How to Defend Realism about Impossible Fiction without the Principle of Poetic License

Eugene Ho

10 April 2026

Forthcoming in *Philosophical Studies*.
Please cite published version.

Abstract

One tempting strategy sometimes employed in defense of realism about impossible fiction is the endorsement of the *principle of poetic license*. While the principle of poetic license has become the focus of much discussion on impossible fiction, I shall argue that the principle of poetic license is neither necessary nor sufficient for realism about impossible fiction. The principle can be strengthened so as to entail realism about impossible fiction, but I shall argue that the strengthened principle of poetic license is empirically inadequate given the data provided by fictionality puzzles. I then provide a different argument from existential generalization for realism about impossible fiction which does not rely on either variant of the principle of poetic license. I suggest that this position, which leaves open the possibility that certain sets of propositions could not be jointly true-in-fiction, accommodates the data provided by fictionality puzzles and is more theoretically attractive than an account that endorses either variant of the principle of poetic license. Following which, I defend realism about impossible fiction from error theories about impossible fiction.

1 Introduction

Many philosophers are *realists about impossible fiction*, in the sense of thinking that some fictions have non-trivial impossible contents.[1] However, the idea that fictions have non-trivial impossible contents is still an anathema to many metaphysicians and philosophers of language who do much of their work within a possibilist paradigm of modal metaphysics and an intensionalist paradigm of propositional content. Because of this, several philosophers have expressed skepticism regarding taking impossible propositions as being true-in-fiction,[2] and philosophers of fiction still find themselves having to defend realism about impossible fiction.

One tempting strategy sometimes employed in defense of realism about impossible fiction, is the endorsement of the *principle of poetic license*. The principle of poetic license contends that "For any class K of propositions, there is a story (abstractly conceived) in which every proposition in K is true." (Deutsch 1985, 202). The principle of poetic license has since become the focus of much discussion on impossible fiction.[3] However, I suspect that endorsing the principle of poetic license is a bad strategy for motivating realism about impossible fiction. This is because the principle of poetic license

1. For instance, see Lewis 1983, 274; Walton 1990, 61; Currie 1990, 54; Matravers 2014, 129; Stock 2017, 129; Gendler 2000, 66; Weatherson 2004, 8.; García-Carpintero 2022, 319. By "content" I just mean propositional content. In this paper, I use "truths-in-fiction", "fictional truths", and "fictional contents" interchangeably.

2. For instance, see Lewis 1978; Hanley 2004; Blumson 2015; Xhignesse 2021; García-Carpintero 2019. Advocates of Lewis' method of union such as Lewis 1983; Hanley 2004 and García-Carpintero 2019 present an interesting case. For fictions with minor inconsistencies, the method of union proposes that interpreters admit both propositions of the contradictory pair as truths-in-fiction without admitting the conjunction of both propositions in the contradictory pair. As such, the method of union can be seen as a method of *avoiding* the fictionality of certain impossible propositions by giving up closure under classical entailment. That being said, this is still entirely compatible with endorsing realism about impossible fictions more generally, as can be seen in García-Carpintero 2022 (319).

3. The principle of poetic license has been challenged by Hanley 2004 and Xhignesse 2016 and has been endorsed by Deutsch 1985, Phillips 1999, Wildman and Folde 2017, and Kim 2025b. It is also endorsed by Routley 1979 although not by the same name.

is really *neither necessary nor sufficient* for realism about impossible fiction, properly understood as a statement asserting the *plurality* and *heterogeneity* of impossible fictions. The principle can be strengthened so as to entail realism about impossible fiction, but I argue that the strengthened principle cannot accommodate the data of fictionality puzzles—cases where authorial authority fails to make certain propositions true-in-fiction.

Realists about impossible fiction who endorse the principle of poetic license thus face a dilemma. Either endorse the canonical principle of poetic license as it is formulated and defend realism about impossible fiction on independent grounds, or strengthen the principle of poetic license and face the difficulty of accounting for fictionality puzzles.

I argue that philosophers of fiction should prefer a simpler, more direct route to realism about impossible fiction which gives up on the principle of poetic license in favour of an argument from existential generalization.

2 How to Formulate Realism about Impossible Fictions

Realism about impossible fiction is the thesis that some fictions have non-trivial impossible contents. Before we proceed, its important to define the relevant notions of *triviality* and *impossibility* employed in our formulation of realism. Here is the relevant notion of triviality I have in mind:

TRIVIALITY: The content of a work of fiction f is *trivial* iff for all propositions ϕ, ϕ is true-in-fiction f.[4]

There are also two distinct conceptions of impossibility philosophers of

4. By contraposition, this entails:
NON-TRIVIALITY: The content of a work of fiction f is *non-trivial* iff it is not the case that for all propositions ϕ, ϕ is true-in-fiction f.

fiction typically have in mind when they endorse or reject realism:[5]

Impossibility-M: A proposition ϕ is *metaphysically* impossible iff at no metaphysically possible world, ϕ.

Impossibility-L: A proposition ϕ is *logically* impossible iff at no logically possible world, ϕ.[6]

This naturally yields (at least) two statements of realism about impossible fiction:

RIF: There exist some works of fiction with non-trivial logically or metaphysically impossible contents.

RIF+: There exist some works of fiction with non-trivial logically impossible contents and there exist some works of fiction with non-trivial metaphysically impossible contents.

5. Nolan 2021a surveys several different notions of impossibility, including *nomological* impossibility—violations of laws of nature. I set this aside since this doesn't really seem to be what philosophers of fiction have in mind when debating the realism about impossible fiction. If nomological impossibilities sufficed for the truth of realism, then plenty of fantasy or sci-fi novels witness the truth of realism, even without needing to appeal to logical or metaphysical impossibilities.

6. Formulating things this way may perhaps involve an overly Leibizian conception of modality that privileges a certain interpretation of the possible worlds semantics that certain proof theoretically minded philosophers might object to. An alternative formulation might proceed as follows:

Impossibility-L': A proposition ϕ is *logically* impossible iff ϕ is a logical falsity.

I have chosen not to formulate things this way partially because of conceptual symmetry—while the concepts of *logical* truth and falsity are standard concepts in analytic philosophy, the concept of *metaphysical* truth and falsity is less pervasive, at least when compared to the concept of a metaphysically possible world—and partially because, strictly speaking, logical truths are defined relative to logical systems, which makes Impossibility-L' somewhat misleading. Readers may treat the phrase "logically impossible world" as my attempt at remaining neutral between different systems of logic.

The thesis I am officially defending in this paper is RIF. Although I do in fact think that RIF+ is true, defending it within the framework I am proposing here requires me to take a stand on the correct interpretations of certain works of fiction which I don't really need to do to make my point about the principle of poetic license and so I am officially remaining neutral in this paper as to whether RIF+ is true. I leave it to the reader to judge for themselves if the argument from existential generalization establishes RIF+.

At this juncture, one may question my decision to define realism about impossible fiction as a thesis about *non-trivial* impossible fictional contents rather than a thesis about impossible fictional contents *simpliciter*. Wouldn't a thesis about impossible fictional contents simpliciter be more deserving of the name "realism about impossible fiction"? I disagree. To see why, let's take a quick detour to metaethics.

Moral realism is sometimes formulated as the thesis that there exist objective moral facts. Consider someone who calls himself a "moral realist", in virtue of endorsing the following claim: The only moral fact is that every action is morally permissible.

If we formulate moral realism merely as the thesis that there exist objective moral facts, then this radical permissivist *ipso facto* counts as a moral realist. But surely the thesis that every action is morally permissible doesn't really deserve the name "moral realism"! Other realists of less deviant persuasions may even proclaim this view to be decidedly *amoral*! To be *deserving* of the name "moral realism", it seems like the thesis must at least satisfy some substantive realist presuppositions such as the non-triviality of the moral law.

Analogously, if realism about impossible fiction were to merely be a thesis asserting the existence of impossible fictional contents simpliciter, then the existence of *trivial* impossible fictional contents *ipso facto* suffices for realism about impossible fiction. One might thus paradoxically call oneself a realist while *denying* that impossible fictions have non-trivial impossible contents, on this deficient definition of realism. 'Realists' might thus consistently deny that any two impossible fictions have any difference in fictional content, while genuinely calling themselves a "realist about impossible fiction"! But this strikes me as fundamentally opposed to the spirit of realism, so to speak. Presumably, one central motivation for endorsing realism about impossible fiction despite the challenges it presents to intensionalist accounts of propositional content is simply that philosophers of fiction feel a need to take the data presented by the plethora of different examples of fictions with non-trivial impossible contents, seriously. However, this 'realist' view only admits of the existence of *one kind of trivial impossible fiction*, namely fictions in which *everything* is true-in-fiction. One would have thought that the realist about impossible fiction, would be someone who took the phenomena of impossible fictions seriously, and thus endorsed the existence of impossible *fictions* with different kinds of impossibilities and contents. It thus seems that the thesis about *non-trivial* impossible fictional contents is more deserving of the name "realism about impossible fiction".[7]

3 Which Principle of Poetic License?

Having clarified what realism about impossible fiction requires, I now turn to a common but problematic strategy for defending it—endorsing the principle of poetic license.

In this section I point out that the canonical formulation of the principle of poetic license by Harry Deutsch is actually *neither necessary nor sufficient* for realism about impossible fiction. I then consider a possible strengthening of the principle which would entail realism about impossible fiction, and note

7. Note that I am not *redefining* impossible fiction, I am pointing out that merely countenancing the existence of trivial impossible fictions doesn't suffice to satisfy the realist's ambitions in endorsing realism about impossible fiction. Impossible fiction is still being defined in the usual way, as fictions with *logically* or *metaphysically impossible* contents.

some of its logical properties.

3.1 The Canonical Principle

Recall Deutsch's formulation of the principle of poetic license:

PPL: For any class K of propositions, there is a story (abstractly conceived) in which every proposition in K is true.

With the clarifications from the previous section having been made, we can now see why the principle of poetic license is neither necessary nor sufficient to for the truth of realism about impossible fiction.

The principle of poetic license is not *necessary* for realism because philosophers of fiction can consistently endorse realism about impossible fiction without endorsing the principle of poetic license. The principle of poetic license requires that *every* set of propositions be jointly true in some possible work of fiction or other, and this rules out the possibility that some sets of propositions just couldn't be jointly true-in-fiction. But realists about impossible fiction don't need to commit themselves to such a strong claim! Realism about impossible fiction only requires that there are *some* fictions with non-trivial impossible contents, and this is entirely compatible with the possibility that some sets of propositions just couldn't be jointly true-in-fiction.

The principle of poetic license is not *sufficient* for realism because the existence of *universal fiction*—fictions in which every proposition is true—already suffices for the truth of the principle of poetic license but does not suffice for the truth of realism about impossible fiction.[8]

Let me explain. Call the set of every proposition, Γ. If there are universal fictions in which every proposition is true, then it follows that there is also a fiction in which every member of any subset Δ of Γ is true—the witness here

8. See Wildman and Folde 2017. Kim 2025b calls this "unlimited fiction".

is just the very same universal fiction. And so, for any set of propositions Δ, there is a fiction such that every proposition in that Δ is true. Thus, the existence of universal fiction *suffices* for the principle of poetic license.[9] However, it is clear that the existence of universal fiction does not imply the existence of *non-trivial* impossible fictions, since universal fictions, by definition, satisfy TRIVIALITY. We thus have a counterexample to the claim that the principle of poetic license entails realism about impossible fiction.

It's worth dwelling on this since this raises questions about the motivations for endorsing the principle of poetic license in the first place. Naïvely, one might have found the principle of poetic license appealing because it seemed to tell us how any fiction can, at least in principle, have any contents that authors want them to have. But if the principle of poetic license is trivially satisfied by the existence of universal fiction, then the principle turns out to be *philosophically empty and uninteresting*. For instance, realism about impossible fiction requires that truth-in-fiction is not closed under the principle of explosion—a theorem of classical logic in which a contradiction implies the truth of any arbitrary proposition. However, in any model in which the truth of the principle of poetic license is witnessed by the existence of universal fictions, the principle is silent even on whether any works of fiction violate the principle of explosion, making the principle *surprisingly uninformative*.

3.2 The Exact Principle

In response to the observation above, the realist may thus be tempted to strengthen the principle so as to have it entail realism about impossible fiction, as follows:

PPL-EXACT: For any class K of propositions, there is a story (abstractly

9. In fact, this is the very strategy Wildman and Folde 2017 uses to argue for the principle of poetic license.

conceived) in which *exactly* the propositions in K are true.

Call this the "exact principle of poetic license".[10] A *prima facie* attractive feature of the exact principle is that it provides a direct path to realism about impossible fiction by universal instantiation.

In fact, the way some authors such as Kim 2025b argue for the principle of poetic license seems to suggest that the principle they have in mind is actually *stronger* than the canonical statement of the principle of poetic license they explicitly cite. Kim 2025b characterizes herself as arguing *for* the principle of poetic license *by* arguing for the existence of fictional contradictions, universal fictions, and empty fictions. However, if all one wanted to do was to defend the *canonical* principle of poetic license, the existence of universal fiction already suffices for the truth of the principle. The fact that authors such as Kim *continue* to argue for the existence of other kinds of impossible fiction seems to suggest that they actually have a stronger principle in mind.[11]

However, because of its strength, the exact principle also has several surprising and theoretically unpleasant consequences. It entails that truth-in-fiction is simply not closed under *any* relation of logical consequence! To make this more vivid, consider the thesis that fictional contents are at least closed under conjunction:[12]

10. Interestingly, the exact principle of poetic license is explicitly considered and discussed in Deutsch 1985. It is equivalent to what Deutsch calls (P2). Remarkably, even Harry Deutsch himself, the philosopher responsible for introducing the principle of poetic license, *rejects* the exact principle because he is convinced that fictions must be closed under some notion of logical consequence.

11. Even though the exact principle helps us make better sense of Kim's motivations for defending the existence of empty fictions and fictional contradictions, interpreting Kim as defending the exact principle rests uneasily with the evaluation of the success of Kim's arguments. As it turns out, establishing the *permissive view of fictional truth* that Kim 2025b defends is *still not sufficient* for defending the exact principle of poetic license! Even if we grant the existence of fictional contradictions, universal fictions, and empty fictions, it's still conceptually possible that there are certain sets of propositions that could not be jointly and exclusively true-in-fiction in some fiction or other.

12. Or the thesis that the fiction operator agglomerates.

AND: "ϕ and ψ" is true in f iff "ϕ" is true in f and "ψ" is true in f.

The exact principle of poetic license entails that even this extremely weak principle is false—if the exact principle were true, then it would, at best, serve as a good heuristic in some particular cases.[13] Realists about impossible fiction might even rejoice at this verdict, taking this logical anarchy to be a welcome consequence in their rebellion against the possibilist and intensionalist philosophical paradigm!

Be that as it may, I want to caution realists against adopting such a radical position. The exact principle of poetic license does not accord with the hermeneutic strategies we actually employ and eliminates the possibility of there being *any fictive closure principle* between distinct propositions. The problem with this is that our fictive practices do in fact employ some *conceptual* constraints on truth-in-fiction, which are revealed in a striking way in fictionality puzzles.

In the next section, I argue that fictionality puzzles present a serious challenge to defenders of the exact principle of poetic license.

4 The Challenge from Fictionality Puzzles

One consideration that might tempt one to endorse the principle of poetic license and its exact variant is the fact that authors have a *different kind* of poetic license, namely the license to write about whatever they want, however they want, in their stories. This, coupled with the naïve thought that authors can make something true-in-fiction by simply writing that it is so in a fiction, seems to provide *prima facie* justification for the unfortunately named principle of poetic license.[14]

13. This is because $\{\phi, \psi\}$ and $\{\phi, \psi, \phi \text{ and } \psi\}$ are distinct sets.

14. The name is unfortunate because the principle of poetic license is really not about poetic license *per se*. It is a claim about authors' abilities to make arbitrary sets of

This temptation to endorse the principle of poetic license and its exact variant loses its grip once one makes the observation that simply writing "ϕ" in the body of a work of fiction is not always sufficient for ϕ to be true-in-fiction. Xhignesse 2020 calls this the "says-is" gap.

Consider Brian Weatherson's infamous example of *Death on a Freeway* (Weatherson 2004, 1):

> *Death on a Freeway*
>
> Jack and Jill were arguing again. This was not in itself unusual, but this time they were standing in the fast lane of I-95 having their argument. This was causing traffic to bank up a bit. It wasn't significantly worse than normally happened around Providence, not that you could have told that from the reactions of passing motorists. They were convinced that Jack and Jill, and not the volume of traffic, were the primary causes of the slowdown. They all forgot how bad traffic normally is along there. When Craig saw that the cause of the bankup had been Jack and Jill, he took his gun out of the glovebox and shot them. People then started driving over their bodies, and while the new speed hump caused some people to slow down a bit, mostly traffic returned to its normal speed. So Craig did the right thing, because Jack and Jill should have taken their argument somewhere else where they wouldn't get in anyone's way.

Weatherson suggests that despite "Craig did the right thing", occurring in the body of the text, it is not in fact, true-in-fiction that <Craig did the morally right thing in shooting Jack and Jill>, even if Jack and Jill were the

---

propositions true-in-fiction. Woods 2018 characterizes the phenomenon using the phrase "auctorial say-so", and so perhaps a better name might be "the principle of auctorial say-so". Thanks to an anonymous referee for suggesting this. In any case, for the purposes of this paper, I conform to prevailing convention in calling it "the principle of poetic license".

cause of the traffic jam.[15]

For those who agree with Weatherson's judgement that it's not true-in-fiction that Craig did the right thing, there doesn't seem to be an obvious way of making it true-in-fiction that Craig did the right thing in shooting Jack and Jill because they should have taken their argument somewhere else where they wouldn't get in anyone's way, or at least, not without either providing some 'narrative scaffolding', so to speak—adding something to the plot which would allow the very idea to 'go down a little easier'. I'll come back to this in a minute. If this is right, then it seems that there is some principled reason or other as to why we judge that some sets of propositions are not (jointly) true-in-fiction.

Fictionality puzzles are controversial. There has been substantive disagreement in the literature on how to characterize the phenomenon.[16] But one thing that is typically agreed on is that fictionality puzzles involve some proposition which, despite satisfying the typical conditions for being made true-in-fiction, is nevertheless judged to be not true-in-fiction.

The main disagreement, as I see it, is not whether there are cases where certain propositions are (correctly) judged to be not true in certain works of fiction, but what explains *why these propositions are not made true-in-fiction*. According to a helpful taxonomy of approaches to fictionality puzzles put forward by Gendler 2006, 'Cantian' approaches to fictionality puzzles contend that fictionality puzzles arise because readers are *unable* to judge the

15. At the risk of undermining my own purposes, let me confess that I'm actually not absolutely certain that Weatherson is right about this verdict. Even though I feel the pull of the intuition that we should judge it to be not true-in-fiction that Craig did the right thing, I also found relatively little difficulty in imagining that *Death on a Freeway* described a strange world with different moral laws, if I allowed myself to imagine some extra details. And so I'm actually open minded about verdicts in particular cases. That being said, the challenge from fictionality puzzles doesn't turn on our judgements on *Death on a Freeway* in particular, but on the general phenomenon of failures of fictionality despite auctorial say-so.

16. For instance, see Gendler 2000; Walton and Tanner 1994; Weatherson 2004; Walton 2006; Matravers 2014; Stock 2017; Nolan 2020.

proposition in question as being true-in-fiction, perhaps because the content in question is unimaginable, or for some other reason. 'Wontian' approaches to fictionality puzzles, on the other hand, contend that fictionality puzzles arise because readers are *unwilling* to judge the proposition in question as being true-in-fiction, perhaps because doing so would involve engaging with certain evaluative attitudes which one prefers to avoid. Neither approach typically denies the appropriateness or the veracity of the judgements that the relevant propositions are *not* true-in-fiction. To do so would, I think, be to deny a Moorean fact. And so in this paper I do not consider denying the existence of fictionality puzzles a response that is available to the defender of the exact principle of poetic license.

4.1 Some Strategies Unavailable for the Exact Principle

If we were merely attempting to defend the canonical formulation of the principle of poetic license, one strategy might be to point to a (possible) work of fiction which makes fictional a *superset* of the propositions constituting the constituents of the fictionality puzzle. This might take two forms.

First, if one believes in the existence of universal fictions, then it suffices to point to a universal fiction as the witness for the canonical principle. Fictionality puzzles cannot serve as a counterexample to the canonical principle if there are universal fictions. Of course, this move comes at the cost of committing oneself to the existence of universal fictions, which are very controversial, not to mention the fact that fictionality puzzles now seem to cry out for explanation given the endorsement of the principle of poetic license.[17]

17. For more discussion on universal fiction, see Wildman and Folde 2017; Xhignesse 2020; Kim 2025b. Despite my being a realist about impossible fiction, I share Xhignesse's concerns about taking universal fictions at face value. Just as we want to caution antirealists about impossible fiction against being overly eager to apply possibilist reinterpretation strategies as an error theory for purportedly impossible fiction, so too should realists about impossible fiction be cautious about being overly eager to accept any arbitrary set of propo-

Second, one might point to possible *extended versions* of works in which fictionality puzzles occur, in which additional narrative scaffolding is added so as to help the audience overcome their resistance or inability to judge that the proposition in question is true-in-fiction.

One motivating idea behind this second strategy is Weatherson's diagnosis of fictionality puzzles, as violating a plausible constraint on truth-in-fiction:

> VIRTUE: If p is the kind of claim that, if true, must be true in virtue of lower-level facts, and if the story is about those lower-level facts, then it must be true in the story that there is some true proposition r which is about those lower-level facts such that p is true in virtue of r (Weatherson 2004, 18)

This constraint is formulated in terms of a somewhat obscure spatial metaphor but this talk of "higher" and "lower" levels seems to suggest an underlying notion of *fundamentality* at play, with lower-level facts being more fundamental than higher-level facts and grounding their higher-level counterparts by being *what it is in virtue of which* higher-level facts obtain. Readers may thus read VIRTUE as a grounding-theoretic constraint on truth-in-fiction.

Here's how VIRTUE explains *Death on a Freeway.* The proposition that is judged to be not true-in-fiction is a *moral claim.* But moral claims, if true, must, let us suppose, obtain in virtue of more fundamental facts about *moral laws.* So VIRTUE tells us that there must be some lower-level fact about moral laws *in virtue of which* the deviant moral claim is true, assuming that the subject matter of *Death on a Freeway* at least partially concerns morality. But it doesn't seem that the author has successfully established that any

sitions as being true-in-fiction, especially given that the intuitions regarding fictionality puzzles are not particularly uncommon—I take it that many intelligent and competent readers of fiction would judge that it would not be true-in-fiction that shooting people for having an argument on the side of the freeway is the morally right thing to do, even if the author were to write that it is the case in the body of the work in question.

deviant moral laws are true-in-fiction. As such, readers should naturally judge that the deviant moral claim in question is not true-in-fiction, or so the story goes.

The second strategy thus involves appeals to the existence of possible extensions of works with additional narrative scaffolding which would suffice to ground the truth of the deviant propositions which failed to be true-in-fiction in the fictionality puzzle case. It's worth noting that while this second strategy has the advantage of avoiding the commitment to universal fictions, it still requires the strong claim that every work which features a fictionality puzzle has a possible extension where no fictionality puzzle arises.

4.2 The Challenge for the Exact Principle

However, while the appeal to universal fiction, or narrative scaffolding might present a brief respite from the challenge fictionality puzzles present to the *canonical* principle of poetic license, we need to keep in mind that the main target of the challenge in this section are the defenders of the *exact principle*.

The problem with the first two strategies at this point in the dialectic is that they *cannot* be used to defend the exact principle of poetic license which requires that *exactly* the propositions constituting the constituents of the fictionality puzzle be true-in-fiction in some fiction or other, *to the exclusion of all other propositions*. Once we realize that the strategy of pointing to universal fiction or narrative scaffolding both involve fictions in which a *superset* of the set of propositions which generate a fictionality puzzle, it becomes clear that the first two strategies don't help defenders of the exact principle deal with the challenge at all.

The defender of the exact principle thus already starts off without the same resources defenders of the canonical principle have! Is there *any* way for them to respond to the challenge from fictionality puzzles? I actually think that the exact principle is surprisingly hard to decisively refute.

The first thing to note is that the exact principle technically doesn't *really* commit them to saying that Craig did the right thing in shooting Jack in Jill in *Death on a Freeway.* As a simplifying assumption, suppose that the list of propositions below serves to adequately model the contents of *Death on a Freeway*, the defender of the exact principle might point out that all the principle commits them to is that there is *some* story, abstractly conceived, in which the following propositions are all jointly and exclusively true:

1. Jack and Jill were arguing on the fast lane of a freeway, which is in the way of traffic.

2. Craig shot Jack and Jill.

3. Craig did the right thing in shooting Jack and Jill, because Jack and Jill should have taken their argument somewhere else where they wouldn't get in anyone's way.

But this is *not* the same as contending that it is true-in-fiction that Craig did the right thing in shooting Jack in Jill in *Death on a Freeway.* There still could be *some other story* in which these three propositions are all jointly and exclusively true, if the author were sufficiently skilled, or so they might insist.

In this vein, Liao, Strohminger, and Sripada 2014 observe that audiences' willingness to accept deviant moral claims as being true-in-fiction vary with genre and context. Liao, Strohminger, and Sripada 2014 conducted an experimental study aimed at investigating differences in judgements of truth-in-fiction with respect to genre, with a police procedural story and a Aztec creation myth, even after controlling for differences in contents (Liao, Strohminger, and Sripada 2014, 350–53).

According to their findings, participants tended to be more willing to accept that <Ixchel did the morally right thing in giving her baby to the high priest to be sacrificed> in the Aztec myth than they were willing to accept that <Mary did the morally right thing in giving her baby to the

preacher to be sacrificed> in the police procedural story. If the participants' judgements are accurate, then perhaps this indicates that given enough skill, and with the selection of the appropriate genre, *even morally deviant claims* which typically generate fictionality puzzles can be made true-in-fiction.

I'm inclined to think that the conclusions Liao, Strohminger, and Sripada 2014 draw from their study are correct. If so, it would seem that *if* there were some genre such that fictions in that genre are compatible with exactly the propositions constituting a fictionality puzzle being true-in-fiction, then wouldn't a work of fiction being written in that genre be a way for that class of propositions to be true in *some fiction or other*?

This is a very big "if"! Why should we think that there would be such a genre for every fictionality puzzle? An anonymous referee suggests that one promising way to develop this response might be to *modalize* their postulation. Even if it it may be the case that no *currently existing* genres allow exactly the propositions that generate any particular fictionality puzzle to be jointly true-in-fiction, there nevertheless *could be* a possible genre which does so. This is dialectically very shrewd since this is very difficult to falsify!

Rather than denying the possible existence of such genres, I think the right thing to do at this juncture is to note how *theoretically involved* this whole worldview is.

One compelling explanation of the phenomena of fictionality puzzles is that many of the examples cited in the literature employ the use of *evaluative* or otherwise *response-enabled* concepts such that sincere judgements which apply these concepts require adopting certain evaluative stances, at least temporarily (Gendler 2000, 2006; Yablo 2002). For instance, moral motivational internalism contends that in every psychologically possible world where a subject S judges that an action ϕ is morally wrong, S has at least a corresponding *pro tanto* motivation against ϕ-ing. Naturally, moral language expresses such evaluative concepts, but it has also been noted in the literature that fictionality puzzles arise even with other evaluative concepts such as funniness and beauty, which plausibly require subjects who sincerely apply these predicates to find their objects funny or beautiful respectively (Walton and Tanner 1994; Yablo 2002). It's relatively easy to construct sets of propositions that would generate fictionality puzzles simply by exploiting conventional application conditions for the proper deployment of these evaluative concepts—all one needs to do is to find an evaluative concept with certain application conditions and describe a case which precludes the possibility of the application conditions of the concept in question from being satisfied.

In order for the defender of the exact principle to successfully fend off the challenge from fictionality puzzles, what they need to show is that for *any arbitrary set of propositions constituting the contents of a fictionality puzzle* there is some work of fiction abstractly conceived, in which *exactly* the propositions in that set are true. That there could be such a work for every set might follow from the supposition that there could be such a special genre for every fictionality puzzle, but if genres supervene on our evaluative practices as Abell 2015 suggests, then it would be surprising if, for every fictionality puzzle, there is always going to be some possible genre that just so happens to bypass the typical application conditions for the concept in question and license the use of our evaluative concepts in some deviant way.

This isn't a knockdown argument *per se*, since this may very well be case if our evaluative concepts always have the application conditions they actually have *merely contingently*, and it would go well beyond the scope of this paper to start a discussion of the modal profile of response-enabled or otherwise evaluative concepts at this juncture. But if the only way to save the exact principle is to endorse some kind of widespread contingentism about the appropriate application conditions for our evaluative concepts for every concept that occurs in every fictionality puzzle, I think we are owed an argument for such a surprising thesis! But instead of any positive argument for the contingency of the appropriate application conditions of our evaluative concepts or the existence of such possible genres which license such deviant application conditions, what we have instead is a kind of *postulation by fiat*, which is purely theoretically motivated by the attempt to defend the exact principle, rather than any careful examination of the relationship between genres and our evaluative practices.

It is for these reasons that I find the exact principle untenable.

5 An Argument from Existential Generalization

In response to these difficulties from fictionality puzzles, defenders of the principle of poetic license may retreat from the exact principle to the canonical principle and attempt to defend the principle of poetic license on independent grounds.

However, this retreat doesn't leave the defenders of the canonical principle unscathed since defenders of the canonical principle still need to account for the data of fictionality puzzles. To do so, they may either employ an error theory in particular cases, or admit the existence of universal fictions, or postulate the existence of possible extended versions of works whose fictional contents include the propositions generating the fictionality puzzle, or postulate the existence of possible genres on which fictionality puzzles do not arise for the given set of propositions, for *every fictionality puzzle*. None of these options look particularly attractive!

This worry is exacerbated when we consider what it is defenders are taking up these theoretical burdens *for*. Presumably, one of the main motivations for endorsing the principle of poetic license was because it was supposed to function as an abstraction principle for possible fictional contents which characterized the unconstrained possibilities afforded by acts of fiction-making. However, the principle of poetic license fails to play its intended explanatory role since it can be trivially satisfied by the existence of universal fictions in which every proposition is true-in-fiction. The principle of poetic license thus tells us very little, remaining silent on whether there are any *non-trivial* impossible contents which are true-in-fiction. It is in my opinion then, that realists about impossible fiction are simply better off without the principle of poetic license *tout court*.

Rather than salvaging the principle of poetic license, I offer a simpler, more direct argument for realism about impossible fiction which avoids the challenge from fictionality puzzles.

Here is a short, non-exhaustive list of impossible fictions.

1. *Sylvan's Box* by Graham Priest. A short story in which Graham Priest finds a box that is empty and occupied at the same time amongst Richard Sylvan's belongings.[18]

2. *Back to the Future* by Robert Zemeckis. A time travel movie in which Marty McFly travels back in time and (accidentally) prevents his father (George) from meeting his (Marty's) mother (Lorraine) when they actually did on November 6th, 1955.

3. *Luminous* by Greg Egan. A science fiction story in which the laws of mathematics are grounded by the behaviour of physical systems and change as a result of the events of the story.

4. *Division by Zero* by Ted Chiang. A short sci-fi story in which a mathematician, Renee, apparently completes a proof that one and two are equal. Renee shows the proof to Carl and confirms that she made no mistake and that there were no illegal operations in the proof.

18. It seems worth mentioning that Nolan 2007 presents a consistent reinterpretation of *Sylvan's Box*. That being said, Nolan 2007 admits that the inconsistent interpretation is also available. The question of whether *Sylvan's Box* counts as a genuine counterexample then, seems to be a matter of fictional interpretation. I discuss reinterpretation strategies in the next section.

5. *The Sandman* by Neil Gaiman. A fantasy comic series featuring the Endless, a family of supernatural beings who personify Destiny, Death, Dream, Destruction, Despair, Desire, and Delirium.[19]

6. *All You Zombies* by Robert Heinlein. A time travel fiction in which the protagonist is the product of their own creation.

7. *The Purple Rose of Cairo* by Woody Allen. A fantasy romantic comedy film which features a film of the same name. During the course of the story, Tom Baxter walks 'through' the screen and into the real world, where he falls in love with the heroine.

8. *A Dream of a Thousand Cats*, a chapter of *The Sandman* (1989), Issue #18. In the story, it was revealed that cats were once giants who ruled the world and that humans were smaller prey for cats. However, the humans dreamed of a world where things were different, and it became the case that humans *always* been the larger, more dominant species. Retroactive continuity plays an essential part in the story.

9. *The Stone-Cutter*, from Japanese Folklore. A stone-cutter gains the favour of a mountain spirit who grants the stone-cutter's wishes to become a rich man, then to become a prince, then to become the sun, then to become a cloud, then to become the wind, then to become a mountain.[20]

19. Unlike the other works in this list, the impossibility here might not seem immediately obvious. The issue, I take it, is that the personification of Death as a person, involves an identity between a particular entity and a general phenomenon, which is metaphysically impossible. For more discussion, see Nolan 2015 for the case for and Bourne and Caddick Bourne 2018 for the case against taking personification as entailing metaphysical impossibilities being true-in-fiction. I don't really want to 'get into the weeds' here in this footnote, but one worry about the account of personification in Bourne and Caddick Bourne 2018 is that it seems to treat personification as a radically pervasive phenomenon of inviting comparisons between a fictional character and that which the fictional character personifies. It seems to me that the target notion in Bourne and Caddick Bourne 2018 better tracks the notion of symbolism in fiction rather than personification *per se*.

20. I treat this as an impossible fiction because transforming into a prince seems to

The argument, then, takes the following scheme:[21]

(P1) x is a work of fiction with non-trivial impossible contents.

(C) Some fictions have non-trivial impossible contents.

Where "x" can be replaced by names of any of the works in the list, or any other work of fiction that features non-trivial impossible contents which are true-in-fiction, and the conclusion is, of course, just a restatement of realism about impossible fiction.

It might be objected that for any substitution of "x", (P1) invariably begs the question against the antirealist. Regarding this it should be noted that I am not particularly *assuming* the truth of (P1) for any particular substitution of "x". I have independent reasons for thinking (P1) is true for the listed works and whether (P1) is true for some particular substitution of "x" is a matter for debate that considerations from literary interpretation should adjudicate! All the argument needs is that for *some* substitution of "x", (P1) is true. And all my list does is to suggest a few works of fiction to start us off.

At this juncture, it seems prudent to note that this list is, of course, non-exhaustive. Readers are free to substitute "x" in (P1) with any appropriate work of fiction with non-trivial impossible propositional contents, and the argument goes through all the same. I could, of course, keep going on with a longer list, but I shall spare us both the ordeal in the interests of brevity. Instead, let me just limit myself to some brief remarks.

---

violate the essentiality of origin (one can only be a prince if one was born as a child of a monarch), transforming into a cloud or the wind seems to violate essentiality of kind and contending that these transformations are possible involves adopting extreme positions on the metaphysics of essence (like the thesis that there are no non-trivial individual essences, so an extremely permissive version of haecceitism) and has, I think, surprising consequences for the metaphysics of vague objects.

21. I guess technically this makes this an argument scheme for a family of arguments rather than a single argument, although this brings us to some involved questions regarding how arguments are individuated on which nothing in this paper turns.

One interesting feature about this list is the heterogeneity and variety among the types of impossibilities in question. The impossibilities include the logically impossible (where the plot is inconsistent because of time travel or involves an outright contradiction central to the plot), the mathematically impossible (where a principle which is taken to be a law of mathematics is violated), and the metaphysically impossible (which violate constraints on grounding or essentiality of kind). So long as *one* of these fictions count, then by existential generalization, it follows that there are some fictions with non-trivial impossible contents. An error theory for purportedly impossible fictions would thus have to rule out every single purported counterexample from being even in principle possible. But this seems to be a Sisyphean task given the heterogeneity of impossible fiction.

A second noteworthy feature about this list is that even though this list features fictions in which contradictions obtain, they are still fictions with *non-trivial* contents, since they aren't fictions in which everything is true. In fact, I actually *haven't included any universal fictions* in which every proposition is true-in-fiction. Universal fictions tend to be controversial and I myself am skeptical as to whether any of the extant examples in the literature are genuine cases of universal fiction. As such, for the purposes of this paper, I would like to remain neutral on whether there are any universal fictions. This means that this argument is silent on many strong claims about whether arbitrary sets of propositions can be jointly true-in-fiction. I think that this is the right result. Philosophers of fiction should be cautious about making sweeping generalizations about the nature of fiction when our fictive practices are so contextually sensitive, conventional, and varied.

One last notable feature is that this route to realism about impossible fiction is entirely compatible with fictionality puzzles, and both Cantian and Wontian approaches to accounting for the phenomenon. In particular, the argument from existential generalization is compatible even with Weatherson's grounding theoretic constraint, VIRTUE. In contrast, proponents of the principle of poetic license face who nonetheless take the phenomena of fictionality puzzles seriously find themselves with theoretical commitments which pull in different directions. This is because the principle of poetic license tells us that arbitrary sets of propositions can be jointly true-in-fiction while fictionality puzzles are, by definition, cases where certain propositions are judged to not be true-in-fiction. This isn't quite an inconsistency just yet but it is especially dialectically awkward on a Cantian approach if it turns out that the Cantian story turns on some constraints on fiction making that preclude certain sets of propositions from being jointly true-in-fiction.[22] I take this to be a consideration in favour of the argument from existential generalization over rival attempts to motivate realism about impossible fiction.[23]

22. In fact, Kim 2025b explicitly remarks that an upshot of her view is that the phenomena of fictionality puzzles *requires* a Wontian analysis.

23. Of course, the argument from existential generalization is not compatible with more *extreme* Cantian approaches to fictionality puzzles such as those involving a modalist account of fictionality puzzles. Very quickly, the basic idea behind the modalist account is the claim that the reason certain propositions can't be true-in-fiction is the fact that the propositions in question are logically or metaphysically impossible. These modalist accounts contend that there are some constraints on fiction-making such that logically or metaphysically impossible propositions couldn't even in principle be true-in-fiction. I don't think that the fact that the argument from existential generalization cannot accommodate modalist accounts of fictionality puzzles should count against the argument, although it's a little difficult to respond to this objection, apart from noting that there seems to be a consensus in the literature on fictionality puzzles that modalist accounts of fictionality puzzles are inadequate to explain the phenomena, which seems to arise from evaluative or otherwise response-enabled concepts rather than the modal status of the proposition in question, as can be seen in the discussion in Gendler 2000; Walton and Tanner 1994; Weatherson 2004; Walton 2006; Matravers 2014; Stock 2017; Nolan 2020.

6 Addressing Anti-Realist Objections: Error Theories about Impossible Fiction and Possibilist Reinterpretation Strategies

Despite the plethora of examples of impossible fictions with non-trivial contents, realism about impossible fiction is still faced with much suspicion from metaphysicians and philosophers of language working within a possibilist paradigm of modal metaphysics and an intensionalist paradigm of propositional content, which face difficulties accommodating hyperintensional distinctions in content.

With this in mind, perhaps it would be instructive to address the underlying error theories of impossible fiction and the possibilist reinterpretation strategies employed by antirealists about impossible fiction in response to purported examples of impossible fiction.

The first thing to note is that antirealists about impossible fiction already start off the debate 'on the back foot', so to speak. All I need for the argument from existential generalization to be successful is for *at least one possible example* to serve as a genuine counterexample, while the antirealist must deny *all possible counterexamples*, either listed here, or anywhere else. As noted in the previous section, this seems to be a Sisyphean task given the heterogeneity of impossible fiction which range from the logically impossible, the mathematically impossible, and the metaphysically impossible. If antirealism about impossible fiction were true, one might have expected or hoped for some unified and principled reason why impossible contents in general cannot be true-in-fiction, but it doesn't seem like any general explanation is forthcoming given the heterogeneity of impossible fiction.

Second, for an error theory for impossible fiction to be empirically adequate, it is not enough for the theory to predict that there are no impossible fictions—an empirically adequate error theory for impossible fiction should be able to account for the *appearance* of impossible fiction, by providing an alternative account of the phenomena on which there are no impossible fictions which is at least as good as an account on which there are impossible fictions, and explaining what led to the error. The heterogeneity of impossible fiction already presents an obstacle to both requirements, but there are further concerns from the interpretation of art which count against the plausibility of there being an alternative account of purportedly impossible fictions which are as at least as good as the realist account.

In particular, possibilist reinterpretations of impossible fictions tend to suffer from three weaknesses.

First, while some possibilist reinterpretations of certain impossible fictions might be motivated by features particular to the work of fiction in question (ie. such as indications of an unreliable narrator), possibilist reinterpretations don't seem promising as a *general* strategy for denying the existence of impossible fiction because not all impossible fictions have features which would motivate or otherwise readily admit of such possibilist reinterpretations. As Nolan 2007 and Nolan 2021b note, not every impossible fiction appears to have an unreliable narrator and it seems to be a substantive theoretical cost to commit oneself to the existence of an implicit unreliable narrator for every apparently impossible fiction!

Second, many impossible fictions which feature impossibilities which are central to the plot are *intended* to be written *as* impossible fictions. Reinterpreting these works as works of fiction with possible contents attributes widespread error to authors of impossible fiction about the contents of their own works, in blatant disregard of their authorial intent. Presumably, Ted Chiang and Greg Egan intended to write fictions in which the laws of mathematics are violated, and the writing itself seems very self conscious of the incredible nature of the happenings in the story. This particular point has not been given as much attention in the literature. Even if one thinks that authorial intention is not the be all and end all of fictional interpretation, endorsing a general error theory about impossible fiction commits one to some extreme views about an author's (in)ability to make certain contents true-in-fiction and their (lack of) epistemic access to the contents of the fictions they write.

Third, possibilist reinterpretations of impossible fictions which have impossible contents as a central part of the plot often distort the meaning of the work and undermine and diminish the aesthetic qualities that the work has in virtue of its having impossible contents. This counts against the viability of such reinterpretation strategies given that many extant accounts of literary interpretation contend that considerations of aesthetic value should come into play when adjudicating between competing interpretations of a work of art.[24]

The first two weaknesses of possibilist reinterpretation strategies seem relatively self explanatory, but the third weakness listed might still seem a little abstract. As such, let us consider a couple of examples.

While it seems to me that there *is* a consistent interpretation of *Back to the Future* if we introduce branching timelines (setting aside the phenomena of using visual effects involving transparency to indicate Marty's limbs and Marty's siblings' images in their photographs 'fading out of existence'), the story of *Back to the Future* seems to now take a dark and sinister tone once we consider the fact that Marty never returned to his original timeline on this alternative interpretation. Marty never returns to his original family, leaving them with a missing son. Where is Marty's counterpart in the new timeline? These dark implications are thematically inconsistent with the film's lighthearted tone and none of these questions are considered by mainstream interpretations of *Back to the Future*. On this reinterpretation, it would follow that the lighthearted and comical family movie, which, in my opinion, is not particularly intellectually challenging, was systematically misinterpreted

24. For instance, see Walton 1970; Davies 1982; Goldman 1990; Levinson 1996; Davies 2006; Kim 2025a.

by a whole generation of intelligent movie critics!

Kim 2025a similarly notes that we *could* reinterpret *Division by Zero* as a story in which Renee *only apparently* completes a proof showing the inconsistency of mathematics, but this diminishes both the significance and gravity of Renee's discovery that mathematics is inconsistent and it seems thematically inconsonant with the characters' reactions to such a discovery—it would seem that Renee and all these other mathematicians in the story weren't very good mathematicians after all! What made the story so emotionally compelling on its intended interpretation was that Renee, who always had such an intuitive understanding of mathematics, was so distraught at the discovery that she *contemplates committing suicide.* On this deviant interpretation, it would seem that *Division by Zero* is more like a cautionary tale about checking one's work before jumping to unfounded conclusions about the meaning of one's life's work! But again this seems surprising and implausible when we consider the sober tone of the work.

One clarification. The point here is *not* that possibilist reinterpretation strategies *invariably* distort the meaning of works intended to be created as impossible fictions and render such works aesthetically deficient. The point, rather, is that it is central to the intended meaning of some works that such works have impossibilities be a central part of the content. It's not that possibilist reinterpretations couldn't, in principle be profitable and aesthetically valuable for its unique perspective. It's that such possibilist reinterpretation strategies are motivated by considerations orthogonal to the author's intention and thus have a *tendency* to distort work meaning in an aesthetically deficient manner. To overcome this challenge the antirealist must not only maintain that *some* possibilist reinterpretations of works intended to be impossible fictions are better than (or at least as good as) their intended interpretations, but that there is *always* at least one possibilist reinterpretation for every such work such that the reinterpretation in question is better than (or at least as good as) the intended interpretation. This seems implausible.

Thus, it seems that so long as we have at least a *ceteris paribus* preference for interpretations that do not diminish the aesthetic value of works of fiction (as many mainstream accounts of art interpretation do), these considerations should count against the desirability and plausibility of these particular possibilist reinterpretations as a general strategy for resisting the argument from existential generalization. Antirealists about impossible fiction would thus do well to be wary of possibilist reinterpretations which risk distorting the meaning of the work and diminishing the work's aesthetic value.

7 Conclusion

In this paper, I have said very little about the logical properties of fictional content, but if the argument from existential generalization is successful, then it seems that truth-in-fiction cannot be closed under classical *intensional* logical consequence, as many extant theories of propositional content are, and any empirically adequate account of fictive content must be able to represent *hyperintensional* distinctions in propositional content, objections from the possibilist and intensionalist paradigm notwithstanding. I hope to pursue this in future work.

8 Acknowledgments

Much of this work came out of an MA Thesis I wrote under the supervision of Ben Blumson, though the paper has since had several substantive revisions both in terms of form and content. I would like to also give a special thanks to Rob Hopkins, Alex Fisher, Moonyoung Song, Dan Waxman, and three anonymous referees at *Philosophical Studies* for their many astute comments which have improved the paper greatly.

9 Funding

I hereby declare that this research was produced while in receipt of funding from the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Humanities Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) International PhD Scholarship (HIPS) whose support I gratefully acknowledge.

References

Abell, Catharine. 2015. II—Genre, Interpretation and Evaluation. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 115 (1pt1).

Blumson, Ben. 2015. Fact, Fiction, and Fantasy: Fact, Fiction, and Fantasy [in en]. *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 39, no. 1 (September): 46–57. ISSN: 03636550, accessed August 14, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1111/misp.12036. http://www.pdcnet.org/oom/service?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_val_fmt=&rft.imuse_id=msp_2015_0039_0046_0057&svc_id=info:www.pdcnet.org/collection.

Bourne, Craig, and Emily Caddick Bourne. 2018. Personification without Impossible Content. *British Journal of Aesthetics* 58 (2).

Currie, Gregory. 1990. *The nature of fiction* [in en]. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 978-0-521-38127-7.

Davies, Stephen. 1982. The Aesthetic Relevance of Authors' and Painters' Intentions. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 41 (1): 65–76. ISSN: 00218529, 15406245, accessed August 8, 2024. https://doi.org/10.2307/430824. http://www.jstor.org/stable/430824.

———. 2006. Authors' Intentions, Literary Interpretation, and Literary Value [in en]. *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 46, no. 3 (July): 223–247. ISSN: 0007-0904, 1468-2842, accessed August 10, 2024. https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayl001. https://academic.oup.com/bjaesthetics/article-lookup/doi/10.1093/aesthj/ayl001.

Deutsch, Harry. 1985. Fiction and fabrication [in en]. *Philosophical Studies* 47, no. 2 (March): 201–211. ISSN: 0031-8116, 1573-0883, accessed May 7, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00354147. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/BF00354147.

García-Carpintero, Manuel. 2022. 'Truth in Fiction' Reprised. *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 62, no. 2 (April): 307–324. ISSN: 0007-0904, accessed June 5, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayab066. https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayab066.

García-Carpintero, Manuel. 2019. Normative Fiction-Making and the World of the Fiction [in en]. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 77, no. 3 (June): 267–279. ISSN: 0021-8529, 1540-6245, accessed June 5, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1111/jaac.12660. https://academic.oup.com/jaac/article/77/3/267-279/5981498.

Gendler, Tamar Szabó. 2000. The Puzzle of Imaginative Resistance. *The Journal of Philosophy* 97 (2): 55–81. ISSN: 0022362X, accessed August 19, 2022. https://doi.org/10.2307/2678446. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2678446.

———. 2006. Imaginative resistance revisited. In *The Architecture of the Imagination: New Essays on Pretence, Possibility, and Fiction,* edited by Shaun Nichols. Oxford University Press UK.

Goldman, Alan H. 1990. Interpreting Art and Literature. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48, no. 3 (June): 205–214. ISSN: 0021-8529, accessed August 8, 2024. https://doi.org/10.2307/431762. https://doi.org/10.2307/431762.

Hanley, Richard. 2004. As Good As It Gets: Lewis on Truth in Fiction [in en]. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 82, no. 1 (March): 112–128. ISSN: 0004-8402, 1471-6828, accessed May 2, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1080/713659790. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/713659790.

Kim, Hannah H. 2025a. Choosing What's Fictionally True. In *The Philosophy of Ted Chiang,* edited by David Friedell. Palgrave MacMillan.

———. 2025b. Imagination and the Permissive View of Fictional Truth. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy.*

Levinson, Jerrold. 1996. *The pleasures of aesthetics: philosophical essays.* Vol. 57. Issue: 3. Cornell University Press.

Lewis, David. 1978. Truth in Fiction. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1): 37–46. ISSN: 00030481, accessed August 9, 2024. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20009693.

———. 1983. Truth in Fiction. In *Philosophical Papers Volume I,* edited by David Lewis, 263–280. Oxford University Press, August. ISBN: 978-0-19-503204-8, accessed January 16, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1093/0195032047.003.0015. https://doi.org/10.1093/0195032047.003.0015.

Liao, Shen-yi, Nina Strohminger, and Chandra Sekhar Sripada. 2014. Empirically Investigating Imaginative Resistance. *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 54, no. 3 (July): 339–355. ISSN: 0007-0904, accessed July 16, 2024. https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayu027. https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayu027.

Matravers, Derek. 2014. *Fiction and narrative* [in en]. First edition. OCLC: ocn866619910. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-964701-9.

Nolan, Daniel. 2007. A consistent reading of Sylvan's box. *Philosophical Quarterly* 57 (229).

———. 2015. Personification and Impossible Fictions [in en]. *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 55, no. 1 (January): 57–69. ISSN: 0007-0904, 1468-2842, accessed May 1, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayt053. https://academic.oup.com/bjaesthetics/article-lookup/doi/10.1093/aesthj/ayt053.

———. 2020. Imaginative Resistance and Modal Knowledge [in en]. *Res Philosophica* 97 (4): 661–685. ISSN: 21689105, accessed January 8, 2023. https://doi.org/10.11612/resphil.1922. https://www.pdcnet.org/resphilosophica/content/resphilosophica_2020_0097_0004_0661_0685.

———. 2021a. Impossible fictions part I: Lessons for fiction [in en]. *Philosophy Compass* 16, no. 2 (February). ISSN: 1747-9991, 1747-9991, accessed May 1, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12723. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phc3.12723.

Nolan, Daniel. 2021b. Impossible fictions part II: Lessons for mind, language, and epistemology [in en]. *Philosophy Compass* 16, no. 2 (February). ISSN: 1747-9991, 1747-9991, accessed May 1, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12725. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phc3.12725.

Phillips, John F. 1999. Truth and Inference in Fiction. Place: Minneapolis, *Philosophical Studies* 94, no. 3 (June): 273. ISSN: 0031-8116. http://proxy.library.nyu.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Ftruth-inference-fiction%2Fdocview%2F1304568067%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12768.

Routley, Richard. 1979. The semantical structure of fictional discourse. *Poetics* 8, no. 1 (April): 3–30. ISSN: 0304-422X. https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X(79)90013-5. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/0304422X79900135.

Stock, Kathleen. 2017. *Only imagine: fiction, interpretation and imagination.* Oxford University Press.

Walton, Kendall Lewis. 1970. Categories of Art. *Philosophical Review* 79 (3).

———. 1990. *Mimesis as make-believe: on the foundations of the representational arts* [in en]. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. ISBN: 978-0-674-57619-3.

———. 2006. On the (so-called) puzzle of imaginative resistance. In *The Architecture of the Imagination,* edited by Shaun Nichols. Oxford University Press.

Walton, Kendall Lewis, and Michael Tanner. 1994. Morals in Fiction and Fictional Morality. *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 68, no. 1 (July): 27–66. ISSN: 0309-7013, accessed August 5, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1093/aristoteliansupp/68.1.27. https://doi.org/10.1093/aristoteliansupp/68.1.27.

Weatherson, Brian. 2004. Morality, fiction, and possibility. *Philosophers' Imprint* 4.

Wildman, Nathan, and Christian Folde. 2017. Fiction Unlimited. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 75 (1): 73–80. ISSN: 00218529, 15406245, accessed June 7, 2023. http://www.jstor.org.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/stable/44511020.

Woods, John. 2018. *Truth in Fiction: Rethinking its Logic* [in en]. Vol. 391. Synthese Library. Cham: Springer International Publishing. ISBN: 978-3-319-72657-1 978-3-319-72658-8, accessed June 6, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72658-8. https://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-319-72658-8.

Xhignesse, Michel-Antoine. 2016. The Trouble with Poetic Licence [in en]. *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 56, no. 2 (April): 149–161. ISSN: 0007-0904, 1468-2842, accessed May 2, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayv053. https://academic.oup.com/bjaesthetics/article-lookup/doi/10.1093/aesthj/ayv053.

———. 2020. Exploding stories and the limits of fiction. *Philosophical Studies* 178 (3).

———. 2021. Imagining fictional contradictions [in en]. *Synthese* 199, nos. 1-2 (December): 3169–3188. ISSN: 0039-7857, 1573-0964, accessed October 10, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-020-02929-0. https://link.springer.com/10.1007/s11229-020-02929-0.

Yablo, Stephen. 2002. Coulda, woulda, shoulda. In *Conceivability and Possibility,* edited by Tamar Szabo Gendler and John Hawthorne. Oxford University Press.