Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics

Volume 15, 2023

Edited by Vítor Moura and Connell Vaughan

Published by

European Society for Aesthetics

Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics
Founded in 2009 by Fabian Dorsch
Internet: http://proceedings.eurosa.org
Email: proceedings@eurosa.org
ISSN: 1664 – 5278

Publisher
The European Society for Aesthetics

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European Society for Aesthetics

Common Belief and Make-believe

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ABSTRACT. On Walton's account of make-believe, unknown facts concerning the existence and nature of props can influence fictional truth. Inspired by Lewis's and Walton's discussions of import of fictional truth, I explore the shape and tenability of a version of Walton's theory that avoids such interference of unknown facts, by making fictional truth rely on participants' *common beliefs* about props: conditional principles of generation are only valid if they quantify over props whose existence and nature is common belief between participants of the game of make-believe. I discuss two possible objections to this version of Walton's theory that are both based on the intuition that fictional truth should be something that is objective and independent of participants' mental states.

1. Walton's hidden Stump

In Walton's (1990) highly influential theory of the representational arts, the concept of make-believe (or imagination) plays a crucial role in the analysis of fiction and fictional truth. In short, some proposition *p* is true in a game of make-believe *f* (i.e., is a fictional truth of *f*) iff participants of *f* are prescribed to imagine *p*. Different kinds of rules determine what we are to imagine in different games of make-believe. For instance, fictional truths can be generated by so-called 'principles of generation' (i.e., conditional rules), in combination with props (i.e., things in the actual world that principles of generation apply to). Suppose Gregory and Eric are in a garden and decide to pretend that tree stumps are bears. Let's call this the 'stump-game'. The stumps are the props that generate fictional truths in combination with conditional principle of generation *P*:

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P If there is a stump at location *x*, participants are to imagine that there is a bear at *x*

Thus, if there is a stump left of Gregory, the boys are to imagine that there is a bear left of Gregory, and hence it is fictional (true in the stump-game) that there is a bear there. Stumps can be props (as in this ad hoc stump-game), but representational works of art are also props, e.g., *The Hobbit* is a prop that (amongst other things) makes it true in my *Hobbit*-game that a hobbit finds a ring.

This paper investigates the interplay between props and prescriptions to imagine (and hence fictional truth). To this end I focus on the often noted (e.g., Lamarque (1991); Howell (1996); Toon (2010)) feature of Walton's account that in a scenario where Gregory and Eric fail to spot a particular stump (e.g., because it is hidden behind a bush), it is *still* fictional that there is a bear there. Given their principle of generation and given the existence of the stump, it is true in their fiction that there is a bear lurking behind that bush (even though nobody imagined this).

An inactive hiding bear seems innocuous enough. However, I suggest that we can change the scenario such that the unknown fact of the hidden stump is detrimental to the 'plot' of the fiction: Suppose Gregory and Eric also agreed that it is true in their game that a group of ducklings is about to waddle by and every bear in the garden has to be paralysed (e.g., by touching them) in order to ensure safe passage for the ducklings. Let's call this game the 'ducklings-game'. The children paralyse every bear (i.e., touch every tree stump) they see, decide that they are done, congratulate each other, and terminate the pretence. Neither Gregory nor Eric ever finds out that there was an additional stump behind this bush. Unfortunately for the ducklings, on Walton's account, it is still true in the ducklings-game that one bear is left awake. Gregory and Eric will never realise this, but they failed to rescue the ducklings in their fiction. Although the boys imagined being hero's and imagined ducklings happily waddling through the garden after they left, actually it's true in their game that the ducklings were slaughtered in a fury of yellow feathers, quacking and blood.

This paper explores the shape and possible complications (section 4) of an alternative version of Walton's theory that avoids such unwelcome interference of unknown facts about props, by making fictional truth rely on participants' 'common beliefs' about props. Before

presenting the proposal (section 3), I will present its main inspiration: Lewis's and Walton's usage of the notion of common belief in their discussions of principles for import of fictional truth (section 2).

2. Analysis 2

It is a commonplace that there are more things that are true in a fiction than those that are explicitly stated or shown. For instance, it is an explicit, direct, or – in Walton's (1990) terminology[368] – 'primary' fictional truth of the Sherlock Holmes novels that the rooms at 221B Baker Street "consisted of a couple of comfortable bed-rooms and a single large airy sitting-room" (Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*). This is explicitly stated in the text of the Sherlock Holmes novels (i.e., the prop in the Holmes-game) and hence we are mandated to imagine this (i.e., it is true in the fiction). However, it is *also* true in the Holmes-world that water is H_2O, that whales are mammals, and "that Holmes does not have a third nostril" (Lewis, 1978, p.41), even though this is never stated in the novels, nor follows from anything that was stated in the novels. Several authors (e.g., Beardsley (1981); Lewis (1978); Ryan (1980); Wolterstorff (1980); Walton (1990)) have discussed principles of importation of such implicit, indirect or 'implied' (Walton, 1990) fictional truths. They often compare the intuitive appeal of two analyses: one that takes the *actual* world as a basis for fictional background information, and one that takes the audience's *beliefs* about the actual world as a basis. The leading question in these discussions is whether unknown or little-known facts of nature should be allowed to influence fictional truth.

In the following, I focus on discussions where the latter principle is formulated using the concept of common belief: Lewis's (1978) Analysis 1 and 2, and Walton's (1990) Reality Principle and Mutual Belief Principle. I will discuss Lewis's counterfactual analysis of the 'In fiction *f*, ϕ'-operator for verbal narratives as an intensional operator, i.e., as quantifying over possible worlds. Walton's discussion (1990, section 4.3) closely follows Lewis's, except that Walton's principles are formulated for verbal *and* nonverbal props.

Lewis discusses several modal analyses, of which Analysis 1 and 2 are the final (and,

[368] Actually, Walton (1990, p.143) emphasises that his 'primary'/'secondary' distinction is not exactly the same as the often used 'explicit'/'implicit' distinction. Unreliable narrators, for instance, may explicitly state *p* while *p* is not a primary truth of the fiction.

according to Lewis, best) candidates. Lewis's Analysis 1 takes the actual world as basis for background information that is imported into the fiction. Roughly, a fictional world is as much like the actual world as the text allows. The fiction operator is thus analysed as a counterfactual, i.e., what is true in *f* is what would be true if *f* were told as known fact in our world. In other words, we take the actual world as our 'starting point' and see what it would be like if *f* were told as known fact. A simplified representation of Analysis 1:

> (1) "In *f*, ϕ" is true iff in all possible worlds where *f* is told as known fact that are most similar to the actual world, ϕ is true[369]

Analysis 1 makes it true in the Sherlock Holmes novels that 221B Baker Street has one living room. Since this is explicitly stated in *f*, this is true in all worlds where *f* is told as known *fact*. Moreover, Analysis 1 makes it true in the Sherlock Holmes novels that water is H_2O. Worlds where the Sherlock Holmes novels are told as known fact *and* water is H_2O are more similar (or 'closer') to the actual world than worlds where the Sherlock Holmes novels are told as known fact and water is *not* H_2O. Analysis 1 thus correctly predicts the fictionality of such background information.

Analysis 1 also makes little-known and unknown facts relevant to fictional truth. On Analysis 1, whatever is actually the case will also be true in the fiction (unless explicitly contradicted by it). But, given that my partner went to the supermarket yesterday, is this then also true in the Sherlock Holmes novels? We may consider such import odd but relatively harmless (similar to the inactive hiding bear in the stump-game). However, as Lewis argues, little-known or unknown facts can be detrimental to the plot of a fictional narrative. This can lead to counter-intuitive results. For instance, in *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*, Holmes claims to have solved a murder case by showing that someone has been killed by a viper that climbed up a bell rope. It is not explicitly stated that Holmes is correct. Gans (1970) has argued that, since vipers cannot actually climb ropes, either it's true in *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* that the snake reached its victim some other way, or Holmes has not solved the case at

[369] Cf. Walton's Reality Principle: "If $p_1,...,p_n$ are the propositions whose fictionality a representation generates directly, another proposition, q, is fictional in it if, and only if, were it the case that $p_1,...,p_n$, it would be the case that q" (Walton, 1990, p.145).

all. Either option is counter-intuitive; Holmes is always right!

To avoid this, Lewis introduces Analysis 2. A simplified representation:

> (2) "In *f*, ϕ" is true iff in all possible worlds where *f* is told as known fact that are most similar to the community of origin's overt conception of the actual world, ϕ is true[370]

The "community of origin's overt conception of the actual world" consists in the 'general common beliefs' about the actual world in the community of origin of the relevant fiction. *p* is 'common belief' (see e.g., Lewis (1969); Schiffer (1972)) within some community *c* iff everyone in *c* believes that *p*, everyone in *c* believes that everyone in *c* believes that *p*, everyone in *c* believes that everyone in *c* believes that everyone in *c* believes that *p*, etc.[371]

Analysis 2 still imports truths such as that water is H_2O. This was common belief between Doyle and his readers. However, information such as that my partner went to the supermarket yesterday or that vipers cannot climb ropes is not imported into the fiction. Although a single reader of the Sherlock Holmes novels may personally have believed either of these things, (and it may even become overt belief sometime after the fiction has been published) it is *not* common belief within the community of origin and hence *not* part of what is true in the Sherlock Holmes novels.

3. Common Beliefs about Props

In this section I explore to what extent a similar 'common belief-move' would be possible in Walton's framework to deal with unknown facts *about props* influencing fictional truth, i.e., I will explore whether the notion of common belief may also be relevant for the analysis of *explicit* fictional truths (rather than just for the analysis of *implicit* fictional truths as discussed in section 2).

[370] Cf. Walton's Mutual Belief Principle: "If $p_1,...,p_n$ are the propositions whose fictionality a representation generates directly, another proposition, *q*, is fictional in it if and only if it is mutually believed in the artist's society that were it the case that $p_1,...,p_n$, it would be the case that *q*" (Walton, 1990, p.151).
[371] See section 4.2 for the notion of *general* common belief. See Vanderschraaf and Sillari (2014) for a discussion of potential issues with the notion of common belief and related concepts.

3.1 Motivation

At this point the reader may wonder about the motivation for such a project, especially since (as will become clear later in section 4) we will need to resort to additional theoretical machinery to make it work.

The main motivation behind this project is the observation that intuitions concerning fictional truth in the ducklings-game scenario are unclear and not uniform across people. Whether the reader thinks that there is a problem to solve here (or whether they think that the current paper proposes an unnecessary twist on an established theory), is going to depend on their intuitions concerning fictional truth in the ducklings-game scenario. Although some theorists report experiencing no unease with Walton's prediction of the ducklings' death, most theorists and laypeople report some level of uncertainty concerning fictional truth. It is not obvious to this latter group that we should indeed accept that (without Gregory or Eric ever knowing this) the children failed to rescue the ducklings in their fiction. There seems to be at least *some* intuitive appeal to giving a little more authority over fictional truth to Eric and Gregory, given that it is *their* game. The current paper explores to what extent we can make sense of this conflict in intuitions. Given that it is at least not obvious that Walton's theory offers the right predictions in the ducklings-game scenario, we thus have a theoretical justification for exploring alternative analyses of fictional truth that may account for this.

Second, we can motivate the current project by drawing a parallel between the discussions on import and the discussion of the ducklings-game. The ducklings-game scenario mirrors Lewis's bell rope scenario; Both scenarios' raise the question of whether unknown facts of nature should be allowed to influence fictional truth (implicit fictional truth in the bell rope scenario, explicit fictional truths in the ducklings-game scenario), and in both scenario's the unknown fact of nature has far-reaching consequences for the plot of the fiction. Just as for the ducklings-game scenario, intuitions vary concerning the correct analysis of imported fictional truth. As both Lewis and Walton admit, it is unclear whether Analysis 2 is necessarily superior to Analysis 1 in all cases.[372] Moreover, intuitions concerning fictional truth in cases

[372] Walton (1990) suggests that analysis 1 may fare better with respect to moral facts (cf. the debate on 'imaginative resistance' Gendler (2000); Weatherson (2004)).

like Lewis's bell rope scenario vary across people. It is not clear to everyone (e.g., to Gans (1970)) that Analysis 2 indeed gives the correct predictions in this case. Drawing this parallel gives us a meta-theoretical motivation to explore whether (just as Lewis and Walton resort to the notion of common belief in their discussion of bell rope-like scenario's) a similar common belief-move would be possible for the ducklings-game. If theorists (including Walton) question whether we should allow unknown facts to ruin the plot of a fiction in the case of implicit fictional truths, why would we (without questioning) let unknown facts ruin the plot of a fiction in the case of explicit fictional truths? The current paper investigates this (previously unexplored) part of the logical space of possible analyses of fictional truth, brought to light by the ducklings-game scenario.

Although the current proposal (concerning the analysis of explicit fictional truths) is thus inspired by Walton's (and Lewis's) discussion of implicit fictional truth, it is *not* meant to be 'true to Walton' and deviates from his original theory in important respects (see section 4). The aim of this paper is not necessarily to argue in favour of this common belief version of Walton's theory, but simply to explore its shape and tenability; Do we absolutely *have to* bite the bullet concerning the ducklings' deaths, or is there a viable way out?

3.2 Proposal

On a common belief version of Walton's theory, conditional principles of generation are only valid (or 'proper') if they quantify over props whose existence and nature is common belief between participants of the game of make-believe, e.g., all participants believe that the prop exists, all participants believe that all participants believe that the prop exists, etc. A principle such as *P* is thus ruled out. Rather, Gregory's proposal to pretend that "stumps are bears" has to be understood as (implicitly) quantifying over stumps whose existence and nature is common belief, rather than simply over *all* stumps (within the garden). In other words, the general formula for conditional principles of generation (i.e., "If *p*, then participants are to imagine that *q*") is reformulated as "If it is common belief between participants that *p*, then participants are to imagine that *q*". The principle of generation guiding the stump-game is thus:

> *P'* If it is common belief between Gregory and Eric that there is a stump at location *x*, then Gregory and Eric are to imagine that there is a bear at *x*

If the actual world is such that it is common belief between the children that there is a stump left of Gregory (i.e., Gregory believes this, Eric believes this, Gregory believes that Eric believes this, Eric believes that Gregory believes this, etc.[373]), then they are mandated to imagine that there is a bear left of Gregory, i.e., this is true in their game. Similarly, if it is common belief that there is *no* stump at *x*, then it is true in the stump-game that there is *no* bear at *x*. In case the children have no common beliefs about there being a stump at location *x* or not (e.g., because they simply haven't explored this part of the garden yet), there will be no mandate to imagine that there is a bear, nor a mandate to imagine that there is none. It will thus be indeterminate whether there is a bear at *x* in the fiction. As Gregory and Eric collectively explore the garden, their common beliefs about the presence or absence of stumps at different locations will grow in number and hence the set of fictional truths concerning bears will grow, making truth in a game of make-believe a *dynamic* notion.

On this version of Walton's theory, unknown facts about props no longer influence fictional truth. Reconsider the ducklings-game. Even if there actually is a hidden stump at *x*, if the children commonly believe there to be no stump at *x*, there will be *no* mandate to imagine that there is a bear at *x*. Hence it will *not* be true in the ducklings-game that there is a bear there. The children commonly believe that they have touched all relevant stumps and therefore it is simply true in the ducklings-game that they rescued the ducklings.

Interestingly, since the account requires *common* belief, it makes truth in a game of make-believe a *collaborative* notion.[374] If Gregory spots the hidden stump at *x* but chooses to ignore it (e.g., because it's getting cold and he wants to quickly finish the game), it will *not* be true in Eric and Gregory's game that there is a bear at *x*.[375] This will even be so in case Eric *also* spots the hidden stump and similarly chooses to ignore it. Gregory may even have noticed that Eric also saw the hidden stump and hence believe that Eric believes that there is a stump at *x*! Still, if the children don't acknowledge this 'publicly', their beliefs about this stump fall short of

[373] I assume the principle of positive introspection (see Rendsvig and Symons (2019)): If *a* believes that *p*, then *a* also believes that *a* believes that *p*, etc. In other words, our attitudes are transparent to ourselves. Hence everything that *a* believes will also be 'common belief' in a community that only has *a* as a member. The proposal thus does not exclude solitary pretend play as a type of fiction.

[374] I leave the question of whether games of make-believe can also be guided by mere 'common acceptance' (see e.g., Stalnaker (2002)) (e.g., when participants lie about props), to future research.

[375] We might say that this is true in a game that Gregory plays individually with the stumps.

common belief, it is *not* true in the ducklings-game that there is a bear at *x*. Of course, this cannot go on forever. If Gregory and Eric end up face-to-face staring at the stump, or some third party publicly points out the hidden stump to them, then they can no longer avoid the mandate to imagine that there is a bear at *x* (and the need to paralyse it). They would have to change the rules of the game to avoid this fictional truth now.

4. Possible Objections

On Walton's original theory, fictional truths and worlds are independent "from cognizers and their experiences". They are "like reality, [...] 'out there,' to be investigated and explored" (Walton, 1990, p.42). The objections discussed in this section hinge on the intuitive appeal of this idea: that fictional truth should be somehow objective and independent of participants' mental states.

Before discussing these, however, it is important to specify to what extent the proposed account is in fact incompatible with this idea. On a common belief version of Walton's theory, fictional truth is guided by our common beliefs about props, rather than directly guided by these props. In this respect, the account makes explicit fictional truth (contra Walton) depend on cognizers' mental states or "what people think" (p.42). However, as in Walton's original account, fictional truth is still independent of what participants do and do not *imagine*. If it is common belief that there is a stump at location *x*, then participants of the stump-game will be mandated to imagine that there is a bear at *x*, and hence this will be true in their game. This will be true even if participants for some reason fail to or refuse to imagine that there is a bear at *x*.

4.1 Discovering the previously hidden Stump

A defendant of Walton may object along the following lines: Sure, there may exist games with principles of generation such as *P'*, but if participants do not agree on this explicitly, then they are simply not playing that kind of game. If Gregory says "all stumps", then it simply is *all* stumps (and not covertly all 'common belief-stumps'). The fact that engagers with fiction indeed accept the consequences of their rules (so specified) is evident from the reaction we, according to Walton, may expect from the children in case they realise that they were mistaken

about there being a stump somewhere:

> "False alarm. There isn't a bear there after all," [...] "We were mistaken in thinking that, in the world of the game, there was a bear there." [...] They do not say that fictionally there was a bear which evaporated when they approached, nor that it is *no longer* fictional that a bear was there at the earlier time. (Walton, 1990, p.37)

Likewise, in case the children realise that they were mistaken about there *not* being a stump at *x* (e.g., they find the hidden stump during their stump-game, even though they previously believed that there was no stump at *x*), they will say that it was fictional *all along* that there was a bear at *x*. Walton has a ready-made explanation: The prop was at *x* all along and hence made it true in the fiction all along that there was a bear at *x*. On the adjusted framework, however, fictional truth is dependent on common beliefs about props. Hence before the children find the stump, it is true in the game that there is *no* bear at *x*, but after they find the stump, it is true that there *is* a bear at *x*!

To avoid the counter-intuitive result of bears evaporating or popping into existence in the stump-game, the common belief version of Walton's theory will have to somehow explain the intuition that it's true in the fiction that there was a bear at *x all along*. We have to allow for retroactively changing fictional truth. This means that we need to allow for the following in the previously hidden stump scenario (I denote the real and fictional timeline respectively as t_n and t'_n): At t_1 (when the stump has not been found yet) it is true in the fiction at t'_1 that there is no bear at *x*. At t_2 (when the stump has been found), however, it is true in the fiction at t'_2 *and* at t'_1 that there *is* a bear at *x*. Something that was false in the fiction at t'_1 thus later becomes true in the fiction at t'_1.

The common belief version of Walton's theory naturally allows for such retroactive changes in fictional truth. To see why, consider how the discussed principles of generation relate to (fictional) timelines. Arguably, principles of generation for stump- and ducklings-games (whether we go for Walton's original theory, or for a common belief version of Walton's theory), have an implicit time variable:

P_t If there is a stump at location *x* at t_n, participants are to imagine that there is a

bear at x at t'_n

P'_t If it is common belief between Gregory and Eric that there is a stump at location x at t_n, Gregory and Eric are to imagine that there is a bear at x at $t'n$

We can formulate P_t and P'_t in this way because for the stump- and ducklings-games the fictional timeline parallels the actual timeline, i.e., the fictional events are happening 'right here, right now'.[376] Given that stumps usually do not move around, the time variable in P_t normally has few consequences for fictional truth. P_t, for instance, predicts that, in case a stump is relocated (e.g., lifted by an excavator) from location x at t_1 to location y at t_2, it is true in the fiction that a bear is at x at t'_1 and at y at t'_2. For the common belief version of Walton, the time variable in P'_t has more direct consequences. Reconsider the hidden stump scenario: Once the children find the stump at t_2, it very probably becomes common belief that there was a stump at x *all along*. In other words, at t_2 the children commonly believe that there was a stump at x at t_2 *and* that it must have been there earlier as well, at t_1. Hence, given P'_t, it becomes retroactively true in the stump-game that there was a bear at x at t'_2 *and* t'_1. It is thus *not* true that in the fiction a bear pops into existence at t'_2. Rather, it is true in the fiction (but only from t_2 onwards) that there was a bear there *all along*.

We have independent reasons to allow for retroactively changing fictional truth as (our knowledge of) props develop(s). Introduction of a new character during an act of storytelling or pretend play can make it retroactively true in the game of make-believe that this person existed all along. This will be true in case their existence was not previously contradicted (e.g., the children are still exploring the garden), and in case their existence *was* previously contradicted (e.g., the hidden stump scenario). For instance, an unreliable storyteller may initially describe their protagonist as an only child and only half-way through their story reveal that they are actually not an only child by introducing a secret sibling. Similar retro-actively changing of truths in games of make-believe may be required for deceptive narrators such as Christie's Dr. Sheppard in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, a detective novel in which the audience finds out at the end of the story that the narrator was the murderer all along.

[376] This is not necessary for fiction or pretend play in general (e.g., children can pretend to be roman soldiers under Caesar's reign or space pirates in a distant future).

4.2 Missing out on fictional Truths

Suppose twelve children play the ducklings-game and only Gregory failed to see the hidden stump. Or suppose that Mia reads a copy of *The Hobbit* that has pages stuck together and accidentally and unknowingly misses the part where it is stated (amongst other things) that Fíli and Kíli are brothers (*p*). Walton has a ready-made explanation for why it seems that Gregory and Mia miss out on the fictional truths (obvious to others) that there is a bear at *x* and that *p*: They are not perceiving the (part of the) prop that makes this fictional. On the common belief version of Walton's theory, however, if one participant doesn't share a particular belief about a prop, it will not be a *common* belief and hence cannot influence fictional truth. How do we explain our intuition that Gregory and Mia *are* (unlike the others) missing out on fictional truths? I consider two possible strategies that work to different degrees for Gregory's and Mia's cases.

4.2.1 The majority's Truth

First, as Lewis (1978) and Walton (1990) do in their discussion of imported fictional truths, we may switch to a version of the theory that requires mere 'general' common belief, i.e., *p* is general common belief in *c* iff *most* members of *c* believe that *p*, *most* members of *c* believe that *most* members of *c* believe that *p*, etc.[377] Such a move will not affect the discussion of Gregory and Eric's ducklings-game. They are only two and hence 'most' participants is 'all' participants. However, in the ducklings-game played by 12 children, it will be general common belief that there is a stump at *x* and hence it will be true in their collective game that there is a bear at *x*. Gregory is thus missing out on fictional truth.

Similarly, because most readers of *The Hobbit* will not have pages stuck together (and believe this about other readers, etc.), *p is* true in their collective game and hence Mia is missing out on fictional truth. Note that this strategy only works for Mia if we (contra Walton) assume

[377] 'Most' can be understood as 'more than 50%' or we might work with a higher threshold. Alternatively, we can allow for a graded (or 'fuzzy') notion of fictional truth. Arguably, we have independent reasons for adopting such a notion because (common) beliefs can be graded anyway (see e.g., Brandenburger and Dekel (1987); Stinchcombe (1988)).

that readers of a novel play a collective game, rather than that they all play their own individual game with the prop. Moreover, on this strategy it will *not* be fictional that *p* if the majority of the readers of *The Hobbit* have these two pages stuck together due, for instance, to a large-scale printing error.[378]

4.2.2 Representation Truth

The second possible strategy, based on Walton's notion of fictional truth of a 'representation', is probably better suited to Mia's case. Walton draws a distinction between 'ad hoc props' that are pressed into service for a single game of make-believe (e.g., the stumps in the stump-game), and 'representations' (or works of fiction), i.e., things that possess the social function of serving as props in games of make-believe. Artworks such as novels, paintings, sculptures, theatre plays, etc. were specifically designed for this purpose and thus count as different kinds of representations (or works of fiction). Although "[p]eople can play any sort of game they wish with a given work" (Walton, 1990, p.59), only games that accord with a representation's function are 'authorised' for it. For instance, it is *The Hobbit*'s function to serve as a prop in games in which it is true that Fíli and Kíli are brothers, not in games in which they are father and son, or games in which it is undetermined whether they are brothers. To play the latter kind of game is to misuse the work of fiction. Fictional truths of a representation are those propositions that are true in *all* authorised games for this representation.

Simply put, although Mia was (supposedly) using the correct principles of generation, her game was based on only part of the text of *The Hobbit* and hence falls short of an authorised game.[379] Since fictional truth of a representation is what is true in *all* authorised games, we cannot allow incomplete games to count as authorised. A game based on just the first three sentences of *The Hobbit* could then also count as authorised and hence hardly anything would be true in *The Hobbit*. Authorised games have to be games that are based on (beliefs about) the entire prop. Mia, playing an unauthorised game, thus misses out on fictional truths *of the representation*. An interesting feature of this second strategy is that it only works for representations: Gregory does not miss out on fictional truths *of a representation* since the

[378] Easter eggs in films and videogames arguably have a similar effect.
[379] This is true independently of whether the majority of readers plays such a game.

stumps (being ad hoc props) do not authorise any games.

5. Conclusions and further Questions

In this paper I have explored the shape and tenability of a version of Walton's theory of make-believe in which unknown facts about props *cannot* influence fictional truth since conditional principles of generation are only valid if they quantify over props whose existence and nature is common belief between participants of the game. The fact that this version theory makes fictional truth depend on common beliefs raises some additional questions relevant for future research (and possibly also for the discussion of implicit fictional truth). First, the fact that people can have graded beliefs (about props) hints at the need for a graded notion of fictional truth. Second, given that people can lie about their beliefs (about props), can games of make-believe also be guided by mere 'common acceptance'? Last, it would be interesting to explore a normative version of Walton's theory in which fictional truth depends on what the children can reasonably be expected to believe about the stumps.

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