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THE INTENTIONAL RELEVANCE: FICTIONAL ENTITIES AND INTERPRETATION

1. INTRODUCTION

The philosophical and critical dispute about the relevance of authorial intentions has been quite lengthy and is, as it seems, irresolvable. Ever since the publication of the well known Beardsley-Wimsatt essay on the alleged 'intentional fallacy',[1] according to which the author's intentions are always irrelevant to the interpretation and evaluation of a literary work, there has been a continuous stream of contributions to this issue.[2] With a few exceptions, a case has been made, in a general way, for either party of the controversy; general arguments have been put forward either for or against the general relevance of authorial intention to the critical enterprise.

      The disadvantages of such general approaches do not have to be stressed here. Suffice it to say that criticism comprises a variety of activities, governed by various critical ideals, and that the relevance of the author's intentions to these activities cannot, as it were, be rejected or accepted in an a priori fashion without rather detailed considerations of each activity; nor should only one type of critical activity be used as a paradigm of the others, not without argument or demonstration, at least.

      In this essay, I intend to examine a kind of interpretive activity to which, as it seems, knowledge or hypotheses about the author's intentions are relevant in a sense to be specified. This interpretive activity has as its main goal to establish what entities are part of the world of a literary work of fiction.

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[1] M.C. Beardsley and W.K. Wimsatt, 'The Intentional Fallacy', *Sewanee Review*, 1946, vol. 54, pp. 3-23; reprinted in several books, e.g., in J. Margolis (ed.), *Philosophy Looks at the Arts*, 3d edn., Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987, pp. 367-380.

[2] Among these contributions are, e.g., the following: A. Barnes, *On Interpretation: A Critical Analysis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; J.M. Ellis, *The Theory of Literary Criticism: A Logical Analysis*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974; E.D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967; P.D. Juhl, *Interpretation: An Essay in the Philosophy of Literary Criticism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983; S.H. Olsen, *The Structure of Literary Understanding*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978; R. Shusterman, *The Object of Literary Criticism*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1984.

2. INTERPRETATION: FIXING THE FICTIONAL ENTITIES OF A WORK

One possible description of the objective of an interpreter of a literary work of fiction is that he wishes to establish what are the fictional entities of that work, that is to say, roughly, what characters, events, actions, states of affairs, and other phenomena, are items of the work, and how they are related. This is, of course, not the only possible description of an interpreter's objective; nor is it an exhaustive one. Nevertheless, it is a description which is true of many actual instances of critical work; it is also a description of the kind of case to be discussed here.

Interpretations may be classified along different lines. I have not yet seen any classification which is extensionally adequate as well as based on nonoverlapping divisions. But, in order to provide a taxonomic framework for the kind of case to be discussed here, let me use Monroe Beardsley's well known categorization of literary interpretations as a point of departure. Beardsley, as we recall, presents a threefold division of interpretations in his *Aesthetics:* explication, elucidation, and interpretation (in the narrow sense), respectively. To explicate a literary work is to determine the linguistic meanings of the words and sentences in it; to elucidate it is to determine the narrative structure, the situation and their constitutive components; and, finally, to interpret (in the narrow sense) is to establish the theme and/or theses of the work, if such there are.[3] Obviously, these different types overlap and are conceptually related to each other in various ways.

The case to be highlighted in the present context, i.e., that of establishing or fixing the fictional entities of a work, seems to belong to the category of *elucidating* a work. Beardsley introduces this interpretative category as follows:

> The situation in a literary work, or its chain of events, if it is
> a narrative, is always more than the work explicitly states....
> Part of what is involved in coming to understand a literary
> work is this process of filling out our knowledge of what is
> going on, beyond what is overtly presented. I shall call this
> process ... the *elucidation* of the work (p. 242).

To my mind, the problems of elucidation are of two different sorts.

(i) The first step is to fix the fictional entities of the work, i.e., to *identify* what characters, events, actions, situations, etc., are items of the work.

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[3]*Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, 2nd edn., Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981, pp. 129, 242, 403.

For instance, the reader of the British author Dennis Potter's recent novel *Blackeyes* may ask himself whose death is actually rendered on the last pages of the novel: Is it Jessica, one of the main characters, who dies? Or is it the girl Blackeyes in the novel-in-the-novel, written by Jessica's uncle who unscrupulously used Jessica as his model of Blackeyes? A more subtle question yet which may enter into the reader's mind is whether Jessica and Blackeyes really are distinct fictional characters in the novel. Perhaps they are one and the same, in which case they would constitute one single fictional entity of the work.

(*ii*) The second step is to *explain* the character or the features of the fictional entities which have been identified. A classical problem in the criticism of *Hamlet,* to take an example, concerns the explanation of Hamlet's act of delaying: What are his reasons for doing so, if any at all? Another interpretive issue is whether Hamlet is mad or not, or, rather, whether by introducing the madness–hypothesis one is able to explain some important traits and actions of Hamlet.

That (*i*) is the first step to take in elucidating a work is fairly obvious; (*ii*) presupposes that (*i*) has been settled. However, sometimes (*i*) is bypassed without much reflection by the reader since the work does not present any difficulties on that level; to identify the fictional entities is altogether unproblematic. Instead, in those cases, it is on level (*ii*) the real problems are. But this does not mean that there are cases where (*i*) is not involved. Rather, it is that an answer to the identificational problems is implied or tacitly taken for granted in (*ii*).

In what follows, I will mainly discuss (*i*), i.e., elucidation on the identificational level. I say 'mainly' because there are, to be sure, cases where the boundary between identification and explanation is not very sharp. As regards these cases, there are good reasons for construing them both as identificational and as explanatory elucidations; to wit, in some respects they appear to be identifications and in others explanations, and there is no way to answer decisively, and unambiguously, what they are.

Suppose, for instance, that you try to construe the order of events occurring in a novel which is utterly complex. In that case you might be said to make an effort to fix the fictional entity 'the plot of the novel'. Clearly, this is an identificational matter, it might be contended. But suppose further that the novel includes an episode which strikes you as very puzzling, and that construing the entire plot in a certain way makes this episode more intelligible than does any other available alternative. Here it seems appropriate to refer to your fixing the plot as an act of explanation. Then, what is it — identification or explanation?

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I think that, to avoid these problems, one ought not to regard identification and explanation as distinct *species* of elucidation but rather as different *levels* of elucidation. The latter admits that one single task of elucidation, e.g., to fix the plot, may function on different levels depending upon what reasons the interpreter has for accomplishing it. Naturally, one could also view identification and explanation as *ideal types* of elucidation, that is, types which are neither perfectly nor purely instantiated in practice but nonetheless theoretically fruitful to introduce in explaining the practice.

Nicholas Wolterstorff makes a distinction between two different interpretive activities which, at a first glance, may seem to coincide with the distinction just made between identification and explanation. On the one hand, he singles out 'the activity of discovering what it is that an author has indicated' which he refers to as 'elucidation', and on the other hand, 'the activity of determining what is included in the projected world beyond what the author indicated' which he calls 'extrapolation'.[4] But this distinction is not identical with the one I wish to make. 'Elucidation', in Wolterstorff's usage, is not the same as 'identificational elucidation', in my usage; and 'extrapolation' is not the same as 'explanatory elucidation'. First of all, 'elucidation' denotes, according to him, the act of 'discovering' what is either *explicitly* or *implicitly* indicated in the work. But to *identify* the fictional entities, however, *might* mean to 'discover' something which is, by virtue of the text alone, indicated implicitly but *not* explicitly in the work. However, in a lot of cases it may *also* involve an imaginative *invention* on the reader's behalf which adds something to what he perceives as explicitly or implicitly stated in the work. Thus, identificational elucidations can *sometimes* be viewed as 'elucidations' (in Wolterstorff's sense) but sometimes *not*. Secondly, what I have referred to as 'explanatory elucidations' in some cases, but not all, are Wolterstorffian extrapolations. The explanation of, e.g., a fictional event may very well be (explicitly or implicitly) indicated by the author in the work.

I prefer the distinction between identification and explanation to Wolterstorff's between elucidation and extrapolation, because it focuses on traits of the interpretive activity itself and not on those of the object of that activity. The notion underlying Wolterstorff's distinction is the dichotomy between what is internal and what is external to the work, respectively; this notion I find problematic for a number of reasons, both conceptual and practical ones. There are, for instance, cases where it is a matter of interpretation just to tell what is internal and external to the work in question. Furthermore, Wolterstorff uses this notion in a way which I find very hard to

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[4]N. Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, p. 116.

grasp. For example, in extrapolating a work one goes 'beyond what the author has indicated' explicitly or implicitly in the work, but what is thus found 'beyond' the author's indications is, at the same time, somehow 'included' in the world of the work. This is, to be sure, in need of further clarification.

Wolterstorff tries to spell out the relationship between, on the one hand, 'what is indicated in the work' and, on the other, 'what is included in the world of the work' by introducing the concept of a 'strand':

> ...assemble what the author has indicated into conjunctions each of which is possible of occurring and each of which is as comprehensive as such. Conjoin with each such conjunction whatever is required by it. Call the result a 'strand'. Extrapolation would then be based on these strands. And the world projected by way of a text could be conceived as including what the author has indicated, plus the strands derived from that.[5]

The following comments are called for. I find it difficult to separate what is implied by a text from what it requires, given that it is correct to understand 'required' in the quotation above as 'presupposed' or 'assumed'. That is to say, the Wolterstorffian 'strands' seem to me to be nothing but implications (i.e., implications of what is explicitly and/or implicitly indicated). And provided that this is correct, then extrapolation—being 'based' on the 'strands'—collapses into elucidation. Furthermore, as a consequence Wolterstorff's principle of what is included in the world of a work becomes very unrestrictive. For instance, it would include necessary truths as items of a work's world, since a 'necessary truth is entailed by every proposition whatsoever' *(ibid.,* p. 117). In my view, it is not *obviously* true that a fictional world has to include every necessary truth, especially not 'the most exotic truths of logic and mathematics' *(loc. cit.).* On the other hand, the principle suggests that there are answers to questions like, 'What shoe size does Hamlet have?', since the play indeed implies that Hamlet has a pair of feet and the property of having a pair of feet 'requires' that the feet be of a certain size. But in my view nothing such is included in the world of *Hamlet,* because there is no *evidence* whatsoever in the play to use in support of a hypothesis or a conjecture to the effect that Hamlet has this or that particular shoe size. Fictional worlds are incomplete in the sense that many conceivable statements about them are radically undecidable.[6]

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[5]Ibid., p. 118.

[6]I entirely agree with D.K. Lewis that questions like 'What shoe size did Hamlet have', or—to use Lewis's own example—'What is Inspector Lestrade's blood type?', are 'silly questions' to which all propounded answers are neither true nor false statements. Cf. Lewis, 'Truth in Fiction', *American Philosophical Quarterly,* 1978, vol. 15, p. 43. Other philosophers who have

Someone might raise the objection that what I have called 'identification' really is not an interpretive matter at all. To identify the fictional entities of a work, it may be argued, is part of *describing* the work and not of interpreting it. But, to begin with, I am not sure whether there is a clear and easily made distinction to be drawn between description and interpretation. Nor do I believe that, once distinguished, they can be sharply separated.

What could be offered as a rationale for the division between description and interpretation? A common answer is that x is described, rather than interpreted, as having the feature F, only if x can be easily seen or grasped or inferred to have F. Another way of putting this is to say that x's possessing F does not present an epistemic problem.[7] However, if this is correct, then it is also clear that not all tokens of identifying the fictional entities of a work are descriptions in this sense. This is true of the examples advanced above collected from Potter's *Blackeyes*, and also, I believe, as regards many cases of uncovering a novel's plot. Furthermore, the medium of a literary work is the verbal one. This means automatically that no 'seeing' nor 'grasping' can occur *immediately*; a minimal, mediating element of interpretation is always logically and temporally prior to description. This includes conceptual as well as linguistic interpretation. So, in saying that x is easily seen or grasped or inferred to have F, in the context of a literary work at least, one presupposes many things about the reader's background knowledge and intellectual capacities, and perhaps also about what is (considered to be) 'normal' in the relevant context. For these reasons, I am not too happy about this way of distinguishing description from interpretation. A closer look at it would probably reveal a host of basic philosophical distinctions concatenated in a way apt to be misleading. These include, e.g., the distinctions between the objective and the subjective, the immediate and the mediate, knowledge and opinion, and so forth.

As Annette Barnes has observed in her recent book,[8] there are mainly two current modes of construing the relationship between descriptions and interpretations. In the context of literary theory, interpretations are often

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analyzed the problems connected with the incompleteness of fictional worlds include: L. Dolezel, 'Mimesis and Possible Worlds', *Poetics Today*, 1988:3, vol. 19, pp. 477-496; J. Heintz, 'Reference and Inference in Fiction', *Poetics*, 1979, vol. 8, pp. 85-99; R. Howell, 'Fictional Objects: How They Are and How They Are Not', *Poetics*, 1979, vol. 8, pp. 129-177; R. Ronen, 'Completing the Incompleteness of Fictional Entities', *Poetics Today*, 1988:3, vol. 19, pp. 497-513; T. Parsons, *Nonexistent Objects*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980, pp. 182-185; N. Wolterstorff, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-134.

[7] According to R. Matthews, 'Interpreting and Describing a Work of Art', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 1977, vol. 36, pp. 7-8, x is *described* as F by P, only if P is in a position to know (in a strong sense) whether x is F; as a contrast, x is *interpreted* as F, only if P is *not* in a position to know (in the required sense) that x is F.

[8] See A. Barnes, *op. cit.*, ch. 8.

separated from descriptions to the effect that interpretations but not descriptions involve claims of meaning. This is often accompanied by the allegation that you interpret the unknown and describe the obvious. According to a broader construal, however, a description is any classification which uses linguistic labels with either singular, multiple, or null reference. On this account, thus, all interpretations which are composed of words (with the kinds of reference referred to above)—written, spoken, or, perhaps, only thought of—are descriptions. I prefer this latter way of using the word 'description'. This usage has the great advantage, in the present context, of eliminating the (pseudo)problem of whether identificational elucidations are descriptions or interpretations. It is certain phenomena in criticism that I am interested in here, not whether they properly be designated by this or that name.

3. THE NOTION OF A FICTIONAL ENTITY

Having thus demarcated the interpretive activity of fixing the fictional entities of a work, it is necessary to say something about the key concept 'fictional entity'. What is a fictional entity? And what kinds of phenomena are to be counted as fictional entities?

In a general sense the expression 'x is a fictional entity' is equivalent to 'x is invented or imagined'.[9] This sense reflects a common way of thinking according to which the fictional is opposed to what is *real*. I prefer, however, to contrast the fictional, in this general sense, to what is *factual* or *a matter of fact*. Suppose, for instance, that during my sleep I dream of a unicorn. Unicorns are invented or imagined entities; they do not exist as a matter of fact. But in a sense yet they *may* be said to be real; to wit, as objects of thought (or imagination, etc.)—they are *intentional objects*, in the phenomenological sense of the word. And in the case of unicorns and similar fictions we do not face *idiosyncratic* objects of imagination but instead conventional and *culturally shared* such objects which assume a kind of reality or existence in a particular cultural setting. Unicorns are or may be spoken of, referred to, depicted, and so forth, in a way which is perfectly intelligible to informed members of our culture and its historical precedents. Thus, there are no unicorns as a matter of fact; yet they are real in being culturally shared objects with conventionally fixed properties.

[9]See, e.g., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* where the entries for 'fiction', 'fictitious', and 'fictive', list the following traits: 'thing feigned or imagined, invented statement or narrative', 'assumed, imaginary, unreal', 'created by imagination'.

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This general sense of 'fictional entity' is, however, both broader and narrower than the one I will make use of in this context. A preliminary definition of the notion I will make use of in this context would read as follows:

> 'x is a fictional entity' = $_{def.}$ 'x *is* an entity which is explicitly or implicitly referred to, or otherwise suggested, in a literary work of fiction'.

This definition is broader than the general definition referred to above in that it allows that also entities which exist as a matter of fact may be fictional entities, if they are parts of a literary work of fiction. As is well known, novels often are about, or include references to, persons, locations, events, and so forth, which exist or have existed as a matter of fact. For instance, in Conan Doyle's stories about Sherlock Holmes, London town plays an important and prominent part.

Terence Parsons classifies fictional entities along the following lines: *(i)* Entities which are *native* to the work of fiction (i.e., entities created or invented in the particular work and which carry only those attributes ascribed to them in the course of the story); *(ii)* Entities which are *immigrant* to the work of fiction (i.e., they have 'emigrated' from either another artwork or the actual world); *(iii)* Entities which are *surrogate* entities (i.e., entities which 'stand in' for actual entities).[10] I have difficulties in seeing any substantial difference between *(ii)* and *(iii)*. Parsons seems to suggest that surrogate entities differ from immigrant entities in that they constitute *versions* of the actual entities. Conan Doyle's London is, according to Parsons, a surrogate entity; it stands in for the actual London and provides a version of it. I am not, however, sure that *(iii)* makes an extra explanatory contribution to this issue;

it is a subclass of *(ii)*, I would say. But the question of how fictional entities with counterparts in the actual world are related to these counterparts is indeed ontologically and phenomenologically intriguing. Does the 'immigration' to the fictional world carry with it a change of identity? Or is the identity of the 'immigrant' preserved?[11]

I As can be seen, the definition above is also narrower than the general definition. It excludes imaginary or invented entities which are not embedded within the frames of a literary work of fiction. I wish to suggest here that the presence of such frames is significant, and that the distinction between

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[10] T. Parsons, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.

[11] I discuss this problem more in detail in my 'The Nature of Fictional Entities', in J. Emt & G. Hermerén (eds.), *Understanding the Arts: Contemporary Aesthetics in Scandinavia*, ('Studies in Aesthetics'), Lund: Lund University Press, 1992.

imagined (or invented) entities *simpliciter*, and imagined (or invented) entities which are parts of the world of a literary work of fiction, is fruitful to make also outside the present context. As I said in the discussion of unicorns above, the conventional and cultural setting adds something important to the mere imaginative aspects. Literary works are cultural objects the creation of which is guided by an adherence to, or, in the case of radical innovations, a deliberate disadherence to a set of conventionally defined rules.[12] These rules provide a culturally shared framework.

The central notion in the definition is, of course, that of a literary work of fiction. And what is central in the present discussion is under what circumstances x should be said to be an entity which is included in such a work; the terms in the definiens ('explicitly or implicitly referred to, or otherwise suggested') are not very informative and the underlying idea is in need of further clarification and elaboration. These questions will be dealt with in the next two sections.

4. BEING A LITERARY WORK OF FICTION

Let me first, in brief, consider the notion of a literary work of fiction. Sometimes it is suggested that there is a specific kind of literary or poetic discourse which differs from other kinds of discourse in important respects, and that these respects constitute defining characteristics of literary works (of fiction).

There are two main ways to construe this allegedly characteristic difference.

(i) Sometimes it is argued that literary works differ from other pieces of language in that they exhibit certain aesthetic properties (e.g., beauty or significant unity) or have been created with a guiding aesthetic concern (e.g., to provide something beautiful or significantly unified).[13] However, apart from

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[12]Although, not even in the case of extremely radical innovations, the deviation from the conventional rules is never *complete*. Some rules are followed, whereas some are not; if there was no compliance at all, there would be no reason to classify the object as a literary work. Probably the talk of radical innovations is operative when the author deliberately has deviated from what has, up to that point, been conceived of as the *central* or *essential* rules of the set but not *all* the rules.

[13]According to Monroe Beardsley, 'Redefining Art', in D.M. Callen and M.J. Wreen (eds.), *The Aesthetic Point of View. Selected Essays by Monroe C. Beardsley*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982, p. 305, a literary or 'fictional text', as opposed to an 'ordinary' piece of language, is characterized by its being produced with a guiding 'intention to provide a possible source of aesthetically qualified experience[s]'. He does concede, however, that the same piece of language may, in principle, be used either as, for instance, a practical communication or as (a part of) a work of fiction. As a matter of fact, Beardsley hovers

being somewhat muddled, these notions of the aesthetic are not sufficient for distinguishing literary works from other pieces of writing. Given a pretheoretic understanding of 'aesthetic', also nonliterary and nonfictional pieces of language may be experienced or evaluated as aesthetically successful, and they may have been written with an aesthetic intent to provide, say, something beautiful or the like (although this is, probably, not the primary purpose). Nor is the aesthetic criterion a necessary one; it is not hard to think of works of fiction lacking in a guiding aesthetic concern, e.g., political novels written in a reportage-like or documentary style where the overriding purpose is make a political statement of some sort.

(ii) On the other hand it is commonly believed, among theorists of literature at least, that a literary work of fiction is distinct in kind from other written works in virtue of some formal features of discourse. But, as Peter Lamarque[14] has observed, there is no set of such properties which is either necessary or sufficient for the property 'being a work of fiction'. There are, for instance, no syntactic and stylistic features which can be used to mark the distinction between fictional works and nonfictional ones, e.g., pieces of historical writing. Surely enough, some such features are more frequent in works of fiction. But it is not possible to rule out that there are works of fiction in which they do not occur, and that there are pieces of nonfiction where they do occur. Nor can the class of literary works of fiction be demarcated in terms of a set of semantic properties, such as truth and reference. Properties of this kind are not necessary just in case the descriptions in the work actually are true of, or refer to, things in the world outside the world of fiction, and not sufficient because a nonfictional work 'might just fail in its own references and descriptions'.[15]

In view of all this, there are reasons to believe that (at least part of) what characterizes the property of being a work of fiction—or 'fictionality', as we may call it—is to be found on the pragmatic level of language, the prospects for finding a set of formal and/or intrinsic properties of language, on the one hand, and aesthetic properties (or intended aesthetic properties), on the other, being rather meagre. Here I find myself in agreement with several writers on the theory of fiction, such as R.M. Gale, Peter Lamarque, and John

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between two different positions: (i) that the distinguishing feature of literary works of fiction is that they are created with a guiding aesthetic purpose, and; (ii) that the distinguishing feature is the manner in which they are *used* by the authors and recipients, and in what kind of *context*.

[14]P. Lamarque, 'Fiction and Reality', in P. Lamarque (ed.), *Philosophy and Fiction: Essays in Literary Aesthetics*, Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1983, pp. 53.
[15]Loc. cit.

Searle,[16] in that I take the author's intentions to be what (partly) determines fictionality. Let us, for convenience, refer to these intentions as 'the intention to fictionalize'. Consider the following statement:

> Gregor Samsa was transformed into an insect

Suppose that Franz Kafka had been a historian and that *The Transformation* was presented as Gregor Samsa's biography, in which case Kafka would have had the intention to provide facts about Gregor Samsa's life, or, if he was deceitful, to present what he knew was not true as facts about Gregor Samsa's life. But, irrespective of whether he was honest or deceitful, his use of the historian's genre would have committed him to several truth claims, including his guarantees that the things he had written were true to the best of his knowledge, that there was evidence corroborating his statements, and so forth. Having the illocutionary force of *assertions*, the statements uttered by him would 'invite assessment under the canons of truth and factual assertion' (Lamarque, p. 53):

> (Truly) Gregor Samsa was transformed into an insect

But Kafka was not a historian; he wrote with the comprehensive intention to fictionalize. In negative terms, this is to put aside the normal commitments associated with genuine assertions (e.g., those of truth-telling). When Kafka writes that Gregor Samsa was transformed into an insect, although in the assertoric mode, he intends to transgress the ordinary limits of factual discourse. This is not the same as willful deceit or lying. There is a distinction to be made between what is asserted to be true, and what is, in Kendall Walton's terms, 'make-believedly' asserted to be true.[17] In a novel, the author does not pretend to assert propositions; he rather pretends that he asserts them as true. Make-belief assertions are characterized by the speaker's disengagement from the ordinary illocutionary commitments of speech; the truth claims are lacking. Fictionality can thus be viewed as a kind of propositional operator:

> (Fictionally) Gregor Samsa was transformed into an insect

And the intention to fictionalize is identical to the intention to provide, without the usual commitments of discourse, propositions which are governed in this way (F-governed). The purpose for which this is done is, in my view, most accurately described in terms of Nicholas Wolterstorff's analysis of 'the fictive

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[16]Cf. R.M. Gale, 'The Fictive Use of Language', *Philosophy*, 30
[17]See, e.g., K. Walton, 'Pictures and Make-Believe', *Philosophical Review*, 1973:3, vol. LXXXII.

stance': 'The fictive stance consists of *presenting*, of *offering for consideration*, certain states of affairs—for us to reflect on, to ponder over, to explore the implications of...'.[18]

To sum up: the property which distinguishes literary works of fiction from other pieces of language or discourse is a complex, relational property which is to be analyzed in terms of the author's intention to provide F-governed propositions with the purpose to offer for consideration to the readers certain states of affairs. In most cases of fiction, these propositions are not true when checked against the actual world; but they might just as well be. Now, this distinctive feature does not, of course, constitute a *sufficient* condition for being a literary work of fiction. Other conditions, such as, for instance, the author's deliberate usage of a conventionally defined medium, must be taken into account too. (For example, if I lean back in my armchair and tell the round-eyed children a story 'under the fictive stance', a story which I invent while telling it, I have not produced a literary *work* of fiction. I may, of course, later on record or make a performance of the story told by using the conventionally defined media of literature or drama.) It is, however, a *necessary* condition; if this complex intention—the intention to fictionalize—is not present in a particular case, then we are not justified in saying that this case presents a literary work of fiction.

5. BEING A FICTIONAL ENTITY OF A WORK W: TWO CONDITIONS

What requirements must be satisfied in order for an entity, x, to be included in a fictional work W? The answer to this question will be decisive for the standpoint taken as regards the interpretive relevance or irrelevance of knowledge of authorial intention.

First of all, I will state a necessary condition for being a fictional entity in a work W which I find altogether unproblematic and in no need of further justification. That is to say, it is unproblematic in the sense that something like it is reasonably offered in this context, although its content may need to be further developed than I have space to do here.

Consider, to begin with, a paradigm case of a fictional entity in a work: the main character Hamlet in *Hamlet*. The presence of the character Hamlet in the play is clearly indicated by various kinds of descriptions; the title of the play, the sentences containing the proper name 'Hamlet', the sentences containing an indexical (e.g., 'I', or 'he') which refers to Hamlet, the sentences

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[18]Wolterstorff, *op. cit., p.* 233.

with a definite description (e.g., 'the Prince of Denmark') which refers to Hamlet, etc. In view of this, the first condition for something (a character, an event, an action, a state of affairs, etc.), x, to be a fictional entity included in a work, W, I take to be the following:

> *The Propositional Requirement: x is* a fictional entity in
> W, only if one or several of the descriptions in the text
> of W generate the proposition that there is at least one
> x in W with properties F, G, ...$_n$, and not its negation.

The expression 'to generate' is intended to cover the following possibilities. A proposition is generated by a set of descriptions in cases where the descriptions in the set either *(a)* explicitly state the propositional content; or *(b)* logically imply the propositional content; or *(c)* contextually imply the propositional content; or *(d)* logically or contextually imply descriptions which in their turn either logically or contextually imply the propositional content. Case *(c)* should be understood in such a way that an ordinary reader, due to his expectations and experiences, is entitled to take the propositional content as being implied by the descriptions. Case *(d)* corresponds, roughly, to the Wolterstorffian 'strands' discussed in section 2.

Now, as also emerged from the discussion in section 2, the propositional requirement is too unrestrictive in determining what entities are part of a fictional work W. The claim that everything which is generated in senses *(a)-(d)* by the descriptions in a literary work is part of it, is highly counterintuitive. It does not capture some basic intuitions about works of art to say that everything which *possibly could* be or *by necessity is 'required'* to be included in the world of a fictional work is *as a matter of fact* included in that world. In everyday life, if somebody tells me about a person who is physically normal, I am entitled to infer, in the light of ordinary logic, that this person has a particular shoe size and bloodtype; and if I am told that a man is the father of many children, the conclusion that he has a determinate number of children is indeed warranted; and, whatever I am told, I may say that 2+2=4. In fiction, however, these rules do not obtain. 2+2=4 may be part of a fictional world, and it may *not*. Although Hamlet seems to be physically well-equipped, his shoe size will remain unknown; it is an indeterminable entity of the work, and therefore not an entity proper of it. The same also holds for Inspector Lestrade's bloodtype and Lady Macbeth's children. Only entities that are determinable are entities proper of a work. By 'determinable' I mean that there are evidence which may be used to support an hypothesis that X has the property Y, e.g., that Sherlock Holmes lives on 221 B Baker Street.

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In asking questions like 'How many children does Lady Macbeth have?' and thereby making an attempt at completing the incompleteness of the fictional world, one has touched upon the *irrelevant*. The lack of features in the works which can be used support answers to this kind of question rules out the question itself as irrelevant. A question about a work of art is relevant if and only if there is a possible answer to it that would have some contextual effects in the context of understanding the work. It would not add to our understanding of the plays to know how many children Lady Macbeth has or Hamlet's size of shoes, even if it were possible to gain knowledge about these things.[19]

Thus, the propositional requirement must be supplemented by something more. What? I wish to suggest here, though I know it is controversial, that what is required is that the author intended that the entity be part of the work or that he probably had this intention:

> *The Intentional Requirement: x is* a fictional entity in W,
> only if it is true or fairly likely that the author of W
> intended that x should be included in W (in the sense
> indicated by The Propositional Requirement).

As can be seen, this is a necessary condition for being a fictional entity in a work. It is not a sufficient condition, since an author may fail to achieve what he intends to bring about.

Now, what are the reasons for introducing an appeal to the author's intentions at this point? That the propositional requirement by itself will not do the trick has been demonstrated. But why is an intentional requirement introduced instead of something else?

(i) If a speaker's intentions are relevant in determining what *kind* of linguistic product he has brought forth, then there are reasons to believe that they are also relevant in determining what *entities* (states of affairs, etc.) are included in the product. If, as I argued in the previous section, 'the intention to fictionalize' is (part of) what determines which kind of piece of writing (i.e.,

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[19]Here I presuppose something like the notions of relevance and contextual effect elaborated by D. Sperber and D. Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, esp. pp. 108-123. It has been suggested to me that it is possible to think of works of which it is indeed relevant to ask a question like 'How many children does X have?', where X stands in for the name of a character in the work, provided that an answer to this question would add to the understanding of the work. This I have not denied. There is nothing peculiar about questions of this kind on the *semantic* or *syntactic* level. It is the way they relate to the context of understanding the work which determines their relevance, i.e., on the *pragmatic* level. Consequently, the relevance of a certain kind of question can only be determined on a case-to-case basis and not in a general way.

a work of fiction) that has been produced, then we have reason to believe that intentions related to, or part of, this intention are relevant in determining what are the fictional entities of the work.[20]

This argument is, of course, not logically conclusive. But the thesis that intentions partly determine what is to count as a work of fiction tends to favor the thesis that intentions also partially determine what entities are included in works of fiction. It is up to the opponent to point out circumstances or facts that disqualify this as an argument. In my view, if you accept that intentions are relevant in the first place (i.e., being a work of fiction), then this tends to lead you to the contention that they are relevant in the second place too (i.e., being an entity of a work of fiction). You are on the 'slippery-slope', as it were, and if you do not want to slip all the way down you have to advance a reason for stopping half way; otherwise it would seem *arbitrary* to stop once you have begun sliding.

Monroe Beardsley contends that '[t]here is no logical disharmony in maintaining that intentions are crucial in making something an artwork but irrelevant to determining what the artwork means'; 'the intentional fallacy applies to the interpretation ... of artworks, not to their identification'.[21]

But I insist that there is indeed a logical disharmony in maintaining that. Not in the sense that doing so leads up to a logical contradiction, but in the sense that it requires special explanation and justification. If an explanation or a justification of this thesis is not provided, then it is surrounded by an air of logical arbitrariness or oddity.

The denial of the relevance of authorial intention to interpretation is often accompanied by the allegation that literary works as well as other kinds of works of art, once created, are separated from their contexts of creation. This allegation is then used to justify the thesis of the irrelevance of intention to interpretation. It is hard to see what is actually accomplished by this contention. Something created at time t in context C might occur at t_1 in C^* and so be 'separated' from C in the sense that there has been a change of context. But this does not imply that C is irrelevant to the understanding, interpretation, evaluation, etc., of this thing in C^*. Instead, what is meant is the normative thesis that C *should be* disregarded. But then it cannot be used as

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[20] A similar line of reasoning is to be found in A.J. Close, *'Don Quixote* and the "Intentionalist Fallacy"',' *British Journal of Aesthetics,* 1972, vol. 12; and Q. Skinner, 'Motives, Intentions, and the Interpretations of Texts', *New Literary History,* 1972, vol. 3. N. Wolterstorff, *op. cit.,* pp. 115-123, discusses two principles of fictional 'world-inclusion': the first principle corresponds to the propositional requirement, and the second principle corresponds (roughly) to the propositional requirement plus the intentional. Despite the serious problems connected to the first principle, he does not reject it in favor of the second principle.

[21] M.C. Beardsley, *ibid., p.* 306.

an argument for the thesis that C is irrelevant since that would be question-begging. An *independent* argument is called for.

(ii) These contentions lead me to a second remark about why the intentional requirement be introduced. A basic fact with which any theory of art (including theory of fiction) should be consistent is that works of art are cultural objects created and experienced by persons with beliefs, motivations, volitions, etc. at certain times and places. A decision about what is 'in' an artwork which is either incompatible with well-established hypotheses about the author's intentions, or does not relate at all—neither explicitly nor implicitly—to what the author as a matter of fact did intend or probably intended or could have intended, has lost sight of a significant part of the cultural nature of that artwork. Why is it that only what we, the contemporary recipients of art, can make out of the descriptions of a fictional text should determine what is included in the fictional world? Is it reasonable to say that a novel which was written, for instance, in the 19th century includes a fictional character who is gradually weakened by AIDS, if it is possible to derive a proposition to that effect from the text alone? My answer is in the negative. I do not wish to deny that an 'AIDS-reading' of the novel may be valuable to the reader as an allegory or application; nor am I implying that readings or interpretations of this kind are not permitted or critically fruitful. What I wish to suggest is instead that, in such a case, one has shifted from one type of interpretation to another.[22] The purpose of one type of interpretation, 'to establish the fictional entities of a work', tends to break down into the purpose 'to establish what fictional entities, made possible by the text of the work, the author (actually or probably) intended to be part of the world of the work', whereas the purpose of the other type is, e.g., 'to provide the (aesthetically) best or most interesting reading' or to 'to apply the work to contemporaneity'.

As Arthur Danto says,[23] the limits of knowledge are the limits of interpretation—the artist's knowledge and that of the recipients. Knowledge is a prerequisite of intention; one's knowledge, in the sense of beliefs, partly determines one's intentions, and one cannot intend that p if one does not know anything about p. In this case—that of establishing what are the fictional entities of a work—the author's and the readers' knowledge interact in complex ways. The author cannot include in the world of a work what he did not intend to include, although he could write something which, at the time it was written or later on, implied something he did not intend to imply or could not

[22]In G. Hermerén, 'Interpretation: Types and Criteria', *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 1983, vol. 19, pp. 131-161, various types of interpretation are distinguished in terms of interpretive objects, aspects, addressees, and purposes.
[23]A.C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, Cambridge, MA. and London: Harvard University Press, 1981, ch. 5.

foresee could be taken as implied by the text. (Note that this does not exclude psychoanalytic readings of works.) And he cannot intend to include that about which he has no knowledge. Readers cannot be sure that something, i.e., a thing referred to by an expression, is included in the world of a work unless they know or have reasons to believe that the author intended to include it. On the other hand, if it seems impossible, to the best of their knowledge, to interpret the work as including an entity x, although they have reasons to believe that the author intended to include x, they are entitled to conclude that the author did not succeed in accomplishing what he intended and, consequently, that the work does not include x.

6. Contexts of Discovery and Contexts of Justification

So far I have not explicitly distinguished between the interpretive contexts of discovery and justification, respectively. I shall now, in brief, say a few words about this distinction and how it organizes the main points which have been advanced.

The *context of discovery is* connected to interpretation in the *process* sense. When I ask whether authorial intention is relevant to the context of discovery, I ask whether knowledge (or hypotheses) about authorial intention is (are) necessary in the process of interpreting. Being necessary in the process of interpreting is the same as being required in order to fulfil the purpose of the interpretive process. The kind of interpretive process discussed here is the one which has as its purpose to fix the fictional entities of a work. My thesis regarding this process is that it requires knowledge (or hypotheses) about authorial intention, as a supplement to knowledge of the works propositional content, if its purpose be fulfilled.

The *context of justification is* connected to interpretation in the *result* sense. The question whether authorial intention is relevant to the context of justification is to be spelled out as a question as to whether facts or well-established hypotheses about authorial intention are relevant arguments for or against a proposed interpretive result, i.e., can be used to support or disprove the interpretive result. The kind of interpretive result discussed here is the one which provides a proposal on how to fix the fictional entities of a work. My thesis is that facts or hypotheses about authorial intention may be used to support or refute a proposal to this effect, and that the kind of support or disproof they provide is logical.

These two theses regarding the context of discovery and the context of justification, respectively, are logical consequences of the two conditions of being a fictional entity of a work W set forth in the previous section.

7. An Objection

At this point the following objection might be raised: The thoughts sketched in this paper about 'fixing the fictional entities of a work' and the relevance of authorial intention are misguided since they misrepresent the fact that works of art have no fixed natures.[24] If this is indeed a fact depends upon which meaning is assigned to the key words. On one interpretation what is meant is that works of art can be understood in various ways and that there is no absolute standard determining which ways are correct and which are not. New ways of understanding are, furthermore, constantly added to the old ones as history progresses.

I agree, of course, that works of art can be understood in various ways, and that there are no absolute standards of correctness for interpretations. Standards of correctness—in whatever field, not only that of literary interpretation—are always relative to a point of view, certain purposes and interests, and epistemological ideals. But the type of interpretation discussed here is defined by reference to such variables; its objective, to fix the fictional entities of a work, yields a certain kind of standard by virtue of its connection to a particular conception of fiction. The preceding pages were intended to show that this standard, i.e., a norm departuring from the propositional plus the intentional requirement, is the most reasonable given the purposes, interests, conceptions, ideals, etc. connected with this particular type of interpretation. In other cases where other purposes, interests, conceptions, ideals, etc. are active, other standards will probably be considered to be more reasonable. The objective of fixing the fictional entities of a work does not become impeachable just by accepting the thesis that artworks have no fixed nature; in a way it presupposes something like this thesis since the project to fix the entities a work would be unnecessary if the nature of the work were already fixed.

So, when Richard Shusterman contends that

> ... the intentions which continue to guide and shape [the] understanding [of a work] are not always those of the

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[24]See, e.g., J. Margolis, 'Reinterpreting Interpretation', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 1989:3, vol. 47; and R. Shusterman, 'Interpretation, Intention, and Truth', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 1988:3, vol. 46.

> author. Moreover, and more importantly, they are not
> always, if ever, aimed at the mirroring truth of a fixed and
> determinate object.[25]

we should not feel obliged to give up the main theses which have been propounded here. I have not spoken of the 'mirroring' of a 'fixed' object but instead discussed 'fixing' something which is not 'fixed' by virtue of the work itself. And, of course, other intentions than the author's may 'guide' and 'shape' the 'understanding' of a work of fiction; these other intentions are not, however, required by this activity of fixing the fictional entities, nor are they set forth as standards of correctness to be applied to the results of this activity.

Maybe there is an objection to the effect that this critical activity should not exist because it violates the works themselves (in assigning a fixed nature to them). Then a plausible answer is that so long as this activity does play an important role in criticism it should be well done and also be considered by philosophical analysts of criticism and interpretation.

In passing it should perhaps be noted that 'fixing the fictional entities of a work' does not imply that the entire 'nature' of the work is being fixed. Moreover, sometimes the contention that works of art have no fixed natures is supplemented by, or explicated in terms of, theses which bring all their arts of seduction to bear. Catch-words or clichées conveying that any work of art may be understood or interpreted in an infinite number of ways which are all correct, or that there is no set of properties such that a work of art will possess it over time and to different critical communities, have been offered as supplements to or variants of this thesis .

The idea that the number of correct understandings or interpretations of any work is infinite I must reject on several counts. First, if it were true, and this was due to the 'fact' that the properties of the works were not fixed, then we would have to say that every interpretation is an interpretation of whatever work. If there is no set of properties of *Hamlet* such that it could be used to identify a set of interpretations as possible interpretations of *Hamlet*, then an interpretation which common sense picks out as being one of, say, *Lady Macbeth* could just as well be an interpretation of *Hamlet*, on this account. The works' alleged lack of properties which can be used to identify possible interpretations of them, does not enable us to maintain that every work has an infinite set of possible interpretations which is distinct from that of any other work, which would not be an absurd thesis but probably a false one. Instead we would be committed to the view that there

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[25]R. Shusterman, *op. cit., p.* 409.

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is one infinite set of interpretations which are possible interpretations of every work. This is obviously absurd.

Second, from a psychological point of view, it is not likely that there is an infinite number of interpretations of a work which would all *be experienced* or *judged* to be correct.

Third, it is not very probable from a psychological point of view that an infinite number of interpretations of a work (correct or incorrect) would be generated by and through the recipients' encounters with the work. And the reason why this is so is closely tied to the denial of idea that there is no set of properties which can be ascribed to a work of art at different times and by different critical communities. The physical text of a literary work is invariant, but the meaning and significance ascribed to it may vary over time and between different critical communities and also within the same community. But there is a core of properties, prominently physical and structural, which the work has invariantly. Otherwise work-identity could not be preserved, and our talk of 'the same work' would have no rational foundation.

Of course, to those whose primary aim is to make *tabula rasa* with all our presuppositions, our way of thinking and talking about artworks is not rationally founded in this way and, consequently, work-identity cannot be preserved. I think the burden of proof lies on them; it is their task to explain why and how we succeed in identifying different copies of literary works as copies of the same work in spite of the alleged lack of identity-conditions. To me the practice itself provides a compelling reason to believe that there are identity-conditions. And the presence of identity-conditions also explains why it is improbable from a psychological viewpoint that readers' encounters with a work could, in principle, generate an infinite number of interpretations, and even more unlikely that an infinite number of interpretations would be experienced or judged as correct. (I presuppose here that 'an infinite number of interpretations' is not given a trivial construal to the effect that every encounter with a work constitutes, numerically speaking, a new interpretation but instead that the difference between two interpretations is construed as a difference with respect to content).

I therefore conclude this section by saying that the thesis that artworks have no fixed natures does not constitute a threat to the topic and the standpoints of this essay. On the first and most plausible interpretation of it, it is both compatible with and logically presupposed by the interpretive objective of fixing the fictional entities of a work. The other, more extravagant readings of it make it either absurd when its logical implications are demonstrated, or psychologically implausible, or both; consequently, they should not make us reconsider the very project of this essay.

8. THE AUTHOR'S INTENTIONS: SOME DISTINCTIONS

So far I have used the words 'the author's intention' and 'authorial intention' in a completely unspecified way. The last step I shall take in this essay, except for an illustrative example, is therefore to be more specific on this matter. To be sure, not all of the author's intentions could regarded as relevant. Which ones, then, and why?

To begin with, let me state that I adhere to a Davidsonian conception of intention[26] according to which intentions are construed as pro-attitudes towards propositions. An agent A intends that p, on this account, if and only if A has a pro-attitude towards the proposition that p. Having a pro-attitude towards the proposition that p is to be disposed to act in such a way that p is brought about or in a way which facilitates the bringing about of p. The distinctions to be made in this section are not dependent upon this particular conception of intention, though I believe they stand out as most natural against the background of, generally speaking, *dispositional* accounts of intention.

Now, what kinds of intentions are relevant in this context? The first distinction which it is useful to introduce is, of course, the one between the author's *literary* and *nonliterary* intentions. Reasonably enough, only the literary intentions of the author are relevant. To take a hypothetical example: A creates the literary work W with two general intentions; *(i)* to make money, and *(ii)* to fictionalize. *(ii)*, and not *(i)*, is among those intentions which are referred to in the intentional requirement formulated above. Literary intentions are *first order intentions regarding the character of the work*. This distinction between literary and nonliterary intentions also brings out the distinction between 'intentionalizing literature' (which the interpretive activity of fixing the fictional entities of a work carries with it to some extent) and 'biographizing literature' (which it does not carry with it). I use the expression 'literary intentions' in a deliberately broad sense referring to intentions regarding the form, structure, and aesthetic character of literary works as well as the relations of the works to literary tradition and also their symbolic import: in short, properties that are commonly considered to exist within the literary sphere. When the intentions regarding these properties (in some way also) concern or affect the fictional entities of a work, they are among those referred to in the intentional requirement.

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[26]See, e.g., D. Davidson, 'Intending', in his *Essays on Actions and Events*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, pp. 83-102.

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A second distinction which is crucial in this context is the one between the author's *general* literary intentions and his *particular* literary intentions. He may, for instance, have a general idea of how literary activity or literary creativity should proceed; an idea about its general aims, and so forth. On the other hand, in creating a particular work he will have some specific intentions regarding that particular work, and make a series of specific decisions about the individual work he is creating, most of them probably tacit ones, during the creative process. These particular intentions may in a sense be derived from his general intentions, but they need not be. A general conception of, that is, a general intention regarding, literature and literary creativity may, so to speak, be a construct or an attractive ideal or a wishful idealization of the practice which, however, does not in any sense have the force to affect the particular literary intentions the author has regarding a particular work. Now, reasonably enough, particular intentions have a priority over general intentions in cases where a conflict is at hand, since they are first order intentions regarding a particular work. In cases where we do not know if it is true that the author had a particular intention, we may take a closer look at his general intentions, which he, for instance, did make a record of in a manifesto, if we have reason to believe that they did in fact have an effect on his particular intentions; if there are such reasons, we conclude that it is 'fairly likely' that the author had a particular intention that so-and-so.

Another distinction which in part overlaps the one just made is that between *operative* and *conditional* intentions. An operative intention is one which *as a matter of fact* guides the creative performance of the author, whereas a conditional intention is one that *would* guide his performance given that certain conditions are satisfied. In literary scholarship we probably form a notion of an author's conditional intentions on the basis of what he actually achieved in a number of works, and then we conjecture that those intentions were probably operative in a particular case, if there are no facts or more plausible hypotheses to the contrary.

It is a well known fact that an author during the process of writing a work may have very different, even divergent, intentions as regards the character of the work. In the creative process, he may test different alternatives, make an impressively large number of revisions up to a point when he feels that, 'Well, this is it; this is exactly what I intended'. This could mean either that he finally succeeded in doing what he intended all the time, or that he changed his mind several times until he became clear about what he, after all, intended to do and succeeded in doing it.

In cases where there are various (perhaps even internally inconsistent) intentions regarding the same thing, which ones are relevant to

the question as to what entities are included in the work? A fairly obvious answer is that the intentions which occur near the end of the process of literary production have priority over the earlier ones unless we have reason to believe that it was the earlier intentions that as a matter of fact became operative. We must, however, in a given case, carefully consider what the intentions are *directed at*. The author may be interested in different aspects of the work he creates during different phases of the creative process. This might mean that some of the intentions which became operative could have occured not near the end but at a very early stage of the creative process. So instead of saying 'near the end' we should say that those intentions of A regarding x which were the latest of A's intentions regarding x and which became operative are among the ones referred to in the intentional requirement.

Sometimes it is maintained, as Beardsley and Wimsatt did maintain in their influential essay, that intentions are not 'available' to others than the intending subject, and that therefore intentions cannot play the role of being part of something which determines what entities are included in a work. I am not sure, however, that something to which we have no access could not be a determining factor; that is, in admitting that intentions are not available to us we are not logically compelled to admit that they are unimportant to work-inclusion. The 'nonavailability'-criticism seems to imply that intentions are identical to mental states, but a mental state-construal of intention is neither the only nor the most plausible account of intention. Suppose, however, for the sake of argument, that intentions are certain kinds of mental states. Of course, the mental states of another person are not available to us; they are part of his inner experience and not of our, and we cannot, so to speak, 'look' into them. But nothing such is required in order to acquire knowledge of, or to form plausible hypotheses about, intentions, not even in this sense. We learn gradually from childhood onwards to see 'signs' of intention, that is, properties of things that provide reasons to believe that intentions played a role in determining the character of the things. Intentions are important to us; they are in some respects the very core of history. Since they are important to us we not only try to form a notion of what other persons intend but we also make reports of our own intentions. Sometimes such reports are not particularly truthful but instead examples of wishful thinking or attempts at retrospective rational justification of irrational actions. Our hypotheses on intentions are based on various elements; what the agent actually did in a particular case, what he reported to be either his general or particular intentions, what he has intended to do in other cases, what we would have intended were we in his position, etc. These elements interact in our forming of a hypothesis.

Now it might be objected that if hypotheses about authorial intention are relevant to the activity of fixing the fictional entities of a work and we form such hypotheses on the basis of the actual properties of the work, then we need not introduce the talk of intentions since the signs of them are already in the work. To this I reply that the signs in the work are not the only signs to be considered; they do not point decisively in one direction only and they have to be supplemented by other evidence. Even if they were the only signs at hand they would, as was shown in connection with the propositional requirement, still make a too wide-embracing inclusion of entities in the world of the work. In reading we therefore make complementary hypotheses as well.

Often it is reasonable to say that an author intends to include what he believes that the intended audience, due to its literary expectations, would take as being included in the work—or, as Wolterstorff puts it, 'what he assumes the bulk of his intended audience believes would occur if some strand derived from what he indicates occurred'.[27] The antecipated expectations the intended audience, which in most cases is identical to the original audience of the work, will often be before the author's mind and affect his intentional actions.

9. AN EXAMPLE

To bring out more clearly the main theses of this essay, let me turn to a illustrative example of what it might mean in a particular case to confront an identificational problem of elucidation, i.e., of fixing the fictional entities of a work.

Any reader of the novel *Ticket to Ride* by Dennis Potter probably felt a certain unease as regards what 'really' happens in the work. As the text on the jacket has it, 'short, powerful and compelling, it is a chilling and unforgettable mystery'. [28]

The main character, John, is travelling by train when, suddenly, he looses the sense of himself and his own identity:

> At that moment, precisely on the turn, he lost all connection
> with his previous self. It was as swift a disaster as falling
> into an uncovered well, and breaking every bone in his body
> at the bottom of the shaft.
> His mind, it was, that lay there in pieces; but he
> did not call out, nor make any lesser sign of distress.

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[27] N. Wolterstorff, *op. cit., p.* 123-124.
[28] D. Potter, *Ticket to Ride*, London: Faber and Faber, 1986.

> Indeed, these first few seconds of otherness were
> suddenly shimmering with a glancing, silvery light, touching
> things and then skeetering off them. He felt a tremble of
> freedom, matching the quick dance of the light. He did not
> yet know what had happened to him. (p. 6)

His confusion is rendered through out in the style of the following passage:

> *Half a pound of tuppenny rice*
> *Half a pound of tuppenny rice*
>
> The tune was definitely inside him, but where had it come
> from? Who were these people? [...] Why was there so much
> movement? What am I doing here?
> I? Who is I? (p. 7)

John's loss of memory is profound, and it provides the general framework for the story. After this introduction, a series of curious and horrible events is presented in the text. The narrator of the story is mostly impersonal but not omniscient. He (in the gender-neutral sense) shifts between two perspectives—that of John, and that of John's wife, respectively. These two perspectives are never brought together in the story. Sometimes the narrator becomes personal and leaves the third-person perspective for a first-person perspective; either John's or John's wife's. The novel is extremely elusive: the reader is at a loss of telling what happens in the story and in what chronological order the events progress.

There are various ways of construing the plot, ways which all are made possible by the text itself. I will restrict my discussion to two of them; those which, in my view, are the strongest candidates.

> *(1)* John suffers a loss of memory after having killed his
> wife, the man who seduced (or raped) her, and also a
> prostitute.

> *(2)* John finds out that his wife has killed another
> woman and a man who seduced (or raped) her (i.e., the
> wife). He kills his wife, runs off, and then suffers a loss
> of memory.

Now, which fictional entities are part of the work? Those reported in *(1)* or those in *(2)?*

The text as it is, is radically open. Instead of saying that the works includes several fictional entities which logically preclude each other, as would be the case on a purely propositional level— for example, that the work

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includes two incompatible events, one of them being 'John (alone) kills the man who seduced (or raped) his wife', and the other one being 'John's wife (alone) kills the man who seduced (or raped) her'—and instead of saying that the work includes one and only one of these fictional events, one could conjecture that the author intended the work to have an extremely elusive character. His intention is to put the events behind a veil. Sometimes you can grasp clearly that certain kinds of events take place in the story but you cannot tell in what chronological order they occur; sometimes you cannot grasp what events occur. In other works, not only in his novels but also in his plays, Dennis Potter has used a similar technique of presentation. He has furthermore made certain general statements about what kind of literary presentation he aims at in his works. All this make it fairly likely that he, also as regards this particular novel *(Ticket to Ride)*, has similar kinds of intentions, that is, intentions with objects of similar kinds.

On this account, invoking the intentions of the author would not mean an effort to make the work a simple and easily comprehensible object. The work still remains ambiguous. It does, however, provide a means for establishing the fictional entities of works which are ambiguous and elusive to an extremely high degree without making them less so and, at the same time, without yielding incompatible statements about what fictional entities are included in the works.

Ticket to Ride does not include both the entities in *(1)* and *(2)*; that would be a self-contradiction. Nor does it include *(1)* and not *(2)*, or *(2)* and not *(1)*. It is likely that it includes, since the author probably intended to include, the complex disjunctive proposition that either *(1)* or *(2)* or..., and the complex entity derived from it. In this way the work has not been made less elusive than it appears to its puzzled readers. Nor has it been construed in a self-contradictory way. But through this kind of identification, when the disjunctive alternatives are made clear, its character has been elucidated.

10. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this paper has been to investigate whether authorial intention is relevant to a particular type of interpretation, i.e., to fix the fictional entities of a work, or identificational elucidation. I conclude that knowledge (or hypotheses) about authorial intention is (are) logically required in order to fulfil the purpose of the interpretive process of identificational elucidation ('context of discovery'), and that facts concerning authorial intention may be used to support or disprove an interpretive result ('context of justification'), this support

and disproof being logical in character. These are the two main theses of the essay. The considerations that has led me to formulate them are of various kinds: a description of the activity of fixing the fictional entities of a work, a notion of fiction according to which certain kinds of intentions on the author's behalf are part of what determine whether something is a piece of fiction or not, a discussion of the problems which arise if work-inclusion is only determined by a propositional requirement. I have also considered, and rejected, several objections to my views, for example, the objection that since works of art have no fixed natures the talk about fixing the entities of a work is based on some kind of misconception, or that an appeal to the author's intentions would make a radically ambiguous work less ambiguous and this without justification. Furthermore, I made a number of distinctions between different kinds of authorial intention and considered which kinds were relevant in the present context. Finally, I made a few remarks about a novel by Dennis Potter for illustrative purposes.

A basic intuition which has guided me in writing this paper is that much of what we do or say, in criticism as well as elsewhere, is intentionally charged, not only and primarily in the sense that we are intending agents but in the sense that we tacitly make a lot of presuppositions about other agents intentions. A final objection against the very project of this essay is that literature as discourse and speech in general is inherently and necessarily intentionally charged and that, therefore, efforts of the kind exemplified by this paper are unnecessary;[29] nothing needs to be proved or theorized, everything is as it is and it could not be otherwise. Perhaps it is true that literature is both inherently and necessarily intentionally charged. But this does not diminish the value of demonstrating the relevance of authorial intention to a certain kind of interpretation of literary fiction, since so many theoreticians have argued that intentions are completely irrelevant, and that it would be a logical blunder to appeal to them.*

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[29]This is the thesis propounded by S. Knapp and W.B. Michaels, 'Against Theory', in W.J.T. Mitchell (ed.), *Against Theory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, pp. 11-30.