the narrative is true if and only if the conjunction of its statements is true. However, this is problematic because it involves basically a de-narrativization of the narrative or the translation of the narrative into a series of statements: 'x is...', 'y did this...', 'then x did that', 'y is...'. It might be difficult in practice to carry out this translation, but there is a deeper theoretical issue: it seems to be impossible to capture all that a narrative means in a list of such statements.

A narrative can only be true if whatever it relates as happening has really happened and happened in a way which is related. If a narrative of the Battle of Stalingrad represents it as an easy run-of-the-mill victory for the defenders, it would be an inaccurate representation of one of the world's bloodiest clashes. Such a narrative would be false on grounds of misrepresentation even though the event of the battle that is referred to did indeed occur.

A more complicated way in which a narrative can be false is by being a misinterpretation. Even if a narrative represents only that which has occurred and represents it accurately, this representation can be made sense and interpreted in a way as to give reason to call it false. While it is possible to misrepresent single events, misinterpretation is a problem that arises when a narrative concerns multiple events implicitly or explicitly. One way in which an account might misinterpret is by being unfair. Behan McCullagh (1998) asserts that the fairness of historical narratives is just as important as their truth: 'If I say that my dog has an ear, an eye, a leg and a tail, that statement would be literally true. It has got all of those things. But the statement does not give a fair description of my dog, which has two ears, two eyes, four legs and one tail' (pp. 57-58). I would go further than McCullagh, the statement is literally true about *some parts* of the dog but literally false about *the dog* as a whole. This is the same issue that is treated under the label selectivity and/or comprehensiveness in historical narratives.²⁴ A narrative that purports to be true can fail to be true because of a distortive bias in choosing what to tell about its subject matter. There are numerous ideologically-motivated and thus

²⁴ See Carroll (2001, pp. 133-156).

false historical narratives to confirm this point. The reflections above support Mink's (2001) claim that the truth of whole narratives is irreducible to the truth of their constituents and of their conjunction (p. 217).²⁵ All in all, narratives are not necessarily falsifying or fictionalizing. Just events are related through a narrative structure, it does not mean that the structure poses an insurmountable obstacle to truth. For a narrative to be true, however, it is not enough that its – explicit or implied – constituent statements are true. A true narrative needs to accurately represent what it is about and also offer a true interpretation.

3. Fiction and Invention

As it has been demonstrated above, it is indeed possible to tell true stories. Based on this, the simple starting point might be to contrast true stories with fictional ones: what is true cannot be fictional and what is fictional cannot be true. However, the simplicity – as in numerous cases – has shortcomings that theorists and philosophers of fiction grapple with. Theories of fictionality can be classified in numerous ways. One of them is the following. Is fictionality distinguished on a semantic, syntactic or pragmatic level? For example, Frege's brief comment on epic poetry can be generalized into a semantic view. Frege (1892/1960) says that in reading an epic poem, only the senses of the sentences are interesting, the denotations are not (p. 63). In effect then, fiction could be said to be distinguished by lacking reference. Or perhaps fictional works have a unique syntactic structure. One of the famous theorists on this view is Käte Hamburger (1993), who develops the category of proper fiction reserved for third-personal non-factual narration. This results in the possibly unsolvable problem that first-personal narrating cannot be counted as fiction (merely 'pretense' on Hamburger's view). In any case,

²⁵ Mink states that this would be a model of truth for a chronicle. A chronicle is the 'stuff' of narratives, according to Hayden White (2001): a chronicle is a listing of events that can be emplotted multiple ways to be romance, tragedy, comedy or satire. Before emplotment, for a chronicle to be true, it is necessary and sufficient that all the individual statements are true. This changes when the chronicle is turned into a narrative, and above I have given examples how the truth of the whole story is not just determined by the truth of its constituents.

the pragmatic approach is by far the most popular, and it is usually cashed out in terms of speech act theory. The foundation is John R. Searle's (1975) famous statement that the 'utterance acts in fiction are indistinguishable from the utterance acts of serious discourse, and it is for that reason that there is no textual property that will identify a stretch of discourse as a work of fiction' (p. 327). Fictionality, on this view, depends on the pragmatics of the speech situation. According to Searle's own proposal, fiction is pretense. It is the intention of the fiction-maker to pretend making speech acts (mostly assertions) that classify a work as fictional.²⁶

Another scheme can be developed based on David Davies (2001) and Peter Swirski (2010). Should fictionality be approached in a textualist, functionalist or intentionalist way? Textualism coincides with the semantic and syntactic levels above. A textualist disagrees with Searle in that fictionality can be distinguished by textual properties either semantic or syntactic. Dorrit Cohn (1999), for example, finds, among other features, the textual property of representing another person's thoughts to be a 'signpost of fictionality' that is independent of the pragmatics of the speech situation. Both remaining approaches are pragmatic, both differently so. In this area, functionalism is attached to the seminal work of Kendall L. Walton (1990) in *Mimesis as Make-Believe*. Walton's approach can be labeled functionalist because on his view 'a narrative is fictional when its socially recognized function is to serve as a certain kind of resource in games of make-believe' (Davies 2001, p. 264). The function of a fictional text is to make the reader exercise her imagination. The content of fictional works is to be made-believe and not to be believed. This latter claim is shared by the most popular view of fictionality: intentionalism. However, as the label suggests, fictionality here depends not on the function of the work but on the intentions of the fiction-maker. Greg Currie's (1990) influential view in *The Nature of Fiction* is that fiction-making requires a fictive intention to produce fictive utterances.²⁷ A fictive intention is a Gricean one: it is an intention that the audience makes-believe the

²⁶ See more on this classification in Schaeffer (2012). On problems about how fictive intentions can be recognized see Sutrop (2002).

²⁷ For his most up-to-date, supervenience view see Currie (2014).

content instead of believing it because of recognizing that making the audience make-believing is the intention of the author.²⁸

What is clear from the above discussion is that fictionality cannot just be reduced to untrue constructions. Invention, without the intention to deceive, seems to be key. As Christopher New (1999) argues, ‘the central idea involved in the term “work of fiction” is that of an invented narrative; and that it is this idea that we need principally to understand’ (p. 39). Similarly, Tim Crane (2013) writes: ‘It is because authors are the creators of fictions that we value them as artists. Creating a fiction is a matter of making something up that did not really happen’ (p. 77). Interestingly, the root of the verb ‘to invent’ is the Latin ‘*invenire*’, which meant ‘to find’ and ‘to come upon’, ‘to discover’. The notion of ‘invention’ today has an opposite meaning: to invent is to create something new.

A possible view can construe the differences between invented and non-invented narratives arguing that only non-invented narratives refer to the extratextual world and only they have the pragmatic dimension associated with falsifiability (but with evidence and confirmation as well). In other words, non-invented narratives make a truth-claim. While the explicated view above is certainly attractive, it does not and would not convince many philosophers concerned with fiction. The main argument against the view can be expressed in the following way. Claiming that fiction does not refer or aim to state the truth cannot distinguish between fiction and non-fiction, invented and non-invented narratives because there are many fictional (invented) narratives that do refer and aim to state the truth.²⁹ Firstly, even though someone might argue that Tolstoy’s Napoleon in *War and Peace* is a robustly fictional character, I would argue that the name ‘Napoleon’ in the novel aims to refer to the historical person.³⁰ Secondly, as Richard Gaskin (2013) claims, one should not only consider proper

²⁸ Swirski (2010) helpfully pries apart the levels of speech acts involved: ‘Textualists, who take the inherent linguistic features of a discourse to be determinant of its fictionality, focus on locution. Functionalists, who relate fictionality to the reception of a discourse, focus on perlocution. Both stand apart from the illocutionary approach (in that the illocutionary approach concentrates on the performance of fiction making)’ (p. 89).

²⁹ Both Stacie Friend (2008, 2012) and Derek Matravers (2014) argue forcefully for such a conclusion in considering the consensus about the supposed different reactions to fiction (imagination, make-believe) and non-fiction (belief).

³⁰ See Friend (2000) on connected names.

names when it comes to the referential dimension of fiction but general terms as well (p. 68). Tolkien (1954/2004) writes in *The Lord of the Rings* that '[o]n the third morning Caradhras rose before them, a mighty peak, tipped with snow like silver, but with sheer naked sides, dull red as if stained with blood' (p. 286). The readers can safely suppose that among other things 'morning', 'peak', 'snow', 'naked', and 'blood' refer as they do in any other discourse, while 'them' (the fictional characters) and 'Caradhras' (a fictional place) are problematic. And lastly, some authors of fictional works of a more didactic bent express views that they offer as truth claims. Didacticism might be one of the 'worst heresies' as Edgar Allen Poe says, but a heresy does not strip away fictionality.

With all these difficulties in mind, one can be inclined to drop the notion of 'invention' in an account of fictionality. 'Invention', in the relevant sense here, is a relation between the narrative and the world. If a narrative is invented, it does not describe something in the world but creates something new. However, as indicated above, most philosophers tend to think about fictionality not in terms of how the fictional work relates to the world but how the creator of the fictional work relates to the work and by that to its audience.

4. Fiction and Accidental Truth

The general consensus among philosophers is this: non-fiction and fiction are not demarcated by truth and falsity, and a narrative's being true does not imply that it cannot be fictional. Considering that there are numerous conditions for a narrative's truth (it is more complicated than the truth of a simple assertion), it is strange that one would even entertain the thought that a fictional narrative can be completely true. Most philosophers of fiction see true fiction as an accidental possibility. Walton (1990) is the most radical exception in this respect (as well) as he states that he sees no reason why an author could not claim truth for every sentence she writes and still write fiction. He imagines a genre of historical novel which allows no liberties with the facts (p. 79). If such an historical novel functions as

a resource in a game of make-believe for the reader, it should be thought of as fiction. On Walton's construal, a work which is intentionally and completely true can be a work of fiction.

I spend the rest of my chapter arguing against the possibility of accidentally true fictions of intentionalists, but Walton's view is so important that I have to address it here. As long as one accepts Walton's definition of fictionality (being a prop in a game of make-believe), I have no quarrel with the possibility of true fictions, accidental or not. However, Walton's definition has problems. For instance, he readily admits that his conception of fiction does not track the ordinary or common notion of 'fiction', the one that is used to classify books in bookstores. Basically, Walton's category of fiction is very broad, it covers, for example, all representational art, and Stacie Friend (2008) argues that it should constitute its own class: 'walt-fiction' (p. 154).³¹ Seen in this way, I have no issue with walt-fictions being true. Indeed, some representations accurately represent reality: they are true representations, which can also serve as props in games of make-believe. However, it is important to point out that the possibility of walt-fictions being true does not entail that works more narrowly defined as fiction can also be true.

In any case, at least it is clear that truth does not imply fictionality, or that there are true stories, histories, autobiographies that are not fictional. However surprising, this applies to falsity as well. Falsity is not sufficient for fictionality because there are false narratives that are not thereby fictional. Firstly, there are lies. If someone asks me to tell them about my last night, and to impress them, I make up or invent events that did not actually occur, then I have produced a false narrative. A standard intentionalist take on why this false narrative is not a work of fiction would refer to my intentions of attempting to deceive my listener, to deceive her into believing that what I narrate has actually occurred. In contrast, the tellers of fictional stories do not intend to deceive their audiences, what they intend is for the audiences to imagine or make-believe the content told. There is a certain type of tacit contract between creators and audiences of fiction that is lacking when someone is deceitful.

³¹ One of the most popular criticism of Walton's account is that it cannot differentiate what is fiction from what is treated as fiction (see Currie 1990, p. 36). On different methodologies for philosophies of fiction see Stock (2016, pp. 204-205).

Secondly, a false narrative might be produced by an historian who makes mistakes. In her book on ancient historians, Susan Sorek (2012) mentions that Livy (Titus Livius Patavinus), an historian of ancient Rome (c.64 bce – c.7 ce) was not the most effective at checking his sources, and so he often committed the error of repeating an event as if it happened multiple times because of having different accounts. ‘For example some of Hannibal’s Spanish operations are repeated, and his crossing of the Apennines is reported as an attempt in 218 bce and then as a fact in 217 bce, when clearly the accounts concern the same march’ (p. 111). Of course, the changes in the history of historiographic practices is a topic on its own that I have no means or intention to discuss,³² however, such an historical account that creates an extra march when there was in fact only one qualifies as an example of a false narrative. It is unintentionally false.

To sum up, the difference between the two cases of false narrative above are not merely about the intentions of the storytellers. The cases are similar in that they are both false, however, they are false for different reasons. The liar’s narrative is intentionally false, relating events that did not occur. The historian’s narrative is false unintentionally. If the historian is not a liar, she believes her narrative to be true. The failure of the historian is that she attempts to tell a true story but ends up with a false one. It has to be noted that the end product might be the same. In an extraordinary coincidence, the stuff of thought experiments, the same false story might be the product of a lie and of mistaken history as well. It seems there’s agreement that there is nothing *necessarily* in a narrative that betrays whether it is a product of fiction making, a lie, or a mistake. Again, this is a point Searle (1975) made: ‘utterance acts in fiction are indistinguishable from the utterance acts of serious discourse, and it is for that reason that there is no textual property that will identify a stretch of discourse as a work of fiction’ (p. 327). Similarly, stories that are products of lies or mistakes are equally indistinguishable based on textual properties. The contrast shows that falsity is sufficient neither for fictionality, nor for lies and mistakes. And even if many would claim that stories of fiction are not false stories, there can be cases where textual features do not distinguish between fictional and false.

³² See Friend (2012) for true historical accounts that do not follow the fidelity constraint in some parts.

Consider the example of David Davies (2007):

An author, Smith, composes what she takes to be a short fictional narrative about a family named Brown living in Montreal, Canada, whose apartment catches fire in mid-January and who are forced to move into a shelter. As a matter of fact it turns out that, entirely unbeknownst to Smith, there is a real family named Brown of whom all of the things narrated in the story are true (p. 35).

According to Davies, fictionality does not depend on the truth, on whether or not the narrated events happened the way they did. Besides the intention for the audience to imagine or make-believe, fictionality depends on whether the actually occurring events and their temporal order have guided the author, or in other words, whether the author has observed the fidelity constraint or not. In the Brown family case, the author could not have been guided by the actual events because she did not know about them. So if she intends her audience to make-believe the fate of the Brown family, she produces a fictional narrative that is also true.

In different circumstances, Smith, who is now a neighbor of the Browns, might have produced the same narrative to a certain Jones who is a friend of the Browns, visiting from Ottawa. Jones cannot get into the Browns' apartment and it smells of smoke. In one case, Smith tells Jones what happened and it actually did happen, so her narrative is true and not fictional. In another case, with deceptive and evil intent, Smith tells the narrative of the fire and the moving to a shelter to Jones, when in fact, the Browns are home, just burned the dinner they were cooking for Jones, and they could not hear him knocking. In this case, the narrative of Smith is false and it is a lie. In a third variation, Smith might have heard the same narrative from a neighbor who wanted to deceive her, and she retells the story without deceptive intent to Jones. In this last case, Smith did not check her facts, so she produced a false narrative by mistake. The narrative itself does not announce if it is true, false, a lie, a mistake, or a fiction.

Currie and Davies both agree that the intentions of the fiction's creator are mostly responsible for fictionality, or that fictionality depends on the fictive nature of the utterances that invite the imaginative response of the audience. On these views, the way the world is does not matter in

assessing fictional status. Regardless of what states-of-affairs obtain in the world, a narrative is fictional if and only if the author intends the audience to imagine or make-believe its content and the audience recognizes this intention of the author. Currie qualifies the theory. He imagines someone named Smith (not to be confused with Davies's Smith earlier) who represses some of his terrible experiences. Failing thus to remember them, he thinks that he invents a story, but the narrative actually retells the experiences that he repressed. In order to argue that Smith's fictive intent fails, Currie adds the disclaimer that a narrative can be fictional only if its truth is accidental. To quote Currie (1990):

Because the circumstances are so unusual one can scarcely imagine them arising in real life, the original proposal - that fiction is the product of a fictive intent - is an extremely good approximation to the truth. In just about any real case it will give the right answer to the question Is this fiction or not? But to turn the approximating formula into a precise one we need to add an extra condition. We need to say that a work is fiction iff (a) it is the product of a fictive intent and (b) if the work is true, then it is at most accidentally true (p. 46).

What this means for Smith is that his narrative cannot be a work of fiction because it is non-accidentally true. It is non-accidentally true because Smith's subconscious feeds in the information about the repressed experiences that influence Smith's 'invention'.

Not everyone agrees that an intentionalist theory can only allow for non-accidentally true fictions. In a recent article about learning from fiction through imagination, Ben Blumson (2015) claims: 'Testimonial novels such as [B. S. Johnson's] *The Unfortunates* should be considered both factual and fictional, because they are intended to induce the reader to believe their content, by means of recognition of intention, but also intended to induce the reader to imagine their content, by means of recognition of intention' (p. 49). Based on authorial intentions, such a testimonial novel is non-accidentally true (or factual) and fictional at the same time. By this Blumson points to an important aspect of the debate: the relationship of belief and imagination as propositional attitudes, and he is right in that some parts of works might call for belief and some for imagination, which makes it difficult to clearly say whether they are fictional or factual or both.

I agree that at least for some testimonial novels, it is as important to experience certain imaginative states as it is to believe their contents and that both are intended.³³ However, concerning the prescribed propositional attitudes, it does not seem to be the case that for a particular content of the novel, *p*, both ‘believe that *p*’ and ‘make-believe that *p*’ are intended by the author. In fact, it is plausible to hold that for the same content, and *ceteris paribus*, believing that *p* is incompatible with making-believe that *p*.³⁴ All other things being equal, a content, *p*, is either believed or made-believe because belief entails that one thinks *p* is true while make-belief requires that one acts as if believing that *p* is true. If one believes *p* to be true, one acts on the belief that *p* is true and cannot make-believe or act as if believing *p* to be true (unless one is ‘disposed to inferentially connect the thought of *p* to further propositional content which one doesn’t believe’, on this see Stock 2016, pp. 213-214). Belief that *p* precludes the possibility of make-belief that *p*. So Blumson is correct in that some testimonial novels are intended to be vividly imagined even though their contents are to be believed, however, this does not entail that a piece of content is both fictional and factual at the same time because, according to Currie, the distinction between fictional and factual content is given by incompatible, prescribed propositional states: either belief or make-belief.

As an accidentally true fiction, Davies (2007) comes up with the already mentioned example of the Brown family’s apartment catching fire. To recall, in this case, without the teller knowing, the described situation actually happens to a family of Browns living in Montreal (p. 35). Davies says that this is unproblematic because the story is not originally *about* the Brown family that actually had to leave their house even though the same events happened to them as they are described in the story. According to Davies (2001), what determines fictionality is the intentional flouting of the ‘fidelity constraint’ under which ‘the author is presumed to have included only events she believes to have occurred, narrated as occurring in the order in which she believes them to have occurred’ (p. 264).³⁵

³³ See Currie (1990) on fictional works as being ‘patchworks’ (p. 49), the criticism of Friend (2012), and also the revised account of Davies (2015).

³⁴ See also Friend (2014): ‘there are many forms of imagining that are compatible with belief, such as the experience of mental imagery or the construction of “narrative worlds” in imagination’ (p. 230).

³⁵ See also Friend’s (2008, 2012) discussion of the issue.

On Davies's view, if someone tells a story with the intention for the audience to make-believe and a design that does not observe the fidelity constraint, she produces fiction even if the narrative is completely true.

Note that Currie's and Davies's conceptions are clearly different.³⁶ For Davies, Smith's narrative, influenced by Smith's subconscious, would actually count as a work of fiction because Smith only includes events that he believes have not occurred. On Currie's view, this is not a fictional narrative because it is non-accidentally true. Non-accidental truth does not necessarily depend on what the storytellers believes or intends. Non-accidental truth counterfactually depends on the facts.³⁷ One way to put it is that Davies's category of fiction is broader than Currie's: while Davies accepts Smith-type stories as fiction, Currie does not. Despite this difference, they would both accept that Browns-type stories, even though they are (accidentally) true, are fictional. I disagree.

I argue below that fiction cannot be true. In other words, 'being fictional' and 'being true' cannot be ascribed to narratives at the same time – they are incompatible. Both Currie and Davies have a good number of imaginative cases which would warrant a judgment of compatibility, but I think the matter needs still closer attention. There are two ways in which a fictional story can turn out to be accidentally true. First, there could be a fictional story in which the fiction-maker thinks that she invents fictional characters, and it turns out that there are or were existing individuals that satisfy all that is predicated of the supposedly invented characters.³⁸ This would be the case of Davies's Brown family above or the case where *The Lord of the Rings* turns out to be true. Both are seen as fictional and accidentally true at the same time because, as it turns out, there are or were real existents that accidentally satisfy whatever the fiction-maker made up. Secondly, a fictional story can turn out to be accidentally true if a fiction-maker makes fiction using only genuine proper names. A prime example

³⁶ See Davies's (2007) critique of Currie.

³⁷ As Currie (1990) writes in parentheses: 'If the horrible events Smith witnessed had been different in some way, his story would have been correspondingly different' (p. 47).

³⁸ I should add that I use the term 'character' for the sake of illustration. The distinction can be applied to all invented or non-invented content that a narrative can refer to.

of this can come from the difficult genre of historical fiction. Suppose there is a work of historical fiction that only uses names of individuals who did exist. Fictionality is in the imaginative predication: the fiction-maker ascribes characteristics or deeds to individuals that she does not know to be true. She makes fiction using real individuals of the past. If then, due to new evidence, it turns out that whatever was fictionally ascribed to an historical person is actually true, we would have an accidentally true fiction on our hands without invented characters. In the first case, I deny that the piece of narrative is accidentally true and I accept that it is fiction, but in the second case, I deny that it is fiction and accept that it is accidentally true. The main thesis remains: truth and fiction are incompatible.

5. Fiction Cannot Be True: Accidental Reference

I begin then by considering a disclaimer of Davies (2007). As he says, the story about the Browns can be said to be true ‘if we grant the terms in the story can refer to entities in the real world’ (p. 35). As Davies’s remark indicates, the issue partly turns on the reference of fictional names. What do fictional names like ‘Odysseus’, ‘Hamlet’, ‘Rogozin’ or the ‘Brown family’ refer to? How do they refer to them? One strong position argues that these names are empty, non-referring (e.g., Adams, Fuller and Stecker 1997; Tiedke 2011). In contrast, there are various possibilities if fictional names are taken as referring: they either refer directly to non-existent objects (e.g., Parsons 1980), to abstract objects (e.g., Thomasson 1999), to possible objects (e.g., Lewis 1978) or they refer non-directly as descriptions (e.g., Currie 1990). These views all have their intricacies, and it is beyond the scope of the present chapter to disentangle them.

It needs to be granted that the terms in the narrative can refer to entities in the real world. Just recall the example from *The Lord of the Rings*: ‘snow’, ‘blood’, and so on. It also needs to be granted that the proper names can refer to entities. As Currie (1990) argues:

Because many of Napoleon's characteristics were common knowledge at the time *War and Peace* was written, and because the description in that book of the character called 'Napoleon' comes close to fitting Napoleon, it is reasonable to infer that the fictional author of *War and Peace* intended that 'Napoleon' refer to Napoleon, and hence that he believed that it did (p. 129).

Similarly in Davies's narrative about the Browns, 'Montreal' has to refer to the real city in Canada. However, and most importantly, the fact that terms in the narrative *can* refer to entities in the real world does not mean that they *actually do*. To return to the possible conceptions of fictional reference: if the 'Browns' is an empty, non-referring name, then straightforwardly, it cannot refer to the actual Brown family. Similarly, if the 'Browns' refers either to non-existent, possible or abstract objects, the reference cannot be the actual Brown family. It is only possible for the 'Browns' to refer to the actual family if the name abbreviates a description. Currie addresses the issue in detail, following Ryle and Kripke. As Currie (1990) writes:

Kripke argues that fictional names cannot be abbreviated descriptions because if they were they might turn out, accidentally, to have reference. He imagines a case where, unknown to Doyle, there is someone who does all the things ascribed to Holmes in the stories. Surely that would not be a case in which Doyle was writing about *that* man. But it seems that on a descriptive account he would have been. For that man (call him 'Actual Holmes' or 'H@') would, on such an account, *be* the unique individual who fits Doyle's description. He would be Holmes (pp. 162-163).

Following this, Currie solves the problem and defends a descriptivist theory of fictional names by moving from the facts of the story (what Holmes did at this or that time) to facts about the story, namely whether it is about the actually existing Holmes or not. On Currie's view, Conan Doyle's Holmes is tied to the texts which Doyle produced, and so the fictional name 'Holmes' abbreviates a description that not only contains what happened to him and what he did, but also that he is described by Doyle's texts. If Currie (1990) stopped at this point, I would have no disagreements. However, he continues:

Notice that a story can be about someone without its being true of that someone, as *War and Peace* is about Napoleon even though it does not describe his activities correctly. Similarly, a story can be true of someone without being about that someone. In Kripke's fantasy, Doyle's story is true of *H@* without being about him (p. 164).

My disagreements can be phrased in the following way. According to Currie, a narrative can be true of something even if it is not about that thing. According to Davies, a narrative can accidentally refer to something and so be true about that thing. The difference is that for Currie, even if the narrative does not refer accidentally, it can be accidentally true of something it is not about. I argue against Currie that a narrative cannot be true of something if it is not about that particular thing. I argue against Davies that a narrative cannot accidentally refer to something, and therefore it cannot be true about that particular thing.

Against Davies then, the counter-argument works with the Browns example. According to Davies, the 'Browns' in the made-up fictional narrative can accidentally refer to an actually existing Brown family, so it is possibly true about them. In making up the story, Smith has a Gricean intention that the audience does not believe her tale about the Browns but it makes-believe because of recognizing that this is her intention. Even if the story contains events that actually happened to a family of Browns in Canada, the 'Browns' in the story does not refer to them accidentally or otherwise because the reference of the 'Browns' is determined by the Gricean intention of Smith. The narrative about the Browns cannot accidentally refer to the actual Browns because the reference is determined by the Gricean intention that produces the fiction. To quote Kripke's (1973/2013) John Locke lectures: 'The fact is that in introducing the name we make "Sherlock Holmes" name a particular man who would have done certain things, not just any old man who did these things' (p. 41). And this also leads us to and can be used to argue against Currie's descriptivist view.

As Currie addresses the issue in more detail than Davies, I do the same in arguing against him, still relying on the Browns story. Take the following proposition: 'The Browns spent the night in a shelter.' This proposition is true if and only if the Browns spent the night in a shelter and false

otherwise. Is it true of any and all Browns who spent the night in a shelter? Even if it does not refer to any and all Browns, is it true of them? I do not think that it is. The truth of the proposition depends on the context in which the proposition is uttered. The same sentence can be used to utter true propositions about any of the Browns who spent the night in the shelter, however, the fact that it *can be* used does not mean that *it is*. Therefore, if you do not refer to a particular Brown family, you cannot say something true about them. Compare it with the following case: I am having dinner with my wife, Andrea, and with one of her friends, strangely also called Andrea. My wife's glass is empty while there is still wine in the friend's glass, and so I ask my wife: 'Andrea, shall I pour some wine for you?' Do I thereby also ask the friend? Of course I do not, and the person my question is directed to is determined by my intention.

Currie (1990) has another imaginative example that is relevant. Jones rewrites an unknown non-fictional story (original text '*T*') in his own words and style, without knowing that it is non-fictional, and attempts to pass it off as a piece of fiction.

Even if Jones uses the same names, he does not use them with the intention of referring by means of them to whoever was referred to by them in *T*. (...) The names in Jones's story can be paired homophonically with the names in *T*, but they are not co-referential with the names in *T*. So the sentences in Jones's story will not express the same propositions as the sentences of *T*, and the stories will be different. Their being different might then be enough for us to say that Jones's version is fiction after all. To get around this difficulty we must assume one of two things. Either *T* contains no names but only descriptions, or, if *T* contains names, it contains only names that Jones knows to be referring and the referents of which he intends to preserve (p. 44).

Applying this to the Browns case, in making up the fictional narrative, Smith's using the name 'Browns' might be homophonic with the actual Browns, but they do not refer to the same family. The problem with Currie's workaround is that the original narrative, *T*, is non-fictional. Currie does believe that ordinary proper names refer directly, he is a descriptivist only about fictional names. So it cannot be

said that there are no names in *T*. If it is a factually true, non-fictional account, the names in it refer directly. So therefore, the sentences in Jones's fictional narrative do not express the same propositions as the sentences in the original, non-fictional narrative. The original narrative is true, but Jones's is not. Altogether, Jones is not writing about the same – actually existing – people that the original narrative refers to, and so, there is no possibility that Jones's story is true. The determination of reference precludes the possibility of truth.

Currie might argue that still, names in fiction are abbreviated descriptions, and so anything – actually existing or not – that satisfies the descriptions is referred to by the name, intended by the author or not. But now consider Tim Crane (2013) on singular thought:

I should emphasize that my aim here is not to argue for any particular theory of names, so long as there are theories of names which are consistent with the view that there can be singular thoughts about nonexistent things. If we use names to express our singular thoughts, and if it is possible to have singular thoughts about non-existent things, then there must be an account of names which does not require that they have existing referents (p. 145).

On Crane's view, fictional names do not refer in the strong sense of reference, that is, latching onto something real, however, even without reference one still can have singular thoughts about the nonexistent. According to Crane, there are descriptivist theories of names that allow for this. So even if one concedes that names in fiction abbreviate descriptions, that information is carried by the descriptions, it does not follow that anything satisfying the descriptions is referred to by the name. Descriptivism about names in fiction does not entail the possibility of accidental truth.³⁹ Even if everything that a fictional narrative contains is satisfied by the real world, at most one can say that fiction maker would have uttered something true if and only if she intended to refer to actual individuals. She *could have* but she *did not*. She intended to make fiction, and so she invented characters.

³⁹ On this point, see Adams, Fuller and Stecker (1997, p. 145) as well.

However, one might object that my argument here was too quick. The point can be put the following way: even though a fiction maker might not intend the names to refer, they could still refer. So granting that the ‘speaker’s reference’ of names such as the fictional ‘Browns’ or ‘Sherlock Holmes’ cannot accidentally pick out actual entities, the ‘semantic reference’ of these terms still could.⁴⁰ As Kripke (1973/2013) expresses the distinction:

one should distinguish between what I might call the “speaker’s reference,” which answers to such queries as ‘Who was the speaker talking about when he used such and such proper name?’ The answer to the question ‘What is the referent of this name in the speaker’s language?’ I might call the “semantic reference” of the name in his language (p. 118).

The two types of reference can come apart in some cases, but for the present argument, this means that even though a fiction maker might use the ‘Browns’ as a term to designate a fictional family, the term can accidentally designate an actual family due to its ‘semantic reference’.

I think this is right, and the semantic reference of the ‘Browns’ has to include both the actual and the fictional families. However, I still do not think that this leads to the possibility of accidental truth. According to the rules of the language, the semantic reference of ‘Browns’ includes any and all families named ‘Brown’. But if someone makes fiction and uses this name, it cannot be the case that she refers to any and all families named ‘Brown’.⁴¹ If semantic reference could lead to accidental truth, any utterance using ‘Browns’ would lead to a large number of uttered accidental truths and falsities, as many as there are Brown families in the world. For this reason, if there is an ambiguity in semantic reference, then one can reasonably expect the speaker’s reference to decide who or what the uttered proposition refers to, moreover, knowing what the speaker refers to is a precondition for assessing the utterance’s truth value. And I have argued that the speaker’s reference to the fictional Brown family cannot accidentally refer to the actual Brown family.

⁴⁰ See Donnellan (1966) for an early approach to the two types of reference.

⁴¹ The actual name ‘Browns’ is homophonic with the fictional ‘Browns’, but they are not co-referential (see also Currie 1990, p. 44),

An interesting case here is fiction that uses no proper names, only general terms. One might object that my argument only goes through if it is about proper names like the ‘Browns’ or ‘Sherlock Holmes’. What about the famous E. M. Forster example: ‘The king died, and then the queen died of grief’? If there ever were a king who died and a queen who died of grief after that, they satisfy the descriptions, and so the narrative is true about them.⁴² This is the case even if it is invented by the novelist, who had no intention to write about the actual king and queen. I think this objection misses the fact that there is a common ground of referring either by proper names or general nouns. It is worth quoting Searle (1969) here: ‘Even though the descriptor may be true of many objects, the speaker assumes that its utterance in that context will be sufficient to identify the one he means’ (p. 85). His descriptive theory can certainly be contested, but Searle’s argument still demonstrates that if one takes a speech act approach (as my targets, Currie and Davies definitely do), even general nouns are used to intentionally execute the speech act of reference. Even if there are a king and a queen who satisfy the descriptions in the narrative, the narrative does not accidentally refer to them, and so it is not accidentally true of them.

In fiction, noun phrases such as ‘the king’ function as referring terms, and they do so necessarily. Peter Lamarque (2010) has an even stronger argument:

it would be wrong to suppose, in line with an earlier point, that because only general terms, ‘a man’, ‘a woman’, are used in the narrative then any individual satisfying those predicates automatically instantiates them in this context. The narrative is not about just any man or any woman, in spite of its failing to provide more specific information (p. 199).

Lamarque’s argument is stronger because it follows that even a narrative such as ‘*a* king died and then *a* queen died of grief’ are not necessarily instantiated if there are something satisfies them. If this is

⁴² Some justified pragmatic inferences are that the king and the queen were married, and the queen died because of her grief concerning the king’s death. So these circumstances would need to arise to satisfy the description, it is not sufficient to have a king die a queen die another part of the world, hundreds of years later due to grief about her daughter’s death. This also shows that pragmatic considerations are important for truth assessment in general.

true for narratives using general terms with the indefinite article, then it is true for narratives with general terms using definite article ‘the’.⁴³

Again, both Currie and Davies are intentionalists: they think fiction-making depends on the intentions of the fiction-maker. They also need to accept that if a fiction-maker utters the sentence ‘a man walks into a bar’, she does not refer to any man who walks into a bar. The reference is determined by the intentions, and the intention in this case is to make up a character of whom it is true that he walks into a bar. The intention is not to refer to any and all male individuals who walk into bars. If there is a fiction-making intention behind using general terms such as ‘a man’ or ‘the queen’, then whatever is predicated of these cannot just be made true by something that is correctly described as ‘a man’ or ‘the queen’. Now if someone is *not* a speech act intentionalist with regards to fiction making, then there might be different considerations that apply to using general terms, depending on one’s theory of language. But both Currie and Davies, whose theories are my main targets here, hold a speech act intentionalist view. In any case, my main point here is that merely satisfying a predication does not lead to truth. These narratives remain untrue fictions.

6. Fiction Cannot Be True: No Invented Characters

But Currie might disagree with me, stating that I misrepresent his views above. He could say that he agrees with me that proper reference is indeed a precondition of truth, that is, it is impossible to truly predicate without referring. Moreover, so far I have focused on cases that are paradigmatically invented, and so a valid point is that I have been making things easy and convenient for my argument. It is naturally more difficult to imagine that a fantasy novel turns out to be true than a narrative that is fictional, however, not as straightforwardly invented. An objection could follow about the possibility

⁴³ See also Crane (2013, p. 141).

of writing fiction referring only to actual individuals. The prime example of this is (or could be) historical fiction.

Take for instance Alison Weir's novel, *Innocent Traitor*, which is set around the time and at the end of Henry VIII's rule, and it is about the Lady Jane Grey or the 'Nine Day Queen', executed by Mary I or 'Bloody Mary'. As Weir (2007) says in her closing words:

Most of the characters in this novel really existed, and most of the events actually happened.

However, where the evidence is scanty or missing, I have used my imagination. For example, we do not know the identity of the female quack who was called in by Northumberland to administer arsenic to Edward VI, but I have spun a tale around her (p. 399).

The episode Weir refers to plays an important part in the novel, and in history as well, because in order to facilitate Lady Jane's ascension to the throne, Lord Northumberland had to buy some time for his plans. He did so by prolonging (and heightening) the terrible sufferings of the young Edward VI and delaying thus the crowning of Mary I. Weir imaginatively invented an identity for the 'female quack', 'spun a tale around her', and in the novel, the quack became Welsh, named Tegwyn Rhys. She is recommended to Northumberland by a trusted agent, Yaxley. Rhys had no children and had been widowed, and she came to London. Yaxley had heard Rhys mention that it is possible to prolong life with arsenic while it can also be deadly, so Rhys is summoned to Northumberland, and she hesitantly began to administer the arsenic to prolong Edward's life.

It is important to note that Rhys is not an invented character as there was actually a 'female quack' employed by Northumberland for the purpose of prolonging Edward's life. However, the tale around her is spun by Weir as evidence was missing and the quack's identity is unknown. So now for the purposes of this chapter, suppose that the tale spun by Weir turns out to be true because of some newly discovered evidence, letters of the duke of Northumberland. The letters found would confirm everything that Weir had written about the quack. Her name was indeed Rhys, she was a childless widow from Wales, at that time living in London, and so on. If this were the case, it seems that this

sub-narrative of the novel's larger narrative turns out to be a piece of accidentally true fiction (if, for the sake of argument, we allow for such slicing up of narratives).⁴⁴

In this case, I do not think that it is plausible to deny that the story containing Rhys is accidentally true. Weir's intention was not to invent a character fictionally but to make fiction while referring to an individual who actually existed, which is signaled by the phrase 'spun a tale *around her* [my emphasis]' (Weir 2007, p. 399). However this chapter pushes the thesis that fiction cannot be true. This seems established in paradigmatically fictional cases, cases where a narrative contains invented characters. What I am left now is the very small subset in which there are no invented characters and an even smaller chance that these might turn out to be true. Still, I think this is important because it presents the strongest case for someone who wants to argue that fiction can be accidentally true. Therefore, I accept that in light of confirming evidence, Weir's tale about Rhys is accidentally true.

Taking a step back then, on the dominant view, a narrative such as Weir's is fiction but carries the possibility of accidental truth. Such a fictional narrative either corresponds or does not correspond to what actually transpired. If it corresponds, it is a piece of accidentally true fiction. What happens if it does not? It has to be admitted that in light of new evidence, Weir's narrative of Rhys can turn out to be false. If the yet undiscovered letters of Northumberland state that the woman's name was Alis Dilys, she was from Wales but she was living with her husband and sons in London, and she had no qualms whatsoever about administering the arsenic, then Weir's narrative of her would be false. Weir's narrative then is unintentionally false because she did not aim to deceive the reader.

To sum up the status of Weir's narrative of the woman who administered arsenic, it is definitely a piece of fiction on both Currie's and Davies's accounts. Weir's process can be described, in this case, as intending the audience not to believe but to make-believe what she came up with. Also, lacking evidence, she could not and did not follow the fidelity constraint because she did not know the facts to be faithful to. Still, in light of new evidence, the fiction can turn out to be accidentally true or

⁴⁴ I agree with Kathleen Stock (2016), who proposes that fictional texts should be distinguished by the fact that while certain parts can be believed to be true by the reader, the whole cannot because believing the whole to be true would preclude the possibility of imagining.

unintentionally false. The story can be confirmed or disconfirmed. At this point, we have to be aware that the practice we have adopted to deal with this narrative are the same as in dealing with historical accounts: considering evidence, confirming or disconfirming. Now I think that it is clear we have adopted the wrong practice for fiction, and this should count as a *reductio* argument against claiming that narratives like Weir's are accidentally true fictions.

Weir's narrative is not intended to be either true or false. It can turn out to be accidentally true, but then, as the argument goes, it is not a piece of fiction. Why would accidental truth preclude fictionality here? According to both Currie and Davies, fictions intentionally prescribe imagination on part of the audience. Unlike factual narratives that call for belief, fictional ones call for imagination or make-believe. The question about Weir's narrative can be rephrased: what happens, when a narrative that intentionally calls for imagination can be believed because it is accidentally true? Putting aside Stacie Friend's (2008, 2012) and Derek Matravers's (2014) strong criticisms of the belief-imagination divide for the time being, is it not the case that the appropriate reaction for something that is true, even if it is accidentally true, is belief? In turn, if Weir's narrative is accidentally true, should not the adequate reaction be to believe it? If belief is the adequate reaction, I see no reason to still insist that Weir's narrative is fictional. If it turns out that everything Weir wrote about the female quack is accidentally true, then it is appropriate to believe it and so it cannot be treated as fiction. Unlike historians, Weir did not intend to tell a true story, she intended to spin a tale. She did not follow Davies's fidelity constraint, but still, despite her intentions and process, she accidentally stumbled into fact and out of fiction in this particular scenario.⁴⁵

A fair point is the following: the claim that Weir's accidentally true historical novel is not fiction still rests too much on intuition. So then, my argument is this: on Currie's and Davies's views, Weir's story about the female quack is an accidentally true fiction referring only to historical individuals, but

⁴⁵ I think my argument here is compatible with Davies's (2015) recently refined account. One of the most important distinctions he makes is between the fictive content and the real setting: 'What we are prescribed to imagine of the real setting can be termed the 'fictive content' of a fictional narrative' (p. 6). If fiction could be accidentally true the distinction between fictive content and real setting would collapse as all content would be real.

one that is intended to be made-believe. If so, it is fiction. However, I think that regardless of intention, it is reasonable to believe the contents of the story because they are true even if accidentally. If it is reasonable to believe the contents, it is reasonable to classify the work as non-fiction, despite the intentions.

To further support the argument, consider that a work like Weir's is intended to induce vivid imaginations: what it is like to be in the female quack's position or imagining the young king's suffering and so on. Many works that should not be classified as fiction are intended to induce imaginative states. On Currie's and Davies's views, it is difficult to maintain the difference between works that are fictional, but are to be believed in some parts, and works that are non-fictional, but are also to be imagined in some sense.⁴⁶ This difficulty supports my point that sometimes it is not the intention but the reasonable attitude (of belief or make-belief) towards the content that should matter for fictionality. And the reasonable attitude can come apart from the intended attitude, as it does in the case of the accidentally true account of Weir about the quack administering arsenic to Edward VI. The narrative of Weir, if it is an accidentally true account involving no invented characters, is not fiction because its contents are reasonably believed. If an utterance made with fictive intent is true, the intended attitude is not the same as the attitude that is reasonable to assume towards the content. Since intentions can fail, when these two attitudes are not identical, it is better to classify based on the attitude that is reasonable to assume than on the intended one.⁴⁷

7. Conclusion

To briefly conclude, in this chapter, I have examined an issue in the connection of storytelling and truth. Some of the stories told are fictional, and 'fiction' is often used synonymously with falsity.

⁴⁶ See the recent discussion of Friend (2012), Currie (2014) and Davies (2015).

⁴⁷ Currie (1990) would not be completely opposed to this as he claims that fictive intentions can fail if the contents counterfactually depend on the fact without the fiction-maker knowing. Davies, as mentioned before, disagrees.

However, being a false narrative is not sufficient for being fictional. On the other hand, some considerations have lead theorists to argue that narratives, due to their narrative form, cannot be true at all. I have reviewed the debate and argued for the reasonable conclusion that despite being a construction of sorts, a narrative can be true, as many historical and autobiographical narratives are. Nevertheless, the main issue the chapter dealt with is the following: can fictional narratives be true? Some prominent philosophers of an intentionalist persuasion have argued that fictionality depends on the intentions and the process of telling a story, so for a fictional story, it is necessary that the fiction maker intends her story to be made-believe and not to be believed in virtue of recognizing that such is her intention. Consequently, if it turns out that there are people, places and events that satisfy the narrative, unbeknownst to the fiction maker, it is an accidentally true fiction.

After addressing the possibility of defining fiction as invention, I have argued against the two ways in which fiction could turn out to be accidentally true. Fiction and truth are incompatible. First, it could happen that a real individual satisfies all the descriptions that the fiction maker invents for a character, which has to do with reference. Then the question becomes: is it possible to refer to an actually existing entity without the intention to do so? If the answer to this is 'yes' then Davies is right, fiction can be true. However, if the answer to this is 'no', as I argued it should be, then there is a further question: is it possible to make a true utterance about an actually existing entity without referring to it? If 'yes' then Currie is right and again, fiction can be true. However, I have argued that the answer should be 'no'. You cannot utter truth about something without referring to it in the sense of talking about that specific thing. A fictional narrative cannot be accidentally true in this way, which also applies to narratives mainly using general terms. Secondly, an historical fiction that contains no invented characters can turn out to be true because the imaginative predications of the real individuals are accidentally correct despite the intentions and process of the fiction maker. In such a case, I accept that the narrative is accidentally true but deny that it is fiction. The reason is that despite the intentions of the author, it is reasonable to believe the contents of the narrative, and in such a strange case, the reasonable attitude to the content is a better guide to fictionality than the intended one.

III. TRUTH: NARRATIVE AND KNOWLEDGE

1. Introduction

The previous chapter is concerned with an issue that can be labeled ‘truth *of* narrative.’ This is the notion of truth that is involved in saying ‘based on a true story’, ‘the story he told me is completely false,’ and so on. I have argued above that fiction cannot be true in the sense of a ‘true story’. However, this should not be taken to mean that they are cognitively worthless. Referring to this as ‘the loss of the world,’ John Gibson (2007, 2009), for example, is worried rightfully that if fictional narratives can only be false or they cannot be either true or false, then they become cognitively uninteresting. Both fictional and non-fictional narratives have cognitive benefits to offer, and this does not depend on the truth *of* them. In other words, even if a narrative is false, it still can be the case that it has important truths to pass on. This is the issue of truth *through* narrative, and this is the topic of the thesis’s second investigation into the connection of storytelling to truth. One of the conceptual pillars of this chapter is experience.

So the guiding intuition behind the present chapter is the following: reading literary works can give rise to a startling experience similar to seeing a color for the first time. Although different in many respects, there is a core experience in literature when the reader feels like that she has experienced something new. In cashing out this intuition, I am entering the debate about the cognitive value of literature. Is literature valuable cognitively? Does it contribute to our knowledge? What is it we learn from literature, and moreover, is learning from literature aesthetically significant, that is, are cognitively valuable works more valuable *aesthetically*?

The roots of the issue can be traced back to a disagreement between Plato and Aristotle about poetry (Lamarque 2014, pp. 121-140). Plato has found certain poetry to be dangerous and deceitful,

the imitation of imitations, removed from truth (e.g., *The Republic*, Book X, 605ab). Aristotle, on the other hand, declared poetry to be more philosophical than history for the reason that history is about the particular, while poetry is about universals, possibilities and necessities of human character and action (*Poetics*, 1451b1-11). In terms of cognitive value, Plato finds poetry in general to be cognitively harmful, while Aristotle seems to claim that poetry can instruct about human beings and how they behave.

One of the most important issues in this inquiry, outlined in detail below, is whether the knowledge that literary narratives provide is propositional in kind. The present chapter argues that there is an *aesthetically* significant type of knowledge that cannot be captured propositionally. Mark W. Rowe (2009) lists five relevant, non-propositional types of knowledge: perceptual knowledge by acquaintance, empathetic knowledge of someone else's situation, know-how, practical knowledge of what to do, and new ways of reconceptualising situations. My chapter develops an argument for one type of non-propositional knowledge, and even though my approach is less Aristotelian (regarding modal and a priori truths), and I am not ready to claim that 'literary knowledge is not propositional' (p. 389),⁴⁸ I offer further support for Rowe's view that focusing exclusively on propositions leads to a 'too narrow conception of knowledge'. So in order to argue that literary narratives have the capacity to provide non-propositional and non-objective knowledge, I repurpose one of the most well-known thought experiments in the philosophy of mind, Frank Jackson's (1986) knowledge argument. By relying on the argument and a reinterpretation of it by Robert J. Howell (2007), I claim that literary works provide subjective knowledge that is similar in many respects to the knowledge that Frank Jackson's argument is about.

⁴⁸ Although Rowe thinks that the non-propositional knowledge derived from fiction can sometimes be conveyed in propositional form.

2. Literary Cognitivism

It can be stated without exaggeration that Jackson's knowledge argument describes an iconic event in the otherwise pretty dry discussion on physicalism and qualia. In the thought experiment, a person called 'Mary' encounters a color she has not seen before. The stipulation is that she knows all the physical facts beforehand. However, if she learns something when she sees a new color, then not all knowledge concerns the physical. In the words of Frank Jackson, one version of the thought experiment goes like this:

Mary is confined to a black-and-white room, is educated through black-and-white books and through lectures relayed on black-and-white television. In this way she learns everything there is to know about the physical nature of the world. She knows all the physical facts about us and our environment, in a wide sense of 'physical' which includes everything in completed physics, chemistry, and neurophysiology, and all there is to know about the causal and relational facts consequent upon all this, including of course functional roles. If physicalism is true, she knows all there is to know. For to suppose otherwise is to suppose that there is more to know than every physical fact, and that is just what physicalism denies

(...)

It seems, however, that Mary does not know all there is to know. For when she is let out of the black-and-white room or given a color television, she will learn what it is like to see something red, say. This is rightly described as learning-she will not say 'ho, hum.' Hence, physicalism is false (Jackson 1986, p. 291).

It seems that Mary's scenario has nothing to do with questions in aesthetics or more specifically in the philosophy of literature. Someone's knowing all the physical facts and seeing a red apple is not straightforwardly connected to philosophical issues about art. In spite of this, I argue here that there

is a significant connection to be made based on the *conception of knowledge* that is at play in Frank Jackson's knowledge argument. By conception of knowledge I mean a view or theory about the content and form of knowledge. To demonstrate that knowledge is a more diverse concept than it would appear at first, it is enough to point to the oft-discussed form of knowledge-how: knowing how to cook, as many argue, cannot be reduced to a list of propositions about cooking. Now Jackson's thought experiment shows that seeing red for the first time is a type of knowledge, but it is not at all obvious that it is the same type of knowledge as finding out that 'ice is solid water'.

In contemporary philosophy of art, one of the most important debates is about literary cognitivism. The various sides and positions are divided by diverging answers to the following questions:

(1) Do literary works provide readers with knowledge?

(2) If they do, is it connected to their aesthetic value?

There are multiple ways of phrasing these questions, but all of them seem to be treated synonymously. For instance, do literary works communicate truths? Do they have cognitive value? Can we learn from them?⁴⁹ There is an issue that I have no intention to address in detail here, namely about systematically distinguishing and connecting the following terms: truth, knowledge, learning and cognitive value. One simplistic theory might be that truths are propositions; the only knowledge there is, is the knowledge of true propositions; learning concerns the process of acquiring these truths, and only those phenomena have cognitive value which facilitate the learning of these truths. This simplistic theory is difficult to defend. Even if it is plausible that truth is nothing else than the truth of a proposition (standardly explained with reference to correspondence), the use of knowledge for cases of knowledge-how complicates the situation. Knowledge is thus not exhausted by the knowing of true propositions. If this is so, then learning cannot be exhausted by learning propositions either, since one

⁴⁹ For a detailed description of positions see Mikkonen (2013).

can learn skills and know how to do things without necessarily learning something entirely reducible to propositions about them. Lastly, granting the previous claims, it is not right that *only* the acquisition of true propositional knowledge is cognitively valuable.

Nevertheless, answering (1) negatively is not a popular move. Peter Lamarque begins one of his essays by asking and responding: ‘Does truth have some connection with literature? Of course. On that there is no disagreement. A multiplicity of connections will emerge as we proceed. Can works of fiction convey truth? Can readers learn from works of fiction? Undoubtedly so’ (Lamarque 2014, p. 121). In spite of Lamarque’s claims, there seems to be a trend of thinking about literature that would deny any connection. These theories build on Frege’s dictum that epic poetry does not have reference, only sense. As there is no reference, truth is not an issue in aesthetic appreciation. For Russell, as it is well known, any statement about non-existents (like fictional entities) are false, which makes the majority of statements in works of fictional literature false. Extreme formalists might argue that literary works are ‘self-referential’, that they have no reference to any reality because they call attention to their use of language. If literary works cannot refer truthfully, it is hard to see how literary works could pass on any sort of knowledge. These are possible expressions of strong anti-cognitivism.⁵⁰

Strong anti-cognitivism does not have a lot of currency these days, and the debate is mostly about (2), granting that literary works have cognitive value and questioning if the cognitive value has any bearing on the aesthetic value. Moderate anti-cognitivism answers question (2) with a ‘no’. Jerome Stolnitz (1992) claims that there is no other type of truth than what philosophy and science operate with. There is no such thing as ‘artistic truth’ that belongs uniquely to artworks. Consequently, if any works of art, including works of literature, communicate truth, they do so by communicating the same type of truth that philosophical and scientific works do. Stolnitz carries the skepticism further: in trying to extract the scientific or philosophical type of truths from works of literature, one ends up with vague, vacuous or too work-specific statements. In most cases, these statements are also cognitively trivial,

⁵⁰ For a discussion of Frege, Russell and related issues, see John Gibson (2007, 2009) on what he calls the loss of the world in both analytic and continental thinking about literature.

meaning that they express something that is generally known. According to Stolnitz's most famous example, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* would boil down to '(s)tubborn pride and ignorant prejudice keep attractive people apart' (Stolnitz 1992, p. 193). Separately Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen (1994) defend the 'no truth theory' of literature. Despite of the 'no truth' label, they do not deny that readers can learn from literary works. What Lamarque and Olsen argue for is that even if literary works can communicate truths, these truths are irrelevant regarding the work's aesthetic or literary merits (see also Lamarque 2014, pp. 121-140).

Defenders of cognitivism, on the other hand, claim that works of literature have aesthetically significant cognitive value, but characterize it differently. The camp that James Harold (2015) calls 'strong cognitivist' argues that the truth that literary works communicate is propositional in form. Just like knowing that 'ice is solid water', there are various propositions that literary works implicitly or explicitly state. Others, falling in the 'weak cognitivist' camp, disagree: instead of propositions, the cognitive value of literature depends on a different form of knowledge, which is notoriously hard to pin down. As my claim goes, this is the exact point where the knowledge argument can be recruited to support a form of weak cognitivism.

Before going on, however, one way to illuminate the distinction between 'strong' and 'weak' varieties of literary cognitivism is with reference to the unity of science debate. Should the social sciences and the humanities share the aims and methods of the natural sciences? One of the central issues in this chapter is the following: if one is willing to agree that literary works provide knowledge, the question is whether this knowledge should be conceived of as the knowledge that the natural sciences and philosophy deal with. So one either assimilates the knowledge that literature provides to the traditional, standard and default conception of propositional knowledge, the one that the sciences work with, or one tries to argue for a special or unassimilable conception of knowledge, independent

of scientific or philosophical propositions. This is a similar question as the one about the aims and methods of the natural sciences and the humanities.⁵¹

The debate is mostly about question (2), assuming that works of literature have cognitive value but disagreeing about whether this contributes to their value *as* works of literature. Despite this, there is an important facet of (1) that the distinction between strong and weak cognitivism reveals: if one is too quick to grant that literary works communicate knowledge, one might quickly gloss over the nature of the knowledge that literary works communicate. For instance, in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, the narrator says that 'Buchel, a farmstead attached to the village of Oberweiler not far from Weissenfels – a forty five minute train ride from Kaisersaschern' (Mann 1947/1999, p. 14). If this were true, the reader of *Doctor Faustus* could learn from the novel that Weissenfels is a short train ride from Kaisersaschern. Kaisersaschern in fact is a fictional place, so strictly speaking with Russell's position in mind, it is not a short train ride from anywhere: the proposition is false. However – this is how the issue about the conception of knowledge (1) is tied up with the issue about the aesthetic value of knowledge (2) – the falsity of the proposition is *aesthetically* insignificant. The proposition's truth or falsity does not impact the aesthetic value of the work. Both Stolnitz and Lamarque think that this applies to all propositions that can be learned from literary works. I disagree with them, but their critical remarks provide motivation to search for a type of knowledge that is non-propositional and aesthetically significant in the sense just mentioned. Furthermore, it would be wrong to dismiss propositionalism so easily, as it is a strong theory of cognitive value.

⁵¹ Peter Swirski (1998), for instance, frames the issue in the following way. There are dismissive and permissive stances towards the question whether literature provides propositional knowledge. There are a variety of positions, ranging from extreme dismissal towards complete interdisciplinary integration. Swirski argues for an affirmative permissive stance, in which literature's cognitive value is assessed by adhering to the standards of propositional truth. Literature, according to Swirski, is cognitively valuable because it forms, advances and defends hypotheses that can be evaluated in an interdisciplinary way, with rigorous scientific methods.

3. Against Propositionalism

Propositionalists claim that literary narratives provide propositional knowledge that is aesthetically significant. Containing implicit or explicit true propositions is not only cognitively valuable but a literary merit as well. Going on, a further distinction can be made between traditional and moderate types of propositionalism, following Jukka Mikkonen (2013). On a traditional view, the author's actual assertions constitute true propositions that can be learned from the work, giving it cognitive value. The moderate view sees the reference to the actual assertion as a shortcoming. To quote Mikkonen (2013), '(t)he moderate propositional theory states that the fictive utterance is not literally assertive, but that the literal content of the utterance is intended to be imagined by the audience. Nonetheless, the theory asserts that authors make assertions through their fictive utterances' (p. 13).

There are multiple ways a propositionalist view can be elaborated. Some, like Noël Carroll (2002) and Catherine Z. Elgin (2007) emphasize that the cognitive value of literary works should be captured analogously to philosophical thought experiments. Peter Kivy and Peter Swirski argue that the advancement of hypotheses is crucial for some literary works. It is clear that literary works can contain true propositions, and sometimes the truth of these propositions is aesthetically significant. As Kivy (2006) states, 'what needs to be said is that for the expression of a live hypothesis (that is a viable candidate for belief) to have any palpable literary value, it must be a hypothesis about something that deeply matters to us' (p. 102). It is not enough for a work to contain just *any* true statements, these statements need to say something about the most important aspects of human life, whatever they may be.⁵² In any case, moderate versions of propositionalism are on the view that there are true propositions in literary works, implicit or explicit, but most often uttered in the fictive mode.

⁵² Naturally, philosophers are disinclined to talk about the cognitive value of *all* literary works, since there is an amazing variety of genres, traditions and so on. So for instance, Mikkonen (2013) talks about philosophical fiction, and many analytic aestheticians take canonical realist novels as their paradigm class.

Learning these propositions is cognitively valuable, and it is a fundamental aesthetic value that should be taken into account in literary appreciation.

It would be inadvisable to argue against propositionalism *as such*. The debate between different kinds of cognitivists, propositionalists and non-propositionalists, is not usually about exclusivity. That is, most philosophers do not argue that literary works are able to provide one and only one type of knowledge (see further Rowe 2009). The discussion is about priority: what is *the most important form* of aesthetically significant knowledge that works of literature provide? In what follows, I advance a new argument against moderate propositionalism, which I take to be the view that an important class of literary works has cognitive value because their authors make assertions through fictive utterances and the truth of these assertions is aesthetically significant.⁵³ This latter part means that if these assertions were false, the work in question would be less valuable aesthetically.

I do not focus on explicit thematic assertions. Consider a famous quote from Thomas Mann, this time *The Magic Mountain*: ‘Time has no divisions to mark its passage, there is never a thunderstorm or blare of trumpets to announce the beginning of a new month or year. Even when a new century begins it is only we mortals who ring bells and fire off pistols’ (1924/1966, Chapter V, Whims of Mercurius, p. 225). Such a reflection on the nature of time by the omniscient narrator is certainly a candidate for propositions carrying cognitive value. Even if such propositions are not rare, they are not typically central to arguing about cognitive value. I take it that Lamarque’s (2014, pp. 121-140, also Lamarque and Olsen 1994) relevant point is convincing: these propositions have an important, aesthetic function in pointing to a thematic organizing principle of the work. Besides this function, the fact that they are true or false as propositions *about the world* is not aesthetically significant. So for my purposes, it is better to look at implicit thematic propositions.

⁵³ There is a variety of arguments against cognitivism in general and propositionalism in particular. Mikkonen (2013, pp. 46-72) wrestles with at least nine of them.

I take the lead from a remark of Carroll (2002): ‘since extracting hypotheses from art and literature generally involves interpretations, and interpretations themselves may often be indeterminate and contestable, it is far from clear that the hypothesis/confirmation model of artworks is very promising’ (p. 5). Now Carroll here emphasizes the indeterminate and contestable nature of interpretations, and I want to focus on something different. The issue I want to raise is the following. Most propositionalists claim that there are implicit true propositions about deeply important matters of human concern in literary works. However, they are implicit, that is, there needs to be a method of ‘translation’ that turns these into propositional form.⁵⁴

How does one arrive at an implicit thematic proposition? For instance, ‘being turned into a large insect with a human consciousness is quite terrible’ is a(n intentionally trivial) thematic proposition derived from Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*. Following Kafka’s short story, I understand the frustration of Gregor Samsa as he is unable to roll to his favored right side and as he tries to get out of bed. I understand his fear and pain as he is treated by his family members. After the closure of the story, I generalize my understanding into the mentioned thematic proposition, interpreting the experiences of Gregor as ‘terrible’, caused by his unfortunate and unexplainable transformation. So literary works need to be interpreted in order to get to the most cognitively valuable propositions that can be learned from them.⁵⁵

This is not a problem in itself. However, it does become a difficulty if readers do not explicitly formulate or articulate the general propositions that literary works implicitly contain. While reading literary works, most readers do not entertain such general propositions. Propositionalists could claim that still literary works are cognitively valuable for appropriately situated readers who actually spend the time and energy to formulate the propositions. I do not want to enter into an empirical debate

⁵⁴ The question of interpretation is treated here very briefly. I return to it in Chapter V.

⁵⁵ As Lamarque and Olsen (1994) see the connection: ‘The problem of how general propositions are implied by or associated with literary works is the problem of interpretation itself, if such a problem can be distinguished from the various problems of clarifying the practice of appreciation’ (p. 329). See also Young (2001).

about how readers read. Nevertheless, the requirement that is inherent in propositionalism, namely about the necessity of formulating or articulating the propositions explicitly, seriously diminishes the attractiveness of the theory. It would require more robust argumentation to show that reading generally involves such a proposition-extracting process.⁵⁶

4. Objectivism and Subjective Knowledge

Even if it is not a knockdown argument, the considerations above at least give motivation to find aesthetically significant knowledge that is non-propositional. Bringing Frank Jackson's thought experiment into the discussion can assist in the move away from propositional knowledge, but before addressing directly what the relevance of the knowledge argument is for the debate about literary cognitivism, there is a further necessary step. As mentioned above, the knowledge argument in its original form is an argument against physicalism. Since the literature we read is rarely if ever directed at the physicalism versus anti-physicalism issue, Jackson's argument needs some interpretive work to get closer to this chapter's main point.

In a reinterpretation, Robert J. Howell (2007) claims that the knowledge argument should be understood not primarily as directed against physicalism, but against objectivism. Objectivism is the theory that knowledge of the world can be complete without subjective knowledge. In other words, 'An objective theory cannot require that one enter any token state of fully determinate type T in order to fully understand states of type T' (Howell 2007, p. 149). For Mary, objectivism would mean that she learns nothing new when she leaves the room and sees red for the first time. Such a response is like

⁵⁶ Unless of course one takes it for granted that such true thematic propositions that are aesthetically significant and cognitively valuable need not be formulated. So if a non-trivial true thematic proposition need not be formulated explicitly in order to carry cognitive value and aesthetic significance, then my argument from interpretation fails. However, I see this as a slim chance because such tacit (unconscious) propositional knowledge is highly controversial, so the thesis that literary works are cognitively valuable because they transmit true thematic propositions to the reader without the reader having to formulate them is not appealing.

Daniel C. Dennett's (1991), when he argues that if Mary truly knew everything there is to know about colors, about the visual system, about the neuroscience, then she would be able to deduce the experience of seeing a red apple, would be able to call the bluff when presented with a blue banana. In Dennett's view then, any such state can be fully known without a subject having to token it.

What is at stake in redirecting the argument from physicalism to objectivism is making room for having a certain subjective state to count as genuine knowledge. To further illustrate, take pain as an example. Being in pain is a complex state with a multitude of variations. It is possible to know a lot of objective facts about pain, about the neurotransmitters involved, about the most common physiological reactions, and so on. There are also medical facts about the treatments or symptom relief methods for various types of pain sensations. If there is a complete list of these facts, according to the objectivist, one only needs to know all the list items in order to know everything about pain.

Now consider the rare genetic disorder called congenital insensitivity to pain with anhidrosis.⁵⁷ The disorder does not allow any nerve-related sensations except for pressure. Feelings of pain, heat and cold are unknown for someone suffering from this condition. The question is, is this 'unknown' just a sloppy, non-philosophical use of the term knowledge? According to the objectivist, it is. It is because even though it is not possible for someone suffering from the disorder to experience pain, she can get to know all the objective facts about pain and pain sensations. On the contrary, for proponents of the knowledge argument, if by some miraculous turn of events someone with the disorder would be able to feel a burn injury on their hands, they would acquire new knowledge. It is less pleasant than seeing a nice red apple, but it would still count as a form of non-objective knowledge: you cannot understand a burning pain fully if you have never experienced pain. There is something about the experience of pain, something without which there can be no complete and exhaustive knowledge of being in the state of pain.

⁵⁷ For an interestingly similar but independent discussion that raises the possibility of a modified thought experiment see Caracciolo (2014, pp. 106-107).

According to Howell, the knowledge argument is indeed effective against objectivism. The knowledge argument shows that there are certain states, like that of seeing the color red, which need to be tokened in order to know them. In this chapter, there is no space for me to defend the knowledge argument.⁵⁸ It is likely a controversial move, but I am assuming that the knowledge argument works *against objectivism*. Howell's reinterpretation supports the claim that, upon release, Mary acquires a certain form of non-objective, non-propositional knowledge. The main issue I am concerned with is the following: if this version of the knowledge argument works, what can it tell us about literary cognitivism?

To begin with, there is a relevant theory defending weak literary cognitivism, which is labelled 'Subjective Knowledge Theory' by Scott R. Stroud (2008). As he claims, 'Such an account of literature places its value in the subjective perspectives or experiences the narrative opens up to the reader' (p. 19). This knowledge is *aesthetically* significant, because acquiring it contributes to the work's aesthetic value. John Barth's *The End of the Road*, an uncharacteristically realist novel, gives insight into the subjective perspective and experiences regarding the existential paralysis ('cosmopsis') the protagonist feels: being paralysed when faced with a decision or having to make a choice. If it did not have the capacity to provide this insight, it would be a less valuable work aesthetically.

As Stroud (2008) argues, following Currie and Ravenscroft (2002), 'the process of simulation is the primary means by which one can gain any type of subjective knowledge from a literary narrative. This type of knowledge will be gained by virtue of the literary narrative's aesthetic qualities, which result in a certain type of activity in the reader' (Stroud 2008, p. 20). According to this line of thinking, the artful construction of a literary narrative imbues it with qualities that affect the reader's imagination. In other words, the reader builds a mental model of the states-of-affairs described by the narrative.⁵⁹ This imaginative process of simulation provides the reader with a certain type of

⁵⁸ For a reply to Dennett, see Howard Robinson (1993).

⁵⁹ I return to mental models in Chapter VII.

knowledge, for example, according to Stroud, reading *Othello* allows one to know what it is like ‘to be caught in the throes of jealousy’ (Ibid., p. 19).

There are many ways to describe what it is that Mary learns when she sees a red apple for the first time in her life. It can be labelled experiential knowledge or phenomenal knowledge. One can argue that it is a form of Russell’s knowledge-by-acquaintance (see Conee 1994). My argument here does not require me to exactly specify the type of knowledge at stake. What I am here arguing for is conditional. Do you think that Mary gains new knowledge when she gets out of the room? If not, it is beyond my scope to convince you. If yes, then my piggybacking on the knowledge argument begins. I claim ‘indeed, Mary learns something when she sees a red apple, and this is the same type of learning that literary works are able to provide’. More explicitly formulated:

P1. By gaining the subjective experience of seeing a red apple, Mary gains knowledge.

P2. Simulating an experience in reading literature is relevantly similar to having such an experience.⁶⁰

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C. Simulating an experience in reading literature leads to knowledge relevantly similar to Mary’s.

In order to support P2, I present the ‘What Mary Didn’t Read’ argument in the Section.

⁶⁰ This premise is what Peter Kivy (2006) calls the Lockean/Addisonian theory picture of reading experience, and one that he is strongly opposed to. He considers the reading of literary, narrative fiction to be a performance, the reader pretending to be the storyteller, instead of an inner imaginative experience, to put it crudely.

5. What Mary Didn't Read and Objections

Mary is *comfortably confined* to a colorful room, is educated only through *scientific* books and through lectures relayed on black-and-white television. Despite being *fully and constantly comfortable*, one day *she gets interested in mortality* and learns about the physiology of death, the psychology of the fear of death, and so on. She learns all the objective facts. If objectivism is true, she knows all there is to know. It seems, however, that Mary does not know all there is to know. For when she is given a copy of Cormac McCarthy's contemporary novel, *The Road*, she will learn what it is like to have a fear of death. This is rightly described as learning-she will not say 'ho, hum.' Hence, objectivism is false.⁶¹

There are three points that I want to note. As this adoption stands, it looks like an argument against objectivism. In the context of the present chapter, where my aim is to argue that literary works have a certain cognitive value, the above adoption looks like it is begging the question by presuming that Mary acquires knowledge reading a contemporary novel. However, I assumed earlier that the knowledge argument is effective against objectivism. If so, I claim the argument above turns into one that, instead of presupposing Mary's learning from the novel, proves it by relying on the knowledge argument.

Furthermore, two changes need to be mentioned. I have departed from seeing a colors, which is an important facet of the original argument. The reason for the departure is that I do not think the best argument for the potential of learning from literary narratives concerns basic perceptual states. However, there is no *prima facie* reason why the argument should be restricted to basic sensory experience. Going on, I stipulate above that Mary is fully and constantly comfortable. This is equivalent to stipulating that she has never felt fear for her life. Fear itself is a basic emotion, so I would not want

⁶¹ Adopted from Jackson (1986).

to stretch the imagination by stipulating that Mary has never felt fear. On the other hand, I do think that the thought experiment can plausibly stipulate that she does not know what it is like to fear death.

If Howell is right about the original knowledge argument, then this argument also commits one to the thesis that there are types of knowledge different from objective, propositional knowledge. I have already alluded to the concept of knowledge-how. Knowledge is involved in cases when someone asks me ‘do you know how to tie your shoelaces?’ I can, without committing myself to serious epistemological misunderstandings, reply: ‘yes, I know.’ One way to argue against this is by claiming that this knowledge, in the end, is reducible to true propositions about tying shoelaces. However, if one is not inclined to pursue this line of argument in the case of cooking, riding bicycles and swimming, it will be very difficult to justifiably narrow the claim down to exclude relevant examples.⁶²

On a darker note, in her room, Mary can make the following deduction:

P1. All human beings will die.

P2. I am a human being.

C. I will die.

She now knows that she must and will die. In a different way, Mary could suffer a terrible car accident, have a near-death experience, and afterwards live her life knowing that she does have to die. Lastly, she could also read Cormac McCarthy’s (2006) *The Road*.

The Road is a contemporary novel, set in the post-apocalyptic U.S. countryside. It is about an unnamed man and his unnamed son, who are trying to survive heading for the coast. The reader’s perspective in the novel is very closely tied to the here-and-now of the man and his son, witnessing how they struggle with freezing cold, near starvation, often hiding and fleeing from cannibalistic bandits. The reader does not get to know the ‘big picture’ besides a few flashbacks. It is a truly

⁶² I do not mean to simplify the debate and discussion concerning knowledge-how, which is a complex matter. See John Bengson and Marc A. Moffett (2012).

harrowing and vivid vision of the future, closely focusing on the suffering and sacrifices of the protagonists.

Dennett believes that the knowledge argument is an intuition pump. Now that I have repurposed the pump, I want to get it started with a taste of how *The Road* reads. In one flashback, the unnamed man remembers:

By then all stores of food had given out and murder was everywhere upon the land. The world soon to be largely populated by men who would eat your children in front of your eyes and the cities themselves held by cores of blackened looters who tunneled among the ruins and crawled from the rubble white of tooth and eye carrying charred and anonymous tins of food in nylon nets like shoppers in the commissaries of hell (McCarthy 2006, p. 181).

Elsewhere he recalls a conversation with the boy's mother:

We're survivors he told her across the flame of the lamp.

Survivors? she said.

Yes.

What in God's name are you talking about? We're not survivors. We're the walking dead in a horror film.

(...)

Sooner or later they will catch us and they will kill us. They will rape me. They'll rape him. They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you won't face it.

(...)

We used to talk about death, she said. We don't any more. Why is that?

I don't know.

It's because it's here. There's nothing left to talk about (Ibid., pp. 55-56).

At one point, the man and the boy meet an old man on the road, and they share a meal. The man asks him:

Do you wish you would die?

No. But I might wish I had died. When you're alive you've always got that ahead of you. Or you might wish you'd never been born. Well. Beggars can't be choosers. You think that would be asking too much. What's done is done. Anyway, it's foolish to ask for luxuries in times like these (Ibid., p. 169).

These are just a few indications of how the novel communicates knowledge of what it is like to face mortality and to fear death. A few citations cannot come close to the experience of reading the complete narrative, however, they are sufficient to point to a way literary narratives communicate knowledge. Knowledge is more complex than the knowing of objective propositions. Even if Mary has read all the psychological, biological facts about mortality, she gets to know something new when she reads *The Road*, and 'if imagination is capable of helping us improve our knowing how and acquaintance at any level that will count, in my book, as a win for the learning from imagination thesis' (Currie 2016, p. 408). I do not mean to argue that these types of knowledge are disconnected. Rather

literary narratives can transmit knowledge regarding a subject matter, and typically, knowledge of a subject matter involves different types of knowledge.

Various philosophers have raised critical points about experiential knowledge and its relevance for art in general and literature in particular. An objection, possibly following from Gibson's position, could focus on whether the knowledge that Mary gains in my revamped thought experiment can be deemed as new knowledge. 'Rather than imparting truths, we might try to see the cognitive dimension of literature as consisting in literature's ability to operate upon the truths we already possess' (Gibson 2007, pp. 101-102). Translating it to the terms of this chapter, this would mean that reading *The Road*, Mary does not acquire new knowledge about the fear of death and facing mortality. The cognitive value of this bleak post-apocalyptic novel resides in working upon knowledge that one already possess, knowledge that Mary, by stipulation, does not have.

The issue here is that my adopted Mary is a special case. It is stipulated that she does not know what it is like to fear death, just as the original Mary does not know what it is like to see red. A proponent of the 'no new knowledge' view could argue that Mary actually lacks what is a prerequisite for benefiting from the cognitive value of the novel. Being constantly comfortable and not knowing what it is like to fear death, Mary cannot understand the crippling fear that the novel's protagonists and normal readers live through. In answering this objection, I think the best route is questioning how 'new' and 'already existing' knowledge are differentiated. There are new experiences, such as Mary's seeing the color red for the first time, but they are new *relatively*. Mary's seeing an apple is not as new an experience as it would be for someone who has not seen *any* color before. There is always some sort of background set of past experiences, beliefs, desires, based on which one acquires new experiences, new knowledge. My Mary, who has not read *The Road* before, might have felt fear when she saw a black spider in her room, and she might have felt desperation because of her comfortable, yet constant, confinement. So even though she has never felt the fear of death before, she has the appropriate background, as I would argue, based on which she can understand *The Road* to a level and

acquire the new experiential knowledge concerning her mortality. This knowledge is new precisely because she has never experienced such a fear before. It is not new in an absolute sense because she could indeed have felt some sort of fear.

Another counter-argument could attempt to discredit the notion of subjective knowledge by insisting that knowledge requires evidence or justification, and there can be none in the case of subjective knowledge. When I say that Mary has acquired new knowledge about the fear of death and facing mortality, it is reasonable to question whether this should actually count as knowledge. What could possibly be evidence or justification for it? How reliable is subjective knowledge? In addressing an objection phrased in similar terms, Stroud presents a compelling case comparing and contrasting narrative texts with argumentative texts. According to Stroud, the problem disappears if one gets rid of a certain double standard, namely the one requires more in terms of justification from narrative texts than from argumentative texts.

We detect mistakes and deception primarily through communal and experiential efforts, not through anything inherent in a text. Thus, it seems unfair to demand that a narrative account of some sort of experience internally verifies that experience, just as it is unfair and unrealistic to expect each source to prove its own veracity and preclude our comparison of its claims to other sources and experiences (Stroud 2008, pp. 29-30).⁶³

In formulating an answer to the evidence-objection, there is no need to argue that every simulated, subjective experience provides one with knowledge.⁶⁴ It is enough to claim that it is possible for some literary narratives to do so, and even without text-internal evidence, it is plausible to argue that there is knowledge. After all, what is the evidence for Mary's new knowledge in the original Jackson scenario?

⁶³ See his arguments against Lamarque and Olsen as well. See also Berys Gaut (2003).

⁶⁴ For an interesting case, see Harold (2015) about William Styron's *Nat Turner*.

Along similar lines to the evidence objection, another might question the legitimacy of calling what one gains from literature ‘knowledge’ in the following way. I argue above that Mary has acquired novel subjective knowledge after reading *The Road*. But what if she faces someone who is doubtful about whether she actually knows now what it is like to have a fear of death? The sceptic might say that she claims to have experience that she actually lacks – just compare her knowledge about fearing death with someone who actually lived through life threatening situations! It is not in line with ordinary language to call Mary’s state ‘knowledge’. I think any response has to concede that there is something right about these doubts. Still I think there is a reply. Knowledge does not only admit of types, it also admits degrees, at least for certain types, and ordinary language allows for this. Certainly, Mary does not know *as much* about fearing death as someone who actually experienced her life in danger, but she knows *more than* she did before reading *The Road*. And this is sufficient for my argument. Moreover, Mary not only knows *less* about fearing death than someone who actually did fear death, she knows fearing death *differently*. It is beyond the scope of the chapter to develop this properly, but reading about fearing death in a literary work is not just an impoverished version of living through such experiences, and the reason for this is that literary works imbue such experiences with meaning and significance, meaning and significance that they might lack when lived through in actuality (see Chapter IV). This of course introduces further complexities about knowledge, which is complex enough even when it comes to its types and the debate about them.

Last but not least, Matthew Kieran in his *Revealing Art* explicitly refers to Frank Jackson’s knowledge argument. As Kieran (2005) says, ‘[p]art of what goes on when we identify with art works is that they express feelings and attitudes psychologically close to us. But it doesn’t follow from this that some kind of special knowledge is involved’ (pp. 101-102). Kieran doubts firstly that experiential or phenomenal knowledge would be needed to explain what Mary learns, and secondly, because of this, he also questions whether experiential or phenomenal knowledge are categories that can usefully be employed in talking about literature. He then refers to what is often called the ability hypothesis response. Briefly, David Lewis (1990) and Laurence Nemirow (1990) have argued, in response to

Jackson's case, that Mary does not acquire new propositional knowledge, what she acquires is the ability to imagine, recall, think about the color red. The ability hypothesis is far from uncontroversial.⁶⁵ Since Kieran's (2005) main motivation in finding a 'more minimal basis for the experiential grounding' (p. 118) is precisely the controversial nature of phenomenal qualities and subjective knowledge, it is hard to see that his choice of response to the Mary scenario is an improvement. In any case, as I have mentioned, in this chapter, I suppose following Howell, that the knowledge argument is effective against objectivism.

I have argued above that the most important cognitive value of artistically crafted, particularly literary, narratives resides in their capacity to provide the reader with a sort of experiential, subjective knowledge. These narratives are cognitively valuable not because they impart certain propositional truths but because of the experiential engagement that they provide. If Mary had no experience about fearing death, she would acquire subjective, experiential knowledge about what it is like to fear death.

6. Conclusion

Narratives of literature have the wonderful potential to conjure up new experiences for the reader to live through in an imaginatively simulated fashion. In this respect, they are far from trivial. If one tries to come up with a certain sort of take-away message after reading *The Divine Comedy*, *Hamlet* or *The Idiot*, one can easily end up with a trivializing statement. This has prompted me to seek a way of approaching the so-called 'cognitive value' in terms of the new experiences these works give rise to. What is the knowledge that they provide and is providing knowledge an aesthetic merit of literary works *as* literary works? One of the main answers to these questions is cognitivist propositionalism: 'yes, literature provides knowledge in the form of true propositions, the truth of which is aesthetically

⁶⁵ For a criticism, see again Conee (1994).

significant.’ I have presented an argument against thinking that this is the most important cognitive value of literary narratives. After, by utilizing and adopting Frank Jackson’s (1986) Mary thought experiment, I have shown that there is an argument to be made that reading literary works provide the same ‘no ho, hum’ feeling as in the original Mary case. Relying on Howell’s (2007) reinterpretation of the knowledge argument against objectivism and Stroud’s (2008) subjective knowledge theory, I have demonstrated that if Mary has not faced her mortality before, has not felt the fear of death looming, she will likely acquire new knowledge when she reads McCarthy’s (2006) *The Road*. If Mary only reads non-narrative, non-literary texts on the subject, she will miss a significant aspect of knowing, an aspect that literary narratives excel in transmitting.

IV. MEANING: EXPERIENCE AND IMAGINATION

1. Introduction

Being engrossed in literary narratives, novels and short stories, I often have the feeling that I am somehow allowed to see through the eyes of someone else. My example in this chapter is Jonathan Safran Foer’s (2005) contemporary novel, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (*ELIC* hereafter). Reading the novel, I have the impression that I am going through an experience similar to what the protagonist of the novel does. The book is about a boy’s adventurous journey through New York City, a journey that is reminiscent of the games he used to play with his father, his father, who died in one of the towers in 9/11. As the protagonist moves towards discovery, I have the opportunity to imaginatively experience what it is like to live through such an adventure, struggling with loss. I would hazard that it is difficult to read the novel without imagining what the protagonist goes through, what he experiences.

It is an understatement that experience is important for narratives. Without going into details, experience occupies a central place in Monika Fludernik's (1996) influential and unorthodox definition of narrative: 'Unlike the traditional models of narratology, narrativity [...] is here constituted by what I call experientiality, namely by the quasi-mimetic evocation of "real-life experience"' (p. 9).⁶⁶ But how close can readers really get in imagination to the experiences of characters, especially if the characters are fictional? It is easy to be skeptical here. If the events in the Safran Foer novel actually happened to a boy, would anyone agree with my saying 'I know what you have gone through' after finishing the book? In an obvious sense, I have not had the same experiences because I was safely resting in a favored reading spot. My aim here is not to address this skepticism, but to use it as a springboard: if I did not have the same experiences, what is different about them, aside from the obvious?

In reading the novel, it is plausible to say that I imagine having the experiences, and one claim for why literary narratives should be appreciated is that they allow having experiences imaginatively that the reader would otherwise could not. This seems to be right, however, there is a fine distinction that remains unexplored in the background: if the novel's protagonist experiences 'x' and I imagine experiencing 'x', is it really the case that the content of the protagonist's experience is the same as the content of my imagination? In exploring this issue, in the next section, I focus in general on how literary narratives evoke experiences, either those of characters or other kinds. In Section 3, I narrow the inquiry to imagining experiences. Whether the target of the imagination are real people or fictional characters, imagining their experiences is what is often described as empathy. Many philosophers of art are skeptical about empathy as a paradigmatic or typical reaction to works of literature or works of fiction, however, I argue that empathy allows for targets that are characters in literature, fictional or not. In Section 4, I claim that a crucial differences between experiences of characters in literature and

⁶⁶ Many philosophers, literary cognitivists, are on the view that reading literature provides us with significant experiential knowledge or knowing 'what it is like', which again entails a strong connection between literary narratives and experiences. See Chapter III. For an overview see Harold (2015).

experiences as imagined by the reader is that the latter are imbued with meaning. When a reader imagines a character's experience, it is meaningful in the context of the work.

2. Experiences Evoked

Although experimental works can employ multiple media, literary narratives are, at the basic, representations of events in written language.⁶⁷ Moreover, unlike other written narratives (in diaries, letters, emails, various everyday contexts), they are written and read as part of the socio-cultural practice of literature, to cite an influential view associated with Peter Lamarque for instance. What this means, roughly, is that there is a certain set of more or less tacit rules that people who are initiated into the practice follow, just as people who learn to play chess know what kind of moves various pieces have, and they know that even if a pawn is made of gold, in the context of the game, it is less valuable than a queen made of wood (Lamarque 2014, p. 108). For instance, readers of literature are aware that there is typically a distance between the author and the narrator of a literary narrative, and furthermore, that the narrator does not necessarily have to be trusted. Also, readers know to pay attention to structural and formal features, as they are significant aspects of the artistry involved in writing a novel for instance. It is also important to realize and reflect on the themes that a narrative elaborates. Lastly, many literary narratives can be classified as fictional but not all of them as there are important examples of literary non-fiction. This is not an exhaustive list of all there is to the practice of literature, but it is sufficient to illustrate in a basic way what is 'literary' about these narratives.

⁶⁷ As Greg Currie (2010) argues: 'Narratives [...] are distinguished from other representations by what they represent: sustained temporal-causal relations between particulars, especially agents' (p. 27). It is important to mention, as Chapter I argued, that larger works such as novels we call narrative are not exhausted by representing events: narrative works are 'patchworks'.

Reading literary narratives is miraculous. As Henry James (1934/1972) argued about art, it has the capacity to create an illusion of having lived another life (p. 93). This is not the place to go into the debate about fictionality (see Chapter II and Currie 1990, 2014; Davies 2007, 2015; Friend 2008, 2012; Matravers 2014; Stock 2016; Walton 1990), but I do not think that James's claim should be restricted to fiction.⁶⁸ Reading a vivid memoir, such as Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*, also has the capacity to produce a feeling about what it is like to live another life, even if the characters and details are not invented. It can also provide an 'enlargement of experience' to quote James again.

However, it is not the literariness of narratives that endows them with the capacity to evoke experiences in this way. As mentioned above, 'literariness' is not a quality or property of texts, although there are numerous qualities and properties that are characteristic of literary texts. One of these is the use of figurative devices. However, the use of figurative devices is neither necessary nor sufficient for a text being literary. There are many texts that have figurative devices but are not literature and many literary ones that are in plain prose.⁶⁹

Nevertheless, a narrative does not have to be literary to evoke experiences. I am quite sure that many of us have listened to stories, for example, by our parents and grandparents, that were skillfully told and so they provided glimpses into different times, places and lives. Narration is a structuring tool that works by representing events and making their connections intelligible, and it is a tool that has sharing experiences as one of its primary purposes. This purpose is served well when the audience of a narrative is not merely informed about the related experiences but is also allowed to undergo them in this remote way. When my grandmother tells me about how difficult it was for the family to wait for her father to return from the war, I understand her and the situation much better if

⁶⁸ See Friend (2012) 'Vividly told non-fiction narratives invite us to imagine what it was like for people to live in different times and places, to undergo wonderful or horrible experiences, and so on' (p. 183)

⁶⁹ This is one of the reasons why Lamarque (2014, pp. 105-120) insists on a Wittgensteinian conception of literature as a practice.

I also experience the fears and anxieties that she describes or alludes to.⁷⁰ Evoking experiences is not unique to literature.

Despite this, literature has a unique ability to evoke experiences with subtle nuance and with an effectiveness, in service of a higher artistic purposes, and also to evoke experiences that require considerable skill in making them available for reflection. If you try to imagine Septimus Warren Smith, the traumatized protagonist of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* as a real person, attempting to voice his traumatic experiences and the aftermath, it would have been quite a different account than what Woolf's stream-of-consciousness technique allowed her in writing the novel. Most people have to live through extraordinary situations, disrupting the everyday, routine flow of life: suffering, loss, deep anxiety, dread, delirium, elation, exhilaration, profound boredom and so on. The emotional intensity of these situations is such that it blocks easy articulation.⁷¹ Septimus is more or less unable to communicate and would have been unable to intelligibly narrate his traumatic experiences that took a severe toll. It requires an artist, such as Woolf, to let the audience share and understand what the protagonist lived through. In this respect, the fact that Septimus is a fictional character does not matter. What matters is that Woolf possessed the artistry to make such traumatic experiences available for sharing and understanding by her vivid and ingenious consciousness-narrative. Literature might not be unique in the capacity to evoke experiences but it definitely is unique in calling up vivid, powerful and/or complex experiences.

So what is this 'vividness', with which others and I have described narratives that evoke experiences? Without giving an exact definition, vividness is a graded quality of certain representations. In the case of literary texts, it depends on a text's capacity to induce mental imagery

⁷⁰ On emotions being involved in understanding, see Robinson (2005) and Lamarque's (2014, pp. 185-200) response.

⁷¹ High emotional intensity is only one type of experience that requires artistry for adequate expression. Another example might be the fine and complex details of common situations that go unnoticed unless someone with skill calls attention to them and foregrounds them. This necessitates a sort of perceptiveness as well. A well-known example of this is Marcel Proust's magnum opus, *In Search of Lost Time*.

by the way it represents its content. Consider this stanza from W. H. Auden's well-known 'The Shield of Achilles':

Barbed wire enclosed an arbitrary spot
 Where bored officials lounged (one cracked a joke)
 And sentries sweated for the day was hot:
 A crowd of ordinary decent folk
 Watched from without and neither moved nor spoke
 As three pale figures were led forth and bound
 To three posts driven upright in the ground.

This description, which is actually a narrative within the poem, is quite vivid even though it is not decorated with figurative devices. One could easily imagine a paraphrase that diminishes the imagery-inducing potential. It is a simple scene, but the way it is represented in the poem, the chosen details to focus on (the bored officials joking, the sweat and the paleness), with the rhythm flow and rhyme royal structure, and within the larger context, creates a vivid image of what is going on. Setting up for the execution, the stanza allows us to be part of the silent, still observers who are looking in from the outside.

In general then, what is required for there to be mental imagery when reading the poem? First off, the language has to be understood. Without knowing what the words in the poem mean, it is not possible to be engaged with the represented content. However, merely knowing what the poem means linguistically is only one condition for experiences to be evoked, the reader also has to take pragmatic inferences into account. It does have to be known that 'barbed wire' means this and that type of wire used for construction and so forth, in addition, the inference from barbed wire to prison camps also has to be made. But second, the represented scene needs to be interpreted as part of the

context that the poem sets up and also, since the poem has a significant historical and cultural background, it has to figure into the way of constructing the imagery. The poem does not evoke just any random experience of a prison camp, it sets up a tension between the ancient Greek mythology of war and the meaningless violence of modern totalitarian warfare, epitomized by Nazi concentration camps. Even though the imagery is probably vague and indeterminate in many aspects, the reader might imagine the officials as wearing Nazi uniforms for instance.⁷² Thirdly and lastly, the scene has a strong atmosphere that seems to me to be closest to melancholia because it is not heavy-handed with emotions of sadness and despair. The imagery and the experience are also melancholic. All in all, the experience evoked by the stanza is not exhausted by certain perceptual qualities, it is also influenced and shaped by thematic and emotional features.

However, just reading a vivid description does not necessarily lead to the evocation of experience. William Blake's 'To the Evening Star' begins by 'Thou fair-hair'd angel of the evening', which is quite a vivid, metaphorical description of Venus, but it is not an evocation of an experience. Indeed, it would be a stretch to say that the reader somehow experiences Venus, whatever that might mean, reading Blake's line. So in order to evoke experience, things have to happen. A narrative can evoke experience because it represents things happening. Even though readers might have a vivid mental image of Venus, it is not a mental image that is produced by a narrative, nor is it an evocation of experience. The question then naturally arises: what is necessary in general to evoke experience? This is difficult to answer without having a definition of 'experience' at hand as people talk about experience in a variety of ways: perceptual experience, 'an experience' that John Dewey (1934/2005) was concerned with, experience as learning, and so on. There is no scope to provide a satisfying answer, so just to offer a working hypothesis: experience, however it might be exactly defined, takes time, and as time passes, things happen. There is no experience without things happening, and so, it is necessary for things to happen to evoke experience. A narrative can thus evoke experience because

⁷² On this see the interesting study of Peter Mendelsund (2014).

it represents things happening. It can but it need not. In principle, it should be possible to comprehend a narrative *on some level* without having any experience evoked.

An interesting aspect of the issue is that a narrative need not represent someone *having an experience* in order to evoke experience. It seems clear that if there is a character in the narrative who herself undergoes certain experiences then the audience of the narrative often has a chance to share in the experiences of the character. If there is a character struck by grief, and the reasons, the emotions, the desires and so on are vividly described, the audience has a chance to experience what it is like to undergo such an experience of grief. In *ELIC*, the protagonist Oskar Schell has outbursts of anger as symptoms of grief, following the death of his father. At one point, this anger is directed against his mother whose occasional happy moments upset Oskar as if she forgot about Oskar's father, whose memory Oskar is desperately hanging onto. This is an experience that the novel evokes and allows us to share in. But not all evocations of experience have to be like this. In showing Oskar struggling with his grief, the novel can evoke sympathy and feelings of sadness, of concern for the boy and a range of different states, none of which necessarily belong to any of the characters in the story. A more radical example would be a story without sentient beings: a sublime experience conjured up by a story of how a star becomes a red giant in billions of years. The experiences evoked by a narrative need not be the experiences of someone the narrative is about.

3. Imagining Experiences: Empathy

In debates within the philosophy of mind, there are many questions associated with imagining experiences: can objects be imagined without imagining the perceptual experience of those objects (Noordhof 2002)? Is it possible to learn about mental states through imagining experiences (Langland-Hassan 2016)? What are the varieties of experiential imagination (Dokic & Archangeli 2015)? Even though these are interesting issues, the present chapter has no scope to go into the details. Therefore,

I focus on a narrower question: what does it mean that in reading a literary narrative, one imagines having the experiences of a character?⁷³ As the previous section has emphasized, narratives can evoke experiences. The experience of sadness when a beloved character dies is prompted by imagining that the character dies but the experience of sadness is not imaginary. On the other hand, the experience of Oskar's struggle with grief is imaginary: it is the imaginary state of an imaginary character, and in reading about it, the evoked experience is imaginary as well. The reader can feel the grief of Oskar through imagination.

In the context of the novel then, Oskar (the fictional protagonist) has an experience (such as the loss of a parent) while the reader imagines having such an experience, being in the shoes of Oskar, what it is like for Oskar to lose a parent. So this is a crucial difference between having an experience and imagining having an experience. But what is the difference exactly? According to some philosophers, there are paradigmatic types of imagination which work by re-creating a non-imaginative mental state (see Currie and Ravenscroft 2002). For instance, propositional imagination or make-believe is analogous to belief. If I imagine that I am the last remaining human being on Earth, what happens is that I simulate having the belief that I am the last remaining human being on Earth. I re-create the mental state of believing that such and such is the case.

Also, imagining Oskar's experience of losing a parent, I do not imagine that I lose a parent nor do I merely imagine propositionally that Oskar has lost a parent. The mental state is somewhat of a combination: I imagine, assuming the perspective of Oskar, what it is like for him to lose a parent. The experience is Oskar's, however, I act imaginatively as if I were Oskar, and the experience were my experience. In essence the way I engage with Oskar is empathetic.

Empathy is of considerable interest within philosophy, psychology and cognitive science as well. I have no means here to give a comprehensive overview of the history or the contemporary debate, however, I do intend to offer an account that makes use of empathy (and a certain definition)

⁷³ See Suzanne Keen's (2007) extensive and informative study.

in approaching our engagement with literary narratives. I rely on Amy Coplan's (2011) conceptualization: 'empathy is a complex imaginative process in which an observer simulates another person's situated psychological states while maintaining clear self-other differentiation' (p. 5). As Coplan explains, the process is complex because it involves not only affect but cognition as well. Furthermore, in empathy, the imagination goes beyond what is perceptually available in replicating or reconstructing the target's experience(s). But in normal cases, empathy does not go as far as identification: while replicating or reconstructing someone else's experiences, the empathizer is well-aware of the fact that she is not identical with the target whose experiences are replicated or reconstructed.⁷⁴

It is important to mention, even if only briefly, that a likely candidate for the main aim of empathy is understanding.⁷⁵ People have rich personal histories, complex emotions, a variety of beliefs, desires and so on. These contribute to what can be called their perspective on the world. They influence and sometimes determine how they act and behave, however, their acts and behaviors do not uniquely manifest all that contributes to them. Without assuming that only actions can be understood, I use actions as my main example (for understanding emotions see Goldie 1999). Some actions are easily understandable: if I see someone waving through a crowd, I can safely conclude that it is probably for trying to get the attention of someone else. Other actions are not so.

In 1963, a Buddhist monk burned himself to death in a busy Saigon square. Now in retrospect, it is known why he did what he did: in protest against the South Vietnam Diem regime's pro-Catholic bias and the laws that discriminate Buddhists. But thinking about what it is like to see the now-famous photograph of the burning monk for the first time, the action is not easily understandable. Of course

⁷⁴ Coplan's proposal is firmly situated in simulation theory. Simulation theory, as a view about understanding others, has provoked some strong critiques (Gallagher 2007; Hutto 2007), and empathy conceptualized as simulation also has its issues (Zahavi 2008; Gallagher 2012). Even though I have my doubts about simulation as a default way of understanding others, I think it is plausible that empathy is a certain type of simulation (see the debate between Jacob 2011 and Zahavi 2011). In any case, I use Coplan's view because it offers a conceptualization of empathy that is well-suited to explain some reactions to characters in literary narratives, but this does not mean that I am committed to a simulationist program in general.

⁷⁵ See Michael (2014).

with background knowledge about Buddhism in general, about religion in Vietnam and reading the monk's last words, one can begin to know the reasons why. However, empathy with the monk, a reconstruction of what it was like to live in an oppressive regime that discriminates against Buddhist faith is, at the very least, an additional way to understanding why he burned himself, of what led him to choose this course of action.

There have been strong criticisms of empathy applying to our engagement with narrative fictions in general or literary fictions in particular. First, Noël Carroll (1990, 2001, pp. 306-316, 2011b) has been a fierce opponent of empathy understood as 'character identification'. One of his arguments is that, in most cases, what the audience knows is different from what the characters know. This difference in knowledge entails that typically the audience and the characters are in different, non-matching affective and cognitive states. In general, Carroll thinks that audiences do not occupy a participant but an observer position in their engagement.

Second, Goldie (2011) claims that empathetic replication of a person's perspective has to fail because a person's perspective necessarily incorporates the experience of oneself as an agent. As Goldie argues, in simple cases, it is relatively straightforward to just replicate being a rational agent, but a 'full-blooded' notion of agency is elusive from empathic simulation: it is one 'which includes not only traits of character and of personality, but also intellectual traits and abilities, such as open-mindedness and quick-wittedness, and emotional dispositions, such as being compassionate towards the homeless, or loving one's spouse' (p. 308). These background traits, abilities and the like make it conceptually impossible to accurately replicate the person's perspective.

Third, McFee (2011) raises doubts about the so-called 'matching' of the states in empathy, and argues that even if it is plausible that one's state can match a target's if the target is a person, it seems difficult to claim the same for a fictional character. For empathy to be successful, there needs to be a fact-of-the-matter whether the target's state was matched or not. How would that work for fictional

characters? Moreover, according to McFee, it is unclear what role there is to play for the 'literariness' of literary narratives in this respect.

There is much in these problems that one should take to heart. However, I still insist that empathy is useful in applying to one's engagement with literary narratives. In order to argue this, I proceed by looking at four types of cases: direct empathy with another person; indirect empathy with another person; indirect empathy with a character in a non-fictional narrative such as an autobiography and indirect empathy with a character in a fictional narrative such as *ELIC*. My argument to be demonstrated through these cases is this: if it is plausible that empathy is a typical real-life reaction in some cases, then it should carry over to our engagement with narratives, fiction and non-fiction, literary and non-literary. There are a couple points to note. First, if one believes that empathy is not a typical reaction in some cases of our everyday lives, I have no means to convince one otherwise. Second, by claiming that empathy carries over to the literary and the fictional domain does not mean that it simply applies in the same way as it does in real-life situations. As my formulations above show, one has to account for the differences between persons and characters, for instance.

One more point of interest before moving on. It could seem strange that Carroll is opposed to the idea that empathy is typical reaction in one's engagement with narratives. (To be fair, I have to mention again that Carroll is not opposed to empathy per se but to empathy understood as 'character identification'.) In a different domain, Carroll (2011a) is very much in favor of everyday practices carrying over to one's engagement with narratives: 'there is a continuum between how we understand the words and deeds of others on a daily basis and the interpretation of art and literature' (p. 127). For Carroll, this supports a modest version of actual intentionalism or the view that artists' intentions determine what artworks mean as long as they are consistent with how the works are. In ordinary circumstances, if someone tells you something, what her utterance means is determined by what she has intended to convey, and in understanding what she means, your 'mind reading' strategy is to figure out what she intended to convey. According to Carroll, the same applies to art.

The same, however, does not seem to be true for empathy. This could follow from different considerations. First, perhaps Carroll does not think that empathy is a typical reaction in everyday circumstances. Unlike the norm of intentionalistic interpretation, empathetic understanding might be a rare process, if it ever occurs, so it should not be employed in discussing engagement with narratives. Secondly, even if empathy is a typical everyday reaction, it could be approached differently from intentionalistic interpretation, which would preclude its carrying over to engagement with narratives. It could be argued that both in everyday and in art interpretation, the targets are products of actual human beings, which is not the case with empathy: reacting empathetically to Oskar is not the same as reacting empathetically to an actual human being because Oskar is a fictional character.⁷⁶ So while it is warranted to carry over intentionalistic interpretation to art from real life, it is not warranted to carry over empathetic reaction to fictional characters from real persons.⁷⁷ As mentioned, I do not have an answer to the first type of objection but I propose one to the second by discussing four types of cases below.

To begin then, I suppose that people are often empathic in everyday, ordinary, real life cases. For instance, being at a funeral, you see a young boy staring with an empty look at the grave of his father. You might react in different ways. One paradigmatic way is *sympathy*, which is often thought to be synonymous with empathy, but it is different: in feeling sorry for the boy, you do not empathize with the boy in the sense of reconstructing his experience. Another reaction is what Goldie (1999) calls ‘in-his-shoes-imagining’: you could imagine what it would be like *for you* to be in the boy’s situation. Empathy is different. Reacting with empathy means that you attempt to reconstruct how the boy thinks and feels, what it is like to be him and occupy his perspective. You do not imagine what it would be like for you to be in his situation, rather what it is like for him to be in the situation that he is. Again, this is an assumption, but I think that this often happens in everyday life when one attempts to

⁷⁶ Gibson (2015) raises the possibility of empathizing with works of literature, not characters.

⁷⁷ For such a worry see McFee (2011).

understand another person. This is a case of direct empathy with another person – direct because it is prompted by a perceptual relation to another person.

For a case of indirect empathy, consider the following.⁷⁸ Suppose that the boy wrote an honest letter to a friend about losing his father, explaining the circumstances and the way he feels in a first-personal mode. If, reading the letter, you become empathic, you recreate how the boy could have felt. This is a case of indirect empathy because it is prompted not by having a direct experience of the boy but by a (self-)representation – indirectly. I think that there is no reason to restrict empathy to the direct type. Direct or indirect merely concern the source, and I think that a claim about empathy requiring a direct experiential contact with the target has no plausibility. The target in the case of the letter is a real person, empathy is ‘interpersonal’ (to use McFee’s (2011) expression), and it is triggered by the way this person represents his experience of losing his father.

Now say that we move into the realm of literature. Imagine an autobiographical novel with an episode of the same nature: the protagonist/writer losing his father. Perhaps Roald Dahl’s (1984/2013) *Boy: Tales of Childhood* comes to mind. Dahl’s father died in pneumonia, weeks after the death of Dahl’s young sister. Reacting with empathy for the 4-year-old Dahl is different than empathy for a boy you see next to a grave. But it is also different from reading the private letter of the boy in the previous example. Why? I want to suggest that it is because *Boy* is a work of literature. As a work of literature, it is a public artifact, written within the practice of literature (see Lamarque & Olsen 1994, Lamarque 2014, pp. 105-120). In reading *Boy*, one has different expectations than in reading a personal letter, and when reading the novel, it is plausible to think that the evocation of certain reactions serves a higher artistic purpose while that is not the case for the letter. Now this does not mean that reading the letter and reading the novel are radically dissimilar, in fact, I think that both can evoke empathy, and both are about empathy for a real person. In this respect, the difference is that the boy writing the

⁷⁸ For a different expression of the distinction, see Matravers (2014) on confrontation and representation relations.

letter likely has no conscious design to evoke empathy, while Dahl writes not only to evoke empathy but to do so in service of presenting an artistic vision.

And lastly, consider a work of literature with a fictional protagonist, such as *ELIC*. The difference is, in contrast to the Dahl case, is that *ELIC* is not autobiographical and that its protagonist is an imaginary person or a fictional character. This is also at the root of the difficulty: is it possible to take a fictional character as the target of empathy? While in the case of someone real, I know that there is a fact of the matter how that person experiences what she experiences. This is not true for a fictional character, and if not, how can I know whether in empathy, I imagine what she experiences or not?

I think that it is possible to react empathetically to a fictional character. Briefly, Peter Lamarque and Stein Olsen (1994) distinguish between an internal and an external perspective that audiences can adopt to a fictional work. When it comes to characters, the difference is expressed as follows: ‘To reflect on characters from the internal perspective is to reflect on them as *persons*, while to identify them from the external perspective is to identify them as *characters*’ (p. 146). While Oskar is of course not a real person but a fictional character, when I am engaged with the work, I act as if he was a real person. That does not mean that I lose sight of him being a fictional character, but being caught up in reading about his adventures through New York City, I am not constantly paying attention to the fact that he is not real.⁷⁹ And so, in taking him as a person, I react to him as I would to a person: sometimes with empathy. Similarly to seeing a young boy at a funeral or reading a boy’s letter, I imaginatively reconstruct Oskar’s experiences even if they are ultimately imaginary themselves.

Altogether, I think that empathetic reaction can sometimes play an important part in our coming to understand works of literature. We imagine the experiences of certain characters, imaginary or real, in order to understand them better: what they think, how they feel, and why they act and react as they do. In this, we flesh out the words of literary authors in ways that they expect, anticipate and

⁷⁹ See Chapter VII on immersion.

rely on. As in real life, there is no need, as I see it, to reconstruct a full-blooded perspective in imagination that incorporates details from one's personal history, unconscious dispositions and so on. Empathy need not be a perfect copy of the target's perspective and experiences. Instead it is a simulation of certain basic characteristics. Knowing someone better, I have the possibility to simulate more and more details. Getting to know Oskar better, my empathy for him evolves through the course of reading the novel, or in other words, it gets more and more fleshed out. But still my imagined experiences remain different from the imaginary experiences of Oskar. Why?

4. Meaningful Experience

My argument in this last section is the following. Even though there are similarities between having experiences and imagining experiences, there is an important difference when it comes to imagining, through empathy, the experiences of a character in a literary work. The difference has to do with the notion of meaning: the experiences of characters in literary works are imagined as meaningful. This is not to say that having experiences cannot be meaningful, however, it is not meaningful in the same way as imagining experiences is when literary narratives prompt it. This is an important difference, but by no means the only one.

Meaning does not arise when a narrative is comprehended by an audience, meaning does not necessarily need interpretation. A narrative is meaningful because of the way it is created. As Velleman (2003) convincingly argues: 'A story does more than recount events; it recounts events in a way that renders them intelligible, thus conveying not just information but also understanding' (p. 1). The question then is: how does a story render events intelligible to convey understanding? To put it differently, how do events become meaningful within narratives and how their meaning should be conceived of? As George M. Wilson (2011) claims, 'narratives are structures of events that are themselves "meaningful," although the meaning of a narrative episode is of an altogether different

nature from the meaning of a linguistic construction or act' (p. 15). Based on this then, a narrative is a meaningful artifact that recounts events and makes them intelligible, however, the meanings are not that of linguistic constructions or acts.

As I see it, a narrative is meaningful and makes events meaningful because it contextualizes them. In a narrative, events are in a network of other events: they precede or follow, cause or anticipate other events. In other words, narratives 'make meaning' of events, among other things.⁸⁰ Narratives do not have to be literary to contextualize and make meaning thereby. In fact, all narratives contextualize events, actions, characters and so on. This is true for my story about how I have spent my afternoon yesterday and for multi-volume novels and multi-season television shows.

However, there is a significant (though not absolute) difference between the context a literary narrative sets up and one that is ad hoc provided by an everyday storytelling occasion. There are differences between the purposes and means of everyday and literary storytelling, and these differences are manifest in different ways of contextualization. This is demonstrated by quoting Lamarque's (2014) 'Principle of Functionality': '*It is always reasonable to ask of any detail in a literary work what literary or aesthetic function that detail is performing*' (p. 72). According to Lamarque, for any narrative, it is reasonable to ask why a certain detail was selected to be told.

However, he argues that there is a distinction between 'literary narratives' and 'real-life narratives', by claiming that '[i]n the literary case, but not the real-life case, detail is significant for conveying meaning' (p. 79). The same applies for matters of contextualization. In explaining why I spent my afternoon half-asleep in the library, I tell a story, set up a context that accurately represents what happened in a way to best convey to my interlocutor the reasons. In such a story, the selected details do not serve any aesthetic or literary purposes, they are mostly there for explanatory aims. However, in 'The Shield of Achilles': 'Barbed wire enclosed an arbitrary spot//Where bored officials

⁸⁰ For Bruner (1990), 'narrative is not just child's play, but an instrument for making meaning that dominates much of life in culture-from soliloquies at bed-time to the weighing of testimony in our legal system' (p. 97).

lounge (one cracked a joke)', the details about the officials being bored and one making joke are not there to accurately represent what was going on or to explain why it was going on. The demeanor of the officials is there to highlight and make palpable the dehumanizing and desensitizing nature of war, which is a theme in the poem explored in a literary manner. It does not matter whether any officials were bored or whether there were any jokes.⁸¹

So then narrowing the inquiry down to literary narratives, they have the ability to contextualize certain phenomena in many ways. First, events might be connected to other events. It seems plausible to say that *ELIC* makes meaning of 9/11. By showing the tragedy of 9/11 embedded in the life of the boy, emphasizing the consequences, the novel contextualizes the events in a way that they acquire meaning. 9/11 is connected to the death of the boy's father. This is a causal connection: 9/11 is meaningful as the cause of the death of this particular person, the father of the protagonist. By being presented as such, the tragedy acquires a new meaning. In the invented concreteness of a life, the events themselves come to life, so to speak. Second, by depicting the tragedy of the terrorist attack as a significant and life-altering trauma of the boy losing his father, the novel contextualizes it in showing how particular people could have been affected. Being a global political event, 9/11, as transmitted through and discussed in various media, can easily be seen as something remote and abstract. In fact, for someone not directly affected by the tragedy, it is difficult to come to grips with the personal dimensions of the event. The novel makes meaning of it by a deep demonstration of its close and personal consequences, even if it is by a fictional story. Thirdly, *ELIC* further contextualizes 9/11 by framing it from the perspective of the boy. Seeing it through his eyes, hearing him narrate endow the consequences of the attack with meaning. This is not to say that what is contextualized is meaningless to begin with. 9/11 has a multitude of meanings without the novel of Safran Foer. Saying that the novel makes meaning of 9/11 entails that the events of that day acquire new meanings but not meaning *as*

⁸¹ Again, this is not an issue about fictionality. Even though the details in the poem seem to be invented, the scene seems to be fictional in a sense, it does not necessarily have to be so in order for the principle of functionality to apply.

such. All in all, without attempting to draw up an exclusive list, narratives make meaning, that is give new meanings, by embedding events into contexts: contexts of other events, of lives, of perspectives.

I have focused on events above because events are seen as the basic represented constituents of narratives. However, I do not want to give the misimpression that narratives can make meaning only of events. As for example Daniel D. Hutto convincingly argues about storytelling in general, that our folk psychology, our everyday explanations of why people do what they do, works with narratives. Whenever we understand behavior, we understand it by embedding it in a story. Stories can lead to rich practical understanding because

[stories] are not bare descriptions of the current beliefs and desires of idealized rational agents. They are snapshots of the adventures of situated persons, presented in the kinds of settings in which all of the important factors needed for understanding reasons are described—that is, those that are relevant to making sense of what is done and why (Hutto 2007, p. 34).

Narratives can ‘make meaning’ of states of affairs, of experience, of the past, of exchanges with the world, and so on. Again, the list is not exhaustive, one could add a great number of entries from concepts to beliefs, and to social or cultural practices.

Safran Foer’s *ELIC* could be said to make meaning of childhood trauma. Childhood trauma can be seen at once a state of affairs, an experience, an event, part of the past, a concept and so on. By displaying the trauma of losing a parent in a violent and shocking way, the novel embeds it in a context of events, of a life, and of a perspective. The narrative makes meaning of childhood trauma by manifesting it in a largely invented network of happenings and actions, of characters and things, of values, projects and possibilities. One way to explain it is detailed by John Gibson (2007) in his *Fiction and the Weave of Life*. As he argues: ‘When we read *Othello*, *Notes from Underground* or *Bartleby the Scrivener*, we see jealousy, suffering, and alienation presented not as mere “ideas” but as very precisely shaped human situations’ (p. 127). Using the terms of the present chapter, Gibson seems to hold the

view that literature, and literary narratives in particular, make meaning by contextualizing: not in a conceptual web but in a living world, not in the interconnections of ideas, but in human situations.

ELIC makes meaning of the experiences of Oskar that the experiences do not have in themselves. Reading a novel, the narrative and the experiences evoked always have a layer of meaning that is prior to the reader's engagement in virtue of being an intentionally designed, and by design, meaningful artifact. The difference rides on the distinction between the meaningfulness of experiences as they are experienced and the meaningfulness of experiences as they are narrated. It should be clear that experience in general is not just 'one damn thing after another' or a meaningless sequence of happenings, and so I only partly agree with Gibson (2007) as he writes: 'To confer meaning on something is to make it available to thought: it is to create sense, and thus understanding, where there once was none' (p. 143). Conferring meaning is indeed creating sense and understanding, but it does not work on a meaningless and chaotic substrate, but on prior, perhaps inchoate and implicit meaningfulness. The (imaginary) experiences of Oskar are not meaningless before they are narrated, and so, does provide some sort of meaningfulness, however, it is not the meaningfulness that reading the novel confers.

To approach somewhat differently, whatever the readers of *ELIC* prompted to experience is part of and influenced by being embedded in the artwork. In the context that the novel sets up, Oskar gets home from school on September 11, 2001, and he listens to the messages of his father on the answering machine. His father is calling from one of the towers, and he calls one last time, but Oskar cannot bring himself to pick up the phone – inaction that haunts him for the rest of the book. As Oskar finally shares his story about being unable to pick the phone up as his father is asking 'Are you there?' eleven times, the reader might experience both his paralysis in having to respond to his father and also his guilt for what Oskar perceives as abandoning him. And moreover, the reader can experience sadness and relief for witnessing how the boy finally articulates this secret that has been haunting throughout the novel.

Building up to the emotional resolution of Oskar's confession, the reader is kept in the dark about what actually happened with his father's last phone call. When the audience finally can share in Oskar's experience, of sitting at the phone, not answering his father's last call, it is an experience that comes with a background that reading the narrative creates. The delay between Oskar's experience and the reader's getting to know the experience through Oskar's articulation (months later) is something that is crucial for aesthetic reasons. The cathartic moment of learning about Oskar's secret requires the experiences involved to be embedded in the novel's narrative. There is a delicate difference between Oskar's catharsis of sharing his secret and the reader's catharsis of getting to know. The latter also requires sharing in and understanding the former.

In any case, it is well-documented that narrative meaning-making operates by displaying, for instance, events as parts of a unity,⁸² so I concentrate on something different, quoting again Lamarque's (2014) 'Principle of Functionality': '*It is always reasonable to ask of any detail in a literary work what literary or aesthetic function that detail is performing*' (p. 72). In other words, for my present purposes, a narrative is an intentional artifact.⁸³ Whatever is read in a literary narrative was intentionally written down by the author. In this, the author had a multiplicity of choices: she could have phrased certain things differently, she could have included or come up with different events to relate, or she could have ordered the telling of the events in a different way. There are a myriad of purposeful decisions. Wordings, phrasings, stylistic and figurative devices have their functions in a novel, not to mention higher-order decisions such as how to arrange the telling of events and what perspective should be adopted, what the narrator is like and so on.

Elements of a literary narrative form a structured, functional whole in which there are various meaningful relations to be discovered. Episodes in everyday lives, as they are experienced, are not functional or structured this way. Without a story I tell about it, my meeting with a stranger is not for the sake of creating tension or surprise. But Oskar's meetings in *ELIC* might be. For this reason too

⁸² See Polkinghorne (1988, p. 1), Guignon (2003, p. 43), Cooper (2003, p. 31).

⁸³ See Currie (2010). To be fair, Currie uses 'intentional-communicative artefact'.

then, the experiences of Oskar are not meaningful in the same way as the experiences of reading the novel are. In the novel, the experiences of Oskar are described intentionally in a certain manner, the experiences have a function in the greater scheme of things, and they are placed specifically to fill in this function best as they can. Oskar's experiences do not have the meaningfulness created by this artistic narration. Through purposeful design, a literary narrative sets up and endows the experiences evoked with meaning.

Altogether then, a literary narrative such as *ELIC* can evoke many interesting experiences. Some of these experiences are ones that the reader imagines as having the character's experiences. Even though a reader of *ELIC* can react with empathy to Oskar as someone can react with empathy to a real boy who lost his father, but there are important differences between the imaginary character having imaginary experiences and the reader imagining, empathetically, having the imaginary experiences. The main difference this section explored is that when the reader imagines having Oskar's experiences, these experiences are imbued with meaning in a way as they are not for Oskar. Because the experiences are contextualized within the novel, within the literary narrative, the reader's imagining Oskar's experiences are meaningful in a way as they are not for Oskar himself. Evoking empathy as a reaction is one of the tools of literary authors, and they have various means to achieve it (see Keen 2007). However, as the experiences imagined in this way are already interpreted by being parts of a narrative artwork, chosen and designed as parts of a narrative artwork by an author, they differ from the 'raw' (imaginary) experiences of the character who undergoes them. Empathy to literary characters in works of literary fiction is a strange connection, one that makes readers feel as if they were close to the character but, at the same time, it opens up a rift between the experiences of characters and readers.

5. Conclusion

As a conclusion, the main question of this chapter is about the experiences evoked by literary narratives. The way literary narratives expand our experiential horizons is miraculous, as Henry James stated. Some of the experiences that literary narratives provide are the experiences of the characters that readers can share in some respects. In this, readers react with empathy to some characters in some parts of some works. Empathy, I would say, assist in getting a better understanding of a character: why she does what does, why she behaves the way she behaves, and so on. In real life situations, I assumed, we often react with empathy to people. Even though many are skeptical, I think the same type of mental attitude carries through to our engagement with literary narratives and fictional characters, but it also goes through some changes. One of the main differences between a character having an experience in a literary work and the reader imagining, empathetically, the experience of the character is that the reader's reconstruction of the experience is imbued with meaning in a way as it is not for the character. Because the character's experience is contextualized within the literary work, and since evoking empathy is a tool of literary authors, the experiences empathetically imagined acquire a meaningfulness that they do not have when the character has them.

V. MEANING: INTENTIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

1. Introduction: Interpretive Projects and the Role of Intentions

The central issue of this chapter is one of understanding and interpreting narrative works of art. With some important exceptions, most philosophers of art implicitly or explicitly agree that the target of understanding and interpretation is the meaning of an artwork. Despite this agreement, many point

out that it is quite strange to use the notion of ‘the meaning’ in ‘the meaning of *The Castle*’, ‘the meaning of *The Godfather*’, ‘the meaning of *Guernica*’ (Olsen 1978; Goldman 1990; Lamarque 2010, pp. 153-187; Huddleston 2012). Admittedly, engaging these works of art, it is not primarily linguistic meaning which we are interested in nor are we typically looking for some ‘message’ or ‘moral’ that could be described with the determinate phrase ‘the meaning’.⁸⁴ It is possible to steer clear of the ‘message’ connotation if one considers ‘the meaning’ to be all propositional content, however, not all interpretation concerns propositional content. ‘Meaning’ could mean many things and could cover many aspects of artworks to be understood, but to avoid the linguistic paradigm and the ‘message’ and ‘moral’ implications, I refrain from referring to it as the main target of interpretation.

As the intention-debate is familiar ground by now, I outline the positions only briefly. There are intentionalist, anti-intentionalist and non-intentionalist positions.⁸⁵ A distinction needs to be made between the type of intentions involved: categorial or semantic (Levinson 1992, 1996; Trivedi 2015). The majority of aestheticians tend to agree that intentions play a strong role in situating a work in a given category. For semantic properties, the debate is livelier. Dismissing the classic and influential expression of the ‘intentional fallacy’ by Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946), intentionalism is the dominant position in contemporary aesthetics. Intentionalists argue that intentions are needed to ascertain the correct meaning or meanings of an artwork. Actual intentionalists claim that it is the actual intentions of actual artists that are either determinative regarding artwork-meaning or that they constrain possible meanings. The first group are the ‘strong’ or ‘extreme’ camp of actual intentionalists (Hirsch 1967; Knapp & Michaels 1992; Irwin 2015), while the second have the ‘weak’ or ‘moderate’ or ‘modest’ label (Stecker 2006, 2010; Carroll 2001, pp. 157-180, 2011). Hypothetical intentionalists, on the other hand, put the emphasis on a hypothesis about the artist’s intentions, which hypothesis should be measured against aesthetic and epistemic standards. The correct artwork meaning then is given by an

⁸⁴ Carroll (2011a) highlights the all too restrictive emphasis on linguistic meaning.

⁸⁵ I take the distinction between non-intentionalist and anti-intentionalist from Andrew Huddleston (2016): ‘Why I Am Not an Intentionalist’.

informed inference about what the actual author meant (e.g., Levinson 1992) or *should have* meant to convey with the work (Trivedi 2015).⁸⁶ It is important to mention that Jerrold Levinson does not consider hypothetical intentionalism as a form of intentionalism because it discards the actual intentions of the actual author.

In contrast, anti-intentionalists, defending a strong claim, arguing that intentions are irrelevant in coming to understand the meaning or meanings of artworks. A more plausible construal of a position inheriting Wimsatt and Beardsley's outlook is non-intentionalism: intentions are sometimes relevant to some meanings or artworks, but a pluralism should be embraced where there are correct artwork meanings not dependent on actual intentions or on hypotheses about intentions (Beardsley 1970; Davies 2007; Davies 2006; Gaut 1993; Goldman 1990; Nathan 1992). Among the numerous qualifications and subtleties, the debate loses its rough edges. Those arguing against intentionalists are no longer committed to the 'death of the author' in Roland Barthes's sense, and intentionalists no longer simply equate meaning with intention.

As mentioned, I refrain from referring to 'the meaning' as the target of interpretation, and I want to respect the complexity of interpretation, so I do not propose an overall answer to whether interpretation in general should be intentionalist or not. Instead I focus on some central varieties of interpretive projects: narrative, thematic and functional. Without assuming that it is an exhaustive list or that they are independent, my main claim will be that while it is plausible to hold that narrative interpretation is dependent on intentions, thematic and some functional interpretation are not intention-bound.

So regarding narrative interpretation, I follow Greg Currie (1995), who states: 'Narrative interpretation is the kind of interpretation that even the least ambitious of us engage in when we read: working out what is going on in the story' (p. 228). As Currie says, it is often obvious what goes on in a given story: there are things explicitly shown or explicitly stated. The obviousness is due to some

⁸⁶ For a different hypothetical view, see Nehamas (1981).

‘default assumptions of literal speech, narrative reliability, rationality and evidential relevance’ (Ibid.). According to Currie, even these obvious ways of realizing story-content deserve the name interpretation with the qualification ‘zero degree’, but when audiences fail to arrive at a coherent picture of the story under these assumptions, more apparently interpretive processes have to kick in.

Contra Currie’s view, many philosophers argue that the need for interpretation only arises if there are thematic issues or if there is some sort of puzzlement. In fact, Lamarque (2002) calls up on some of Monroe C. Beardsley’s terms, ‘elucidation’ (for what is true in a given story) and ‘interpretation’ (for thematic issues), precisely in order to highlight this difference. For Beardsley and for Lamarque, these are different ways of engaging with the work. I think that this is not merely terminological issue as it is about the difficult question regarding the scope of interpretation. However, for argument’s sake, I retain ‘narrative interpretation’. In one way, both Beardsley and Lamarque could accept that sometimes figuring out what is going on in the story intersects with thematic concerns as it does in the famous case of Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw*. Whether there are ghosts in James’s narrative is as much a question of narrative interpretation as it is a question of theme. Whether there is ‘zero degree’ interpretation, as Currie would have it, is not something to decide here.

In thematic interpretation, the targets of understanding are the organizing principles in a narrative artwork, which can take the form of concepts (with varying complexity) or of statements. A narrative work of art tells a story, and in telling a story, it explores certain issues of human interest. A theme can be a concept like loneliness, creativity, forgiveness, war, but it can also be somewhat more nuanced like ‘the loneliness one feels even among a crowd of people’, ‘forgiveness in the face of betrayal’ and so on. A theme, on one view, can also be a statement: ‘war takes a toll and leaves one’s soul scarred’. These can all be expressions of themes, and they are focal points of narrative artworks, organizing principles that direct the artwork both in content and in form. In thematic interpretation, one aims to discover what, on an abstract level, an artwork is about. An artwork with a plot that has John killing Jack and Liam taking revenge on John is about these characters and events concretely, but

it can also be about the morality of murder and revenge abstractly. Only this latter qualifies as a theme. To quote Lamarque (2014) here: ‘Themes are conceptions that bind works together, encapsulating a work’s significance and what I called its moral seriousness’ (p. 76).

Thus while narrative interpretation is about what is going on in a story, ‘functional interpretation’ is about why. Trying to figure out why say a certain episode occurred when and where it occurred requires thinking of the narrative as what I like to call a *functional whole*. To quote Lamarque’s (2014) ‘Principle of Functionality’: ‘*It is always reasonable to ask of any detail in a literary work what literary or aesthetic function that detail is performing*’ (p. 72). Also, as the remark indicates, functional interpretation is about more than just story-content: different formal elements of a narrative also have functional roles in the ‘economy’ of a work (Trivedi 2015, p. 704).

It is important to note that functional interpretation necessarily takes an ‘external’ approach to a narrative. Following Lamarque and Olsen (1994) and Currie (2010) as well, there is an important distinction between story-internal and story-external explanations. Say a male character in a film has a violent outburst. The fact that he had a violent outburst is a matter of narrative interpretation. So then there is the question ‘why?’ One answer is story-internal: because he wrongly believes his wife cheated on him and he has problems controlling his temper. This answer still belongs properly to narrative interpretation: it is true in the story that he wrongly believes that his wife cheated on him, which caused him to have an outburst. A different, story-external approach treats the narrative as an artifact in which episodes such as the outburst are chosen to be included and to be included in a specific way. So in this sense, why the character had an outburst could have an answer such as: to further flesh out the character and to create tension. It could be true *about the story* that the outburst builds tension, but it is not true *in the story* in the same sense because it is about the audience’s reaction.

There is quite a complex relationship between different interpretive projects. In a way, narrative interpretation is fundamental: one has to know what is going on in the story before thinking

about what themes the story develops. Both narrative and thematic interpretation seem to be preconditions for assessing how different aspects, parts and elements function. But interpretive projects are not neatly independent in this way. They are interconnected and interdependent. Many issues about narrative interpretation depend on the themes that the work elaborates and seeing how some parts function might be necessary before understanding what the theme is. However, I do not think that this is a problem for the present account. I make my argument by conceptually separating the types of interpretive projects, but this should not mean that in any actual interpretation they occur in a neat logical order.

In what follows, I defend a qualified non-intentionalist position. I concede to intentionalists that narrative interpretation should refer to intentions in one way or another but argue that functional and thematic interpretations need not. I use the expression ‘referring to intentions’ as something that is common and essential to both actual and hypothetical intentionalists, and arguing that some types of interpretation do not have to refer to intentions goes against both actual and hypothetical intentionalist views. In the Section 2, I briefly describe how intentions play a central role for human actions and for the products of human actions. However, I also demonstrate that the ties between intentions, actions, products, and finally, artworks are not straightforward. In Section 3, I then argue that there is good reason to think that narrative interpretation has to refer to intentions, and the reason concerns story- and artwork-identity. Section 4 is about thematic interpretation, and I argue that thematic interpretation does not have to refer to intentions. Before concluding, in Section 5, I focus on functional interpretation, and I make a distinction between theme-related and non-theme-related functions. I argue that following the argument in Section 4, theme-related functions need not be understood with reference to intentions.

2. Intentions: Actions and Artifacts

It is quite straightforward to see why the debate between actual intentionalism and hypothetical intentionalism dominates the discussion about interpretation.⁸⁷ Acting intentionally and understanding intentions are fundamental for human practices in general, and it seems very difficult to argue that there is a special group of human phenomena (e.g., artworks) that merit different treatment. This lies at the heart of what I term the ‘continuity-discontinuity debate’.⁸⁸ The basic issue can be expressed as follows: is making art continuous with other human practices? The answers are usually not simply ‘yes’ or ‘no’, rather, most claims are qualified. This is seen as central to the controversy about intentions because the assumption is that if there is strong continuity between everyday human practices and practices of engaging with art, then intentions should be at the very least relevant for understanding artworks. The important premise is that in everyday practices, in the understanding of human action and artifacts, intentional interpretation is the norm.

In a seminal paper, Donald Davidson (1963) distinguished between different ways under which an intentional action could be described. In fact, there are some descriptions under which an action ceases to be intentional. The famous example is turning a light on when getting home. Getting home, the agent intentionally turns the light on, however, with the same action, she also alerts a burglar, and so the same action can be described as ‘alerting a burglar’, which is unintentional. Without going into details, there are differences between physical movements, basic actions and consequences, however, it seems intuitively clear that ‘turning on the light’ is to be understood by referring to the intentions of the agent, while ‘alerting the burglar’ is not. Of course, alerting the burglar is an unintentional consequence of an intentional action, but it is important to note that the very same action can be described in intentional and unintentional terms.

⁸⁷ For an excellent overview see Sherri Irvin (2006).

⁸⁸ See numerous contributions by Carroll (2001, 2011a) and Currie’s (1995).

Considerations such as these complicate the neat picture of interpreting actions on basis of intentions, and things get even murkier when it comes to artifacts. In coming across a hitherto unknown artifact, a good initial questions seems to be: what was it made for? What were its creators try to achieve by making it? If one were to understand what the world knows as a refrigerator without prior knowledge, it would be a good idea to ask what it was made for (namely the eponymous purpose of refrigeration). However, say one uses a broken down refrigerator as a strange flower stand on a balcony. In order to understand the purpose of the refrigerator-turned-flower stand, one would not get very far asking about the making of the refrigerator. But then again, maybe the intentions of the one repurposing the refrigerator into a flower stand have to occupy central stage. In any case, the neat picture of intentionalist interpretation is complicated, but of course, it still stands strong, and I return to considerations in favor of understanding artifacts intentionally when I consider the notion of ‘function’.

If an artifact is a communicative artifact, then in understanding it, the main question seems to be: what was its creator trying to communicate in creating it? People who produce something with intentions to communicate expect and anticipate that the audience tries to understand what they intend to convey even if they fail in executing their intentions. The foregoing has important consequences for narrative art. Currie (2010) defines narratives as ‘intentional-communicative artefacts’ (p. 6), and so narratives in art are intentional-communicative artifacts that are also artworks. When it comes to narrative works of art, they are products of intentional human action, or, in other words, artifacts designed intentionally.⁸⁹ As described above, there is a strong connection between actions, artifacts and intentions, even if the connection is often not straightforward.

⁸⁹ For Jerrold Levinson (2006), however, a ‘literary work is an utterance, of course, but it is a sort of “grand utterance”, one governed by different ground rules of interpretation than are ordinary utterances’ (p. 310).

3. Narrative Interpretation

Prior to my non-intentionalist argument, I want to concede that narrative interpretation has to take artists' intentions into account. This concession is one that Beardsley and Lamarque could also make. My reasons are given by considerations concerning artwork-identity. To begin with, I am interested in narrative works of art, that is, works of art that tell a story. For a narrative work of art, it is essential to tell a story, otherwise, it would not be a *narrative* work of art. Any work of art that does not tell a story cannot be categorized as narrative, and in turn, any work of art that does, is a narrative work of art. But narrative is not a simple either-or property, rather, as scholars have argued, it is a scalar concept – there are degrees of *narrativity*.⁹⁰ This means that an artwork can be more or less narrative or possess more or less narrativity. I do not think that there is a non-arbitrary degree that one could specify, which would help one to decide whether an artwork is narrative or not, however, I still think that there is intuitively a minimal degree of narrativity that an artwork has to possess to belong in the narrative category.⁹¹

To go on, the second step in my argument is that for a narrative artwork, it is not only essential to tell a story, the content of the story is also essential for its identity. In other words, a narrative work of art is that particular narrative work of art and not another one because it tells that particular story and not another one. But, in principle, the same story can be told by multiple works of art.⁹² Intuitively, even though 'same' should not be understood as strict metaphysical identity, the same story is told both by Irvine Welsh's novel *Trainspotting* and the film by Danny Boyle. Therefore, for two narrative artworks to be identical, it is necessary but not sufficient to tell the same story.

And to finally return to interpretation, narrative interpretation of an artwork concerns the story the artwork tells. To repurpose the terms of the 'truth in fiction' debate, it is about what is true

⁹⁰ See Ryan (2007), Nanay (2009), Abbott (2009), Currie (2010).

⁹¹ See Chapter I.

⁹² On this see Smuts (2009).

according to the work of art. Let me illustrate with the following questions: is Dumbledore of the *Harry Potter* novels gay? Are there ghosts in *The Turn of the Screw*? Is Decard a replicant in *Blade Runner*? In attempting to answer these questions, one is narratively interpreting the works. How should narrative interpretation proceed? Should it take the artist's intentions into account? I think it is quite plausible that it should.⁹³ For a narrative work of art, it is essential to tell a story, and the story it tells is essential for its identity. Say it is common knowledge that James intended that there are ghosts in *The Turn of the Screw* and the governess is not insane. If an interpretation is based on there being no ghosts in the work, then it seems that it is an interpretation of a different story and thus, if my reasoning above is correct, a different work of art. But in approaching a work of art that tells a story, it is not just any possible story that one can extract from the work that is of interest, it is the story that the artist intended to tell by the work that interpreters have to understand. Otherwise, if it had a different story to tell, it would be a different work.⁹⁴ It is an important premise and assumption of my argument that audiences are not interested in possible works with possible stories, they are interested in stories told by works that artists intended to create.

There are important issues that are left unaddressed in this discussion. For instance, what if James intended the work to be ambiguous between the 'ghosts' and the 'no ghosts' interpretations? Do the story with the ghosts and the story without belong to two different artworks? This would be implausible, but I do not think it follows. If it is known or reasonable to assume that James intended (or should have intended) the work to tell an ambiguous story, then there is only one ambiguous narrative artwork. Any interpretation that denies the ambiguity, however, would have a different narrative work as its target.

Second, as in other discussion of intentions, what about failure of execution? So perhaps James had intended *The Turn of the Screw* to be ambiguous, but he failed to make it so. There may be more

⁹³ On storytelling intentions see Currie (1995, pp. 239-243).

⁹⁴ For Jerrold Levinson, a literary work's identity is fixed by text and context of utterance, and if that is so, story-identity would only bring in additional problems.

textual evidence for the ‘ghosts’ than for the ‘no ghosts’ reading, and it might not be sufficiently emphasized that the governess could suffer from some sort of mental condition. What is the story then that gives the artwork its identity? I want to remain neutral between actual and hypothetical intentionalists here. Robert Stecker (2006), for instance, argues that the artwork’s interpretation is determined by actual intentions if and only if they are successfully executed. However, Saam Trivedi (2001) pushes an important epistemic argument against actual intentionalists, which focuses on the ability to know whether an artist’s intention is successfully carried out or not. For the present account, the hypothetical failure of James to tell the story that he wanted is at the same time a failure to create the artwork that he wanted. If so, then considerations about whether one is interpreting the artwork one should are no longer relevant.

And thirdly, story-identity and artwork-identity are contentious. There are no sets of necessary and sufficient conditions for two artworks or two stories being identical. It is a fair point that the view in this section relies on claims about identities that are not well-defined. If so, then perhaps it is not reasonable that narrative interpretation is largely determined by intentions. And I have to agree, neither artwork-identity, nor story-identity are precise matters. However, the question is, do they need to be? Is it not enough that in everyday, ordinary circumstances, people can easily agree that the *Trainspotting* novel and film are two separate artworks that tell the same story? And it is easily accepted that for them to tell them same story, they do not need to tell each and every thing that the other one does. There surely is a vagueness problem here, but the problem should not mean that it is not possible to tell artworks and stories apart. But if there are compelling reasons why artwork and story-identity cannot play a part in an account of interpretation, then I would have to concede that narrative interpretation need not be intentionalist for the reasons given in this section.

4. Thematic Interpretation

So then, once one is more or less clear about the (actually or hypothetically) intended story of a narrative artwork, the argument here is that thematic interpretations of these works do not have to refer to intentions, and I make the argument by claiming that thematic interpretation seeks to make sense of its object in terms of the themes it develops. Beardsley famously distinguished between a work's thesis and its theme (Beardsley 1981, pp. 401-409). A thesis can be expressed as a proposition and it can either be true or false. 'Human beings have a strong desire to enact their freedom even if this means self-destruction' might be a thesis extracted from or implicitly contained in Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*. A theme is different. Human freedom is a theme in the Dostoevsky novel, however, it makes no sense to say that it is a proposition or that it is true or false, while true or false propositions can certainly be formulated based on its treatment in the work. A theme, on this view, is a concept, simple or complex, that a work can be said to be about, and which is an important organizing principle in the work. In other words, a work can often be discovered to explore a theme or a cluster of themes. In *Notes from Underground*, the anecdotes the Underground Man selects display issues concerning human freedom, drives and forces, internal and external, and they advance the narrative towards its conclusion. The work is about human freedom and it is organized around the theme of human freedom.

Following Beardsley's distinction between a work's thesis and its theme, Lamarque and Olsen (1994) argue that themes can actually be statements as well, and even the same statement can be treated differently as thesis and theme. However, they also argue that proper aesthetic appreciation is not concerned with theses but only with themes because it is themes that organize the work as an artwork. Even if it is possible to evaluate a theme for truth, the truth value is not of aesthetic interest. This is quite contentious as it is a major issue in the debate concerning the so-called 'cognitive value'

of art, but this is not the place to elaborate. For the time being, I focus on themes and not theses, and I put to the side whether themes can be or should be evaluated for truth.⁹⁵

As I have mentioned, a thematic interpretation seeks to make sense of its object by ascribing themes to it around which it is organized. If this is so, then the question becomes: is it a legitimate interpretive practice to make sense of an artwork thematically without reference to the artist's intentions? Or to use Andrew Huddleston's (2016) terms, is there an option besides restrictive intentionalism, that is, the view that interpretations which 'contravene' the artist's intentions are illegitimate? Like Huddleston, I also want to argue for non-intentionalism or the view that there are legitimate interpretations which need not take the intentions of the artist into account. In my view, there are legitimate interpretations which bracket any reference to intentions, which do not refer to intentions, neither actual, nor hypothetical ones.

To deal with an objection right off the bat, one could claim here that since thematic interpretation depends on narrative interpretation, and because narrative interpretation is tied to intentions, transitivity requires one to say that thematic interpretation also should be tied to intentions. However, this is based on a misunderstanding concerning the dependence relation between narrative and thematic interpretations. Thematic interpretation depends on narrative interpretation in the following sense: in order to know what themes a story develops, one has to know what the story is. However, this does not entail that the themes a story develops are uniquely determined by what the story is. Therefore, even though what the story is depends on the storytelling intentions of the author, the themes the story develops do not. As Marco Caracciolo (2012) claims:

A straightforward example: readers are not free to decide whether Anna Karenina commits suicide or not at the end of Tolstoy's novel, and any reading based on the assumption that she

⁹⁵ See also Lamarque (2002, p. 297).

does not is plainly wrong with respect to Tolstoy's communicative intentions. By contrast, the significance of Anna Karenina's death is open to different interpretations (p. 204).

My argument then is the following: normatively, a good thematic interpretation is one that makes sense of the artwork in terms of the themes that the artwork develops. I want to argue that it is possible to come up with a good thematic interpretation of an artwork that does not refer to the artist's intention. The reason I am not using 'true' or 'correct' interpretation here is that when it comes to thematic interpretations, making sense of an artwork is at stake. Is it possible to make sense of an artwork truly or falsely? Is it possible to do so correctly or incorrectly? These are complicated questions, but let me say this. According to a thematic interpretation, Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* is about the issue of free will. Is this true? Is this correct? It is certainly a statement about the work, which is truth-evaluable. My view here is that such a statement of thematic interpretation will be true and will be correct if and only if it makes sense of *Notes from Underground*. And this is to say, the measure of truth and correctness is how good a thematic interpretation is. My move is analogous to a move from a correspondence theory of truth (correspondence to artists' intentions) to a pragmatic theory of truth (usefulness in making sense) when it comes to thematic statements. A thematic interpretation is good just in case it makes sense of the artwork and bad if it does not, and there are degrees between bad and good thematic interpretations. There are better and worse interpretations and they differ according to how much they make sense of the artwork.

The most philosophical weight is carried by the expression 'making sense of'. What does it mean to say that a thematic interpretation makes sense of an artwork? This goes back to what a thematic interpretation is and what it does. A thematic interpretation seeks to understand, in an abstract way, what a work is about. By putting forth what a work is about, it makes sense of what the work recounts and how it does it. The crucial difference is between concrete and abstract, or the plot and how the plot is significant. In *Notes from Underground*, the reader needs to understand that the Underground Man feels a compulsion to stalk a certain officer as this is part of the plot. But the

significance of this episode lies in expressing something interesting about free will, which is one of the themes in the novel. In order to arrive at the conclusion that free will is indeed a theme, the reader must recognize a pattern in the novel, namely that multiple episodes, scenes, dialogues and the monologue of the narrator are about free will either directly, but more often, indirectly. This is how an interpreter can see a theme as an organizing principle, a principle that lies in the background for a large part of the work. Therefore, making sense of a work like *Notes from Underground* involves such a process of pattern recognition, of moving from concrete to abstract, from plot to significance.

The intentionalist will make the following normative claim: to come up with true interpretations, thematic interpreters should not make sense of an artwork without referring to the artist's intentions if the artist's intentions are successfully executed. As a consequence, in order to understand what a work is about, one has to know what its creator intended it to be about, and even if the thematic interpretation on offer is not intended by the creator, it has to be compatible with it. In other words, only those thematic interpretations are legitimate which refer to artists' intentions and which are compatible with them. But, if the standards of thematic interpretation are as I have described them above, this cannot be right. To recall, a good thematic interpretation is one that makes sense of the work. Looking at aesthetic criticism, it is often the case that interpreters make sense of the work in ways that are not compatible with the artist's intentions. The claim that they should not do this cannot be supported if the benchmark of thematic interpretation is making sense of the work. If an interpreter makes sense of the work in ways incompatible with the creator's intentions and also without being aware of or referring to the creator's intentions then the interpretation is good and the claim that she should not have done so is unwarranted. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that the only way to make sense of an artwork is by reference to the artist's intentions as that would be question-begging.

The obvious move that the intentionalist can make here is denying that I have given the standards of thematic interpretation correctly. True, an interpreter can make sense of a work without

recourse to or even going against the creator's intentions, but such a making sense is not 'good' at all. According to Robert Stecker (2003), the interpretive claims that can be truth-evaluated are ones that aim to identify what an artist intends to do with a work. There are other aims of interpretation, and pursuing those aims cannot lead to true or false interpretations but only to acceptable or unacceptable ones. As he says: 'Some may seek merely *a way* of making sense of a work, a way it can be taken, where this may or may not be something the artist could have intended' (p. 54). If an interpretation makes sense of the work but without reference to the artist's intentions, it is merely an acceptable interpretation. As I have indicated above, in the case of thematic interpretation, the criterion for truth and falsity are making sense. If on a thematic interpretation the work makes sense, then it is a true interpretation that makes true statements concerning what the work is about. It is also possibly acceptable but acceptability and truth are not mutually exclusive. Among the many interpretations, some take the artist's intentions into account, and they make sense of the work based on those. If they succeed, they are true and they can also be acceptable. Furthermore, I am not quite sure that Stecker's view about the multiple aims of interpretation applies here: as I see, all thematic interpretations aim to make sense of the work, some do it with reference to the artist's intentions, some do it without.

An important point here could be made by claiming that the intentions should not be conceived of as private mental items in the shadowy realm of the mind, but rather one should think about them in a neo-Wittgensteinian way as manifest in the works themselves.⁹⁶ In essence, this would mean that any making sense of the work would, by necessity, refer to intentions even if the reference is unconscious in some way and made solely on the basis of the encounter with the work itself.

Now I think that it is generally important to steer clear of the 'private mental item' picture and a Wittgensteinian view has a lot going for it in this respect. However, I would argue that the 'manifestness' of intentions in narrative artworks is difficult to establish. In contrast, intentions in many everyday situations are readily available: in traffic, the car in front of me starts angling to the side of

⁹⁶ See the neo-Wittgensteinian view in Carroll (2001, pp. pp. 157-180). For worries see Jerrold Levinson (1992, p. 234).

the road while signaling to turn. I do not need to telepathically reach into the mind of the driver in order to know what her intentions are. She intends to turn, and this intention is manifest in her actions. But to recall Section 2, the issue gets more complicated when it comes to different descriptions of actions and to products of human action or artifacts. In many cases, the intentions of an artifact's creator are not readily available by inspecting the artifact. Imagine a high-tech product that one has not encountered before: what it is and what it is for are not just manifest. Similarly, I do not see how a complex artistic narrative such as *Notes from Underground* would wear the intentions of Dostoevsky on its sleeve, so to speak. If it did, there would be no puzzling questions and issues about it, and critics would not argue about its interpretations. As George Dickie (2006) claims: 'On the neo-Wittgensteinian conception of intention, there should not be any puzzling cases of utterances' (p. 75).

A final point is required to distinguish my view properly from hypothetical intentionalism as one could worry that my view, in the end, collapses into hypothetical intentionalism. Thematic interpretation, as argued, makes sense of the work. It could be claimed that such making sense of the work is almost always something that is reasonable to hypothetically attribute as intended by the author. If free will, as theme in *Notes from Underground*, makes sense of the work, it is plausible to conclude that Dostoevsky would have wanted this to emerge as a theme from the work. I disagree with the hypothetical intentionalist on two counts: first, I think that there can be thematic interpretations of a work, making sense of the work, which are not plausible to hypothetically ascribe as something the author would have intended. To use an example of Huddleston (2016): Slavoj Žižek's interpretation of *The Sound of Music* as manifesting fascistic ideals makes sense of the work (to a degree), however, it is not something that can be ascribed hypothetically to the filmmakers. Second, there is a methodological difference. A hypothesis about a theme as an organizing element emerging from the work is not necessarily a hypothesis about what theme(s) an artist intended the work to

have.⁹⁷ If this is plausible, then even though a hypothesis might coincide with the theme that is ascribed to the work independently, in my view, it does not matter whether it does or not. After thematically interpreting the work, one can hypothesize this as something the author intended or should have intended, however, I do not see a reason for this step being necessary.

5. Functional Interpretation

As mentioned above, functional interpretation is about elements, parts and aspects of works of art. In functional interpretation, one attempts to understand certain why-questions. Why is a character like this? Why is a dialogue presented in the way it is presented? Why is the chronology mixed up at certain places? Why use an omniscient narrator? These questions all inquire about the roles these details in works play.⁹⁸ It is interesting to see the conclusion of Robert Stecker (2010) about the functional interpretation of a James Joyce narrative:

For example, we read in James Joyce's story, 'The Dead': 'He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of' (Schwarz 1994, 48). 'He' is the protagonist, Gabriel, and the woman is his wife, Gretta. There is no problem knowing the literal meaning of the sentence. We want to know its point: why it is put there? Are we to ask the same question as Gabriel, and is the answer more accessible to us than to him? Or are we to realize he is asking the wrong question at this moment, a fact that reveals an alienation on his part from the flesh and blood Gretta? The default assumption is that this

⁹⁷ I agree here with Trivedi (2015): work-meaning is sought independently of intentions, actual or hypothetical. According to Trivedi, after establishing a hypothesis about the work's meaning, one should ascribe this meaning as something the artist should have intended for the work to have. I disagree with Trivedi as I do not think this second step is required.

⁹⁸ Both Clark Zumbach (1984) and Carolyn Price (2003) have compelling accounts that rely on the notion of function, however, there is no scope here to go into the distinction between 'design function' and 'use function', which distinction I think is difficult to apply to parts of artworks.

is a hypothesis about Joyce's point (intention), and only if we can't make that assumption work do we look for alternative determinants of meaning (p. 155).

Here I endorse Trivedi's (2015) objection against Stecker:

Stecker is in danger of *conflating* the point or *function* of a bit or a passage in a *work's* overall economy with the *artist's* point or *intention*, even taking Joyce's greatness as an artist fully into account. Unless one is firmly wedded to actual intentionalism, it should be clear that these need not be the same or otherwise coincide, even if it may often happen in practice that they happily do so (p. 704).

But how should the notion of function be understood here? There is quite the debate in the philosophy of science, especially the philosophy of biology, about conceptualizing functions. It seems clear that things in the world can have functions without having human designers: hearts, livers, porcupine quills, chlorophyll in plants and so on. In a seminal article, Larry Wright (1973) argues that these 'natural functions' are less problematic than what he labels as 'conscious functions'. These latter are functions that artifacts or parts of artifacts possess. As Wright argues, if one is curious about the function of this or that, one has to look for the reason of its 'being there'. When it comes to artifacts, the reason is given by the conscious intent of the artifact's creator. This is needed in order to distinguish between function and accident: telephones do a lot of things, they take up space for example, but taking up space is not their function, their function is to foster communication, to put crudely. In order to make the distinction, Wright thinks we have to refer to the reason for the telephone 'being there', that is, being invented.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Robert Cummins (1975), for example, counters Wright's analysis in proposing that to understand functions, one has to explain the appropriate causal contribution that something makes in a certain system, which does not necessitate recourse to how something has come to do what it does. Thanks to Maria Kronfeldner for the pointers here.

From this discussion, it seems that artifact functions are intimately tied up with intentions.¹⁰⁰

To return to the main issue of the chapter, does functional interpretation then have to refer to intentions? I think a first step here is to distinguish between different types of functions in artworks. Not to offer an exhaustive list, I merely want to make the distinction between *theme-related* functions and *non-theme-related* functions. A theme-related function is a function that contributes in some way to the exploration of a theme. In contrast, think about a so-called ‘jump scare’ in a horror film. A jump scare is a scene when, after setting up tension, a sudden, scary incident occurs. Imagine the camera slowly moving towards a closed door at the end of a barely-lit hallway and getting to it, the door just flies open and the ghost appears in the dark room behind it with the appropriately shocking music and sound effects. Such a scene has the function of scaring the audience. In functionally interpreting the scene, one does better to refer to the intention of scaring the audience because the scene can trigger a different reaction: if I laugh about it (probably due to the failure of executing said intention), I cannot just argue that its function is to make the audiences laugh. Such a jump scare is a non-theme related function.

However, the episode of Gabriel seeing his wife on the stairs and asking of himself what she symbolizes has a theme-related function. It contributes to exploring the theme of a failed or failing marriage. To follow Stecker’s suggestions, the reader knows better than Gabriel that Gretta is a symbol of their alienation or perhaps the reader knows that Gretta is not a symbol at all and Gabriel deceives himself. To use a different example, what is the function of the so-called ‘Underground Man’ not revealing his name in *Notes from Underground*? Why is his name not revealed? This fact is of course foregrounded because of violating a core norm of storytelling – that the protagonist’s name is almost always known. This absence has a thematic function: as the Underground Man is a first-personal

¹⁰⁰ See a thorough examination of artifact functions, including intentionalist, evolutionist and causal role theories of function in Houkes and Vermaas (2010). They mention an interesting case in their section on how engineers and structural analysts ascribe functions in which reference the most significant intentionalist component (the ‘use plan’) is omitted.

narrator, his not sharing his name characterizes the protagonist. Moreover, it also contributes to a certain universalization of the character as he is of course himself but he is also supposed to stand for the nameless masses of human beings grappling with issues in modern societies. These are examples of theme-related functions.¹⁰¹

Thus, there are functions that need to be understood with reference to intentions. However, theme-related functions do not. This is because their functions, the ways they advance or contribute to the theme of the work, depends on what the theme of the work is. If the theme of *Notes from Underground* were not known, it would be quite difficult to say what the function of not revealing the protagonist-narrator's name is. In the case of theme-related functions, one has to know what the theme is in order to understand how certain details function in contributing to developing the theme. What this means is that just as narrative interpretation is a precondition for thematic interpretation (the interpreter has to know what the story is before knowing what it is about in a thematic sense), thematic interpretation is a precondition for the functional interpretation of theme-related functions. And since thematic interpretation need not be carried out with reference to intentions, functional interpretation also need not be so. I have not consulted Dostoevsky's intentions in coming up with the masses theme, nor is this manifest in any straightforward way in the work. But coming up with such a theme, I can now understand a detail such as the namelessness of the protagonist-narrator also without recourse to Dostoevsky's intentions. The interpretation of theme-related functions need not refer to intentions.

A worry might again arise because of the dependency-relations between different interpretive projects. As I argue, theme-related functions need not be interpreted based on intentions because themes are not interpreted based on intentions. However, I have made the argument above about

¹⁰¹ As it is apparent in Lamarque's (2002) work, thematic and functional interpretations are intimately connected. E.g., 'Standardly, the focus of interest at the thematic level rests not in the bare statement of a theme but in the manner in which the theme is elicited and supported through interpretation. The unifying "vision" of a literary work resides not in thematic summary but in the complex manner in which elements of the work—character, incident, symbol, verbal structure—are subsumable under themes of general interest' (pp. 297-298).

narrative interpretation and thematic interpretation that seems to contradict this. I have argued that the dependence between narrative interpretation and thematic interpretation does not entail that thematic interpretation is to be carried out intentionalistically. How could now I state that non-intentionalism carries over from thematic interpretation to the interpretation of theme-related functions?

The answer is that non-intentionalism is broader than (and encompasses) interpretations based on intentions. Following narrative interpretation, I have argued that non-intended themes should be accepted as long as they make sense of the work. And while thematic interpretation depends on narrative interpretation in the sense that one has to know what the story is in order to understand what themes a story develops, knowing what the story is does not uniquely determine what themes the story develops. So intentionalism in narrative interpretation does not carry over to thematic interpretation: non-intended themes can be correct and acceptable as long as they make sense of the work. Similarly, knowing the theme of the story is required before knowing how certain details function in developing the theme. However, as non-intentionalism of thematic interpretation is already established, there can be themes of the work not intended by the artist, and how the details contribute to developing the unintended theme cannot be interpreted with reference to artistic intentions. If the theme is one that is reasonable to consider as intended, then some details can be understood functioning as intended. However, this is just a subset of correct interpretations.

6. Conclusion

Above, I have argued that interpretation is a complex process with many types and numerous facets, which cannot all be described as concerned with ‘the meaning’ of an artwork. This has interesting consequences for the intentionalism debate, the debate about whether intentions are relevant for, constrain or determine ‘the meaning’ of an artwork. Focusing on narrative works of art, I have first

distinguished between three types of interpretive projects. Narrative interpretation is about establishing what goes on in a given story. Thematic interpretation is about what themes a narrative explores. Functional interpretation is about the roles various bits and pieces of narratives play. In general, there is temporal and logical priority here: narrative needs to be carried out before thematic and thematic needs to be done before at least some functional interpretation.

I have indicated that while there is an intimate connection between intentions and understanding actions, this picture gets quite complicated when it comes to differently described actions or to products of actions. I have then claimed that it is plausible that intentions play a central role for narrative interpretation for reasons of story- and artwork-identity. But then I have argued that thematic interpretation need not refer to intentions because the benchmark of thematic interpretations is making sense of the work. If an interpretation goes against or discards the artist's intention, it can still be a good thematic interpretation as long as it makes sense of the work. My point should be intuitively clear: interpreters need to know what the – successfully intended – story is in order to thematically interpret the story, however, thematically interpreting the story is free from the constraints of intentionalism. In the same events, understanding theme-related functions need also not refer to intentions. Since to know how a detail in a work contributes to a theme, one has to know the theme, and since the theme is not necessarily the intended theme, the theme-related functions of details can be understood without reference to intentions. Interpretation is a complex, multi-layered enterprise, and even though acting on and understanding intentions are pillars of everyday human activity, the artifact-nature of narratives, embedded in the practice of art, complicates the intention-interpretation connection.

VI. MIND: NARRATIVE AND IDENTITY

1. Introduction

‘Life is not what one lived, but what one remembers and how one remembers it in order to recount it’ (Márquez 2003). Márquez’s epigraph to his autobiography, *Living to Tell the Tale*, sums up an important trend of thinking about one’s life, memory and experiences. One’s life is not, as commonsense would have it, one’s personal history and trajectory, but instead, it is directed memory: events and experiences recalled to tell a story. This is of course all too extreme. It would be strange or maybe even a category error to say that one’s life is identified with memories that have a story-structure. Still, the prevalence of storytelling in various areas of human activity is so apparent that it would also be perplexing if who one is had nothing to do with the stories one tells about oneself.

In philosophy, most views about who one is and whether one is who one used to be, strive for scientific rigor and clarity, and there is a lively contemporary debate – with historical roots – about certain problems concerning ‘personal identity’. The mainstream takes a ‘third-personal’ instead of ‘first-personal’ approach to personal identity, meaning that they do not regard a person own perspective to be constitutive for identity. However, numerous philosophers have sought to establish theories of personal identity that take storytelling and first-personal perspective seriously. These are known as ‘narrative identity’ views.¹⁰² In this chapter, I concede that everyday storytelling is of no use to metaphysicians of personal identity. However, I also claim that this does not diminish the value of stories that people tell about themselves. They do not establish one’s persistence through time, but

¹⁰² There is a diverse group of philosophers who are broadly sympathetic to what Márquez expresses above. For instance, David DeGrazia (2005) argues that ‘[e]ach of us has a mental autobiography, an extremely detailed story of what we have experienced and done and a perhaps less detailed account of what we intend, or at least hope, to experience and do’ (p. 80). And Valerie Gray Hardcastle (2008) claims that ‘we are driven to tell narratives about ourselves. This is something we cannot help but do, for it is the only way we have of understanding ourselves, our world, and the others in it’ (p. 48).

they do communicate a picture of who one is and who one takes oneself to be. Narrative is a type of discourse that easily and effectively lends itself to this. Other types of discourse, such as argument, description, dialogue or poetry, do not. This does not mean that other types of discourse cannot in principle communicate who one is, but they are not as well-suited as narratives to do so.

The main questions of personal identity are these: 1) what are we as human beings? 2) Who are we as particular human persons? 3) Are we the same, in some sense, as we were some time ago and will we be the same in the future? I think that most of the answers to these questions are metaphysical 1) is about the type of beings that we are, 2) is about the metaphysical characterization of particular individuals and 3) is about the metaphysical relation of persistence that holds or does not hold. An extreme narrativist view would hold that 1) human beings are storytelling animals, that is, the practice of storytelling is a necessary condition of being a human being. 2) That who we are, the characteristics we have, is constituted by the stories we tell. And 3) that one is the same person through time because there is a narrative that binds one to one's past states. Now I think that such a metaphysical and extreme narrative view is mistaken, and I will present some reasons throughout the chapter. I will, however, defend a metaphysically deflationary view of narrative identity that locates the importance of narrative in the area it belongs: in communication. My narrative view does not answer to any of the three questions above, it does not tell us what human beings are or what characteristics does a particular human person have or what makes a human being at a time the same as at another time. So the main question of this chapter is: what is the role of narrative in connection to personal identity? The answer is: it does not have a metaphysical role in answering the questions enumerated above, rather, its role is communicative in a sense to be explained below.

In Section 2, I briefly describe the prominent contemporary views about personal identity: biological, psychological and narrative theories. My emphasis is on narrative views. In Section 3, I present my argument for the conclusion that storytelling about oneself does not matter for metaphysical issues concerning personal identity. In Section 4 then, I outline what I label the

‘Communicative View of Narrative Identity’. The view locates the value of narratives about oneself in the communicative act of sharing who one takes oneself to be. Section 5 presents a strong case for why narratives matter on the view outlined: besides communicating, they also provide access to and give resources for shaping who one is. Finally, before the conclusion, in Section 6, I address the differences of everyday narratives and narrative art in this respect.

2. Personal Identity and Narrative

Philosophers are mostly occupied by the issue of diachronic identity, that is, identity through time, and the extended discussion has led to precise formulations: what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for a person at one time to be the same as a person at another time? In attempting to come up with an answer, there are various established positions.¹⁰³ Biologically-oriented theories put the emphasis on biological facts and survival while psychological theories require connections between mental states. Narrative theories are strange beasts as they argue that persistence necessitates a story that binds one’s past, present and future together. Let me take each of these in turn.

One of the most prominent biological views is Eric Olson’s (1997, 2007) animalism. For Olson, personhood is not a substance-concept but a phase sortal. Briefly, substance concepts refer to metaphysically real entities that pass through phases during their existence. These phases are referred to by phase sortals. Being a person is merely a phase in an organism’s life, and Olson argues that the survival of what one is depends upon the continuity of one’s biological life and not the continuity of one’s personhood. Therefore it is not *personal* identity that matters. Losing one’s claim to personhood

¹⁰³ One distinction that I am not concerned with here is between ‘simple’ and ‘complex’ views. The former are simple because they take personal identity to be a brute fact that cannot be informatively or reductively analyzed. Lowe (1996), for instance, describes selves and persons as mereologically simple psychological substances and argues that any informative criterion would have to refer to the parts of which it is a criterion for. In what follows I describe complex positions.

is similar to losing one's job in this respect – the metaphysical entity survives both. In Olson's view, if the vital functions of an organism are intact, then it remains the same organism as it has been before. This view is in direct contrast with one that would state that we are fundamentally people or persons: our metaphysical nature is that of human animals.

A different strand of thinking takes psychology to be essential for personal identity, and especially for personal identity through time. Most contemporary advocates of the psychological approach are four-dimensionalists: generally, they theorize that time is analogous to a dimension of space and that things do not endure the passing of time. Instead, things 'perdure' by having 'temporal parts' (analogous to spatial parts) that are connected by relations conceived differently by different philosophers.¹⁰⁴ Psychological theories aim to provide impersonal descriptions of metaphysical relations between temporally remote person-stages or, on three-dimensionalist views, throughout the life of the temporally extended and enduring person. Developing John Locke's view, in which consciousness takes center stage, most psychological theorists argue for a connection between mental states. A connection between mental states ensures personal survival, ensures that the person in the future is identical with one in the past and present. According to David Lewis (1976/2003), mental continuity and connectedness accounts for personal identity through time. For Derek Parfit (1984/2003), famously, psychological connections are more important than identity, or more extremely, identity is not what matters in survival: the relation of psychological continuity contains everything that is required.¹⁰⁵

Narrative views have become popular because of a certain dissatisfaction with the theories briefly mentioned above. Identity, especially the 'who am I?' question, seems to be important for the person whose identity is at stake. Similarly, the 'am I the same as before?', and various issues about personal change are also a crucial matters for many. On core biological and psychological views, what the individual thinks, feels and experiences about him or herself do not count for anything. In other

¹⁰⁴ I am not focusing on the issue of four-dimensionalism. See further e.g., Sider (1997).

¹⁰⁵ See also Perry (1976), Shoemaker (1975) and Nozick (1981/2003).

words, the ways one relates to being who one is or to being the same person as before are discarded by the most prominent theories of personal identity. For proponents of narrative views, this is problematic. In what follows, I consider narrative to be a story told, where a story contains some events, and a narrative tells a story by representing what the events that make the story up (see further in Section 4).

Narrative identity is appealing, so much so, that it crosses borders between analytic and continental philosophy. Charles Taylor (1989) and Paul Ricoeur (1992) are early theorists of the view as are Alasdair MacIntyre (1981/2007), Daniel C. Dennett (1992) and Marya Schechtman (1996). The debate is lively in these days as well, and philosophers have offered various versions in which narrative has great importance.¹⁰⁶ There is a good deal of variation between different theorists, and there is no unified narrative view to be found. There are two prominent types of narrative theories. I label one of the ‘action-oriented narrative theory’¹⁰⁷ and the other ‘self-oriented narrative theory’,¹⁰⁸ but these are not clearly demarcated.

The action-oriented group considers narrative to be important because it makes human acts intelligible and contributes to personal identity through doing so. For instance, MacIntyre (1981/2007) claims that ‘in successfully identifying and understanding what someone else is doing we always move towards placing a particular episode in the context of a set of narrative histories, histories both of the individuals concerned and of the settings in which they act and suffer’ (p. 211). But action-oriented views have to account for the intelligibility that narratives bring to action and for how this exactly contributes to identity. Intelligibility, for MacIntyre, comes from the context that the narrative sets up, in which actions make sense in relation to the past and the future, and narratives contribute to identity because ‘a narrative structure exists in the pattern of my actions themselves’ (Rudd 2012, p. 182). It is

¹⁰⁶ See also in psychology Bruner (2003), McAdams (2003) and Nelson (2003).

¹⁰⁷ Besides MacIntyre, see for instance, Daniel Hutto (2007) and Anthony Rudd (2012).

¹⁰⁸ See David Velleman (2006), Valeria Gray Hardcastle (2008), David DeGrazia (2005), Schroer & Schroer (2014). Recently, Schechtman (2014) modified her ‘narrative self-constitution’ view and now she accommodates narratives told by others as well to be constitutive for one’s identity.

not the case that one retrospectively understands actions by forcing them into a narrative structure, according to both MacIntyre and Rudd, human beings live out and enact these narratives that make sense of their actions.¹⁰⁹

The self-oriented theory is different in that it considers the self to be in some way constituted by the narratives one 'tells' about oneself. To quote Schechtman (1996): 'individuals constitute themselves as persons by coming to think of themselves as persisting subjects who have had experience in the past and will continue to have experience in the future, taking certain experiences as theirs. Some, but not all, individuals weave stories of their lives, and it is their doing so which makes them persons' (p. 94). Schechtman's is a prime example of a self-oriented narrative view, in which a narrative is a structure that gives a life unity and this is the unity that is essential for constituting one's self as persisting.¹¹⁰ One problem that plagues this approach is the question about the nature of narratives: do they need to be told and if so, how? Now if telling is understood as a conscious, deliberate and explicit activity, it is going to be too demanding for what the narrative theorists want to achieve: it is implausible to think that people constantly recite stories of their lives and experiences. However, the narrative theorist is between a rock and a hard place because if telling is not a conscious effort of recital in some form, then it is hard to avoid the dilution of the notion of narrative (Schechtman 2014, p. 101).¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ It is important to note that Hutto's (2007) view, while it is about narratives making actions intelligible, is not committed to grand claims about living in narratives.

¹¹⁰ There is no scope here to describe the intricacies of Schechtman's evolving view, see her (2003, 2007, 2011, 2014).

¹¹¹ See the criticism stated in Zahavi (2014, pp. 58-60). For another issue that concerns a global unifying narrative and local narratives, see Velleman (2006, pp. 222-223).

3. Narrative: Persistence and Characterization

Throughout the years, there have been some fierce critiques of narrative identity theories. Galen Strawson's (2004) 'Against Narrativity' is likely the most well-known example. In the article, Strawson argues against both what he calls the 'psychological Narrativity thesis' and the 'ethical Narrativity thesis'. The former claims that human beings experience their lives in the form of a story and the latter states that it is good or valuable to experience one's life as such. Either of these can be held separately, but for Strawson, holding them together is a prevalent position in the philosophy of personal identity. As Strawson's argument goes, the overemphasis on narrative as a valuable form of experiencing one's life leads to an impoverished view about how life can be experienced. Strawson champions 'Episodicity', a mode of experiencing one's life without experiencing one's self as persisting: 'I have absolutely no sense of my life as a narrative with form, or indeed as a narrative without form. Absolutely none. Nor do I have any great or special interest in my past. Nor do I have a great deal of concern for my future' (p. 433). This is certainly strange attitude, but it cannot just be discarded as mistaken or without value.¹¹²

Peter Lamarque (2014, pp. 67-82), broadly in agreement with Strawson, pushes another line of critique. According to Lamarque, narratives are uninteresting in and of themselves. They become interesting as works of art, for instance, when they are written by literary authors within the practice of literature. The paradigmatically, although not exclusively, fictional narratives of literature provide the impetus for thinking that narratives in general, narratives about real lives told by real people, are intriguing and important. But there are essential differences between real-life and literary narratives, and it is a mistake to project either one onto the other. Projecting real-life narratives onto literary ones results in the impoverishment of literature and our understanding of it, while the reverse creates a

¹¹² See the discussion of Schechtman (2007, 2011) and Strawson (2007).

dangerous practice in which real lives are fictionalized.¹¹³ I return to the difference between real-life and literary narratives somewhat later.

In any case, despite the attractiveness of both action-oriented and self-oriented narrative theories, there are numerous issues that seem difficult to solve and quite strong critical points that narrative theorists have to take into account. But let me return for a moment to the traditional question of personal identity through time, that is, what makes a person at a time identical to a person at another time. This is a straightforwardly metaphysical question, which can be put in the following way: what are the persistence conditions of a certain type of entity that is called a 'person'? The issue is complicated. As it was indicated above, for Olson's animalism, human beings are a kind of organism, and this kind of organism has persistence conditions similar to other kinds. For Olson, it would be a mistake to look for persistence conditions of persons just as much as it would be to look for conditions for other phase sortals like 'child', 'student', 'wife', 'lawyer' and so on. In essence, human beings are organisms. And it seems to support Olson's view that there is historical, social and cultural variation about who counts as a person. Are fetuses persons? Or people in persistent vegetative states? Late stage Alzheimer's? It would be wrong on multiple grounds to say they are not human beings, but do they have the capacities for personhood if personhood requires certain capacities such as responsibility for one's past actions?

Instead of getting tangled up in these questions, what I would like to highlight is the following: most problems concerning narrative in relation to personal identity stem from the fact that narrative is a metaphysically dubious thing. First of all, narrative is not a natural kind term. Natural kind terms such as 'water', 'gold', 'organism', 'black hole', 'the speed of light' denote mind-independent phenomena that structure the world independently of human beings. Narratives, as they are produced by human beings, are not like these. It might be objected that a phenomenon, such as narrative, need not be a natural kind in order to fulfill an informative purpose in conditions of personal persistence.

¹¹³ See also Peter Goldie's (2012) view on fictionalizing tendencies.

And this seems right, however, the point that I am making is that ‘organism’ in animalism or ‘causal psychological continuity’ in psychological views are more easily accepted as notions in conditions of personal persistence because they are not socio-cultural products of human beings.¹¹⁴

Secondly, as many have argued, narrativity, to use this term, comes in degrees.¹¹⁵ This means that representations can contain more or less narrativity. Naturally, there are representations that are paradigmatically narrative and ones that are non-narrative, but there are also many instances in-between. And again, a lot of concepts come in degrees, maybe most of them do, however, when it comes to theorizing personal identity, narrative is dubious because of the vague statues of the in-between cases. It would be really difficult to provide a theory of narrative identity that would specify the degree of narrativity required for personal persistence through time.

In these considerations, I am sympathetic to Peter Goldie’s and Melvin Chen’s recent arguments. As Goldie (2012) claims: ‘one’s narrative sense of self as I conceive it really has no direct connection with the metaphysical question of one’s identity over time’ (p. 117). For Goldie, human beings paradigmatically think about the past and the future in terms of narrative, but this should not be taken to entail that they have ‘narrative selves’ metaphysically speaking or that they constitute their identity and persistence through this. Similarly Chen (2015) argues that the narrative theory should not be taken to be, as it often is, a metaphysical thesis where ‘narrative might be thought to play some kind of a metaphysical role in constituting and providing the conditions of re-identification for individuals across time’ (p. 252). Rather, it is better understood as what he calls a semantic thesis: ‘the narrative theory of the self *sensu lato* [in the broad sense] plays a semantic role in securing the intelligibility of events, actions and/or episodes and (possibly) in investing life as a whole with value

¹¹⁴ Defenders of narrative theories, such as Carr, MacIntyre and Rudd often claim that narratives are not conscious constructs of human beings, but rather inherent, as it were, in the way human beings experience time and action. To me, this seems to be overstating the case for narrative because of using a diluted and vague conception of what narrative is.

¹¹⁵ See Chapter I. Also Ryan (2007), Abbott (2009), Nanay (2009), Currie (2010).

and significance' (Ibid.).¹¹⁶ Chen makes some points about the implausibility of the narrative theory as a metaphysical thesis, and then he goes on to carve out his own semantic position, which is different – albeit compatible – with the one I offer in the next section.

In any case, my argument against considering narrative identity as a metaphysical thesis follows from the remarks above.¹¹⁷ The notion of narrative cannot carry the metaphysical weight its proponents want it to. First, in order for narrative to contribute to personal persistence, the concept of a person has to be tied to narrative, which is problematic. There are a lot of human beings that deserve to be called 'persons', but they do not tell stories about themselves. They do not have to be extreme cases, it is enough if like Strawson, taking his report at face value, they have no sense of narrative continuity in experience and in life.

Secondly, whether a person persists does not seem to be tied to narrative capacities. After Derek Parfit's (1984/2003) 19th century young Socialist, Schechtman (2003) comes up with an interesting example about a 'carefree and wild young woman' turning into a 'responsible matron' (pp. 240-241). What Schechtman means to show is that there are cases when, *in some sense*, a person ceases to exist or becomes a different person just because of radical (but sometimes gradual) changes in personality. And colloquially, it is often said of someone that he or she 'is not the same person anymore': 'He has not been himself since he finished his tour in Afghanistan' or 'She has just not been the same since the attack'. Now narrative theorists, like Schechtman, have a lot to contribute to these cases, however, it seems clear that 'not being the same person' is used quite loosely and vaguely in these instances. In saying that 'she is not the same person anymore', the only reason that one can use

¹¹⁶ Schechtman (2011) describes some narrative approaches as 'hermeneutical' and Shaun Gallagher (2014) also puts the emphasis on self-interpretation: 'The claim that we find in Ricoeur, MacIntyre, and other hermeneutical thinkers such as Charles Taylor, is that persons are self-interpreting beings and that such self-interpretation in the form of narrative is at least in part constitutive of the self' (p. 406).

¹¹⁷ In a recent article, Lynne Rudder Baker (2016) argues that her metaphysical view is compatible with a type of narrative approach, moreover, that narrative views cannot stand on their own, they presuppose a metaphysical view about personal identity. In turn, a narrative view can supplement a metaphysical one, such as Baker's, providing for psychological unity and qualitative identity: what it is like to be a particular person. These latter fall outside of a metaphysical theory's scope.

the 'she' pronoun intelligibly is because, *in some other sense*, she is definitely the same person. When Jack comes back from the war, Jack-before-the-war and Jack-after-the-war have a more intimate connection than Jack-before-the-war and James-after-the-war. I return to the issue in Section 5.

Thirdly, narrative as a notion is just not fit to play the metaphysical role that is required for theories of personal persistence. This is painfully obvious in how the proponents of narrative identity conceive of the narratives that actually contribute to or constitute persistence: they are implicit, they structure experience, they are not fully conscious, they do not have to be articulated and so on. It is difficult to see if there is any such phenomenon that is picked out by these designations, let alone whether it deserves to be called 'narrative'.¹¹⁸ All in all, metaphysical issues about persons, human beings and selves are not very hospitable to the conception of narrative.

To recall, questions about personal identity are largely metaphysical. For Schechtman (1996), there are two important questions: 1) the characterization question: 'which actions, experiences, beliefs, values, desires, character traits, and so on [...] are to be attributed to a given person' (p. 73). This is distinct from 2) the 'reidentification question': 'what makes a person at time t_2 the same person as a person at time t_1 ' (p. 2).¹¹⁹ It might seem that my criticisms concerning narrative above only apply to the reidentification question, when in fact, Schechtman focuses on characterization and argues that her narrative self-constitution view has an answer to that.

And this is a fair point, and in this case, there should be different critical treatment even though there are problems above that do apply to narrative answers to the characterization question as well (the first issue about some persons not narrating and the third one about the notion of narrative and narrativity). Before going into the critical points, it has to be mentioned that Schechtman provides two

¹¹⁸ Schechtman (2011) is acutely aware of this problem: 'Much of our self-narration is expressed in the way we think, the way we live, and the kinds of explanation we feel called upon to give to others. Beyond this, however, it is hard to say anything much more specific about how self-narration is supposed to work' (p. 407).

¹¹⁹ Although, for Schechtman, there is a link between the questions. As one is actively involved in narrative self-constitution, one appropriates past actions and experiences, which are characteristic, and so, constitutes oneself as persisting.

constraints on narrative self-constitution: i) the articulation constraint, which requires that the self-constituting narratives, even if they are never expressed, can be articulated. And ii) the reality constraint is supposed to exclude delusions or other extremes of distortive or false narratives one can in cases tell about oneself. It requires that self-constituting narratives conform to reality, by and large.

Still I do not think that narrative is helpful for the characterization question either. It is quite true that many actions, experiences, beliefs, values, desires and traits can be found out from narratives that persons tell about themselves, however, this does not mean that these are the ones and the only ones to be attributed to the person in question. There are characteristics that can be attributed to persons without them figuring in their narratives, and also, there are characteristics figuring in narratives which should not be attributed to persons in spite of this. Being a part of a person's narrative understanding about her experiences or life is neither necessary nor sufficient for a characteristic to be attributed to the person.

First then, it is not necessary. I would hazard that most human beings have characteristics that they do not think of themselves as having, characteristics that do not influence the narratives that are supposed to structure lives and experiences. I do not want to get into the intricacies of self-knowledge, but it seems quite safe to say that it is limited and perspectival for human beings. Human beings might know themselves better than others know them, however, they do not know themselves perfectly and objectively. If that is so, it is quite probable that human beings lack knowledge about some of their characteristics, and they know some of their characteristics differently than others do, and so, these can reasonably be attributed to them, but they are not self-attributed by self-constituting narratives.

Secondly, attributing a characteristic to oneself in a self-constituting narrative is also not sufficient. This thesis follows from considerations about self-knowledge as well. Self-knowledge about characteristics might not only be lacking but it also might be wrong. For instance, there are empirical studies to show that there are widespread cognitive biases. One such studied bias is the 'above-average effect' or 'illusory superiority', and the results indicate that people see themselves more

favorably than other see them, and they tend to think of themselves as having positive attributes more than the average person (Brown 1986). This means that one might see oneself as say braver than one actually is or braver than the average person, influencing the ways in which narratives structure one's life and experience. But such courage should still not be attributed to oneself, hence the insufficiency.

Now the question then is, does this violate the reality constraint? Schechtman could say that if a characteristic is attributed to a person in a narrative that is subject to the 'above-average effect', then her reality constraint is not observed, therefore, it is not a self-constituting narrative. So, if not necessary, at least being part of such constrained narratives is sufficient. Taking into consideration what the reality constraint says, this reply would not work. The reality constraint requires narratives to 'fundamentally cohere with reality' (Schechtman 1996, p. 114) or that 'a person's narrative conform to what we are generally accepted to know about the basic character of reality and about the nature of persons' (Schechtman 2007, p. 163). Described like this, the reality constraint is too weak to exclude cases such as the one about courage above, cases that are not about fundamental coherence to or the basic character of reality but subtly biased misrepresentations of oneself. And so, I still do not think that narrative self-constitution is sufficient.

4. The Communicative View of Narrative Identity

Above, it might have seemed that I am strongly opposed to narrative theories of identity, but this is not the case. I do think that the stories people tell matter deeply for who they are, but I do not think that this is a metaphysical issue. As mentioned above, Chen (2015) opts for a semantic thesis of 'the narrative theory of the self', where narrative contribute to the sense of the self by making experiences, events and actions intelligible. This is definitely one way to rescue the importance of narratives, and it develops the sensible suggestions in MacIntyre and others, but I propose a different one. My thesis is neither metaphysical, nor semantic, but communicative.

I think that Schechtman's account is valuable and useful in the following way.¹²⁰ Above I have argued that the narratives people produce do not tell us which characteristics should be attributed to them in a metaphysical sense. But they are still informative on two counts: 1) the characteristics people intend to communicate as having and 2) the characteristics that they unintentionally communicate as having. Both depend upon the interpretation of the narratives: 1) on the intentions, on what people want to project about themselves, and 2) on what the narratives project about someone besides what is intended. This is what I call 'The Communicative View of Narrative Identity' ('Communicative View' henceforth). I think it is quite clear that it sidesteps some of the problems that plague metaphysical narrative theories, but let me get into the details, the advantages and the relevant issues.

To begin with, in producing a narrative, one communicates not only what one intends but also other things about oneself. In a recent article, Paul A. Taylor (2014) has argued that in interpreting a literary work, there are two types of meaning that one can target, and these types of meaning are picked out by Grice's (1957) natural and non-natural distinction: in 'those spots mean measles', the use of meaning is natural ('non-cognitive') while in 'that sign means cars cannot turn right', meaning is non-natural (communicative or conventional). It is beyond my scope to go into the details but as Taylor (2014) says:

Our actions invariably reveal things about ourselves, whether we intend them to or not, and the kind of expressiveness I am singling out here is of the kind where we do not: the writer does something in a certain way, describes something using a particular choice of words, let us say, and in so doing reveals some aspect of his or her inner life without intending this, and in some cases without being aware of it (p. 383).

While non-natural meaning is what an author intentionally aims to convey in writing a particular work, natural meaning is what an author conveys 'directly' about her mental states, which are expressed in

¹²⁰ Not to mention Schechtman's (2014) recent emphasis on the overall structure and unity of a person's life, persons as 'inherently diachronic entities' (p. 102) and her defense of the 'person life view'.

the work. Now I think that there are serious issues here when it comes to art and literature, but putting those to the side for the time being, this account works perfectly well with everyday narratives. It also corresponds to the distinction of 1) and 2) above: if a person produces a story, it can be interpreted with any eye to non-natural meaning, that is, to the characteristics they intend to attribute to themselves, but also with attention to natural meaning, that is, to what they reveal or express about themselves without intending to just by the action of producing the narrative they produce. Now, these can be harmonious or discrepant: with a narrative, people can intend to communicate that they are wise and express wisdom, or in another case, despite their intentions, they can also reveal that they are foolish. This is the essence of the Communicative View.

Going on, the Communicative View is clearly not metaphysical, but it is also not semantic (see again Chen 2015). Since it is not metaphysical, it does not have to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for attributing characteristics to persons. Being aware of problems with self-knowledge, it can accommodate cognitive biases and other misrepresentations. If someone comes up with a story in which there are no deep distortions of reality just a few exaggerations about one's courageous character, the Communicative View states that 1) the person intends to project of themselves that they are courageous and 2) they might also project a 'trying-too-hard' attitude unintentionally. Both of these communicate about the person, about who the person takes herself to be and who she comes off as being. So the Communicative View does not posit metaphysical entities such as the 'narrative self' or deal with relations such as 'persistence'. I agree with Zahavi's (2014) critical remark:

I would oppose the exclusivity claim, that is, the claim that *the* self is a narratively constructed entity and that every access to oneself and to the selves of others is mediated by narratives. I consequently don't think the narrative approach (or any other normatively oriented approach to selfhood) can stand alone. Whereas narratives might be important tools for self-reflection, for making sense of ourselves, we shouldn't overlook the role of passivity and facticity. Who I am isn't exclusively a question of how I understand myself and how this is expressed in the

story I tell about myself. It is also a question of who I am quite independently of what I decide (p. 60).

What about making actions, experiences and events intelligible? I basically think that the semantic theory is correct: people embed actions, experiences and events into stories in order to make sense of them. I want to highlight the fact that there are many ways to make sense of actions, experiences and events, and producing a narrative about them is only one. Moreover, there are numerous narratives that can be produced to make the same action or event intelligible. Making sense of something by producing a particular narrative is a *choice*, involves numerous choices about what to tell and how to do so, and it is done for certain reasons and purposes. In my view, it is a communicative act. The biggest issue the semantic theorist faces is having to argue why narrative is such a privileged mode of making sense of actions, events and experiences. What is it that makes narrative such a good tool for playing the semantic role it needs to play? In order to answer this, one has to get quite clear on what narrative is because the answer to what narrative is will reveal the answer why narrative is effective in making actions, events and experiences intelligible.

The Communicative View has the advantage over action-oriented and self-oriented narrative theories in that it can operate with a worked-out conception of narrative. According to Greg Currie's (2010) definition, narratives are intentional-communicative artifacts. They are intentionally produced representations for communicative purposes, 'distinguished from other representations by what they represent: sustained temporal-causal relations between particulars, especially agents' (p. 27). Taking such a definition on board prevents one from having to enter the shadowy realm of 'implicit narratives' and 'unconscious narratives'. On the Communicative View, the narratives that people intentionally produce communicate various things about them intentionally and unintentionally by representing 'temporal-causal relations between particulars'. And this also helps in avoiding the problem concerning the degrees of narrative or narrativity: since narratives are intentionally produced representations, there is no need to decide how much narrativity a representation has to possess in order to

communicate about someone because all such communication, no matter how low or high in narrativity, does so.

It might seem that the Communicative View requires all narratives to be essentially verbal, but that is not the case. All manners of representation are available to someone who intends to produce a narrative, but typically, everyday storytelling and stories people tell about themselves are in language. A tricky issue is whether it is feasible on the Communicative View that there is such a thing as ‘narrative thinking’ as Peter Goldie (2012) would have it. It is quite plausible that people can make sense of actions, events and experiences by thinking them through in a story-like way and without producing anything that would be available for others to interpret. And if this is so, it is difficult to see what this would amount to on the Communicative View. But, notice how Goldie argues: ‘Narrative thinking involves not text or discourse, but another kind of representation: thoughts’ (p. 3). Also, narrative thinking is ‘*narratable, communicable*, but need not be publicly narrated or communicated to another person’ (p. 4). I think that there is nothing in the Communicative View that would make such a use of narrative unacceptable as it is related to action, intention and so on. Goldie’s notion is different from ‘implicit narrative’ because, as he says, ‘thinking through a narrative, and narrating a narrative publicly, are kinds of action, done for reasons, and an account of these reasons can explain why someone thought through or related this particular narrative at this particular time in this particular way’ (p. 150). True, in thinking narratively, one does not communicate about oneself to anyone, but they still think in a way that, if it could be inspected, it would communicate who they take themselves to be.

Narrative is an especially well-suited form of discourse to communicate who one takes oneself to be, but this does not imply the extreme claim that all human beings having to narrate in order to possess personal identity. As mentioned, the Communicative View is not a metaphysical thesis. Still, the tendency to narrate is widespread, and to show that narrative is well-suited for communicating about oneself, it is useful to bring into discussion Currie’s (2010) notion of a ‘framework’: ‘a framework

is a preferred set of cognitive, evaluative, and emotional responses to the story' (p. 86). A narrative represents things that happen, people's actions and events that occur. In doing so, the way of representation, the 'how' of telling shapes and influences what is represented. This way of representation, this 'how' is referred to as 'framework' by Currie. It is important to note that the framework itself is not represented, it does not typically come as a set of explicit instructions, but it is communicated by being '*expressed* in the process of representing the story' (Ibid.). For the Communicative View, this indicates that a narrative communicates not just what it represents but also how the representation is framed. In telling a story about some episodes of one's life, one communicates not only the episodes but also how one would like the audience to respond, the preferred set of responses. What the preferred set of responses is communicates intentionally about who one takes oneself to be and also perhaps unintentionally certain things about oneself. Other types of discourse are not so effective at communicating in this way. Think about an argument. While it is quite clear that an argument can also reveal certain things about the one who is making it, it is not a type of discourse that can smoothly communicate who one takes oneself to be, and also, it is *ceteris paribus* more difficult to infer characteristics of a person from an argument than from a narrative.

Another advantage of the Communicative View is that it need not be restricted to narratives that people produce about themselves, their pasts, lives or experiences, and this further underlines how well-suited narrative is for communicating about oneself. The psychologist, Michael Bamberg (2005) argues in the following way:

narratives, irrespective of whether they deal with one's life or an episode or event in the life of someone else, always *reveal* the speaker's identity. The narrative point-of-view from where the characters are ordered in the story world gives away—and most often is meant to give away—the point-of-view from where the speaker represents him- / herself. By offering and telling a narrative, the speaker lodges a claim for him / herself in terms of who he / she is (p. 223).

It seems quite clear that this resonates with the way I have utilized Currie's notion of 'framework'. In producing a narrative, the storyteller reveals who he or she is irrespective of whether the storyteller appears as a character in the story. The communication can take the following combinations: a) communicating about oneself intentionally through content; b) communicating about oneself intentionally through framework; c) communicating about oneself unintentionally through content; and d) communicating about oneself unintentionally through framework. In a single narrative, all four of these types might be found, and they might also be intertwined.

So first, a), straightforwardly, communicating intentionally through content can be done by telling a story that is about the storyteller, his or her past, experiences and actions, attempting to convey who the storyteller takes him or herself to be.¹²¹ Secondly, b), the storyteller can intentionally communicate about oneself through consciously framing the narrative as the framework is also communicated to the interlocutors. Sure, the framework is not represented as the content of the story, however, it still represents the storyteller, who the storyteller is, and the characteristics they possess can be inferred based on the way he or she represents what the story is about. In this case, the narrative need not be about the storyteller, it need not contain the storyteller as a character. For example, if one tells a story about a friend's socially awkward behavior, in framing a story, the storyteller might communicate that they take themselves to be the opposite – socially competent. And then thirdly, c), the storyteller can communicate about themselves unintentionally through the content that they select to talk about. Any narrative about a subject involves a limited selection of characters, events and actions, and what they select to talk about might reveal what the person is like unintentionally. So if one comes up with a narrative about the history of modern American literature that completely neglects female authors, the content of the story (the male authors and their lives and works) reveals by omission a bias of the storyteller. Fourthly and lastly, d), the way that a story is

¹²¹ It might be possible to communicate about oneself through content by content that does not include the storyteller as a character, but for the time being, I put this possibility to the side as this seems to be a very strange and rare case.

framed can also communicate certain things about the storyteller unintentionally. If one tells the story of the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. by constantly using phrases such as ‘them’ and ‘us’ that clearly reinforces a racial distinction, such framing communicates about the storyteller because the audience can infer how the storyteller positions him or herself in relation to the events he or she talks about. All in all, the intentional and non-intentional distinction cuts across the narrative content and framework distinction, and gives rise to various possibilities through which one communicates about oneself in producing a narrative. The storyteller can but need not tell a story in which he or she appears as a character in order for the audience to be able to infer and attribute certain characteristics to the storyteller.

The most severe issue that haunts the Communicative View can be summed up as follows: even if the Communicative View is right, does it have an answer to any of the interesting problems concerning personal identity that narrative theories traditionally target? Despite not being metaphysical, does the Communicative View have answers to the characterization or to the reidentification question? It is clear that the Communicative View does not provide answers to what characteristics have to be metaphysically attributed to a person or to whether a person is metaphysically identical to person at another time. What it does is shift the focus from the metaphysical questions to what persons communicate about their characteristics and about their continued persistence. Is this interesting for the theorist of personal identity? I think it should be. As Zahavi (2014) argues: ‘There is no such thing as who (in contrast to what) I am independently of how I understand and interpret myself. In short, no account of who one is can afford to ignore the issue of one’s self-interpretation, since the former is (at least partially) constituted by the latter’ (p. 55). Now Zahavi’s is partly a metaphysical claim about (partial) self-constitution, which I am sympathetic to but have no scope to defend here. What I would like to add is the following: if one agrees with Zahavi about the importance of self-interpretation, the Communicative View calls attention to how people use narrative to express their self-interpretations, or in other words, the stories that people tell are

the best guides in getting to know how they understand themselves and how they want themselves to be understood.

Take persistence. Traditionally, theories of personal identity attempt to find links between a person at an earlier time and a person at a later time independently of how people understand themselves. The Communicative View does not attempt to find any such links, rather, it puts the emphasis on what people communicate about themselves: do they communicate that they are the same as before or do they try to dissociate themselves from their pasts? This is broadly in line with some developments in narratively-oriented psychology. The stories people tell do not provide answers to metaphysical questions, but they deliver insights into how people deal with sameness and difference through time.

When it comes to numerical identity, one either persists through time or does not. The ways people experience and understand persistence is different. Bamberg (2010) describes this process as ‘navigation’ because people have to manage the sense of staying the same in the face of constant changes: ‘sorting out how the person can view and present a self as the same person s/he used to be, but at the same time as different and new, is not straightforward and easy. And narrative means seem to lend themselves for practicing such navigations, because narratives are the genre par excellence for sorting out this diachronic aspect of identity formation’ (p. 6). Irrespective of, for instance, whether a person is the same persisting organism or not, the narratives they produce in communication provide a look into how they experience and understand themselves being the same or being changed. If one does not subscribe to a metaphysics that would radically discard how persons experience and understand themselves, who they are or how they persist, the Communicative View will be of interest.

5. Narrative Access and Self-Shaping

The Communicative View is, on one construal, a deflationary account. As I concede that narratives do not play a metaphysical role for personal identity, many theorists, especially those who believe in some form of narrative self-constitution, would disagree with me. My positive claims about the role of narratives in communication are not controversial, however, I have not yet seen them explored elsewhere, so in that, the Communicative View has something new to offer. In this section, however, I make a stronger argument that begins with the role of narratives in communication but goes beyond that. Let me begin with the following question. If I want to know who I am and whether I am the same person as before, how would I go about finding out?

To illustrate the issue, consider this. Due to a long-time of gradual changes or sudden abrupt ones, one can cease to *feel* to be the same person as before. Focusing on the latter, take the case of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), an anxiety disorder that is caused by experiencing one or more traumatic incidents. The disorder is characterized by having intrusive thoughts, dreams and memories. The intrusiveness stems from the way memories of the traumatic experience(s) are stored. In experiencing trauma, the mind gets overwhelmed and cannot process and store memories as it ordinarily does. As a result, memory gets fragmented and the traumatic material remains dissociated on the verge of awareness, not integrated into ordinary memory, ready to intrude by exposure to any trigger reminding the PTSD sufferer of the trauma. Therefore, the sufferer is in a hyperaroused state, anxious about having to endure the traumatic experience again. However, there are psychological counter-forces, namely avoidance and numbing. Due to the hyperaroused state, the sufferer tends to avoid reminders of the traumatic experience(s) since they can trigger the intrusion of dissociated trauma memory. Also, she can develop emotional numbing to mitigate these consequences. All this leads to impaired personal and social functioning in different degrees.¹²² To take an example, let us say

¹²² See Cash (2006) and Schiraldi (2009).

that there is Vietnam war veteran who has suffered a trauma in the war in 1969, remembers what happened in 1976 and reports a fundamental change in his sense of identity: 'I'm a different person since the trauma'.¹²³ If personal identity, characterization and persistence, depends on metaphysical facts-of-the-matter, does that mean that the hypothetical trauma victim is just simply wrong about not being the same person anymore?

Narratives are important in this respect. Following a manuscript and then an article by Lloyd Wells (2003), there have been quite a few publications about the inabilities of people with mental disorder to form their life experiences into coherent narratives. One way to express the issue is this: 'Traumatic experience produces narrative structures that are fractured and erratic, structures which will not sustain integrated notions of self, society, culture, or world' (Robinett 2007, p. 297). In fact, some believe that a person before suffering a trauma and after are not the same just in case the person after cannot produce a narrative that ties her to her past.¹²⁴ The issue here is apparent: say the war veteran cannot tell a story that connects him to his past, however, the reason why he cannot do that is in the past he cannot connect to. That is, if he was not the same person as before, there would be no explanation why there is a break in his personal history. The trauma that caused the break is also the cause of his inability to tell his story, so there is something in his past that exerts a strong influence even if he cannot bring himself to thinking that he is the same man the trauma happened to. The problem can be restated by employing the notions of 'first-personal' and 'third-personal' perspectives. From a third-personal perspective, the war veteran is, metaphysically, the same person as he was before. From his first-personal perspective, phenomenologically, he is not the same. Should this conflict be resolved, and if so, how?

I think that focusing on the metaphysics of personal identity has the unwanted consequences of construing human beings as passive in connection to their identities. What kind of metaphysical

¹²³ As Shalev (2009) declares 'one of the most frequent complaints of PTSD patients is "I am not the same."' (p. 8).

¹²⁴ See the discussion in Flanagan & Hardcastle (1999), Woody (2003), Phillips (2003) and Lumsden (2013).

beings human beings are is perhaps not 'up to us' in any meaningful sense, but who one is as a human person, what are one's characteristics and whether one is the same person as before are different in this respect. As a particular human person, I do have the capacity to influence who I am and whether I am the same as before. Knowing that I am person with a characteristic *x*, I can take steps to become a person with characteristic *y*. One way to put it is that human beings have an agentive role with regards to who they are, their identities in this sense. They can take action to change who they are. So for instance, if I know that I am an unfriendly person in general, I can try and become friendlier. I can choose to go out, force myself to avoid rudeness and to open up more to people I do not know. Sometimes these kinds of endeavor can be successful.

Now it is important not to go to the extreme of radically free self-constitution. I cannot become any kind of different person just because I would like to. There are facets of my existence that are given, and they are beyond my conscious choice or control. I cannot change the fact that I was born in Hungary or that I have not learned Spanish (yet). I cannot just become less anxious by wishing to be so. However, it is important to thread the middle ground: the fact that there are givens does not imply that everything is given. Or in other words, I am not radically free to be any kind of person I can think of, however, I do have the power to change some things about myself, as described above.

So how does the communicative act of storytelling come into the picture? It does in two ways. 1) Through stories, we can get access to and get to know who we are and whether we are the same persons as before. 2) Since telling stories is a type of action, and through some actions we can change who we are, it is possible that through telling stories, we can change who we are. To begin with 1), how does telling stories provide access to who we are? Well, if you start thinking about who you are, you can come up with a good number of things: your name, occupation, marital status, nationality, and so on. These are all facts about you, but these are not personal characteristics, such as being unfriendly. So how do you get to know your characteristics? Ask yourself: 'who am I as a person?' 'What kind of person am I?' You reflect. First, it is quite likely that you look back on your life, some

significant life events, actions that were important for you in some way and so on. You then take what you reflect and remember and deduce things about yourself or, in other words, you portray yourself based on your reflection and memories. Second, you might start thinking in counterfactual scenarios: ‘if this or that happened, what would I do? It seems likely I would this, so this might indicate that I am such and such a person’. In reflection, you employ what Goldie (2012) calls ‘narrative thinking’: you think about your personal history and possible future in stories. In thought, you represent sequences of events and actions. This is again a conscious and communicative production of narrative artifacts, and as the audience of your narratives, you might find that you reveal things about yourself in the stories, intentionally and unintentionally, just as you do to others.

Another kind of narrative access that you might have to yourself is through stories that others tell about you. In narratives, but not only narratives, you can get a glimpse of how others see you. Of course, you might also get this in simple conversations that do not involve narratives or by observing how someone behaves towards you. But narratives are unique in that they provide an elaborate and detailed look into what others think. As mentioned, in expanding her narrative self-constitution view, Schecthman (2014) argues that the role of others is twofold:

First, the recognition of one’s narrative by others is an essential feature of identity for mature adults; an identity-constituting narrative is not just a story you have about yourself but also the stories others tell about you. Second, those without the wherewithal to narrate their own lives (e.g., infants and those with cognitive deficits) can be given an identity through narratives created by others (pp. 103-104).

Now again, even with the expansion to include stories that others tell, I am skeptical about narratives as being constitutive for identity. But to put the disagreements to the side for the time being, the point I am making here is that the narratives others tell of one are important sources of knowledge about who one is, seen through others’ perspectives. For example, it could be the case that I think I acted courageously in a situation, but when someone else tells their side of the story, I realize that what I did

was rather foolish. Through narratives of others, one can also find one's characteristics revealed besides, to repeat, the characteristics of the storyteller.

The same applies to having access to the fact whether one is the same person as before. Going back to the example of the war veteran, it is safe to say that he is the same persisting organism as he was before the traumatic experiences. Why are people who suffer traumas then prone to saying that they are different persons since then? With the considerations above in mind, one plausible view is that they are unable to produce a narrative which communicates the fact that they are the same person, and so they seem to know that they are not. More generally, the claim is that one's ability or inability to narratively connect to one's past is a source of information and knowledge about whether one is the same person as before. I might find it easy to tell a story about my past couple years, but difficult to maintain a sense of identity that goes back to decades. Tying my present to my recent past in a narrative lets me know that I actually actively identify with who I was in my recent past, while the inability to weave a narrative that binds more remote events and experiences to my present indicates that I no longer feel the same or that I have changed. Narratives are a source of knowledge not only about who I am, my characteristics, but also about whether I maintain some sort of sameness in the face of changes. And again, others' narratives about me can play the same role.

And 2) telling stories is a kind of action through which it is possible to change who one is. Stories, as argued above, give us access to who we are, but they also offer a chance to change who we are. The Communicative View states that in telling stories, the storyteller reveals who she is, intentionally and unintentionally. So it could seem that there is a fixed entity, the storyteller, and telling stories does nothing else but provide information about the fixed entity, the storyteller. However, while in telling some stories, this is the case, it is not the case with all storytelling. Some narratives we produce do not only provide information about us, they also influence and shape who we are. One could object here in claiming that telling stories can only change who one is in the sense of changing the picture that one's audience has of oneself. If, by producing a narrative, I manage to maybe deceive

my audience about what kind of person I am, then I have changed myself only in the sense of changing the image others have of me.

I think that it is certainly possible to change the image others have of one by telling stories, ones that paint a compelling portrait. But telling stories can do more than that. In coming up with a narrative about myself, maybe about some events in my past, I have the chance to shape and form how those events relate to me as a person, whether they determine who I am or indicate my characteristics. In a narrative, I might give more weight to certain episodes and less to others. My story can explain why a certain foolish act does not make me a foolish person by relating it to mitigating circumstances and to other acts that were not foolish. In this, my communicative storytelling act changes who I am not by some literal transformation of the past, not by making events disappear or concocting actions that did not happen, but because it allows me to shape, form or influence what episodes of my past describe me as a person and how they do it. Now of course, others might disagree with me, they could say that I cannot explain away my foolish act and the act does indicate that I am a foolish person. However, my narrative as an active, communicative product of self-interpretation still has to be given a voice in how to characterize me as a person. The narrative does not constitute who I am, it is not responsible for attributing me characteristics *ex nihilo*, but it does show that I am actively involved in forming and have a say in who I am. As I can work on changing some of my characteristics, a narrative I produce can be a tool in achieving that change.

And finally, coming up with narratives also influences whether one maintains a sense of sameness throughout the changes in one's life. If there is nothing more to identity through time than the identity of the biological organism, for instance, then narrative has nothing to contribute here. However, recalling the tension for the hypothetical war veteran, there might a difference between judging a person to be the same from a third-personal point-of-view and feeling to be the same from a first-personal point-of-view. One of the ways in which human persons navigate sameness and change is through telling stories about themselves that explain the sense in which they have changed and the

sense in which they have stayed the same (Bamberg 2010). For instance, I know that I possess a characteristic *x*, and I am also committed to changing the situation: either by getting rid of characteristic *x* or by replacing it with characteristic *y*. Imagine that I am successful, I am no longer *x*. Am I the same person as before? In some sense, the answer is obviously ‘yes’: I am the same but I have changed. A sense of sameness can be articulated by my producing a story about the change I have gone through. But now consider the war veteran. Since his traumatic experiences in the war, he feels to be a different person. He is not strictly and literally a different person. What makes his case different from the one about me above is that he is changed but he is unable to produce a narrative that would explain how he maintains his sense of sameness in the face of it. Third-personally, he is still the same person, a person who was shaken by traumatic experiences. First-personally, however, he does not feel to be the same. The tension is explained by his inability to come up with a narrative that ties him to his past. According to some psychologists, narratives can be used therapeutically in these cases. If the traumatized person is able to produce a narrative about his or her past, including the trauma, that might be a step towards mental health, making sense of the experience and having a (re-)unified sense of identity through time.¹²⁵

6. Narratives in Real Life, Narratives in Art

Both Currie (2010) and Lamarque (2014, pp. 51-66) argue that narratives by themselves are uninteresting, and that one should focus on narrative special for some reason, such as literary narratives. I think that literary narratives are interesting in their own right, however, there are other narratives which deserve attention as well. And a further advantage of the Communicative View is that it is consistent with empirical research about what real-life, everyday, conversational storytelling is. People very often produce narratives in conversational contexts, and they are quite different from how

¹²⁵ Just as an example see ‘Narrative Exposure Therapy’ in Schauer, Neuner and Elbert (2011).

narratives in philosophy are conceptualized. As Neal R. Norrick (2007) describes it, conversational storytelling is 'interactive', 'negotiated', 'deeply contextualized', and 'diffuse' (p. 127). One of the main examples is a reminiscing-type of storytelling at a family dinner table. Someone takes the floor, begins a story, and others react and contribute. It becomes unclear who the primary teller is, and the relations between storyteller and audience get murky. This is different from sitting down on a sofa with a thick novel. And, to quote Ochs and Capps (2001): 'mundane conversational narratives of personal experience constitute the prototype of narrative activity rather than the flawed by-product of more artful and planned narrative discourse (p. 3).¹²⁶

In this respect, Lamarque (2014, pp. 67-83) is correct to argue that there should be a distinction between narratives in real life and narratives in art. However, the empirical research indicates that real life narratives also deserve interest. In fact it is interesting in itself that narrative has the capacity to be employed both for conversational storytelling and for artistic purposes. To recall, Lamarque criticizes narrative views of personal identity for importing the paradigms of narrative art into how people experience or understand themselves, and vice versa, '[t]o see literary characters as our friends, as ordinary people like ourselves, their lives as essentially like our lives, is to set aside nearly everything that makes great literature what it is' (p. 68). People are not literary characters and literary characters are not people, and Lamarque demonstrates this through enumerating certain principles that apply when one is dealing with a literary work. These principles guide one's engagement with literature, but if one models one's sense of self or one's life on literature, these principles result in unwanted consequences. For instance:

Narratives find patterns in people's lives and give structure. There is nothing wrong with that.

But the literary model, where patterns are deliberately created and can determine (and thus explain) fictional content, is entirely inappropriate for narratives of real lives. Explanations for

¹²⁶ See also Norrick (2000), Georgakopoulou (2007), Bamberg (2010) and Rühlemann (2013).

non-fictional events must stay in the realm of causes and reasons. Nothing in the real world happens because some structured design determines that it must happen (p. 79).

Does this criticism apply to the Communicative View? The Communicative View states that, through narratives, people communicate intentionally who they take themselves to be, and from this communication, some characteristics can also be inferred besides the communicator's intentions. I think the way they communicate is strongly influenced by non-conversational narratives of art, and sometimes of literature. One can tell a story that makes it appear there was a higher purpose at work in some chance encounters, which goes beyond Lamarque's causes and reasons constraint. And if one tells a story like that, on the Communicative View, the person reveals certain things about him or herself. So indeed people sometimes model their narratives about their lives and experiences based on great works of literature. Is this a problem for the Communicative View? I do not think that it is. Such modeling does happen. The criticism of Lamarque is that it should not. The Communicative View is neutral on the normative side.

Schechtman (2011) replies to Lamarque by conceding that Lamarque is right, people in real life should not think of themselves merely as characters in literary works. But she also distinguishes three ways in which one can be involved with a narrative: as character, as author and as critic. On Schechtman's narrative view, people should think of themselves as occupying all three roles, and the roles are interconnected and intertwined. First, people are characters because they are 'constrained by the facts about the social and natural world' (p. 413). Second, people do not fully and solely author their lives but they partially do so because they are confronted by what to do next. They are agents who have to act. And third, they also have to, as critics, reflect on their lives. In this reflection, people have to be aware about both the constraints and the agency as contributing to the narrative trajectory of their lives: 'Life is different from literature because we write it as we live it and engage in criticism as we go along rather than after the fact, and because this forces us to take on different roles and perspectives' (p. 414).

So life is different from literature, but life is also not something people ‘write’ (except in the genre of ‘life writing’, which is a different matter). Thus I am not sure whether separating these roles helps Schechtman in defending her view. It seems to me that one should not think of one’s life in any of the roles enumerated by Schechtman for the simple reason of life not being a narrative or literary work. To show that it is requires further metaphysical argument (swimming against Strawson’s (2004) tide). While people are agents, they act within constraints and they do reflect, these do not correspond to ‘character’, ‘author’ and ‘critic’ as there is no product to support these roles. But perhaps Schechtman’s point is not that life is a narrative, rather, it is that life should be thought of as a narrative, and if it is, one should take all three perspectives into consideration. The normative view is not that people should think of their lives as paradigmatically fictional works of literature, instead, they should look at the trajectory of their lives in narrative terms and in which they play all three roles of ‘character’, ‘author’ and ‘critic’. The benefit is the meaningfulness that such a narrative trajectory provides, which is not to be mixed up with literary narratives.

In a later essay, Schechtman (2015) returns to Lamarque’s criticism once more, arguing that ‘in a literary narrative the characters are there to serve the narrative, and in a real-life narrative the narrative is there to serve the character’ (p. 36). As she concludes,

taking a narrative view of one’s life does not require one to think of it as bound by a rigid and inflexible template or subject to external norms. It can instead involve taking a particular attitude toward one’s life, viewing oneself as character, reader, and author of a life in progress, negotiating meaning, interpreting, and revising as we go along’ (p. 37).

I want to elaborate on one of the important points Schechtman makes. As she says it is possible to ‘make a meaningful and important distinction between real life and literary narratives, and hence between real people and characters in novels, without forcing ourselves to deny that there are important points of contact’ (p. 36). According to the view Schechtman defends contra Lamarque here, literary narratives have a lot to offer for people’s real-life narrative activity. It is not simply the case

that people model the narrative understanding of their lives on literary narratives, rather, they should be well-aware of the differences and learn what they can about their lives from literature.

The Communicative View says that narratives people produce reveal, intentionally and unintentionally, who they are and who they take themselves to be. I think that this is true for narratives of everyday life and narratives of art, with the differences taken into account. In everyday narratives, people can attempt to communicate who they are by borrowing styles and techniques of literature. This can have both beneficial and harmful effects: the literary models, as in Schechtman's view, can help people understand and make sense of their lives if they do not consider their lives authored, for example. However, it is indeed harmful, if in retrospection, one comes to think of one's life as a *Bildungsroman*, a novel of personal growth and development, and if the understanding of any ordinary happening is forced into the developmental pattern. This is psychologically harmful as it can hinder the acceptance of failures and stagnation, which can play important roles in one's self-understanding. Altogether, it is of utmost importance to realize the difference between real-life and literary narratives, however, descriptively, people in real-life sometimes model their narratives on literary ones, and normatively, this can have both beneficial and harmful consequences depending on the particular instance.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the chapter has considered questions of personal identity: 'what am I?', 'who am I?' and 'am I the same as before?' These issues are largely metaphysical and the main theories that address them are as well. Biological theories emphasize that people are organisms and psychological views put the weight on causal connectedness and continuity between mental states. Narrative theories are different as they attempt to give the person in question an active role in understanding and shaping his or her identity. On narrative views, what matters is the narrative understanding of one's actions (in

action-oriented theories) or one's self (in self-oriented theories). On a plausible construal, the role of narrative is to provide intelligibility: for making events, actions and experiences intelligible.

The chapter has criticized metaphysical narrative theories that would postulate entities such as the 'narrative self' for stretching the notion of narrative beyond recognition and forcing it to work in a context, a metaphysical one, which is not appropriate for it. The chapter took Marya Schechtman's (1996) influential theory and offered critical points to its answer to the 'characterization question', however, it has also taken some of Schechtman's insights on board. The chapter has elaborated a view of narrative identity labelled the 'Communicative View', which finds the relevance of narrative for personal identity in the communicative act of narrating. The main thesis is that by telling narratives, people intentionally communicate who they take themselves to be and also unintentionally reveal things about themselves. The chapter has provided some considerations to support the Communicative View, for example that it can work with a well-defined concept of narrative or that the content of relevant narratives need not be restricted to those that take the storyteller as a character. It was also argued that narratives that people produce are sources of knowledge about who they are and who they take themselves to be, so that they provide access to answering these questions, and also, narratives are important tools for shaping one's self: one has an agentive role towards one's identity. Finally, the chapter investigated the differences between real-life and literary narratives. All in all, the chapter has sought to establish the Communicative View as a strong alternative to standard narrative theories of personal identity.

VII. MIND: NARRATIVE AND IMAGINATION

1. Introduction

Narrative, fiction and imagination constitute a complicated set of concepts. A simple starting point might be the following: fictionality is a property of narratives, and fiction, as opposed to non-fiction, is a type of narrative that calls for an imaginative attitude such as make-believe. In Chapter II, I have described theories of fiction in detail, so here I will stick to the fiction-imagination connection. To recall, among the various theories of fictionality, two are quite influential: intentionalism and functionalism (Davies 2001). The main question is: what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for a narrative to be fictional? Intentionalism, in this sense, puts the emphasis on the intentions of the fiction-maker: having a Gricean, reflexive intention for the audience to make-believe or imagine the content of the narrative is necessary, although not sufficient, for the narrative to be fictional (e.g., Currie 1990). Functionalism about fiction is different. According to Walton (1990), being fictional is serving as a prop in a game of make-believe. A narrative is fictional if and only if it serves the function of involving the audience in a game of make-believe irrespective of the intentions of the storyteller. These theories are clearly different and opposed in many ways, however, they both agree on the central role of the imagination for defining fictionality. Fiction and imagination are intimately connected.

One way to put the consensus is this: a narrative is either fiction or non-fiction. If it is fiction, then its contents are to be imagined. If it is non-fiction, the contents are to be believed.¹²⁷ Recently however, arguments have been put forth to the effect that there is no special relationship between fiction and imagination. A straightforward way is to deny either one or both conditionals. Some

¹²⁷ There is a thorny issue that Currie's (1990) description of fiction captures well. For Currie, fiction is 'a patchwork of truth and falsity, reliability and unreliability, fiction-making and assertion' (p. 49). For this reason, Currie prefers to talk about individual utterances within larger narratives and their being fiction or non-fiction. But see his (2014).

contents of fiction are to be believed and also some content of non-fiction is to be imagined. Stacie Friend (2008, 2012) offers convincing examples for both: authors of realistic fictional works often include details or assertions which are apparently to be believed, and some paradigmatically historical works of non-fiction contain imaginative episodes or parts, made up by the author often for dramatic effect.¹²⁸

In the wake of this debate, some questions are relegated to the background: is narrative, as a form of discourse, connected somehow to the imagination? I argue that narrative, irrespective of fictionality, is indeed intimately connected to the imagination both on the side of creation and on comprehension.¹²⁹ In Section 2, I put forth the ‘Thesis of Imaginative Variation’: imagination is involved in creating narrative, fiction or non-fiction, because the storyteller has to imaginatively vary what to tell and how to do it. Section 3 then is concerned with comprehension, and I propose the ‘Thesis of Imaginative Response’, which states that narrative, irrespective of fictionality, made-up content or authorial intention, calls for an imaginative response: in comprehension, audiences build mental, situation models of what is represented in a narrative. Following this, since I agree with Shen-yi Liao and Tyler Doggett (2014), who state in their abstract that ‘imaginative immersion is a crucial data point for theorizing about the imagination’, Section 4 is about understanding immersion as an imaginative state in comprehending narratives.

I do not define precisely what the capital ‘I’ ‘Imagination’ is, and I am not sure that such a definition can be given.¹³⁰ In this chapter, I mostly rely on I employ one central type of imagination, ‘cognitive imagination’ (McGinn 2004; Byrne 2005) and mention some more, all of which are reasonably called ‘imagination’. In Section 3, I argue that in order to understand narratives, one has to construct ‘situation models’ (e.g., Johnson-Laird 1983) of a narrative’s represented content. This construction is carried out by the cognitive imagination, at least in part, because it is required to

¹²⁸ See the current discussion by Gibson (2007), Matravers (2014), Davies (2015), Stock (2016) among others.

¹²⁹ This is not to be mixed up with the distinction in Currie and Ravenscroft (2002) between the creative and the recreative imagination even though there are interesting overlaps.

¹³⁰ For the numerous complexities see Stevenson (2003), Gendler (2013) and Van Leeuwen (2013, 2014).

imaginatively consider hypothetical scenarios. As the scenarios are non-actual, and there is no actual perceptual input, the imagination has to be at work: ‘Human rationality depends on imagination. People have the capacity to be rational at least in principle because they can imagine alternatives’ (Byrne 2005, p. 39). It is important to distinguish cognitive imagination from both propositional imagination (‘imagine that such-and-such is the case’) and mental imagery (‘imagine/visualize this-or-that’) while of course, entertaining non-actual scenarios often involves both propositional imagination and mental imagery.

2. Imagination in Creating Narratives

In this chapter, my arguments rely on a certain type of imagination. It is indeed quite a problem that there is no consensus on what the imagination generally is, and also, there is no agreement about what ties together all the mind’s activities called ‘imagining’. Since I have no scope to propose a theory about the imagination and the varieties, I have to settle for theories and proposed types of imagination by others, signaling why I think these are warranted to be called ‘imagination’. Let me quote the following from Colin McGinn (2004): ‘The thought “What if?” always presupposes a shift to the merely possible and hence an exercise of imagination. Suppose such-and-such were so: what would follow? This very suppositional act brings in the imaginative faculty’ (p. 143). According to McGinn, the cognitive imagination, the imaginative entertainment of possibilities in this way, plays a robust role in rationality and belief-formation. I do not want to follow him that far, however, it seems right to me that the ‘merely possible’ cannot be conceived of or represented without the imagination. Or as he argues: ‘Our thoughts of the non-actual are imaginative thoughts, exercises of the cognitive imagination’ (p. 141). So then, in this section, I agree with McGinn for the time being that there is such a thing as the cognitive imagination, and it is a kind of imagination that has to do with entertaining thoughts about the non-actual.

To continue with a working definition of narrative, I consider it as a story told, where ‘telling’ is understood in a broad sense and not necessarily verbally. I follow Greg Currie (2010) in that narratives are intentional-communicative artifacts, particularly representations, ‘distinguished from other representations by what they represent: sustained temporal-causal relations between particulars, especially agents’ (p. 27).¹³¹ A narrative representation can take many forms: language, images, bodily movement and so on. Narrativity does not reside in the medium or media that the representation employs but rather in what is represented.

If this is acceptable, then any account about creating narratives has to contend with at least two processes: creating the content of representation and the form of representation. There is no need to assume that these are independent, in fact, they must be strongly intertwined in some cases. However, it should be possible to conceptually separate content and form as, intuitively, the same content can be represented by different forms of representation, and ‘sameness’ is judged not by strict identity but by some other reasonable standard.¹³² In any case, as mentioned, I argue here that creating narratives necessarily involves some form the imagination, and it would be enough to show that coming up either with the content or with the form of representation involves it. However, I make a stronger claim: creating a narrative involves the imagination in creating content and form both.¹³³

I begin by make a distinction between two types of narratives based on the following question: does the narrative contain made-up content? By made-up content I mean a) characters or things that did not or do not exist, b) descriptions that are not intentionally true and c) events which did not occur. For instance, to use an example from film, Darth Vader, a former jedi pupil turned to the dark side, kills his mentor, Obi-Wan Kenobi in *Star Wars: A New Hope*. There is a lot of made-up content: a) Darth Vader has never existed so c) the murder did not occur.

¹³¹ For alternative definitions see Carroll (2001, pp. 118-133), Velleman (2003), Ryan (2007) and Nanay (2009).

¹³² On these issues see Chatman (1981), Herrnstein Smith (1981) and Smuts (2009).

¹³³ For a general discussion of imagination and creativity see Stokes (2016), for issues about art and imagination Wiltsher & Meskin (2016).

Description (b), when it comes to film, is tricky. If a film contains descriptions explicitly, it is in dialogues or uttered by a narrator, however, by representing characters, locations and so on, it also implies propositions that can be formulated as descriptions. For instance, *Star Wars: A New Hope* implies that Obi-Wan Kenobi has a beard. It does not explicitly describe Obi-Wan Kenobi as having a beard but it represents him as having one. The proposition that 'Obi-Wan has a beard' is true in case he has a beard and false otherwise. A good Russellian would argue that since he has never existed, any description of him has to be false. Even if the matter is more complicated,¹³⁴ it is safe to say that his having a beard is not an intentionally true description of the real world (while it is true that in the film he does have a beard). The description of Obi-Wan also counts as made-up content. And similarly, if an historical novel (or film) describes (or shows) Winston Churchill as having a full head of long hair, it also contains stuff that is made-up in this form.

So a narrative either has made-up content or it does not. Why is this distinction interesting? One reason is that this more or less corresponds to a commonsensical picture concerning the differences between fiction and non-fiction that some philosophies of fiction mean to preserve.¹³⁵ However, whether this should be the foundation of the theory of fiction remains controversial.¹³⁶ Thus a second and main reason for interest is that the processes of creating a narrative with made-up content and one without are different. If they are different, they have to involve the imagination in different ways. In other words, when it comes to the role of the imagination, the process of inventing a character is different than the process of referring to and describing a real person. In this latter case, a real person is employed as a character in a narrative (which can be a work of fiction or non-fiction).

To recall, my argument is that the imagination is necessarily involved in the production of narratives. I think this is easier to demonstrate when it comes to narratives with made-up or invented

¹³⁴ See the complexities of 'truth in fiction' and 'truth about nonexistents' in Lewis (1978), Currie (1990), Thomasson (1999), Everett (2013).

¹³⁵ Even though as arguments by Friend (2008, 2012) and Matravers (2014) demonstrate, there are many works which should be classified as non-fiction but have made-up content. See also Chapter II.

¹³⁶ See again Walton (1990) and Friend (2012).

content. If a narrative is about nonexistent characters or events that did not happen, then the imagination is obviously involved in coming up with those character and events. The process of such invention cannot be carried out without the imagination. Contrast it with writing a story about an historical character, such as Winston Churchill. With Churchill, I have a chance to know numerous things about him before writing the story: his appearance, his life, his character and so on. In writing a story about him, there is a rich background of real-world information that I can rely on. Cognitively this wealth of information can be supplied by my beliefs, beliefs I have acquired about Churchill. In contrast, for George Lucas coming up with Obi-Wan Kenobi, there is no such repository of information. Obi-Wan's appearance, life and character are primarily products of the imagination, which nonetheless relies upon real-world information.¹³⁷ Prior to inventing Obi-Wan, George Lucas had no beliefs about him in particular, and any such beliefs are founded upon the imaginative invention of the character. This should apply to any and all made-up content. Making things up is imaginative, however, I do not need to define the imagination exactly here because this is more or less uncontroversial.

The more difficult task is to explain how the imagination is involved in the case where there is no made-up content, and I want to argue that even a completely accurate historical narrative written with scientific rigor involves the imagination. In such a narrative, whatever it is about, what it represents and what it refers to are not products of the imagination. The events of discovering the American continent or Nazi Germany invading Poland are not imaginary, neither are Attila the Hun or Winston Churchill. The imagination is not involved in producing these events or characters. But it would be wrong to conclude that it is not involved at all because beyond what is represented, another crucial dimension of narrative is the how of its representation.

So when there is no content that has its source in the imagination, it is best to argue that the way in which the content is represented involves the imagination. It would be too strong to claim here that all representation involves the imagination: if my thought that Churchill died in 1965 is a

¹³⁷ On the real-world background of fictional stories, see Ryan (1980), Walton (1990) and Friend (2016).

representation, as many would argue, then it would have to involve the imagination as well, and it is implausible to suppose that such thoughts about states of affairs have to do so. A good starting point here is that any one thing can be represented in multiple ways. Churchill's death is something that is given as an historical fact, however, it can be represented in language as in 'Churchill died in 1965' and it can also be represented in a film, an actor could play Churchill on his deathbed. Coming up with a representation, a certain type of imagination has to be involved necessarily as representing goes beyond what is given. The type of imagination has to do with considering alternative possibilities of representation (McGinn 2004; Byrne 2005). This is different from making up a character and also from having a mental image as it about entertaining possibilities, and in this specific case, possibilities of representation. This is legitimately called a type of imagination. As Williams (2003) claims: 'We do call a person imaginative who is able to frame and entertain possibilities' (p. 190).

Narratives, representing 'sustained temporal-causal relations between particulars' (Currie 2010, p. 27), also involve the imagination especially because of the temporal-causal relations that they choose to represent and how they choose to represent them. This is what I label the 'Thesis of Imaginative Variation'. It basically states that in creating a narrative, the storyteller has to vary the selection of events that are included and the way they are included. The storyteller has to imaginatively think through a number of 'what if' scenarios: what if I tell this but do not mention that? What if I present this event from this point of view rather than another one? The storyteller, in coming up with the 'what' and 'how' of a story, has choices about both. Going through these choices is not always an explicit process, nor is it necessarily conscious, but there is always an imaginative component in it: imagining what story to tell and how it could be told. Narrative is indeed a representation that involves the imagination.

This applies to narratives irrespective of the medium. However, for a telling a story, there is always a medium or multiple media. A novel tells its story mostly through written language. In contrast, a film can use numerous channels: moving images, sounds, written and spoken language and so on. A

comic book or graphic novel contains images and written language for the most part. According to the Thesis of Imaginative Variation, if a storyteller comes up with a narrative using such media, she also has to imaginatively vary the possibilities of medium-specific representation. A novelist needs to imagine how a certain scene could be described using different phrases or sentential structures. A director of a film has to manage whether a scene is shot from one angle or another. A comic book author can opt for using a different method of speech representation instead of the traditional bubbles. All of these medium-specific choices presuppose an imaginative process in which the storyteller goes through various possibilities of representation.

A valid point is that what storytellers, novelists, directors, comic book authors do is an empirical question. The best way to find out whether they use their imagination is by conducting a large-scale quantitative study in which a good number of storytellers have to sit through tests and interviews about their creative process. Or perhaps these introspective reports would be unreliable by themselves, so one needs to compliment them with brain fMRI scans to see whether the areas of the brain associated with imaginative capacities are active in storytelling. And I think that such research would be interesting and valuable, however, I want to insist that my argument is not empirical but transcendental and such an argument has its place. A transcendental argument is one in which based on something given, it is argued that a condition has to obtain because it is necessary for what is given. Applied to the Thesis of Imaginative Variation, it goes like this: there is obviously storytelling going on, and stories can be told in numerous ways. For telling a story then, it is necessary that the ways in which stories are told are taken into consideration by storytellers. Taking these possibilities, these what if scenarios into consideration, storytellers use their imagination as there is no other source for supplying them. It seems implausible that finding a single storyteller who reports not using her imagination or whose associated brain areas are not active would be evidence against this argument. In order for it to be so, there would need to be agreement on the basic terms of what it means to tell a story, what kind of imagination is involved and what varying possibilities consists in. Without such an agreement,

I think my transcendental argument has its place because it reasons from plausible premises (about storytelling and its possibilities) to a necessary condition.

Again, the worry is that there could be a storyteller who never considers alternative ways of telling a story. The produced narrative would then be a case where the imagination is not involved. My answer here is that alternatives do not have to be considered consciously in an elaborate way. Even if a child just tells a story without ever entertaining any possibilities, she still makes certain decisions: using one word instead of another, telling one episode before another, focusing on one character instead of another, among others. Even if she did not consciously go through alternative possibilities as a novelist typically would, the fact that she made the decisions she made is enough to argue that the cognitive imagination was at work because she could have told the story differently, even if this did not occur to her.

3. Imagination in Comprehending Narratives

Above I have argued that a certain kind of imagination is necessary for creating narratives, irrespective of fictionality. To complement the argument, in this section, I now claim that the same kind of imagination is necessary for comprehending narratives, irrespective of fictionality. But here, cognitive imagination is not about alternatives but about considering hypothetical or non-actual scenarios. Let me begin with an illustration. Reading Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, you acquire some propositional information such as Gregor Samsa is a salesman, that he transforms into an insect, that his mother faints when she sees him, that an apple thrown by his father hurts him badly, and that, in the end, Gregor dies. On one level, to understand these pieces of information, you really have nothing else to do than to read the book. You might have mental images of the mother fainting, you might feel Gregor's shame and fear, and so on. However, at this basic level, there is no obvious need for the imagination.

On the other hand, *The Metamorphosis* relies on and mobilizes a wealth of information that you do not acquire from the story propositionally. This goes from the mundane such as Gregor Samsa having, before his transformation, all the normal organs that a human being has. But it also goes beyond the mundane to such socially grounded knowledge that it is important generally not to be late from work.¹³⁸ It would be implausible to suppose that one imagines all these things as these seem to contribute to the background of Kafka's story: there are things to know, that do not come to the foreground, in order to understand the story. So how does the imagination come in? I want to argue that in narrative comprehension, it is not sufficient to understand the propositional information the narrative provides even if one adds a set of background assumptions and pragmatic inferences. To understand the narrative, one has to imaginatively construct a situation model in order to make some warranted inferences. The scenario depicted by the narrative has to be considered as a hypothetical one. This is not propositional imagination and also not mental imagery. As described below, a situation model is a mental construct that involves propositional information and can involve mental imagery but goes beyond that, integrating information into a complex structure with contextual and spatiotemporal dimensions. Reading about Gregor's transformation, I do not just imagine that he transformed, nor do I merely believe that if he is an insect, he has to have a three-part body, I imagine the situation of Gregor being an insect in the family house.

As mentioned, according to some views, the distinction between fiction and non-fiction partly rides on what storytellers tacitly require audiences to do: if a story is non-fiction, then one requires the audience to believe the contents of one's story, namely that whatever is told did actually happen. If a story is fiction, one requires the audience to make-believe or imagine the contents (e.g., Currie 1990). Such a theory concerns the propositional imagination: 'imagine that...' or 'make-believe that...': 'there is a kind of imagining which stands to belief as imagery stands to perceptual experience. Indeed, this kind of imagining is often called "make-believe." When we "make as if to believe" something, we

¹³⁸ See Friend (2016) on the reality assumption.

do something that is rather like believing it' (Currie 2001, p. 258). While I believe that Denmark is an actual country, I do not believe that Hamlet met the ghost of his father. Towards the proposition 'Hamlet met the ghost of his father', I adopt a different attitude: I imagine or make-believe it. Why? Because I recognize that it was not Shakespeare's intention that I should believe that there was Danish prince called Hamlet who met the ghost of his father. He intended the audience to not trouble themselves with whether this really happened or not but to go along reading or watching *Hamlet* as if it did, knowing very well that it might not have.

Even though this intentionalist view is very attractive and influential, it has prompted strong criticisms (Friend 2012; Matravers 2014), and it is not suitable for my purposes. In this section, I am after an argument that comprehending narrative, irrespective of fictionality, involves the imagination. If the large class of non-fictional narratives prompts belief instead of imagination then I would not be able to argue that all narratives are comprehended using the imagination. This is the Thesis of Imaginative Response. So I want to follow up on a suspicion of Stacie Friend (2012): 'I suspect that the association between fiction and imagination arises partly because fictions are normally narrative in structure, and narratives typically invite imagining' (p. 183). As Friend suspects, it is not the case that fiction has a special relationship to imagination or that fiction is demarcated from non-fiction with reference to the imagination, but rather the narrative structure, the representation of temporal-causal relations is what affects the imagination in comprehension. From this point of view, it does not matter whether one is dealing with fiction or non-fiction, what matters is whether the representation is a narrative or not. To further quote Friend: 'Vividly told non-fiction narratives invite us to imagine what it was like for people to live in different times and places, to undergo wonderful or horrible experiences, and so on' (Ibid.).

One issue that raises certain difficulties here is the following. In defining fiction, Currie (1990) relies on the notion of propositional imagination: 'imagine/make-believe that...'. What makes the utterance 'Hamlet met the ghost of his father' fictional is that its content should not be believed,

instead it should be imagined or made-believe. Friend's claim about vividly told non-fiction narratives inviting us to undergo certain experiences does not seem to affect the argument concerning propositional imagination. True, Currie might say, Hemingway's (1964) *A Moveable Feast* does invite us to imagine what it is like to undergo certain experiences of Hemingway, however, its propositional content about, for example, Hemingway's meeting Fitzgerald is still to be believed and not to be made-believe. In other words, Friend might be right that certain types of imagination (e.g., imaginatively undergoing experiences) are invited by non-fiction, but these are not the types of imagination that determine fictionality. That is the job of propositional imagination or make-believe.

I think that propositional imagination is different from cognitive imagination (entertaining possibilities) and mental imagery as well. Propositional imagination, to follow Currie, is a belief-like state. When you propositionally imagine that *x*, you think as if you believed that *x*. This leads into the warzone of the debate about belief and imagination as propositional attitudes.¹³⁹ Take a proposition such as 'Hemingway met Fitzgerald'. Is it possible to take either the belief-attitude or the make-belief attitude towards it or both? If one believes it, it seems to entail that one thinks it is true: yes, Hemingway did meet Fitzgerald. If, on the other hand, one makes-believe it, its truth value is not in question: one goes along as if it were true, knowing that it might not be. Is there a coherent mental state that takes both attitudes towards the same proposition? What would it mean to think that Hemingway met Fitzgerald *is* true and go along as if it *were* true? The 'as if' cannot get off the ground if there are sincere beliefs, it is redundant. Think of the case of pretense: I am typing on my laptop now, so can I type and pretend to type at the same time? True, pretending to type can take the form of actual typing, but actual typing seems to preclude the possibility of pretense. It seems that there is an incompatibility here: the same content cannot be believed and made-believe (propositionally imagined) at the same time. In a recent article, focusing on propositional imagination, Kathleen Stock (2016) argues for a similar conclusion:

¹³⁹ See e.g., Nichols and Stich (2000), Kind (2001), O'Brian (2005), Weinberg & Meskin (2005, 2006), Doggett & Egan (2007, 2011), Gendler (2008), Sinhababu (2016).

I can imagine *I'm typing at my computer*, even while I believe it, as long as I am disposed to inferentially connect the thought *I'm typing on my computer* with some further content I don't believe; for instance, that *I'm on the moon (and I'm typing on my computer)*. I can believe that *p* and imagine that *p* simultaneously [...] as long as the total set of thoughts to which I'm disposed to be inferentially related is different, in each case (p. 213).

So I can believe that Hemingway met Fitzgerald and make-believe it at the same time, but only if I connect the latter with something I do not believe such as Hemingway met Fitzgerald and was instantly taken by Fitzgerald's nice, relaxed and friendly manner. However, I cannot just without further ado believe and make-believe the same content at the same time. This is a type of incompatibility between belief and imagination, and I label this 'narrow incompatibility'.¹⁴⁰

The reason for labeling it as such is that I want to distinguish it from 'broad incompatibility'. To recall, Friend claims that vivid non-fictional narratives invite imaginings such as what it is like to undergo certain experiences. This imagining is untouched by the incompatibility mentioned above. Even if I believe that Hemingway met Fitzgerald, I can imagine still myself in the shoes of Hemingway, meeting Fitzgerald for the first time. The argument that belief and imagination are broadly incompatible when it comes to the same content would exclude not only propositional imagination but all other forms of imagination as well. So someone defending broad incompatibility would argue that when one reads the non-fictional narrative about Hemingway meeting Fitzgerald, one cannot imagine oneself in the shoes of Hemingway. On the face of it, this seems to be absurd, and I am not sure if anyone holds such a view.

Where does this leave my argument for the Thesis of Imaginative Response, that is, for all narratives necessarily engaging the imagination? Well, as long as I do not restrict the imagination to propositional imagination, there seems to be no problem at the outset as narrow incompatibility only

¹⁴⁰ See also Friend (2014): 'there are many forms of imagining that are compatible with belief, such as the experience of mental imagery or the construction of "narrative worlds" in imagination' (p. 230).

concerns propositional imagination and broad incompatibility is *prima facie* absurd. So there is no claim here against the possibility of non-fiction engaging certain forms of imagination, but this of course does not mean that non-fiction narratives *necessarily* engage the imagination, which is what I want to argue for. The way to go here from possibility to necessity is this: comprehending narratives, irrespective of their content and fictionality, involves the imaginative construction of situation models. As Friend (2008) states:

‘A *situation model* is the reader’s representation, not of the text itself, but of the situation the text is about. It may be described as a complex representation of a world, created in a reader’s imagination. Because this creative process is common to fiction and non-fiction, we should conclude that neither mental images nor situation models, though both arguably products of imagination, constitute a type of make-believe special to fiction’ (p. 156)

A problem that haunts any view that refers to situation models is due to the difficulties in defining what a situation model is (see Gottschling 2009). There are many approaches to situation models in the literature, and there is an extended discussion in philosophy, cognitive science and psychology.¹⁴¹

I will rely here on Radvansky and Zacks’s (1997) treatment. As they argue, a situation model is indeed a representation of a situation, one that can be prompted by perception, discourse or reasoning. The situation model is an abstract representation because it can possibly represent non-perceptible and non-concrete things and relations as well (e.g., the relation of ownership).¹⁴² A situation is defined as a collection of entities, animate and inanimate objects and also abstracta, which all have certain characteristics or properties and are related to each other functionally in a meaningful way. According to Radvansky and Zacks, it is important that a situation model is constructed when the

¹⁴¹ Matravers (2014), for instance, mentions three approaches to situation models: minimalist (McKoon & Ratcliffe 1992), constructivist (Graesser, Mills & Zwaan 1997) and event-indexing (Zwaan 1999), and he opts for constructivism. See also Johnson-Laird (1983) and Van Dijk & Kintsch (1983).

¹⁴² A situation model can be quite rich as well: ‘The situation model for a story is a microworld with characters who perform actions in pursuit of goals, events that present obstacles to goals, conflicts between characters, emotional reactions of characters, spatial settings, the style and procedure of actions, objects, properties of objects, traits of characters, and mental states of characters’ (Graesser, Olde and Klettke 2002, pp. 230-231).

aim is to understand a situation, and in this, each model is a representation of a unique situation. The structure of a situation model is functionally analogous to the structure of the situation, which means that it is unlike a coded representation (such as the word ‘dog’ for the thing dog), and in this, similar to a mental image. For instance, if an entity *A* is far away from *B*, *A* is represented to be far away from *B* in the model as well. In contrast, propositionally stating ‘*A* is far away from *B*’ does not represent them analogously as being far apart, they are in fact separated by four words.¹⁴³ Lastly, a situation model in comprehending a narrative is not a static one, it is a dynamically evolving, tracking courses-of-events. Now this is of course one conception of situation models, and it is to be expected that other theorists would disagree.

Let me illustrate with an example. Consider the following passage from *A Moveable Feast*:

The first time I ever met Scott Fitzgerald a very strange thing happened. Many strange things happened with Scott but this one I was never able to forget. He had come into the Dingo bar in the rue Delambre where I was sitting with some completely worthless characters, had introduced himself and introduced a tall, pleasant man who was with him as Dunc Chaplin, the famous pitcher. I had not followed Princeton baseball and had never heard of Dunc Chaplin but he was extraordinarily nice, unworried, relaxed and friendly and I much preferred him to Scott (Hemingway 1964, p. 149).

I am not going to spoil the ‘very strange thing’, but this easy passage can be seen as prompting the reader to construct a situation model of what is going on. The situation model is spatially inside a bar. The reader’s background knowledge situates the bar in Paris and it is the 1920s (it is 1925, just two weeks after the publication of *The Great Gatsby*, to be exact). There is Hemingway with a number of ‘worthless characters’ at a table when Fitzgerald walks in with a ‘tall, pleasant man’. The model also contains the properties of Dunc Chaplin as a famous baseball pitcher, his demeanor as nice and relaxed

¹⁴³ But as Radvansky and Zacks (1997) explain, the situation model is not a ‘veridical copy’ of Euclidean space if it is spatial (p. 176).

and Hemingway's preferring him to Fitzgerald. And this is just the outset of the episode, and as time passes, the model gets updated. In attempting to understand what the story is about, the reader constructs and consults the situation model, so when Hemingway reveals the strange thing that happened, the reader is aware that the situation has begun with Hemingway preferring a baseball player to Fitzgerald when they first met.

An important question about situation models is how they are constructed. I cannot go into the details of the cognitive mechanisms involved and I also cannot convince the skeptic who doubts that there are situation models at all. What I can say, based on the Thesis of Imaginative Response, is this: the imagination has to be involved in constructing situation models, which is in line with what Friend (2008) claims, as quoted above.¹⁴⁴ The issue can be phrased in the following way: can a situation model be constructed without the imagination? If someone wanted to push an affirmative answer, it could go like this: engaging with a narrative, one acquires certain beliefs concerning what the narrative is about. A situation model is constructed by nothing else than the beliefs acquired through this engagement. This would be true if and only if a situation model would be exhausted by the propositional information that the text conveys explicitly and implicitly, but that is not the case. As Philip Johnson-Laird (1983) has already claimed, there are three different types of representation: propositions, mental images and situation models. Propositions represent as strings of symbols, corresponding to natural language. Mental images are perceptual and imply a point-of-view. Situation models are not reducible to or exhausted by either (or both). Therefore, propositional beliefs might be necessary for the construction of situation models, but situation models are not reducible to them.¹⁴⁵ The Thesis of Imaginative Response is safe.

¹⁴⁴ For Ruth M. J. Byrne (2005), the prevalence of situation models in reasoning shows that imagination has a central place in our reasoning processes.

¹⁴⁵ On the differences between situation models and what they call propositional networks and the limitations of the latter, see Radvansky and Zacks (1997, pp. 203-204). The main difference between a situation model and a mental image is that situation models can represent entities, properties and relations that are not perceptible (p. 205). And due to this latter point, the view here is not susceptible to the criticisms of Peter Kivy (2006) about reading literary fiction and mental imagery.

One could worry here that the argument is too quick. Even if one were to grant that situation models are not reducible to the propositional information that a narrative passes on, it is still not clear why the imagination has to be involved. My claim is the following: understanding a narrative requires that one relies on and manipulates information that goes well beyond what is explicitly and propositionally available through the narrative. Much of this information is supplied by one's belief concerning the actual world, the world of the story and the relevant conventions. However, some of it is provided by just one's reasoning which works with the narrative material. Using the imagination is necessary for the latter as the information input is not perceptual but given through narrative medium or media. For instance, to deduce that Fitzgerald must have felt awkward in the situation described above, a piece of information not stated by the text but necessary in understanding it, one has to use one's imagination: imagining how Fitzgerald must have felt. Fitzgerald's feeling then becomes part of the situation model that the reader constructs about what the narrative represents. In this, there is a hypothetical scenario with some explicit information, and one has to imaginatively consider that hypothetical scenario to make some inferences about it. The Thesis of Imaginative Response then is about understand and considering non-actual scenarios that narratives represent.

4. Immersion as an Imaginative State

So far, I have argued for two theses: the Thesis of Imaginative Variation and the Thesis of Imaginative Response. Based on them, both the production and comprehension of narratives involve the imagination: production necessarily involves the cognitive imagination (McGinn 2004), imaginatively thinking through how a story might be told, while comprehension involves the imagination in the construction of situation models. Both of them might and probably often do involve other types of imagination as well: propositional, experiential, sensory and so on. Now the issue that this last section

focuses on is the following: in light of the imagination's involvement in comprehending narratives, how should the phenomenon of immersion be understood?

To begin with, immersion has been studied extensively. It is described by a variety of phrases such as being 'entranced' or 'lost in a book' (Nell 1988), being 'transported' (Gerrig 1998) or 'absorbed' (Harris 2001). Its effects are often studied in connection to how narratives persuade their audiences (Green & Brock 2002, Green & Donahue 2009). Being immersed is an imaginative mental state. Hilary C. Dannenberg's (2008) presents the image of the immersed reader who is 'mentally sinking into the narrative world' in a 'boundary-crossing journey into that world while she nevertheless simultaneously occupies an ontological and a corporeal habitat in the real world' (p. 20).

As Susanna Schellenberg (2013) describes it: 'When we immerse ourselves in a fictional world, we cease to be aware that we are imagining' (p. 507). This is strange as even in non-immersed engagement, one is not necessarily aware of one's imagining, but in any case, I think it is clear that a narrative that one is immersed in need not be fictional. Reading *A Moveable Feast*, one can be immersed in the situation that Hemingway describes as he met Fitzgerald. Schellenberg argues that when one is immersed, one's imaginings or make-beliefs begin to have some characteristics of beliefs in that one begins to take what one imagines to be true. Watching Darth Vader killing Obi-Wan Kenobi, one adopts a make-believe stance. However, in some way, *Star Wars* draws one in and so, being immersed, one ceases to be aware of the fact that one was intended to make-believe the content and one gets closer to believing that this actually happened to Obi-Wan: 'In cases of imaginative immersion, the imagining subject has mental states that are belief-like in that the imagining subject comes close to taking the subject matter of her imagination to be true' (Schellenberg 2013, p. 509).

I think this is not quite what happens in immersion.¹⁴⁶ First of all, as hinted above, this cannot account for imaginative immersion in narratives that are offered as true, in narratives which have

¹⁴⁶ In developing the suggestion, I am broadly in agreement with Shen-yi Liao's (2016) account, but I focus on a set of cases Liao only briefly mentions: being immersed in comprehending narratives. As Liao argues,

content that the audience believes. Being immersed in the Hemingway story, my imaginings do not take belief-like characteristics because they are already beliefs. I am immersed in spite of my completely believing that what I read about happened in the way described. A way to proceed would be that when it comes to being immersed in narratives with believed content, beliefs take on the characteristics of imaginings, but that would require robust argumentative machinery. Secondly and relatedly, this shows that immersion is not a mental state that primarily affects the attitude one takes towards the propositional content of a story. A proposition is either true or not and one either believes it or makes-believe it. Schellenberg suggests that the phenomenon of immersion provides evidence for considering beliefs and imaginings to be on a continuum, where imaginings – in certain circumstances such as immersion – can become more belief-like. However, if one can be immersed in a non-fictional account where the content is believed then immersion cannot serve as evidence in the way Schellenberg wants it to. Still one should also not jump to the conclusion that beliefs and imaginings are therefore *not* on a continuum because, independently of immersion, they could very well be.¹⁴⁷

My view is that immersion does not affect the propositional attitude that one takes to the content of a narrative, rather, it affects the perspective that one takes towards the narrative work. Before going into that, however, I would like to mention the intensity of the imagination, which seems to fall outside of the purview of propositional imagination. It seems straightforward that propositional imagination does not accept varying intensities: it does not make sense to say that I make-believe the fact that Obi-Wan's is killed with more or less intensity. As Currie (2014) argues, there is a difference between 'barely imagining something' and imagination that is accompanied by mental imagery for example: 'We do not simply imagine that Anna Karenina commits suicide: we visualize her falling under

immersion of actors and pretenders should be understood as a matter of awareness and attention: when one becomes immersed in a role, for example, one does not acquire new desires, rather, one gradually loses awareness of her mental states and focuses attention on mental states that she takes her character to have.

¹⁴⁷ For arguments to the contrary see Liao & Doggett (2014). Sinhababu (2016) argues for a perceptual account of imaginative immersion: 'In addition to providing a positive story about imaginative immersion, treating the imagined state of affairs as the content of a perception like state avoids entailing that imaginatively immersed people actually believe to some extent that things are as they imagine' (p. 118).

the wheels, we imagine the sound of the brakes, and we may proprioceptively simulate the act of falling' (p. 360). A narrative such as *Anna Karenina* (or *A Moveable Feast*) sets up a context, in which the reader has followed a story, in which she is invested or immersed to some degree, and this does not depend solely on propositional imagination. According to Currie, reading *Anna Karenina*, I imagine that she commits suicide, just as someone who has never read the work can imagine when told about it, and the two would have the same propositional attitude (make-believe) to the same proposition (Anna Karenina commits suicide). The difference is that having followed Tolstoy's narrative, the imaginations accompanying the make-believe are quite intense, and immersion is typically accompanied and facilitated by intense episodes of non-propositional imagining.

Now going back to the previous section's main idea about situation models, narrative comprehension requires the imaginative construction of situation models which contain what the narrative is about. Being immersed in a narrative would thus mean being immersed in the situation model one has constructed. This is independent of the situation having obtained or being imaginary. Independently of whether one believes or makes-believe the propositional content, when one is immersed in being engaged with a narrative, one adopts an 'internal perspective' to it at the expense of an 'external perspective'.¹⁴⁸ These are terms borrowed from Peter Lamarque and Stein Olsen (1994). Taking an internal perspective means to be engaged with the representational content and losing sight of the fact that it is a representation. From the external perspective, things are the other way around as one focuses on the artifice of representation. To illustrate with an example: 'Who created Frankenstein's monster? One answer, from the internal perspective, is of course: Frankenstein. Only from the external point of view must the reply be: Mary Shelley' (p. 145). Or more generally: 'To reflect

¹⁴⁸ As Liao (2016) writes: 'When people are immersed in a book—or more precisely, immersed in an imaginative engagement with a book—they are attentive to information about fictional contents of the book rather than information about the book itself. They attend to the happenings of the fictional world, the dialogues between fictional characters, and other features of the fiction; they do not attend to the writing style, the plot structure, and other features about the book itself' (p. 12). This again should not be restricted to fiction.

on characters from the internal perspective is to reflect on them as *persons*, while to identify them from the external perspective is to identify them as *characters*' (p. 146).

Again this is focused on fiction, but it does not have to be. To be sure, Hemingway did not create Fitzgerald, so the difference between the internal and the external perspectives have to cashed out differently than when some content is made-up or invented. To stick with the person-character distinction, Fitzgerald is definitely a person, no matter what perspective one takes, which is not true for Obi-Wan Kenobi, who is a person only from an internal perspective. But like Obi-Wan Kenobi, Fitzgerald is also a character from the external perspective. Consider the praise 'Obi-Wan Kenobi is a well thought-out character'. This cannot be applied to Fitzgerald in *A Moveable Feast* because he is not 'thought-out' by Hemingway. However, Hemingway can indeed be praised for the way he represents Fitzgerald as someone who is difficult to approach, for instance. In doing so, one focuses on the artifice of Hemingway in how he depicts Fitzgerald.

The difference is this: when a narrative is about some made-up content such as Obi-Wan Kenobi, the questions of the internal-perspective such as 'why did Obi-Wan Kenobi kill Darth Vader?' ask for an 'as if' answer: we answer as if these characters were persons. 'Darth Vader killed him because he was one of the dangerous threats to the Galactic Empire'. In the case of Fitzgerald, such as 'why did not Hemingway like Fitzgerald when they first met?', the answer is not an 'as if': we think about them as we think of persons in any ordinary case. That aside, there is no fundamental difference in the types of answers for external perspective questions: what were the filmmakers' reason for including the episode in the way they included it might be 'to move the plot forward', which can similarly motivate someone like Hemingway, even when he writes about events that took place.

In any case, irrespective of fictionality and made-up content, audiences can take internal and external perspectives to narratives. The internal perspective and the external perspective are on a continuum. If one is immersed in Hemingway's story of meeting Fitzgerald, one takes a largely internal perspective, losing awareness of the artifice of representation in Hemingway's work, being caught up

in the conjured images and evoked emotions of the situation. In this, I am in agreement with Liao and Doggett (2014), who state that Schellenberg is right to emphasize that in immersion one tends not to be aware that one is imagining or to not think consciously that one is imagining, but that this does not mean that they are in a mental state which is vaguely between imagination and belief (p. 270). It is important to note that this should not be taken to mean that if one is not immersed, one is constantly conscious about one's imaginative endeavor only that it is not difficult to turn one's attention to the artifice of the work's prompting the imagination. When not immersed, one is likely to pay attention to features of the work *as a work* instead of being lost in the represented content.

Regarding the contrast between internal and the external perspectives, it is an interesting question what is true in a non-fictional story such as *A Moveable Feast*. Imagine that Hemingway was wrong about meeting Fitzgerald for the first time in the Dingo bar, and they had met years before at a different place, which occasion Hemingway forgot. The question then is: is it true in *A Moveable Feast* that they met in the Dingo bar for the first time or not? Taking the internal perspective, if there is no reason to suppose that the narrator is unreliable, he has to be believed, they met there for the first time even if they, in actuality, did not. However, if one is aware of the fact that Hemingway was wrong here, the immersion that sustains the internal perspective can break: one easily slips back into the external perspective, looking at the work *as a work*, smiling at the fact that Hemingway was wrong. From the external perspective, it is still true in the story that Hemingway met Fitzgerald at the Dingo bar for the first time, however, one now pays attention to the fact that there is a discrepancy between what is true in the story and what is actually true. The same, quite clearly, do not apply to paradigmatically fictional works: there is no analogue of this situation for *The Lord of the Rings*, but this does not mean that the internal and the external perspectives are not on a continuum. They still are in both fictional and non-fictional narratives.

Lastly, it has to be mentioned that there are numerous narratives that block or keep immersion at bay. It is enough to think of the contemporary metafictional trend. For instance, one of Italo

Calvino's (1981) novels starts out like this: 'You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a winter's night a traveler*. Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world around you fade' (p. 3). This is witty because it fakes a setup for immersion: how would the reader be able to let the world around her fade when the book she is reading constantly calls attention to it?¹⁴⁹ This is a process counter to immersion: expulsion. As Dannenberg (2008) puts it: 'the reader is forcefully ejected from her mental sojourn within the narrative world' (p. 23). The Calvino work is an extreme example as are contemporary metafictional novels and films. There are ordinary expulsive techniques: changing storylines, for instance, or structuring a work with chapter headings. These all go counter towards immersion because they disrupt the engagement, and even if minimally, such as a chapter title, they call attention to the artifice involved and bring back the need to approach the work from an external perspective.¹⁵⁰ Altogether, immersion is an imaginative mental state, often accompanied and facilitated by various forms of imagination, and being immersed, one takes an internal perspective to a narrative work at the expense of an external one.

5. Conclusion

To conclude this final chapter, my aim was to argue that narratives necessarily involve the imagination both in creation and in comprehension. This follows the recent accounts of Stacie Friend (2008, 2012) and Derek Matravers (2014), who both call the definitional relationship between fiction and imagination into question. I have argued for the Thesis of Imaginative Variation, which states that in creating a narrative, the storyteller's cognitive imagination (McGinn 2004; Byrne 2005) is engaged in

¹⁴⁹ As Ryan (2001) says, it is 'a tale of frustrated immersion: as soon as a fictional world begins to solidify around the reader, he is expelled from it and must start all over again' (p. 168).

¹⁵⁰ Even though they restrict their claim to fiction, which I do not think is necessary, a similar point is made by Lamarque and Olsen (1994): 'Being "caught up" in fictional worlds and at the same time recognizing their fictionality involves a delicate balance—even a tension—which certainly accounts for much of the pleasure and value of imaginative works of art' (p. 145).

imaginatively thinking through the varieties of which events to include and how to include them. I then argued for the Thesis of Imaginative Response, which is based on the theory of situation models (specifically Radvansky and Zacks 1997). Situation models are representations distinct from propositions and from mental imagery, and their construction is often prompted by the need to understand the situations that narratives depict.

Emphasizing the distinctness of situation models has allowed me to criticize the account of immersion offered by Susanna Schellenberg (2013). Immersion is an extremely important state for the study of imagination. I consider immersion not as affecting propositional imagination but rather as having to do with the perspective one takes to a narrative, often facilitated and accompanied by intense non-propositional forms of imagination (Currie 2014). Immersion is best described as an imaginative mental state in which one takes up an internal perspective at the expense of an external one (Lamarque and Olsen 1994). All in all, I have sought to offer a novel account of the imagination's robust involvement in storytelling activities which I think are prevalent in numerous areas of human life.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, I want to focus on what the doctoral thesis achieved. I set out to explore some issues that come up in connection to the notion of 'narrative' and the pervasive socio-cultural practice of storytelling. In this the main area of investigation was the philosophy of art, but other areas of philosophy were also brought into the discussion: philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, metaphysics and epistemology among others. As producing and consuming narratives are such important activities in ordinary, everyday life, they provide motivation to approach them in a philosophical manner. Doing so, I clarified and elaborated on crucial concepts, presented and defended

original views about central matters and put forth novel arguments with respect to a small but significant set of issues. Moreover, since there is considerable theoretical interest in narrative in academic disciplines outside of philosophy, it was one of the aims to establish certain connections with psychology, literary studies, and history, to mention a few.

Chapter I ('Definitions: The Narrative Patchwork') began with the foundational project of defining what 'narrative' is. Works that tell stories are narrative artifacts, however, narrative artifacts are patchworks, put together of narrative and non-narrative elements. A narrative element was stipulated to be an abstract entity, an element in a work that represents the transformation of a unified subject. If such narrative elements are dominant in an artifact, the artifact belongs in the category of narrative. The chapter also presented some of the most important aspects of narrative artifacts: first, that they are representations of events, and what can be called a 'story' is a sequence of events that is represented by a 'telling' – a narrative. Second, narratives often, but not always, make sense of the events and actions they represent: they offer an explanation for understanding. Thirdly, the successfully executed intention to tell a story is necessary but not sufficient for producing a narrative artifact. It is necessary, narrative artifacts cannot be produced without such an intention, but not sufficient because some non-narrative artifacts contain narrative elements that tell stories.

Chapter II ('Truth: Fiction and History') was about truth in the sense of what is often called a 'true story'. Many works of history and of fiction are narrative artifacts. Some philosophers and theorists are skeptical about the possibility of constructing narratives that are true and argue that narrative is inherently 'fictionalizing'. I argued to the contrary that it is possible for a narrative to be true. Afterwards, I looked at the debate in the philosophy of fiction about whether fictional narratives can be true. Some philosophers of an intentionalist persuasion claim that fiction can be accidentally true. I argued to the contrary in this chapter: fictionality and truth are incompatible. I distinguished narratives based on whether they contain invented characters or not, and offered respective sets of

arguments to the effect that there is no case when a fiction is accidentally true. A narrative is either fiction or accidentally true but not both.

Chapter III ('Truth: Narrative and Knowledge') tackled the issue whether narratives of art, literary ones in particular, provide audiences with truths. In the philosophy of art, the debate is about the cognitive value of literature. The main question is phrased in various ways. Can literary narratives provide knowledge? Can readers learn from works of literature? This chapter offered a new line of argument in departing from propositional truth, arguing that literary narratives provide aesthetically significant knowledge, however, that this knowledge cannot be captured in propositional form. My position depends crucially on Frank Jackson's influential knowledge argument. The chapter described a modified 'What Mary Didn't Read' case. In doing so, it is argued that the knowledge literary works provide should be understood as a type of experiential knowing of 'what it is like' analogous to what Mary acquires in the original case of seeing the color red for the first time.

Chapter IV ('Meaning: Experience and Imagination') is about the experiences of readers of literary narratives and the experiences of characters, imaginary or not. The chapter described that narratives can evoke experiences in many ways, experiences that are not necessary ones of characters that the narratives are about. However, when they are of characters, narratives do provide the opportunity to empathetically imagine having the experiences that characters have. Even though philosophers have valid concerns about how empathy applies to our engagement with art, the chapter defended the view that empathy has a role to play. In the end, the main argument was that there is a crucial difference between the experiences of characters and the empathetic imaginings of these: when a reader empathetically imagines having experiences of a character, the experiences for the reader are imbued with meaning. Meaning here is understood as meaningfulness that comes from the experiences being part of and being embedded in the larger context of an artwork, in connection to other experiences, events and actions.

Chapter V ('Meaning: Intentions and Interpretations') employed the notion of 'meaning' in a different way. It is often thought that understanding artworks, in a way, has to do with the understanding of meaning: what an artwork means. However, some argue that it is best not to use 'meaning' as an umbrella term for covering our engagement with artworks. Furthermore, a dominant view in philosophy is that artworks have to be understood with reference to artists' intentions because they are intentional, communicative products. Siding with those who do not believe 'meaning' is the ultimate target of interpretation, the chapter made some distinctions, and different interpretive projects were identified: 'narrative interpretation' for what is going on in a story, 'thematic interpretation' for the themes that a story develops and 'functional interpretation' for how certain details function. The position outlined was a qualified non-intentionalist one: I argued that narrative interpretation has to take storytelling intentions into account but thematic and theme-related functional interpretations do not.

Chapter VI ('Mind: Narrative and Identity') put forth a view about the role that narratives play in connection to personal identity. In the philosophy of mind, the issue of personal identity is about questions such as: what kind of beings human beings are? How to identify the characteristics of particular human person (who the person is) and what makes a person at a time identical with a person at another time? Besides animalism and various psychological views, one important answer here is narrativist: narratives, in some sense, constitute one's self and identity. While I agree that narratives are important for identity, I think that such views often misconstrue the roles narrative play, and I offered some arguments to demonstrate this. I then outlined 'The Communicative View of Narrative Identity', which locates the role of narratives in the domain of communication: narratives, reveal who one is and who one takes oneself to be, intentionally and unintentionally. Unlike other modes of discourse, narratives are especially suited for this. I further argued that narratives provide access to knowledge about who one is and whether one is the same person as before, and moreover, they are important tools for shaping and forming ourselves.

Chapter VII ('Mind: Narrative and Imagination') was concerned with how narratives affect the imagination. An orthodoxy in the philosophy of fiction, which was recently challenged, is that fiction should be demarcated from non-fiction by intended response: the creator of non-fiction, such as an historian, intends the contents of her work to be believed while the creator of fiction, such as a fiction novelist, intends the contents of her work to be made-believe or imagined. Imagination belongs to fiction. I argued against the orthodoxy by investigating the ways in which all narratives, irrespective of fictionality, engage the imagination, more specifically, the cognitive imagination. They do so both in creation, when the creator's imagination is at work, and in comprehension, where the audience's imagination is affected. Finally, the chapter closed with an argument about immersion as an imaginative state of being absorbed in narratives.

Altogether, the main area of research interest in the thesis covers a variety of questions, problems and issues in connection to the notion of 'narrative'. It is not only the case that philosophers and academics are intrigued by narrative, the notion has a life outside of academia. Most people in most cultures tell stories. They narrate, and they are interested in the stories other people tell. Children learn to tell stories at a relatively young age, and according to some, they are initiated into understanding others, mental states, experiences, actions and behaviors, mostly through what they learn by telling stories and listening to them. As telling stories is such a prevalent activity in numerous societies and cultures, it is important to approach it philosophically. My main aim has been to get clear on certain concepts, propose and defend views and develop novel arguments about narrative that contribute to contemporary debates in philosophy and also to our understanding of certain issues and phenomena in connection to telling stories. In this, philosophical enquiry interacts with other disciplines, particularly ones that conduct empirical research into the notion of narrative and into the ways in which people tell stories in various contexts.

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