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TRUTH IN FICTION & NATURAL STORIES: ABOUT AN ARGUMENT

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*The nature of fiction is commonly understood in terms of make-believe. Within this framework, there has been a debate between **fictive intentionalism** and **fictive anti-intentionalism**. In this paper, my purpose is to make a case for the latter. To do so, I reassess the debate over Kendall Walton's (1990) 'Cracks in a Rock' thought experiment. I put forward a careful reconstruction of its most popular reply, namely Gregory Currie's (1990) pseudofiction counterargument, and argue that it is either incomplete or unsound. I then emphasize the importance of fictional truth for the thought experiment. Therein lies the core of the argument, for intentionalism has a hard time accounting for fictional truths. I thus rehabilitate the 'Cracks in a Rock' argument as a compelling reason for the anti-intentionalist view of the institution of fiction.*

1 Introduction

The problem of the nature or definition of fiction is a long-standing debate. What is the difference between fiction and non-fiction? To resolve this issue, a number of theorists (Walton 1990; Currie 1990; Lamarque & Olsen 1994) proposed to conceive of representational works of art in terms of *make-believe*. These theories share the basic conception that fictions prescribe imaginings: they are causally and normatively responsible for the imaginative states of their readers. Beyond that, significant differences have persisted.

Disagreements arise about the institution of fiction. The institution of fiction is the network of relations and contexts within which a philosophical theory places works of fiction. The important issue here is whether there are *authors* within the minimal framework of the institution of fiction alongside *works* and *readers*.

“There are indeed!” some argue.

Fictions are *made*. They ultimately function in a particular - imaginative - manner *because* their fiction-makers acted in a certain way: “The explanatory work for defining the fictional dimension of stories appeals more to *actions* and *attitudes* than to words and *things*” (Lamarque & Olsen 1994, 32).

“Not necessarily!” others object.

Fictions *function*. Fiction-makers have ultimately crafted fictions *because* their products work in a particular manner: “The basic concept of a story and the basic concept of fiction attach most perspicuously to *objects* rather than *actions*” (Walton 1990, 87).¹

These disagreements then, pertain to the question of what it is to prescribe something to be imagined. Author-based theories of fiction (Currie 1990; Lamarque & Olsen 1994; Davies 2007; García-Carpintero

1 In both quotes, the emphasis is mine.

2013; Stock 2017) are based on two claims:

- They postulate the existence of *fictive utterances*. Fictive utterances are assumed to be essentially contained within fictions and ultimately a kind of communication.
- They introduce a *Gricean clause* as, at least, a necessary condition for fictive utterance. Fictive utterances are taken to be necessarily uttered with reflexive intentions.² Every author-based theory contains a refined version of the following: for an author *X*, a particular audience *Y* and an utterance *A*, *X*'s utterance of *A* is fictive only if *X* utters *A* intending that *Y* will (i) imagine that *P*, (ii) recognize that *X* intends *Y* to imagine that *P* and that (iii) this recognition (ii) will be a reason for the imagining (i).

So conceived, author-based accounts are communicative and intentionalist theories of fiction. Henceforth, I will refer to those views as fictive intentionalism.

Fictive intentionalism is misleading. There could be works of fiction without an author, hence without a fictive utterance or Gricean intention. In fact, such challenging cases exist. Here is one:

Queneau's *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* [...] is a set of ten sonnets each of whose verses can be combined with each of the others. Queneau thus produced 10^{14} well-formed sonnets. But is he the author of each and everyone of them? Answering "yes" would be to commit oneself to the idea that one can be the author of a text one has never entirely read. (Rouillé 2019, 150-151)

There also are well-known hypothetical cases. It is quite possible to pos-

.....
 2 While all author-based theories rely on a Gricean concept of intention, some of them do not admit a Gricean picture of communication. See for example: Lamarque & Olsen (1994); García-Carpintero (2019).

tulate that monkeys hitting keys on typewriters for an infinite amount of time will produce at least an instance of every possible finite text, or (in a more Putnamian spirit) that an ant crawling on a patch of sand could by pure chance produce readable symbols. And there is Kendall Walton's 'Cracks in a Rock' thought experiment (1990).

Proponents of fictive intentionalism (Currie 1990; Lamarque and Olsen 1994) claim to have convincingly countered the arguments put forward using the 'Cracks in a Rock' case. In this paper, I argue that they have not. To that end, I put forward a careful reconstruction of the pseudofiction counterargument (Currie 1990). I argue that it is either incomplete or unsound. Then, I emphasize the importance of fictional truths for the thought experiment: it really is 'true in' the story that there are three bears, who enjoy eating porridge and napping afterwards. Therein lies the core of the argument, for intentionalism has a hard time accounting for these fictional truths. In a nutshell, my purpose is to shed light on the debate and rehabilitate the 'Cracks in a Rock' argument as both correct and compelling.

2 The Cracks in a Rock Thought Experiment

The reasoning behind Walton's 'Cracks in a Rock' argument against fictive intentionalism is straightforward: there are non-artefactual, natural fictions; hence, it is not necessarily the case that fictions are produced by specific intentional acts performed by an author. Two hypothetical cases flesh out the argument. First, Walton introduces the 'Natural Newspaper' story.

Consider a naturally occurring inscription of an assertive sentence: cracks in a rock, for example, which by pure coincidence spell out "Mount Merapi is erupting." And suppose we know for sure, somehow, that the cracks were formed naturally, that nobody inscribed (or used) them to assert anything. This inscription will not serve anything like the purposes vehicles of people's assertions typically serve. It will not convince us that Mount Merapi

is erupting, or that there is reason to believe it is, or that someone thinks it is or wants us to think so. (Walton 1990, 86)

No theory of communication should allow the 'Natural Newspaper' story to be a case of communication and indeed the Gricean theory of communication clearly does not. Take an agent *X*. *X* cannot recognize within the natural inscriptions that someone intends him to believe that Mount Merapi is erupting. As a matter of fact, *X* is aware that nobody *uttered* anything here. So, there is no intention to recognize that could have been a reason for *X* to believe that Mount Merapi is erupting. There is no such thing as a natural newspaper here. Fair enough. Next, Walton compares the 'Natural Newspaper' story and the 'Natural Story' case.

Contrast a naturally occurring story: cracks in a rock spelling out "Once upon a time there were three bears..." The realization that the inscription was not made or used by anyone need not prevent us from reading and enjoying the story in much the way we would if it had been. It may be entrancing, suspenseful, spellbinding, comforting; we may laugh and cry. Some dimensions of our experiences of authored stories will be absent but the differences are not ones that would justify denying that it functions and is understood as a full-fledged *story*. (Walton 1990, 87)

Here again, Walton argues, a Gricean theory of communication does not allow the 'Natural Story' thought experiment to be a case of communication because the natural inscriptions are no more uttered with reflexive intents than before. However, there are *induced* imaginative responses featured in 'Natural Story' where 'Natural Newspaper' features no induced doxastic response. More importantly, there clearly seems to be a *reason* to imagine that there are three bears. That is, the stones seem to make imagining that there are three bears appropriate while making, for instance, imagining that there are three little pigs

inappropriate. Correlatively, it clearly seems to be *fictional* or true in the fiction that there are three bears. The cracked rock “functions and is understood” as fiction. Systematic consistency is on the line. Intentionalism cannot account for those facts, while anti-intentionalism can. There truly *is a fictional world* of the cracked rock. It truly *is fictional that* there are three bears. And there truly is a *reason to imagine that* there are three bears, as long as we admit Walton’s dictum (1990, 41): “what is fictional” necessarily is “what is to be imagined.”³ Hence, for Walton, this natural phenomenon *is* a work of fiction.

3 The Pseudofiction Counterargument

According to Walton’s argument, neither fiction nor fictionality imply communicative acts. However, Gregory Currie has argued that the natural story is *not* a work of fiction:

The most this argument could establish is that we may treat the shapes on the face of the rock *as if they were fiction*; we can respond to them as we would to a fictional work. But this is not enough to make something fiction. [...] Just about anything can be read as fiction but not everything is fiction. (Currie 1990, 36)

The shapes on the face of the rock are authorless. Hence, they are not fiction. When we do respond imaginatively, we treat the shapes *as* we would have *if* they were intentionally produced. Ultimately, there are no fictive utterances; there is no incentive to imagine anything on the grounds of a recognition of reflexive intents. The counterargument sorts out a misconception. According to Currie (1990, 37), we should differentiate *fiction*, which is determined diachronically by particular Gricean intentions, from *pseudofiction*, which is determined synchronically “by there being a widespread practice of reading the work as if it were fic-

3 On another note, Walton’s definition of fictionality encounters important issues. See most notably Walton (2015) for an argument against its sufficiency and Matravers (2014) for arguments against both sufficiency and necessity. Those are fights for another day.

tion.” Natural stories are no more than pseudofictions. For many philosophers, the conceptual distinction puts an end to the debate.⁴

It is premature to blow the final whistle. As it stands, the reply *begs the question*. Let us sum up briefly. Walton’s natural story argument is straightforwardly the following:

(Pa) If the shapes on the face of the rock are fiction, then there are some fictions that are authorless.

(Pb) The shapes on the face of the rock are fiction.

∴ There are some fictions that are authorless.

Here, the *conclusion* implies that intentionalism is wrong. Comparatively, Currie’s reply to the argument is built around the contraposition of Walton’s first premise. We have then the following *modus ponens* argument:

(P1) If there is no authorless fiction, then the shapes on the face of the rock are not fiction.

(P2) There is no authorless fiction (only pseudofiction).

∴ The shapes on the face of the rock are not fiction.

Here, the *premises* imply that intentionalism is right. It seems clear that there is a circularity. The counterargument presupposes what it should have established. Circularity is not always a critical flaw. However, it qualifies the outcome: Currie’s reply establishes at most that, *according to his theory*, the natural story is not fiction. The counterargument will strengthen faith in intentionalism but it will not alter anti-intentionalist beliefs. So far, the debate relies solely on conflicting intuitions.

In order to provide a way out, a reply has to argue that there is a *reason* to distinguish fiction from pseudofiction here *besides* loyalty to a particular theory of fiction. Only then would we legitimately endorse prem-

4 For instance, García-Carpintero (2007, 213).

ise (P2). According to Currie, his own counterargument is grounded on the fact that there is, to put it roughly, a separation between a *folk* concept of fiction and a *folk* concept of pseudofiction in our conceptual scheme. To show this separation, Currie provides conceptual analysis in a couple of hypothetical cases.

If we do not make the distinction, we have to say that *The Origin of Species* would be fiction if some or most people adopted the attitude toward it appropriate to a reading of fiction: surely an unacceptable result. (Currie 1990, 38)

Many people read and enjoy Bible stories *as* fiction. [...] If atheism becomes more widespread than it is, I can imagine Christians (the few who remain) admitting that the Bible is pseudofiction (in my sense) and denying that it is fiction. To call the Bible fiction is much more inflammatory to a believer than to say it is often read as fiction. (Currie 1990, 36, 38)

The conceptual analysis breaks down the following conceptual relations. Most of us as laymen will admit that Bible stories and *Origin* stories are read as fiction. Most of us will also admit that neither the Bible nor *The Origin of Species* are fiction. Or

anyone who says, reasonably enough, “It was widely and mistakenly thought to be fiction,” must be making a distinction between being fiction and being regarded as fiction. (Currie 1990, 38)

Hence, the man on the street distinguishes fiction from pseudofiction. To put it in another way, we have the following *modus tollens* argument:

(P3) If there is not a conceptual distinction between fiction and pseudofiction, then Bible stories and *Origin* stories are fiction (in the circumstances mentioned).

(P4) Bible stories and *Origin* stories are *not* fiction (not even in the circumstances mentioned).

∴ There is a conceptual distinction between fiction and pseudofiction.

For the sake of the argument, I should add a few things. Currie draws an ontological conclusion from his conceptual analysis: something would not *become* fiction if there were a widespread practice of reading it as fiction. He also draws an epistemological conclusion: we are more prone to *errors* regarding the diachronic claim that something is fiction than we are regarding the synchronic claim that something is pseudofiction. Although it seems we have a compelling reason to admit (P2), it is time to question matters in more detail.

4 Tacit theses

Currie's reply is less straightforward than it seems and requires further qualifications. There are, in fact, *two* claims behind his conceptual analysis: a *descriptive thesis* according to which *people do* distinguish fiction from pseudofiction and a *prescriptive thesis* according to which *philosophers should* distinguish fiction from pseudofiction. To be clear, they both seem perfectly true to me. However, true beliefs sometimes come from improper reasons. Here, I want to take a closer look at the specific arguments offered for those theses. The Bible and *The Origin of Species* cases undoubtedly possess an intuitive appeal, but those intuition pumps play on an ambiguity. I would argue that they have different implicit functions regarding the two tacit theses.

The Bible case seems to be an argument in favour of the descriptive thesis: it reveals what *is believed by people on the street* rather than what is true. In fact, this is made explicit in Currie's proposal for (P4): "*Christians [...] den[y] that it is fiction.*"⁵ Taking this into account, the argument should be prefixed with *doxastic* operators. So, roughly:

.....
5 My emphasis.

(P3') If, *in our conceptual scheme*, there is not a conceptual distinction between fiction and pseudofiction, then *it is commonly believed that Bible stories are fiction*.

(P4') *It is not commonly believed that Bible stories are fiction*.

∴ *In our conceptual scheme*, there is a conceptual distinction between fiction and pseudofiction.

Although reasonable, the argument is limited. It is a truism that common-sense ideas are often wrong. In fact, Currie (1990, 36, n. 40) himself acknowledges that the beliefs could be mistaken here: “[T]he Bible, or parts of it, may be fiction.” Hence, there really are two distinct claims behind the conceptual analysis. The Bible case only supports the descriptive thesis which will not matter much as long as it remains isolated from the prescriptive thesis.

The *Origin* case seems to be an argument in favour of the prescriptive thesis: it reveals what *should be held by philosophers* rather than what is ordinarily believed to be true. There is a normative flavour to Currie’s thinking (1990, 38) when he deems a result “unacceptable.” The norms involved are constraints on philosophical theories. In fact, the textual basis for (P3) is concerned with theoretical thinking: if *we as philosophers* “do not make the distinction, [then] *we* have to say that *The Origin of Species* would be fiction” whether we do or “do not accept the theory [Currie is] proposing” (Currie 1990, 37).⁶ Taking this into account, the argument should be prefixed with *deontic* operators. Roughly:

(P3'') *It is philosophically obligatory to consider that if there is not a conceptual distinction between fiction and pseudofiction, then Origin stories are fiction*.

(P4'') *It is philosophically obligatory to consider that Origin stories are not fiction*.

.....
6 My emphasis.

∴ It is philosophically obligatory to consider that there is a conceptual distinction between fiction and pseudofiction.

Let me state that I do not want to argue against the descriptive and the prescriptive theses themselves. But I have a problem with the arguments that lead to them, especially with (P4”).

We have established that the Bible case and the *Origin* case are somehow related. I assume that the descriptive argument (the Bible one) is supposed to be an intuitive reason for the prescriptive argument (the *Origin* one). Yet, this is not immediately obvious: are we to understand that, because Bible stories are not commonly held to be fiction, (P4’), then we have a reason to believe that *Origin* stories should not be philosophically held to be fiction (P4”)?) This is hardly the case, even if we grant the rightness of the descriptive argument. On what grounds, then, are we to admit (P4”)?) Surely, on semantic grounds: *Origin* stories are not *false* in the situation mentioned. However, such an explanation would be incoherent. Purely semantic criteria for fiction are rejected by every make-believe theorist;⁷ keep that in mind when you put the classical scientific work in a world where ordinary people have a much more advanced knowledge of biology and so read the *Origin* as a simplistic but entertaining view of the phenomena. Does it mean that the *Origin* is fiction? What is the status of the work? In all honesty, I do not know and have no clear intuition on the matter. And that is my point. We would be wise, *contra* (P4”), to be cautious regarding what philosophers should think in those exotic circumstances.

At this point, we may have serious doubts about the pseudofiction counterargument: its reasoning is cumbersome and its thought experiments are dubious. But there is a more eloquent way to dismiss it.

.....
7 See, for instance, Friend (2008, 151) for a general description of make-believe approach to fiction.

5 An Unsound Version of the Counterargument

Something still remains unclear. Do we now have an argument establishing that natural stories are only pseudofiction? Not quite. In order to obtain a valid argument, we must add another proposition (P₅).

(P₅) If (in our conceptual scheme/it is philosophically obligatory that) there is a conceptual distinction between fiction and pseudofiction, then there is no authorless fiction.

This is a curious idea that was never asserted by Currie as far as I know.

On a charitable interpretation, (P₅) could be understood as a *retaliation*. The rationale behind it would be that *Walton's theory* fails to acknowledge that authorless fictions do not exist (consequent) *because* it fails to account for the conceptual separation between fiction and pseudofiction (antecedent). More accurately, it would allegedly violate some conceptual truths - an ontological truth (nothing becomes fiction) and an epistemological truth (we are more prone to errors regarding fiction than pseudofiction) - unveiled by the conceptual analysis. The intentionalist reply becomes a riposte which argues that the 'Natural Story' argument perpetuates confusions that haunt anti-intentionalism. This reading makes sense of (P₅) and incidentally explains why philosophers act as if the counterargument puts an end to the debate.

Henceforth, Currie's riposte is based on a valid inference. However, it is not a sound argument. Proposition (P₅) is perfectly inadequate because its rationale is utterly false. Walton's theory of fiction *does* account for the conceptual separation but still claims authorless fiction can exist.

It is said that Walton has a *functionalist* theory of fiction. As a matter of fact, the function criterion is taken to be *vague*: accordingly, its correlated class of works of fiction is partly extensionally undetermined. However, Walton offers four conceptions of the notion of function. They do not dispel this vagueness. They are intended to clarify the source of any conflicts about the fictive status of something. Two of those concep-

tions explain the Bible case and the *Origin* case well.

Relativist account of function.

Fictive status is society relative insofar as it is possible that something, *A*, is a fiction in a society, *X*, whereas *A* is not a fiction in another society, *Y*. For instance: “The ancient Greek myths may have been non-fiction for the Greeks but fiction for us.” (Walton 1990, 91) Within this conception, the Bible and *The Origin of Species* are fiction in their respective hypothetical societies; none of them *become* fiction.

Historical account of function.

Fictive status is inherited. That is to say, if *A* was produced in *X* and *A* is a fiction relative to *X*, then *A* is a fiction relative to any *Y*. For instance: “If Greek myths were nonfiction for the Greeks, perhaps they are nonfiction for us also, despite the fact that we use and understand them as fiction” (Walton 1990, 92). Within this conception, neither the Bible nor *The Origin of Species* are fiction in their respective hypothetical societies; both of them can be erroneously *judged* to be fiction while unmistakably treated as fiction.

Are Bible stories and *Origin* stories non-fiction in the circumstances discussed? We arguably have mixed intuitions about them to the point where being agnostic would not be a bad thing. Surely Walton is, although this does not mean he remains silent. The framework he puts forward explains why we have mixed intuitions; they oscillate between faith in a relativist conception and in an historical conception of function. This does not settle the dispute but does clarify what is at stake.

The framework also allows us to see why (P5) is false. Walton did not talk about fiction and pseudofiction. However, both so-called conceptual truths are in fact explained within the functionalist framework. Hence, there is an unarticulated conceptual distinction between fiction

and pseudofiction. So, (P₅)'s *antecedent is true*. Now, let us link the functionalist framework to the shapes of the surface of the rock. Here, the historical conception is useless, and the relativist conception applies.⁸ Accordingly, it truly is an authorless fiction for us because we would use and understand it as such. So, (P₅)'s *consequent is false*. Hence, the rationale behind (P₅) is false. We *can* argue that there are authorless fictions while acknowledging the distinction between fiction and pseudofiction.

Ultimately, Currie's riposte appears fundamentally unsound as it fails to provide a reason to think that natural stories are simply pseudofiction besides its own theoretical assumptions. So, Walton and Currie's respective analyses appear to be on a par with one another. The alternative between them seems to be reduced to a matter of theoretical preferences. This is not the case. The reason is to be found in their analyses of what is *fictional*.

6 Truth in Fiction Arguments

Fictive intentionalism leads more often than not to *fictional* intentionalism; it puts one on the path toward a theory of fictional truth that relies on some notion of *author*.⁹ There are great disparities among intentionalist theories of fictional truth. The 'Cracks in a Rock' argument intends to show that *in any case* intentionalism struggles to account for what is *fictional* or for what is *to be imagined* in the natural story. Let me elaborate.

An *actual* author theory of fictionality such as Kathleen Stock's (2017, 14) claims that an "authorial intention of a certain sort is both necessary [...] *and sufficient*" for what is true in the fiction. As a consequence,

8 To be fair, the relativist conception competes with an essentialist view and a gradualist view. See Walton (1990, 91-92). However, that does not matter much and we can reasonably enough assert that the outcome will be more or less the same in any case.

9 A remarkable exception may be Lamarque (1990).

Stock argues that the shapes on the surface of the rock are one of those things which are “not fictions and [which] do not ‘generate fictional truths’ at all, though they may be used as imaginative prompts.” (2017, 153) Natural stories are not fiction and there are no truths *in* natural stories. Further consequences become unavoidable. There is *no reason* to imagine that there are three bears. We just *imagine* this to be the case. The rock only *causally* induces an imaginative response. It does not *normatively* govern an imaginative project. In this respect, the answer is highly counterintuitive. Most of us will undoubtedly admit that encountering a mineral story beginning with “Once upon a time there were three bears...” is a good enough reason to imagine that there were three bears. The importance of this fact cannot be overstated. *This* is the point of Walton’s argument.

A nonactual author theory of fictionality claims that what is true in the fiction depends on a fictional or implied author, which is, in the words of Currie, a theoretical “construct, not the real live author of the work.” (1990, 75) This has an affinity with the subtler explanation involved in the pseudofiction argument: when we respond imaginatively we treat the shapes on the surface of the rock *as* we would have *if* they were intentionally produced. Bringing the two together would be like pairing an almost but not quite fiction with an almost but not quite author. However, that does not clarify the matter. There are two mutually exclusive elaborations on the explanation that are available to the nonactual author theorist: a *realist* analysis and a *fictionalist* one. Both are inadequate.

In the first instance, the nonactual author theorist may adopt a *realist* analysis of what is fictional. It really is fictional that there are three bears, because the mineral text really does have a fictional or implied author that believes that there are three bears. Notwithstanding, an asymmetric system will result from the realist analysis. There still won’t be a *reason* to imagine that there are three bears because prescriptions

to imagine require *actual* reflexive intentions. In fact, the realist analysis reveals a conceptual break within such an intentionalist framework, for truth in fiction turns out to be independent from fictive utterances. This ultimately puts the analysis in harm's way. It does not explain why there seems to be a reason to imagine that there are three bears...

Alternatively, the nonactual author theorist may prefer a *fictionalist* analysis of what is fictional. It is not really fictional that there are three bears. We treat the cracks as we would have if it were fictional that there are three bears. The 'as if' reading applies transitively from the natural work to its content, avoiding any conceptual break. We have an 'as if' reason to imagine. This could be a decent explanation but the notion of 'as if' is hardly innocuous. It is reminiscent of the grammatical analysis of fictions by Hans Vaihinger, the father of scientific and moral fictionalism. This leads me to express a concern. The notion of 'as if' and the notion of 'make-believe' are historically as well as conceptually intertwined.¹⁰ So, the explanation cannot hope to be intelligible, I submit, unless it elucidates the relationship between them. There are roughly two ways of providing such clarifications: a *traditional* way and a *contemporary* one. The signs are once again unpromising.

Classical fictionalism assumes that acting as if and make-believing are attached to different *types* of fiction. As a matter of fact, Vaihinger (1924, 81) himself stressed that we call "scientific fictions - *fictions* and the others, the mythological, aesthetic, etc. *figments*." In recent years, Peter Lamarque & Stein H. Olsen (1994, 188) revived the idea, arguing that Vaihingerian "fictions of convenience [...] belong in a distinct category of fictions" which "is not identical with that of fiction in the make-believe sense." This is a promising path but the pseudofiction argument cannot admit such assumptions. In particular, Currie (1990, 37) has to argue that there is no attitudinal difference between an imaginative response to fiction and an imaginative response to pseudofiction; as he puts it,

.....
10 See Bouriau (2013).

we may surprisingly learn that a text is pseudofiction rather than fiction while continuing to respond to it in the same manner. This is inconsistent with classical fictionalism.

A more *contemporary* fictionalism assumes that acting as if and make-believing are very similar. Today's fictionalism about a given region of discourse is, according to Stephen Yablo (2001, 74), the thesis that utterances of sentences produced within that region are, or should be regarded as, "advanced in a [...] make-believe spirit." Provided this is what Currie has in mind, the riposte would have to endorse bizarre consequences. Here, pseudofiction turns out to be *metafiction*: fiction about what is fiction or about what is fictional. In compliance with the contemporary assumption, metafiction *is* fiction in the make-believe sense. Accordingly, the fictionalist explanation of our intuition would be that it is fictional that, fictionally, there are three bears. We imagine that there are three bears as an effect of imagining what we were to imagine, would it be fictional that there are three bears. Specifically, according to Currie's nonactual author theory of fictionality, we imagine so because we infer that a fictional author believes that a fictional author believes that there are three bears. That is a rather curious explanation and one which I find hard to understand. We should remain dubious. Bear in mind that there could be a way to make it work. But the prospect of an emendation is not particularly inspiring. Hitherto, I had shown that the famous riposte to Walton's argument is undoubtedly less clear than it seems and that it is a mistake to be compelled by it.

7 Conclusion

Far-fetched as it is, 'Cracks in a Rock' is a great thought experiment. It delves deep into our intuitions; it reveals complex relations between fiction, truth in fiction and imagination. In doing so, it brings constraints. Intentionalist views of the institution of fiction should also account for the fact that natural stories seem associated with some fictional worlds and seem normatively responsible for their readers' imaginings.

The pseudofiction counterargument is unsatisfactory in this respect. It does not provide reasons that are independent from the Gricean clause assumed by any communicative theory of fiction to believe that the natural phenomena are pseudofiction rather than fiction. It does not explain what, if anything, is fictionally true of the natural story. And it remains unclear whether any author-based theory of fictionality can consistently and cogently help in providing such explanation. At the very least, I hope I have provided enough reasons to challenge some certainties and to reclaim Walton's 'Cracks in a Rock' argument in favour of fictive and fictional anti-intentionalism.¹¹

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