Hermeneutic Fictionalism

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Fictionalist approaches to ontology have been an accepted part of philosophical methodology for some time now. On a fictionalist view, engaging in discourse that involves apparent reference to a realm of problematic entities is best viewed as engaging in a *pretense*. Although in reality, the problematic entities do not exist, according to the pretense we engage in when using the discourse, they do exist.

In the vocabulary of Burgess and Rosen (1997, p. 6), a nominalist construal of a given discourse is *revolutionary* just in case it involves a "reconstruction or revision" of the original discourse. Revolutionary approaches are therefore prescriptive. In contrast, a nominalist construal of a given discourse is *hermeneutic* just in case it is a nominalist construal of a discourse that is put forth as a hypothesis about how the discourse is in fact used; that is, hermeneutic approaches are descriptive. I will adopt Burgess and Rosen's terminology to describe the two different spirits in which a fictionalist hypothesis in ontology might be advanced. *Revolutionary fictionalism* would involve admitting that while the problematic discourse does in fact involve literal reference to nonexistent entities, we *ought* to use the discourse in such a way that the reference is simply *within the pretense*. The *hermeneutic fictionalist*, in contrast, reads fictionalism into our actual use of the problematic discourse. According to her, normal use of the problematic discourse involves a pretense. According to the pretense, and only according to the pretense, there exist the objects to which the discourse would commit its users, were no pretense involved.

My purpose in this paper is to argue that hermeneutic fictionalism is not a viable strategy in ontology. My argument proceeds in two steps. First, I discuss in detail several problematic consequences of any interesting application of hermeneutic fictionalism. Of course, if there is good evidence that hermeneutic fictionalism is correct in some cases, then some of these drastic consequences would have to be accepted. So, in the second part of the argument, I consider the best cases for hermeneutic fictionalism, and argue that, in each case, a hermeneutic fictionalist analysis is untenable.

Section I.

The metaphysician who exploits hermeneutic fictionalism in ontology seeks to free herself from commitment to a problematic range of entities, the ones to which a certain useful discourse appears to commit its serious users. A metaphysician of this persuasion appeals to fiction, because in cases of fiction, she assumes that we can and do use referring terms and quantifiers without thereby committing ourselves to entities referred to or quantified over. This way of thinking of fiction –as a realm of discourse acceptance of which does not commit one to any entities referred to or quantified over in it—means that the hermeneutic fictionalist in ontology is compelled to reject certain accounts of fiction. In particular, accounts according to which fictional discourse *does* involve reference to and quantification over entities –fictional characters—seems inconsistent with the spirit of hermeneutic fictionalism as a strategy for evading ontological commitment.[i] So, I will assume that this account of fiction is not available to the metaphysician who wishes to exploit hermeneutic fictionalism as a strategy in ontology.

Another theory of fiction that sits uncomfortably with ontology in the hermeneutic fictionalist spirit is that advocated in Lewis (1983). On Lewis' account, descriptions of fictional characters and situations are taken to be preceded by a covert "In a fiction f" operator. The semantics of this intensional operator is ultimately explained in terms of what is true at certain metaphysically possible worlds in which the fiction f is told as known fact. The role metaphysically possible worlds play in Lewis' analysis raises many strictly non-ontological worries with the approach as an analysis of fictional truth. But even if one abstracts from these worries, it remains an approach to fiction that a metaphysician concerned with minimizing her ontological commitments would not be likely to accept. For *possibilia* are sure to be high on most hermeneutic fictionalist metaphysicians' lists of worrisome entities. For these two reasons, I will also assume that Lewis' analysis of fiction in terms of metaphysically possible worlds is also not available to the metaphysician who advocates a hermeneutic fictionalist position in ontology.[ii]

So, I will grant to the hermeneutic fictionalist the thesis that there can be fictional truth without actual reference. That is, I will grant to the hermeneutic fictionalist an

account of fiction she requires for her views, according to which our talk about fiction is not ontologically loaded discourse. But talk about fiction is not the only kind of discourse that (arguably) frees us from ontological commitments. Discourse that is non-literal or figurative also has this feature. When someone utters an explicit metaphor, such as "Juliet is the sun", it is a perfectly reasonable position that the truth of her utterance does not commit her to the consequence that Juliet is literally identical to the sun. I will also grant to the hermeneutic fictionalist that sentences containing explicit metaphors are cases in which their users are not committed to the entities or claims to which a non-metaphorical reading of their utterances would commit them.[iii]

What unifies these cases in which someone can seriously use a discourse without incurring the commitments a good semantic theory for the discourse would predict, is that they all involve a kind of *pretense*.[iv] It is for this reason that I have explained hermeneutic fictionalism in terms of *pretending*. I assume that all accounts of what we do when we pretend will share certain features, in virtue of which they counts as theories of pretense. These features have been brought out most clearly in the work of Kendall Walton. Accordingly, I begin this section with a Walton-inspired review of the mechanism of pretense. Let us say that a *pretense account* of a discourse is an account, in terms of pretense, of a discourse that does not obviously involve pretense. A hermeneutic fictionalist analysis of a discourse is an account of that discourse in terms of pretense. The ultimate goal of this section is to understand the general form of a pretense account. Accordingly, after discussing the mechanism of pretense, I conclude with an exposition of one pretense account of an ontologically problematic discourse.

Suppose John and Hannah are playing cowboys and Indians. In so doing, Hannah and John are *pretending*. John is pretending to be a cowboy, and Hannah is pretending to be an Indian. Suppose that during the game, Hannah squeezes her fist in John's direction, and John collapses to the ground. Within the game, it is true that a cowboy has been shot by an Indian. That is, it is fictionally true that a cowboy has been shot by an Indian. But this fictional truth is made to be the case by an action "in the real world". For Hannah's squeezing her fist in John's direction is an action "in the real world", as is John's dropping to the ground. These 'real' actions make it fictionally true, true in the pretense of cowboys and Indians, that a cowboy has been shot.

So it is with pretense generally. In a game of make-believe, certain real world facts make certain propositions fictionally true. Here is a further example. Suppose Hans and Boris are playing the game of Stalingrad. Boris has made a large circle around himself, and Hans is prancing around this circle, looking menacing. The real world fact that Hans is prancing around the circle made by Boris makes it fictionally true that the Germans are laying siege to Stalingrad. The fact that Boris is standing within the circle makes it fictionally true that the Russians are defending Stalingrad.

In any game of make-believe, certain tacit or explicit principles link real world objects to objects within the pretense. For example, it is a principle governing Boris and Hans' game of Stalingrad that anyone standing within the circle made by Boris is, within the pretense, a member of the beleaguered Russian populace. Anyone prancing around the circle, looking threatening, is part of the German army. Following Kendall Walton, let us call such principles, *principles of generation*. The function of principles of generation is to link real world objects and events with objects and events within the pretense.

The hermeneutic fictionalist about a discourse D holds that those competent with the vocabulary in D, when employing it, are in fact also involved in a pretense.[v] Thus, the hermeneutic fictionalist holds that when competent speakers employ the vocabulary in the disputed discourse, they are invoking principles of generation that link real world situations up to truths in the pretense. It will prove worthwhile to look at one example of such an account.

Negative existential sentences, such as "Zeus does not exist", pose a well-known philosophical puzzle. One way of appreciating the puzzle they pose is by considering the Meinongian theory of negative existentials. On a Meinongian account of negative existential sentences, "exists" expresses a property that some things have and other things do not have. "Zeus" then refers to a thing that lacks the property of existence. The Meinongian account yields the most elegant semantics for negative existence sentences. But it does so at the cost of burdening us with an exceedingly unattractive metaphysics. Surely there are no non-existent objects; surely *that* is a truism if anything is. But if we want to preserve this metaphysical intuition, we seem to be forced into giving an exceedingly implausible semantic account of negative existential sentences. For there is

presumably no compositional semantic theory which, given the sentence "Zeus does not exist", yields as a truth-condition that "Zeus" does not refer.

Here is an account of negative existential sentences that exploits the mechanism of pretense.[vi] Suppose one held the following two perfectly plausible theses: first, that "exists" does not express a property and secondly, that empty names, such as "Zeus" do not refer to anything. One can still give an account according to which we can use sentences such as "Zeus does not exist" to express truths. The idea is that when uttering this sentence, we are engaged in a pretense.[vii] Within the pretense, "exists" actually does express a property, one that some things have and other things do not. Within the pretense, the term "Zeus" refers to an object that does not have the property expressed by "exists" within the pretense. Since competent users of this sentence are in part engaged in a pretense, there are certain principles of generation. The principle of generation governing "Zeus does not exist" entails that "Zeus does not exist" expresses a fictional truth in virtue of the fact that any attempt of the kind made within the pretense to refer to an actual object using the name "Zeus" fails.[viii]

The final stage in the analysis involves what Mark Richard has called "piggy-backing". As Richard writes:

> Suppose we are playing Cowboys and Indians, and it is fictionally true, of our belts, that they are holsters. Then the real world truth condition of an utterance, addressed to you, of "your holster is unbuckled" is, of course, that your belt is unbuckled. Now suppose I notice that your belt is unbuckled and, worried that your pants are heading south, utter "your holster is unbuckled". The point of my utterance is not so much, to engage in the pretense that you are a cowboy whose holster is unbuckled and that I am a fellow cowboy saying that this is so, as to convey to you that the real world truth condition of my utterance –that your belt is unbuckled—in fact obtains.
>
> Richard (2000, p. 213)

In Richard's terminology, piggy backing is "to make an utterance u within a pretense in which u has a real world truth condition c, thereby actually asserting a proposition which is (in fact) true iff c obtains". The final stage of this particular pretense analysis of negative existentials is that negative existential assertions involve piggy-backing. Normally, when someone utters "Zeus does not exist", they do so with respect to a

pretense of the sort described above, and thereby assert that attempts to refer of the kind one makes with "Zeus" within the pretense, in fact fail.

Such an account gives us a way of steering between the semantic Scylla and the metaphysical Charybdis. Within the pretense, "Zeus does not exist" expresses the proposition the Meinongian thinks it actually expresses. However, what makes "Zeus does not exist" express a fictional truth is the real world fact that "Zeus" does not refer. The tension between semantics and metaphysics is resolved, because the compositional semantics is operative only within the pretense, and does not saddle us with undesirables such as nonexistent things. The sentence "Zeus does not exist" is linked up with its metaphysically acceptable truth-maker (that "Zeus" does not refer), not via a compositional semantic account, but rather via principles of generation that are operative in negative existential games of make-believe.

This example gives the structure of a hermeneutic fictionalist account of a perfectly literal discourse. What seems to be the best semantics for a certain discourse commits to us to metaphysical undesirables. By claiming that those who use the discourse are in fact engaging in a pretense, the hermeneutic fictionalist is able to exploit the mechanisms that are clearly involved in explicit games of make-believe. This allows the hermeneutic fictionalist to endorse the semantics of the discourse, without having to accept its metaphysical consequences.

Section II.

In this section, I present five general worries for hermeneutic fictionalism. Some of the worries will be generally applicable to any view that draws tight analogies between figurative language and certain kinds of literal speech. Other worries will involve specific features of the mechanism of pretense.

My first worry involves the claim that our understanding of some apparently literal, apparently non-figurative discourse functions via the mechanism of pretense. It is fairly widely accepted that speakers have an extraordinary ability to understand the real world truth-conditions of novel utterances, that is, utterances of sentences they have never heard before. But in order to explain this ability, there must be a systematic

relationship between the real world semantic values of the parts of the sentences, and the real world semantic values of the whole sentences. But if there are apparently literal discourses that involve the mechanism of pretense, then no such explanation appears forthcoming.

Assuming the pretense account, there is no systematic relationship between many kinds of sentences and their real world truth-conditions. On Kendall Walton's pretense account of negative existential sentences, the real world truth-condition of "Zeus does not exist" is that attempts to refer of the "Zeus" kind are unsuccessful. But these truth-conditions are not a function of the meanings of the constituents of the sentence "Zeus does not exist". Similar, it is difficult to see how, on a pretense account of arithmetic, the real-world truth conditions of arithmetical sentences are a function of the meanings of the parts of the sentence. But we are able smoothly to grasp the truth-conditions of novel arithmetical sentences on the basis of our familiarity with their parts. This ability of ours is mysterious, if our understanding of such discourse involves the mechanism of pretense.

There are two distinct systematicity worries here. The first is whether or not, within a particular pretense, the principles of generation are sufficiently systematic as to account for our ability to grasp the real world truth-conditions of all potential sentences that are evaluated within that pretense. Linguists and philosophers have long held that the type of systematicity required to explain this ability requires attribution to language users of a compositional semantic theory. But the mechanism of pretense certainly does not respect compositional interpretation of the truth-conditions expressed by a sentence relative to a context.

The second systematicity worry concerns moves from pretense to pretense. The literature on pretense analyses suggests that we often switch quite rapidly between pretenses in understanding discourses. Switching between pretenses amounts to learning a new set of rules, the rules governing the new pretense. It is therefore akin to acquiring a new lexical item, or coming to grasp a metaphor one has never before encountered. These processes are not systematic. But our understanding of novel sentences containing familiar lexical items that are used literally does not seem to involve the same unsystematic processes that are at work in the acquisition of new lexical items, or new metaphors.[ix]

Defenders of pretense analyses of discourse are aware of some of these points:

> That the pretense account has not emerged as a contender among theorists can be explained by too much focus on the compositional model on which what a sentence is used to say is built up largely from the meanings of its components. The mechanism of semantic pretense (**which surely is sufficiently systematic as not to raise special worries about how finite minds can grasp it**) allows dramatic shifts from component-meanings to serious statement content.
> -Crimmins (1998, p. 15)

Crimmins provides no argument for the claim I have outlined in bold. However, this claim requires argument. For example, Kendall Walton (1990, Chapter 4) argues at some length against it. As Walton writes, in describing what he later calls "the disorderly behavior of the machinery of generation" (p. 184):

> Insofar as we do have reasons [for principles of generation], what we are conscious of being guided by is a diverse assortment of particular considerations which seem somehow reasonable in one or another specific case.
> …Is there a relatively simple and systematic way of understanding how fictional truths are generated, a limited number of very general principles…I do not think it a live possibility. But some theorists have sought such general principles, and have made at least tentative suggestions as to what they are. (In the background are worries about how there could be even as much agreement as there is, how we could learn to extract fictional truths from new works as confidently as in many cases we do, unless there is at some level a reasonably simple relationship between features and fictional truths.) Our examination of these suggestions will reinforce the suspicion that the search is in vain, and will foster a healthy respect for the complexity and subtlety of the means by which fictional truths are generated.
> Walton (1990, p. 139)

The facts seems to justify Walton's pessimism. Consider the first worry, concerning systematicity within a pretense. Certain games of make-believe involve rather simple principles of generation. Consider, for example, the game of Cowboys and Indians. In this game, principles of generation generally take the form of an analogy. For example, in a game of Cowboys and Indians, Hannah in the real world may be cowboy Sally within the pretense, and for x to close x's fist outside the pretense may correspond to firing a gun in the pretense. Here, one can see how to explain our grasp of the truth-conditions of novel sentences involving singular terms and the predicate "fires a gun". It

is fictionally true that cowboy Sally has fired a gun if and only if Hannah has closed her fist; if John in the real world is cowboy Jill in the pretense, then it is fictionally true that cowboy Jill and cowboy Sally have fired guns if and only if John and Hannah have closed their fists.[x]

However, there are a host of other forms rules of generation may take, that are not analogies. In fact, the literature advocating pretense analyses is full of such cases.[xi] But in cases in which principles of generation do not take an analogical form, it is very difficult to see how they can be used to provide a systematic account of a language user's grasp of the real world truth-conditions of a novel sentence relative to that pretense.

It is important to emphasize that the lack of systematicity involved in pretense analyses goes far beyond any comparable proposal in the current philosophy of language literature. Defenders of the program Francois Recanati (1993) labels "truth-conditional pragmatics" also maintain that the compositional semantic interpretation of many sentences, relative to a context, often does not yield the truth-conditions of the utterance. For example, according to Kent Bach (1994) and others, the compositional semantic interpretation of "John is tall", relative to a context, is not a full proposition. Rather, pragmatic mechanisms enter in to "complete" the semantic interpretation by the addition of a comparison class for the comparative adjective "tall". But Bach and other defenders of truth-conditional pragmatics do not challenge compositionality. For they nowhere deny that the semantic interpretation of "John is tall" is a function of the denotations of the parts of the sentence. Pragmatics only enters into the picture in supplying *additional constituents* to the compositionally derived semantic interpretation. In contrast, the lack of systematicity contemplated by defenders of pretense analyses involves rejecting compositional interpretation *tout court* as a guide to (actual) truth-conditions. Only followers of the later Wittgenstein could be comfortable with such a view.

The fact that there is no clear requirement of systematicity governing the principles of generation that link sentences in the disputed discourse to their real world truth-conditions raises a further problem. The need to provide a compositional semantic theory for sentences in a disputed discourse has forced many a nominalist away from making hermeneutic claims. But principles of generation do not need to be so formulated to account for our understanding of truth-conditions in a systematic manner. So nothing

appears to prevent the hermeneutic fictionalist from simply declaring, when faced with an ontologically loaded discourse, that its users, when engaged in it, employ principles of generation that link the discourse up with ontologically innocent truth-conditions. The role of compositional semantic theories has been to place some constraints on hermeneutic claims. The fact that principles of generation governing games are unsystematic appears to lift all constraints on hermeneutic fictionalist claims.

This last point leads to a second worry.[xii] One method of presenting an ontological proposal in a "revolutionary" fashion is what is occasionally called *the method of paraphrase*. A metaphysician who employs the method of paraphrase accepts part of the problematic described above. In particular, she accepts that rejecting the ontological commitments of the best semantic analysis of the original discourse entails rejecting the truth of what is expressed by sentences of the discourse, if that discourse is used fully literally. But her response is a revolutionary rather than a hermeneutic one. An proponent of the method of paraphrase advocates replacing the original discourse by paraphrases that can do the same work as the discourse, but do not involve commitment to the objectionable ontology.

The worry here is that a pretense analysis turns out to be just the method of paraphrase in disguise, and so not a version of hermeneutic fictionalism at all. That is, the appeal to pretense is a way to make us swallow the claim that what is expressed by sentences in the discourse is really what is expressed by their ontologically acceptable paraphrases. For it appears that the advocate of a pretense analysis is just rejecting the importance of the fact that there is no way to give a compositional semantic theory that links the sentences of the discourse to their desired real-world truth-conditions.

We can sum up these two worries as follows. The importance of compositional semantic theories is that they answer a mystery about linguistic understanding: how can a finite mind grasp the real-world truth-conditions of an indefinite number of new sentences? For the reasons described above, it appears that this mystery is unanswerable by appeal to the mechanism of pretense. But if so, then the defender of pretense analyses cannot in principle give a successful account of how we could assign ontologically innocent truth-conditions to ontologically promiscuous discourse.

One response the hermeneutic fictionalist might give to these worries is that the ontologically innocent truth-conditions are not what is expressed by an utterance of a sentence of the relevant discourse, but rather only *what is communicated*. On this view, what is expressed is the proposition expressed within the pretense, which we may call "the pretend-proposition". So, a hermeneutic fictionalist about theological discourse might maintain that when someone utters "God will help you in times of difficulty", what is expressed is the proposition concerning the non-existent entity named by "God", whereas what is pragmatically communicated is the more ontologically innocent claim that in times of difficulty, it's useful to hope that you'll get lucky.

There are several responses to this reply. First, if "God" does not refer, standard views about propositions lead one to the conclusion that there is no proposition expressed by "God will help you in times of difficulty". Indeed, part of Walton's original motivation for a pretense analysis of fictional discourse is to avoid commitment to propositions expressed by fictional sentences (cf. Walton (2000, p. 76)). So, while sentences in the disputed discourse may express propositions about God 'within the religious pretense', in reality, they do not express propositions about God (even pretend-propositions). If so, one cannot take "God will help you in times of difficulty" as expressing a proposition about God outside of the pretense. That is, while one may speak of "expressing a proposition within a pretense", it does not make sense to talk of the actual expression of a pretend-proposition.

An alternative way of presenting the view that the ontologically innocent paraphrase is only pragmatically implicated is as follows. Perhaps what is expressed by an utterance of a sentence in the disputed discourse is not the 'pretend-proposition', but rather the proposition that, within the pretense, the utterance expresses some true proposition or other. On this view, what is expressed by an utterance of a sentence in the disputed discourse is the proposition, about the utterance event itself, that it expresses a true proposition within the pretense, and what is communicated is the ontologically innocent paraphrase.

However, this way of defending the thesis that the ontologically innocent paraphrase is what is communicated, rather than what is expressed, faces a serious difficulty. For assuming modal properties to be properties of what is expressed by an

utterance, it is inconsistent with the modal facts. Consider, for example, Walton's theory of negative existentials. On the view under consideration, an utterance of "Zeus does not exist" expresses the proposition that that utterance of "Zeus does not exist" expresses a true proposition within the pretense, and communicates the proposition that a certain kind of "Zeus" attempt to refer invariably fail.[xiii] But now consider the discourse in (2), as uttered by a single person A in a particular context:

> (2) Zeus does not exist. That still would have been true, even if I had not spoken today.

Both utterances express truths. But if the view under consideration were true, A's utterance of the second sentence in this discourse would express a falsehood. For according to this theory, the proposition expressed by A's utterance of the first sentence is that there is a true proposition expressed by A's utterance within the pretense. But this proposition would **not** have been true, had A been silent during the day of the utterance. For in that case, the possessive description "A's utterance" would fail to denote.[xiv]

The second response to the view that a sentence in the disputed discourse expresses the pretend-proposition, and only pragmatically implicates the ontologically innocent paraphrase, is that it yields the wrong account of some constructions that are the most promising cases for a pretense analysis. Consider the case of metaphor. David Hills (1997) has argued that metaphorical speech exhibits the structure of pretense. A metaphor such as "Juliet is the sun" has a 'literal' paraphrase; crudely something like 'Juliet illuminates and gives nourishment to her surroundings'. But Hills argues that the way we grasp this literal paraphrase is by pretending that Juliet is in fact the sun. Crucially, Hills also provides good evidence to take this literal paraphrase as part of what is expressed, rather than simply what is pragmatically communicated.[xv] Since explicit metaphors provide the best evidence that there is discourse that non-obviously involves pretense, the fact that the view under consideration sits unhappily with a pretense account of metaphor is reason enough for the pretense theorist to reject it.[xvi]

The third response to the view that a sentence in the disputed discourse expresses the pretend-proposition, and pragmatically implicates the ontologically innocent paraphrase is that the resulting view is no longer a species of hermeneutic fictionalism at

all. The resulting view is rather an *error theory*. But hermeneutic fictionalism was supposed to be a way of avoiding an error theory. The view under consideration is thus simply a rejection of hermeneutic fictionalism, rather than an alternative construal of it.[xvii]

Furthermore, the kind of error theory envisaged by this view is not an improvement on a brute error theory, the content of which is just that much of the disputed discourse is literally false. The problem facing a brute error theory of a discourse that is epistemically central (e.g. talk about unobservable entities) lies in explaining how a discourse laced through with falsity can nevertheless be useful. On the view we are considering, this problem amounts to explaining how a discourse that expresses mostly falsities may communicate true propositions. Within the framework of hermeneutic fictionalism, a solution to this problem amounts to a systematic account of the principles of generation that link propositions within the pretense to their ontologically unproblematic paraphrases. But, as we have seen, there is much reason to doubt that a systematic account of principles of generation is forthcoming.

Here is a third worry. In any case of interest, the hermeneutic fictionalist's position entails that whether or not someone is engaged in a pretense is inaccessible to that person. For example, consider hermeneutic fictionalism about arithmetic. Competent users of arithmetical discourse will certainly deny that they are pretending when they discuss arithmetic. In such cases, the hermeneutic fictionalist must maintain that the fact that the language user is pretending is not accessible to her, even in principle. Now, pretense is unquestionably a psychological attitude one bears to a content; it is in the same family of attitudes as belief.[xviii] The advocate of hermeneutic fictionalism is therefore committed to the thesis that there is a (non-factive) psychological attitude that x can bear to a proposition, even though it is inaccessible to x that x bears that attitude (as opposed to some other in the family) to that proposition.

If the hermeneutic fictionalist is correct, then x can bear the propositional attitude of pretense towards a proposition, without it being in principle accessible to x that x bears the propositional attitude of pretense towards that proposition. But this introduces a novel and quite drastic form of failure of first-person authority over one's own mental states.[xix] Essentially, there are two kinds of reasons philosophers have had for doubting even the

weakest versions of the thesis that we have first-person authority over our own mental states.[xx] The first case involves the controversial issue about the tenability of any first-person authority thesis and externalism about content. According to some philosophers, we could not have privileged access to the contents of our attitudes, if those contents are individuated in part by their relations to the world. The second case concerns Freud's category of repressed beliefs.

The failure of first-person authority contemplated by the hermeneutic fictionalist does not fit into either of these two familiar and controversial challenges to this thesis. The first case involves a potential failure of even weak forms of first-person authority due to facts about the content of an attitude. However, the failure of first-person authority implicated in hermeneutic fictionalism involves facts about the attitude itself, rather than the content of the attitude. There is a certain psychological attitude, which we may, following Crimmins (1998), call "shallow pretense", which is such that it is opaque to persons whether or not they bear that attitude to a content. This is more similar to the failure of first-person authority contemplated by advocates of the Freudian apparatus of repressed beliefs. However, appeal to the Freudian categories does not help the hermeneutic fictionalist. For she probably does not wish to commit herself to the view that the non-introspectible nature of shallow pretense is due to childhood trauma. For example, the hermeneutic fictionalist about arithmetic certainly should avoid defending the view that arithmetic is a mass neurosis.[xxi]

Here is a fourth worry. The most straightforward way to understand the hermeneutic fictionalist is that the way in which engaging in games of make-believe is like engaging in the ontologically controversial discourse is that the very same psychological capacity is involved in both activities. The fourth worry is that, in any non-explicitly fictional discourse of interest to metaphysicians, the thesis that the same psychological capacity is involved in engaging in games of make-believe and grasping the relevant discourse is likely to be subject to empirical refutation.

Consider, for example, discourse involving negative existentials, identity, and arithmetic (all cases in which pretense analyses have been proposed). We can imagine an argument for the thesis that the same psychological capacity is involved in engaging in games of make-believe and engaging in such discourse, which proceeds as follows:

Step 1: The same psychological capacity is involved in playing games of make-believe as is involved in grasping figurative language.
Step 2: The same psychological capacity is involved in grasping figurative language or fiction as is involved in engaging in discourse involving identity, negative existentials, and arithmetic.
Conclusion: The same psychological capacity is involved in playing games of make-believe as is involved in discourse involving identity, negative existentials, and arithmetic.

Surprisingly, there does seem to be some evidence from the study of autism for the first step in this argument. But there is no evidence known to me for step 2, and in fact there appears to be positive evidence against it.

There is much discussion of pretense in the psychology literature on "Theory of Mind". A good deal of the literature is devoted to autism, which is used by theorists in support of the existence of a specialized mechanism devoted to the development of notions such as pretending and believing, what is sometimes called a "Theory of Mind" mechanism (e.g. Baron-Cohen, Leslie, and Frith (1985), Leslie (1987)). The majority of autistic persons fail at false-belief tasks, suggesting they lack the concept of belief. More relevantly for our purposes, autistic persons also exhibit a striking lack of make-believe play (which is in fact one of the behavioral diagnostics for autism). Perhaps there is some deep capacity that underlies successful performance on false-belief tasks, and the ability to engage in games of make-believe. Or so goes a trend in the psychology literature. Since this hypothesis, if correct, would only help to support advocates of shallow pretense, let us suppose it is correct.

The lack of imaginative play in autistic persons does not diminish with age. Autistic adults have great difficulty reading fiction or understanding its point:

Though now too old to be expected to play pretend games, the same imagination problems are evident in [an able adult with autism's] inability to follow the plots of soap operas and in a preference for learning lists of train times over reading books with fictional content. Happe (1995, p. 276).

Furthermore, autistic children have difficulty understanding figurative uses of language (Happe, Ibid.), and non-literal speech generally (Happe, 1994). There is more research

that needs to be done before one can conclude that the understanding of figurative language is due in part to the same capacity that is required to engage in games of make-believe. But let us suppose that it is correct that understanding explicitly figurative speech and fictional discourse involves the same mechanism that underlies successful engagement in games of make-believe. This supports the first step in the above argument.

If Walton, Crimmins, and Kroon (2000) are correct that pretense is implicated in the understanding of negative existentials and identity statements, then we should expect autistic children to have the same difficulties with negative existentials and identity statements as they do with fiction and figurative speech. There is currently no evidence that autistic children do have such deficits. Furthermore, if the hermeneutic fictionalist about arithmetic is right that arithmetic involves the same mechanisms that underlie grasp of explicitly figurative language, or fiction, then we should expect autistic children to be challenged in their grasp of arithmetical language, as they are in the comprehension of such discourse. But of course many autistic children are quite adept at grasping arithmetical language. So there looks to be strong evidence that there are capacities that are implicated in the grasp of figurative language that are not implicated in the grasp of arithmetical discourse. That is, there looks to be strong evidence against step 2.

Here is a reply to this worry on behalf of the hermeneutic fictionalist.[xxii] The autistic person who hears a sentence of arithmetic does not engage in the game of make-believe that the rest of us are engaged in when we grasp arithmetical discourse. But this does not entail that the autistic person cannot be arithmetically behaviorally identical to us. The problem with autistic persons and metaphors is that they take the words literally. Similarly, the autistic person who hears the sentence "There are several prime numbers between one and ten" also takes the utterance completely literally. She really believes that accepting the proposition expressed by this claim commits her to numbers. But this does not entail that there is a detectable behavioral difference between the autistic person and those of us who (assuming the hermeneutic fictionalist about arithmetic to be correct) pretend that there are numbers in order to express a truth that does not involve numbers. Someone who cannot engage in the make-believe we engage in when discussing arithmetic will nevertheless be able to add, subtract, and multiply. Though such a person will be operating under the misapprehension that she is adding and subtract things that

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really exist, they will nevertheless be behaviorally no different from those of us who do engage in the make-believe.

There are two responses to this reply to the worry. The first is that it concedes the existence of a radical difference between figurative speech and the disputed discourse. Someone who is not aware that a given sentence is used figuratively will have a vastly different reaction to its use than someone who is so aware. If John says (metaphorically) "Hannah is the sun", and Hannah does not recognize the figurative nature of his discourse, she will not behave appropriately in response to his utterance. The figurative nature of a discourse has obvious repercussions for action. In contrast, if this reply is correct, the figurative nature of the disputed discourse would not have any clear repercussions for action. Someone who does not know that the discourse is figurative may still nevertheless be indistinguishable from someone perfectly competent in its use. This is a significant disanalogy between figurative speech, on the one hand, and any one of the ontologically disputed discourses, such as arithmetical speech. [xxiii]

The second response is that the fact that someone who is engaged in pretense and someone who is not engaged in pretense are going to be empirically indistinguishable is not a situation which sits happily with hermeneutic fictionalism. For surely the default assumption, when someone believes they are not engaged in pretense, is that they are not engaged in pretense.

Here is a second reply on behalf of the hermeneutic fictionalist to the fourth worry. The hermeneutic fictionalist might simply give up this particular analogy between pretense, figurative speech, and grasp of sentences in the disputed discourse. That is, she may continue to maintain that engaging in games of make-believe is *something like* what we do when we engage in arithmetical discourse. However, she is free to deny that it is like engaging in arithmetical discourse in the sense that both involve the same psychological capacities.

But any two activities are analogous in some respect or other. For example, engaging in make-believe is like speaking about numbers in that both are activities humans engage in. But this analogy does not support the claims made by advocates of shallow pretense. The analogy between engaging in games of make-believe (or grasping figurative language), on the one hand, and engaging successfully in the disputed

discourse, must be sufficiently tight as to motivate the view that speakers are only pretending that the objects referred to in the disputed discourse exist. It is rather difficult to see how this could be so unless, on some level at least, users of the discourse are exploiting psychological mechanisms that are at work in obvious cases of pretense.

There is one hermeneutic fictionalist who can endorse this second reply to the fourth worry. For Stephen Yablo clearly recognizes these concerns, and to assuage them provides a list of purported analogies between figurative language and talk of numbers, sets, possible worlds, and other ontologically problematic discourse (Yablo (2000, pp. 301-4)). Though I do not here have the space to justify the point, Yablo's analogies are contentious, in that many of them only someone with nominalist leanings would find compelling. But Yablo at least has a developed response to the fourth worry. A hermeneutic fictionalist's claim stands or falls with the strength of the analogies she draws between the disputed discourse and speech that obviously involves some kind of pretense. However, the balancing act facing the hermeneutic fictionalist is difficult, because the analogies cannot be so strong as to conflict with the empirical facts.

Here is a fifth and final worry, which concerns the *motivation* for hermeneutic fictionalism. The hermeneutic fictionalist holds that the best semantic theory for a discourse may not be a good guide to the ontological commitments of the person who uses that discourse. For example, the best semantic theory for arithmetic commits someone who believes what is expressed by "There are several prime numbers between one and ten" to the existence of numbers. But, according to the hermeneutic fictionalist about arithmetic, a nominalist could believe what is expressed by this sentence, without thereby being committed to numbers. The hermeneutic fictionalist believes that semantic theory does not capture this notion of a speaker's ontological commitments. Hermeneutic fictionalism is motivated by the desire to account for *the ontological commitments the speaker believes she incurs* when she endorses the truth of an utterance.

Here is the idea. Suppose the best semantic theory for a discourse entails that endorsing the truth of a certain utterance commits one to some objects the existence of which some speakers who would endorse the truth of the utterance repudiate. In such a case, the speakers are simply pretending that the objects in question exist, in order to express something ontologically innocent. For example, a nominalist who utters "The

number of apostles is twelve" is only pretending that there are numbers, in order to express that there are twelve apostles. Similarly, one might think (cf. Melia (1995)) that someone who utters "The average star has 2.3 planets" is only pretending that there is an average-star-thing, which can have properties like having 2.3 planets. Upon reflection, a speaker would reject the *actual* existence of these entities to which the best semantics appears to commit her.

The fifth worry is that there are numerous problems with this motivation for hermeneutic fictionalism. I will discuss just five. The first is the motivation only is compelling in certain cases, like that of arithmetic. Suppose, as is plausible, that the best semantic theory for adverbs is Davidsonian, and involves the postulation of events. If so, then the best semantic theory for adverbs commits someone who utters "John is walking slowly" to the existence of events. But someone who is unfamiliar with Davidson's account of adverbs might very well deny that by believing what is expressed by "John is walking slowly", she is thereby committed to the existence of events. But in this case, it is not at all plausible to suppose that the reason she is not so committed is that she is only *pretending* there are events. After all, she has no clue that the best semantic theory in fact commits her to events. So, if one wants to capture the notion of the speaker's believed ontological commitments, as distinct from the ontological commitments that the best semantic theory imparts to the speaker, pretense is hopeless as a general account.[xxiv]

The second worry with this motivation for hermeneutic fictionalism is that particular cases are often motivated by a flawed conception of what the best semantic theory for a particular stretch of discourse happens to be. For example:

> …consider now statements like "there's something Jones is that Smith isn't: happy" or "another way to get there is via Tegucigalpa." Taken at face value, these sentences do indeed commit themselves to entities called "happy" and "via Tegucigalpa"…Likewise, someone who says that "the number of registered Democrats is on the rise" wants the focus to be on the Democrats, not "their number", whatever that might be. Their number is called in just to provide a measure of the Democrats' changing cardinality; it's expected to perform that service in the most inconspicuous way and then hustle itself off the stage before people start asking the inevitable awkward questions, e.g. which number is it? 50 million? is 50 million really on the rise?
>
> Yablo (2000, p. 298)

This is Yablo's argument for the thesis that sentences he discusses are what he calls "unobtrusive existential metaphors". For his argument to have force, it must be that treating these statements literally would in fact commit those who use them to objects called "happy" or "via Tegucigalpa", or that a particular number could be on the rise.[xxv] That is, it must be that the best semantics for, e.g., "The number of Democrats is on the rise" treats "The number of Democrats" as an expression that picks out a particular number. However, it is at best suspect that the correct semantic theory for these sentences functions in the manner Yablo requires for his argument to be compelling.[xxvi, xxvii]

The final few worries concern the notion of the ontological commitments *the speaker believes she has*. The third worry is that it is unclear why this notion should have any interest for the project of ontology. There are many commitments we have that we do not recognize we have. For example, many of us believe the axioms of Peano arithmetic. We are therefore committed to their consequences. However, there are many such consequences which we do not recognize that we are committed to. But the study of the *arithmetical commitments speakers believe they have* is surely not a very interesting topic. It is of particularly little interest to someone who is interested in finding out about our actual arithmetical commitments. It is similarly unclear why ontology should care about the ontological commitments speakers believe they have. Perhaps ontology should be in the business of uncovering the *actual* ontological commitments we incur when we use a discourse, rather than the ontological commitments speakers believe they incur.

The fourth worry concerns an unmotivated asymmetry between how the hermeneutic fictionalist treats ontological commitment, on the one hand, and pretense, on the other. The focus the hermeneutic fictionalist places on a speaker's believed ontological commitments is only justified given the background assumption that a speaker's *believed* ontological commitments are her *actual* ontological commitments. Thus, an assumption of this motivation for hermeneutic fictionalism is that a speaker has first-person authority over the ontological commitments she incurs when using a discourse. However, to maintain this assumption, the hermeneutic fictionalist must give up the thesis that we have first-person authority over whether or not we are pretending. But surely the thesis that we have first-person authority over our ontological

commitments is considerably less plausible than the thesis that we have first-person authority over whether or not we are pretending.

The fifth worry is that this motivation is inconsistent with any interesting application of hermeneutic fictionalism. As we have just seen, an assumption of this motivation is that a speaker has first-person authority over the ontological commitments of her discourse. It is hard to see how to motivate this except via the thesis that a competent speaker has first-person authority about the exact nature of the real-world truth-conditions of her utterance. But this is in tension with hermeneutic fictionalism.

First, in the case of explicit metaphors, it is dubious that speakers have a grasp of the exact nature of their literal paraphrases. This, after all, is what makes explicit metaphors so semantically intractable. So the most promising case for a pretense account provides examples in which speakers do not have access to the details of the real-world truth-conditions of their utterances.

Secondly, in any case of interest, the hermeneutic fictionalist will need to allow that speakers lack access to the details of the real-world truth-conditions of their utterances. For example, the hermeneutic fictionalist about arithmetic presumably does not want to maintain that a normal non-philosopher knows the real world truth-conditions of ''There are several prime numbers between one and ten''. For such knowledge would amount to knowledge of the nominalist paraphrase of this sentence, and surely this is not available to ordinary competent users of arithmetical discourse. So it appears that the hermeneutic fictionalist is after all committed to the thesis that sometimes competent users of a discourse may be unaware of its ontological commitments.

In this section, I have raised some worries about hermeneutic fictionalism. However, suppose it turned out that a pretense account was in fact the best linguistic account of some apparently non-figurative, non-fictional discourse. If so, then some of the worries I have raised would have to be reclassified as discoveries. Whether or not there are any apparently non-figurative discourses that are best analyzed in terms of pretense is therefore an important question to resolve. That is the purpose of the next section.

Section III.

In the last section, I gave several general reasons for rejecting any hermeneutic fictionalist account of an apparently non-figurative, non-fictional discourse. In this section, I discuss some examples that are the best cases for a pretense analysis of such a discourse. By a "best case" for a pretense analysis, I do not mean a deeply controversial case such as fictionalism about morals or mathematics. If a fictionalist account of a philosophically controversial discourse is to be at all plausible, it must be that there is evidence in the less controversial parts of our speech that we can sometimes be engaged in a pretense without realizing it. By a "best case", then, I mean a case in which appeal to pretense yields a better overall analysis of the linguistic and phenomenological facts. If a pretense analysis is not a viable option for any case outside the philosophically controversial examples of, e.g., mathematics or morals, then claiming that these philosophically contentious areas of discourse actually involve pretense looks to be dogmatic in the extreme.

So, the cases I discuss are each ones in which a fictionalist analysis appears to help with some difficult problem. In each case, I argue that an analysis in terms of pretense is nevertheless not tenable. Given that we are now in possession of reasons that militate against hermeneutic fictionalism generally, showing that appeal to pretense fails to illuminate our understanding of even the most promising cases should lead to pessimism about its value as an account of any apparently non-figurative, non-fictional kind of discourse.

Before I begin, a note of caution. As we know from syntax, sentences do not wear their actual logical forms on their sleeves. The same is true of semantics, in part because the correct semantic analysis of a sentence is a function of its correct syntactic analysis. Some of the constructions that hermeneutic fictionalists have chosen as the best cases for a pretense analysis are ones the semantics of which are very difficult. In fact, pretense analyses of such constructions are particularly attractive, because they appear to absolve us of the responsibility of doing the hard work of uncovering the actual syntax and semantics of some very puzzling sentences.

One oft-cited construction that seems amenable to the pretense analysis involves uses of "average" as in:

(3)   The average mother has 2.4 children.

According to the pretense analysis of this sort of use of "average", understanding a use of (3) involves pretending that there is an average mother who in fact has 2.4 children. Such a pretense allows us to express (or communicate) an ontologically innocent proposition that does not commit us to such an entity.

There are, as far as I can see, one main argument in the literature supporting a pretense account of sentences such as (3), given most explicitly by Melia (1995).[xxviii] It is, according to Melia (1995, p. 223), a "logical consequence" of (3) that there is a particular thing, an average mother, that has the property of having 2.3 children. So, Melia's claim here is that the actual syntax and semantics for (3) is such that (3) can only be true in a model, if that model contains an entity denoted by the definite description "The average mother", that has the property of having 2.4 children. Since (3) can clearly be true, even though there is no such entity, it must therefore be that the actual semantics of (3) is only 'within a pretense'.[xxix]

There is a second argument for a pretense account, one that depends on the first. One can of course paraphrase (3) in a manner that does not entail the existence of average mothers, as in:

(4)   The number of offspring divided by the number of mothers is 2.4.

But there is a problem facing such a paraphrase. As Melia (1995, p. 224) writes:

> The word 'paraphrase' is misleading. Intuitively, P is a paraphrase of Q if P means the same as Q. But paraphrases in this sense are useless for our purposes. How can P and Q have the same meaning whilst only one of them is committed to a certain type of entity?

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Melia's point here is that (3) entails the existence of an average mother, whereas (4) does not entail the existence of an average mother. So, (4) cannot be a correct (that is meaning preserving) paraphrase of (3).[xxx]

Of course, this second argument is a corollary of the first. Only if it is indeed part of the literal meaning of (3) that it entails the existence of average mothers does it follow that a statement that does not commit one to average mothers is not a meaning preserving paraphrase. So, the argument for a pretense analysis of 'average' rests upon the claim that uses of sentences such as (3) do in fact have such entailments. And how convincing is this?

Before we give a detailed evaluation of this claim, let us first note an ambiguity in the word "average" (cf. Higginbotham (1985)). Consider the sentences in (5):

(5)   (a) The average New Yorker is kind.
       (b) The average politician is corrupt.
       (c) The average philosopher is bewildered.

It should be uncontroversial that these sentences do not commit us to strange entities. For example, (5a) expresses the proposition that generally, New Yorkers who are average in some contextually salient respect are kind. (5b) says that politicians who are average in some contextually salient respect are corrupt. In short, the sentences in (5) raise no metaphysical or semantic problems. Here "average" is being used as an indexical adjective. Its denotation, relative to a context of use, is a property that some (ordinary) things have and others do not.[xxxi] Let's call this use the "predicative" use of "average". In potentially true uses of (3), by contrast, "average" is not used predicatively. So it is not the predicative use of "average" that raises metaphysical problems. We can therefore leave it to one side.[xxxii]

Let us call the reading of "average" in potentially true uses of (3), the *adverbial* reading of "average". The sobriquet is apt, because of the existence of adverbial paraphrases of the relevant uses of "average", which would not be appropriate for the uses of "average" in (5). For example, we may paraphrase (3) as:

(6)   On average, mothers have 2.4 children.

Of course, Melia would object to the adverbial paraphrase of the adverbial reading of "average", because, according to him, the adverbial use of "average" commits its user to an entity that can have strange properties like having 2.4 children, whereas (6) does not so commit its user.[xxxiii] So, now that we have distinguished these two readings of "average", we may turn to an evaluation of Melia's claim.

If "the average N", in its adverbial use, were a normal definite description, like "the president of the United States", then there is no question that Melia would be right in his contention that its use in a sincere assertion of a sentence such as (3) would commit us to an entity that is capable of having properties like having 2.4 children. That is, if "the average N", in its adverbial use, were a denoting phrase *just like* "the President of the United States", then just as "The president of the United States has 2.4 children" entails the existence of something that has the odd property of having 2.4 children, so (3) would entail the existence of something that possesses such a property. However, it is not difficult to show that "the average N", in its adverbial use, is not a normal definite description.

Consider the contrast between (7a) and (7b):

(7)   a. The average red car gets 2.3 tickets per year.
        b. The red average car gets 2.3 tickets per year.

Though (7b) is not ungrammatical, it *is* semantically deviant. The reason that it is semantically deviant is that inserting an adjective between the adverbial reading of "average" and the definite description "the" eliminates the adverbial reading, yielding only the predicative reading of "average". Similarly, (8a) is perfectly fine, though (8b) is again semantically deviant:

(8)   a. The average American conservative has 1.6 guns.
        b. The American average conservative has 1.6 guns.

These facts provide strong evidence that "the average N", in its adverbial usage, is not a normal definite description. Consider, for example, a typical definite description like "The red shiny car on the corner". Both (9a) and (9b) are fully acceptable:

(9)   a. The red shiny car on the corner has a flat tire.
        b. The shiny red car on the corner has a flat tire.

Similarly, both (10a) and (10b) are fully acceptable:

(10)   a. The American conservative next door voted for Nader.
        b. The conservative American next door voted for Nader.

So there is strong evidence that "the average N", on its adverbial usage, is not a normal definite description. For one cannot insert adjectives between an adverbial occurrence of "average" and the definite description.[xxxiv]

But from the fact that "the average N", in its adverbial use, is not a normal definite description, it does not follow that Melia is incorrect to hold that a sentence such as (3) entails the existence of a shadowy average-mother-thing. For "the average N", in its adverbial usage, is similar in the above respect to superlative definite descriptions, such as "the shortest spy", which clearly do denote entities in the world. For example, insertion of adjectives between the definite description and the superlative adjective also results in deviance:

(11)   a. The shortest nice spy is French.
        b. The nice shortest spy is French.
(12)   a. The tallest mediocre basketball player plays for the Pistons.
        b. The mediocre tallest basketball player plays for the Pistons.

The (b) sentences in (11) and (12) are both deviant, whereas the (a) sentences are not. So, there are constructions that share some of the properties of "the average N", on its adverbial usage, yet which are clearly ontologically committing.

However, there remain significant differences between [TUoM1]superlative adjectives, on the one hand, and the adverbial use of "average", on the other. For example, the sentences in (13) are contradictions:

(13)　　a. The shortest spy is somewhere in France, but there is no shortest spy.
　　　　b. The shortest spy is somewhere in France, but no spy is the shortest.

However, the sentences in (14) could certainly be true:

(14)　　a. The average mother has 2.3 children, but there is no average mother.
　　　　b. The average mother has 2.3 children, but no mother is average.

The difference between "the shortest N" and "the average N" revealed by the distinction between (13) and (14) is of course particularly germane to the relative differences in ontological commitment. Another difference between "the shortest spy" and the adverbial use of "the average mother" that provides equally strong evidence that "the shortest spy" is ontologically committing, and "the average mother" (on its adverbial usage) is not, is that when we count up all of the spies in the world, we count the shortest spy. However, when we count up all of the mothers in the world, we do not include the average mother, the one with 2.3 children. Thus, despite the parallels between the two constructions, there are powerful disanalogies that bear directly on relative difference in commitment.[xxxv]

So, there are strong reasons for thinking that the adverbial usage of "the average N" does not have the semantic function of singling out a unique entity. There are furthermore many additional objections to this thesis. Here is just one. Suppose that the semantic function of "the average mother", on its adverbial usage, were to pick out a unique entity. Then, (15a) and (15b) would follow trivially from the premise that mothers have mass:

(15)　　a. If there are any mothers at all, then there is some mother who is an
　　　　　average mother in terms of weight.
　　　　b. If there are any mothers at all, then there is a mother of average weight.

But the sentences in (15) certainly do not follow trivially from the premise that mothers have mass. Rather, they unambiguously express substantive truths.

The adverbial usage of "average" provides a potentially good argument for the thesis that there are apparently perfectly literal, non-figurative discourses the semantics of

which involve pretense. The persuasiveness of the pretense view is due in large part to the difficulty of the construction. If a pretense account were correct, it would save us from the hard work involved in facing the semantic facts. However, as we have seen, the claim upon which the pretense account rests is dubious. Of course, the nail in the coffin of the pretense account would be a linguistically plausible semantics for the adverbial usage of "average" that invalidates the entailment that motivates it. I provide such a semantics in the appendix. Therefore, not only is there an alternative semantics that does not commit one who utters (3) to the existence of a shadowy average mother, but there are serious problems for the view that an adequate semantics should capture this entailment.[xxxvi]

In Crimmins (1998), Mark Crimmins provides admirably detailed and rigorous arguments for the thesis that there are types of apparently literal, non-figurative discourse that involve pretense.[xxxvii] One example Crimmins discusses is discourse involving identity. As Crimmins points out, we sometimes utter sentences such as:

> (16)   Whenever two things are identical, and one has a property, then the other has it as well.

If "identical" meant strict identity in (16), then (16) could not be true. Two things can never be strictly identical to one another. The desire to validate (16) is Crimmins' primary motivation for a pretense analysis of identity statements.

According to the pretense analysis advocated by Crimmins, an identity statement such as (17) is to be analyzed via the mechanism of pretense:

> (17)   Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus.

Anyone who utters (17) pretends that there are two distinct objects that bear what Crimmins calls the "promiscuous identity relation" to one another. It is fictionally true that the promiscuous identity relation holds between two objects when "these fictional objects result from pretending-apart a single object" (Crimmins (1998, p. 35)).

With this semantics in place, one can then see how (16) can be used to express a truth, rather than the absurd claim that a straightforward semantics predicts. The 'two

things' that are discussed are simply the two things *within the pretense* that bear the promiscuous identity relation to one another.

There are several worrisome features of this account of identity statements. First, the only explanation of the promiscuous identity relation is in terms of the "pretending apart" of one object. But it is unclear what "pretending apart" amounts to. Indeed, some metaphysicians are quite used to making the point that it makes no sense to "pretend apart" an object. For this is just what one does in explaining, for example, the intuitive basis for the necessity of identity.[xxxviii]

But there is a considerably more serious concern facing Crimmins' account of identity.[xxxix] Consider the discourses in (18):

(18)   a. Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus. So, they are two planets. Indeed, both are identical to Venus. So, together they make three planets.
        b. Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus. So, they are distinct.[xl]

There is something decidedly odd about these discourses. I doubt they are ever felicitous. But Crimmins' account of identity statements makes it mysterious why these discourse can't be felicitous. After all, within the pretense, Hesperus and Phosphorus are two distinct planets. So why doesn't it make sense to say that they are?

The problem here is one that reoccurs repeatedly when assessing pretense accounts of particular constructions. They tend to over-generate, predicting that discourses can be felicitous that never can be felicitous.[xli]

There are several possible responses the pretense theorist can make to the over-generation worry. The first is that the discourse are infelicitous because it involves a switch from pretense back to non-pretense. But this response simply misses the point. The point is not that certain instances of the discourses in (18) are infelicitous. It is that these discourses are *invariably* odd. But there is no explanation, within the pretense account, of why, for each discourse in (18), there couldn't be a single pretense that encompasses all of it.[xlii]

Indeed, I suspect that any story that is powerful enough to make (16) true will over-generate in this manner. And how could it not? If there are resources available to make (16) true, then there will be resources available to make each of the discourses in

(18) true. The problem of over-generation seems to face any attempt to make (16) true. The proper reaction here is, of course, simply to reject (16), just as we reject the claims of those undergraduates who maintain that Bill Clinton might not have been Bill Clinton, because he could have received a different name at birth. After all, (16) is completely inessential to theorizing about identity, and it is a trivial matter to avoid using such locutions.[xliii]

I want now to turn to hermeneutic fictionalist analyses of negative existential sentences, which were introduced in Section I. Such analyses are perhaps the most difficult to refute, because negative existential sentences have proven so semantically intractable. Unlike the case of adverbial uses of "average", there is no clearly superior semantics that provides the "nail in the coffin" of hermeneutic fictionalist accounts. Nevertheless, in combination with the worries in Section II about the dire consequences of any hermeneutic fictionalist analysis, the following concerns pose serious problems for these analyses.

The most obvious concern is the "incredulous stare" objection. Existential sentences such as "Bill Clinton exists" and "Zeus exists" certainly do not *feel* like figurative language. Of course, the incredulous stare objection arises for every interesting application of hermeneutic fictionalism in ontology. But it is worthy of brief mention in this context, since it is an objection Kendall Walton takes quite seriously, and addresses in detail. Walton (2000, p. 90) argues it is a necessary condition for a construction to be a metaphor that understanding it requires a grasp of the literal meaning of the expressions used metaphorically. But, according to Walton, singular existential sentences do not even *have* literal meanings apart from their "pretend" uses.[xliv] So, singular existential sentences do not satisfy a necessary condition to be metaphors.[xlv] I think that Walton has here provided an adequate response to the incredulous stare object.

The second concern involves over-generation worries of the sort facing Crimmins' pretense account of identity statements.[xlvi] Each of the sentences in (19) seems infelicitous:

(19)   a. Zeus does not exist and he is very powerful.
        b. Zeus does not exist, but he ruled over all of Greece.

Again, it is not an option to appeal to distinct games governing the different conjuncts in the sentences in (19). The question is not why the sentences in (19) are *sometimes* infelicitous, but rather why the sentences in (19) are *always* infelicitous.[xlvii]

One possible reply to the over-generation worry is to appeal to a sentence like:

(20)   The fountain of youth does not exist, but it nevertheless was sought by Ponce de Leon.

It is uncontroversial that there can be true, felicitous utterances of (20). So, one might argue, we should reevaluate the intuitive reactions to the sentences in (19), since sentences just like it can be used felicitously to express truths.

But this reply to the over-generation concern is not convincing. (20) is not "just like" the sentences in (19). For (20) contains the intensional transitive verb "seek", whereas the sentences in (19) do not contain intensional transitive verbs. A sentence containing an intensional transitive verb can be true, even though the noun phrase in its complement position does not refer. In the case of (20), the second conjunct is the passive form of the sentence:

(21)   Ponce de Leon sought the fountain of youth.[xlviii]

The reason (20) can be used to express a truth is because the grammatical subject of the second conjunct originates in the complement position of an intensional transitive. The truth of an utterance of (20) therefore has nothing whatsoever to do with games of make-believe associated with negative existential sentences.

According to Walton, the proposition asserted by an utterance of "Zeus does not exist" is that "Zeus" attempts to refer of the sort found in the Zeus pretense are unsuccessful. The third concern with Walton's analysis is that it yields incorrect predications about the modal contents of existential sentences. For example, (23) simply is not what is asserted by (22):

(22)   Rebecca might not have existed.
(23)   "Rebecca" attempts to refer might not have been successful.

With respect to another possible situation, "Rebecca" attempts to refer might not be successful, even though Rebecca is living a full and happy life in those situations. Furthermore, appeal to a rigidifying operator like "actual" does not seem to help Walton's account. It is not at all clear what is meant by (24). But insofar as it is interpretable, it is difficult to accept that it expresses the same proposition as (22):

(24)   Actual "Rebecca" attempts to refer might not have been successful.

This problem is familiar to advocates of pretense analyses, but a clear defense of Walton's account has yet to be advocated.

One possible response on behalf of Walton is to restrict the account to sentences that do not contain modal operators.[xlix] There are two replies to this maneuver. First, as Walton (2000, p. 90) recognizes, it is inconsistent with Walton's response to the "incredulous stare" objection, which involves the claim that "exists" never has a literal use. Secondly, and more importantly, the account seems deeply problematic. For, as Kripke (1980, pp. 11-12) emphasizes, we may speak of the modal properties of the modal content expressed by non-modal sentences. This point is especially worrisome for the resulting account of negative existential sentences. To make this point more concrete, consider the discourse in (25):

(25)   Rebecca does not exist. That might have been true, but it's not actually true.

According to the envisaged account, "exists" has a non-literal use in non-modal contexts, and a literal use in modal contexts. But there is only *one* use of "exists" in an occurrence of the discourse in (25). The occurrence of 'that' in the second sentence of (25) denotes something expressed by the first sentence, but it does not involve *another use* of the word "exist".

Suppose we grant that, in (25), the use of the predicate "does not exist" is non-literal, yet somehow a literal 'use' of this predicate emerges in the evaluation of the second sentence. There are still serious problems with the view. The first is that the

account entails that it is *impossible* to attribute modal properties to the modal content expressed by simple negative existential sentences. But this posits a mysterious and unmotivated asymmetry between normal figurative speech and 'covert' figurative speech. For attributing modal properties to the modal content of normal figurative speech is a perfectly straightforward matter, as in:

(26)   Rebecca has butterflies in her stomach. That might have been true, but it's not actually true.

If "has butterflies in her stomach" is figurative, then the second sentence in (26) expresses the proposition that Rebecca might have been nervous, but isn't.

The discourse in (26) raises a further problem for the envisaged account. Suppose there are in fact processes of the sort required for this sort of analysis of (25). Then there should be a *natural* reading of (26) in which what is said to be possibly true is what would have been literally (non-idiomatically) expressed by the utterance of the first sentence. After all, on this account, this is the only possible reading of the second sentence of (25). However, this doesn't seem to be a possible reading of the second sentence of (26), much less a natural one. In sum, then, the hermeneutic fictionalist would be well-advised to avoid this reply.

Crimmins (1998, pp. 34-35) recognizes the problem facing Walton's account of negative existentials.[1] His suggestion is to abandon the "metarepresentational" aspect of Walton's account that leads to the difficulties. In its place, Crimmins proposes that:

No possible world makes it fictionally true that there is a possible world in which "Santa exists" (so that ["Santa does not exist"] expresses a necessary content despite having a contingent truth-condition) and…all and only possible worlds in which Venus exists make it fictionally true that there are possible worlds in which "Hesperus exists".

Crimmins (1998, p. 35)

Crimmins' suggested principles of generation governing the modal contents in the pretense of singular existentials and negative existentials yield the correct results. However, Crimmins achieves these results via brute force stipulation. The game of hermeneutic fictionalism simply looks too easy to play here.

Here is another apparently literal, non-figurative construction, the normal use of which Crimmins (1998) claims involves engaging in a pretense:

(27)   There is milk in the refrigerator.

Suppose there is a dried drop of milk on the shelf. Relative to most contexts, this drop of milk is not relevant to the truth or falsity of the proposition expressed by (27), relative to that context. Crimmins suggests that the reason here is that the person who utters (27) engages in a pretense that such a case is not to be counted as milk, despite the fact that it really is milk.

Now, the phenomenon Crimmins is here discussing is the phenomenon of quantifier domain restriction. According to the theory of quantifier domain restriction defended in Stanley and Szabo (2000), quantifier domain restriction is due to the fact that each common noun co-occurs with a domain index, which restricts its interpretation. As Stanley (forthcoming) emphasizes, the point holds for mass nouns as well as count nouns. So, if Crimmins is correct that each case of quantifier domain restriction is a case that involves pretense, and if the theory of domain restriction advocated in Stanley and Szabo (2000) and Stanley (forthcoming) is correct, then it follows that virtually *every sentence* containing a common noun (count or mass) involves pretense. If so, virtually every utterance involves pretense, which is surely a consequence with which few could be happy.

It seems to be assumed in the small literature on pretense that idiomatic expressions cry out for a pretense analysis. I want to conclude by expressing some doubts about this assumption. For it is mysterious to me what linguistic problem about idioms is solved by appeal to pretense.[li]

Let me begin by some general remarks about idioms.[lii] 'Idiom' does not pick out a natural kind of theoretical linguistics. Nonetheless, there is a 'family resemblance' between different categories of expressions that we call idioms. Idioms are generally recognizable as figurative. Paradigm examples of idioms are conventionalized; their meanings can't be predicted on the basis of the meanings of their parts. Paradigm examples of idioms are inflexible, they can only appear in a limited number of syntactic

frames. As Nunberg, Sag, and Wasow (1994) argue, phrases that we are likely to classify as idioms vary in the degree to which they have these properties.

Here are some rough and ready categories of idioms. First of all, there are what we might call *completely frozen* idioms. These include:

(28)　　a. kick the bucket
　　　　b. shoot the breeze
　　　　c. blow off steam.

As (29) demonstrates, these idioms are completely frozen and non-compositional. They cannot, for example, passivize:

(29)　　a.* The bucket was kicked by John.
　　　　b.* The breeze was shot by John.
　　　　c.* Steam was blown off by Hannah.

They also resist anaphora:

(30)　　a. * John kicked the bucket yesterday, and Mary kicked it the day before.
　　　　b. * John shot the breeze with Bill, and Hannah shot it with Muti.
　　　　c. * Hannah blew off steam, and John blew off it as well.

Furthermore, the meanings of such idioms are completely unrelated to the meanings of their parts.

Idioms vary in the degree to which they are frozen. For example, consider "break the ice" and "keep tabs on". As (31) shows, these idioms can engage in some syntactic operations:

(31)　　a. Tabs were kept on John by the FBI.
　　　　b. The FBI kept tabs on John, and they kept them on Hannah as well.
　　　　c. The ice was broken by Muti.

However, these idioms also are somewhat frozen. For example, they resist replacement of synonyms. "Preserve" is a synonym of "kept", and "frozen water" is a synonym for "ice". Yet the sentences in (32) are decidedly odd:

(32)   a. * The FBI preserved tabs on John.
       b. * Hannah broke the frozen water.

This shows that these idioms are still partially frozen, in the sense that they occur in particular syntactic frames. Finally, idioms are, as a rule, not translatable into other languages, which is presumably a further reflection of their frozen nature.

So, just as an extremely rough and ready suggestion, the degree of the idiomaticity of an expression can be measured by the degree to which it is frozen. Yet one would think that pretense accounts are particularly ill-suited to explain *this very feature* of idioms. For if we understand idioms by engaging in a pretense in which their literal meanings are fictionally true, then it is a complete mystery why idioms aren't fully compositionally interpretable, and don't allow free substitution of synonyms by synonyms. The class of completely frozen idioms is of course particularly mysterious on this account. Why should pretenses that govern some idioms completely break down when the idiom undergoes the passive transformation? In fact, a pretense account of our understanding of idioms seems to make it completely mysterious why idiomatic expressions possess *the very features that are paradigmatic of idiomaticity*. In a sense, then, a pretense account of idioms fails as badly as it is possible for an account of idioms to fail.

But if a pretense account of idioms is incorrect, then it is difficult to see how analogies between idiomatic speech and an ontologically disputed discourse could help the hermeneutic fictionalist evade commitment to problematic entities. For it may be that our grasp of idiomatic expressions is best explained by supposing we learn genuine idiomatic expressions just like new individual lexical items, and that many expressions only are partly idiomatic. If so, then the best semantics for an idiom like "has butterflies in one's stomach" simply assigns to this predicate the same meaning as "is nervous". But then idioms pose no threat to the view that the ontological commitments of a sentence are given by whatever the best semantic theory assigns to it.

In the cases we have discussed in this section, appeal to pretense initially appears to help with some recalcitrant linguistic or phenomenological data. However, upon deeper investigation, pretense analyses have failed to deliver on their promise. In the case

of identity statements, idioms, and adverbial uses of "average", they do not seem particularly promising at all. Negative existential sentences are substantially more promising for the pretense theorist, but this is in part due to the absence of any clearly more satisfactory semantics for such sentences. In short, even in those constructions in which a pretense analysis may initially appear to help, our understanding does not seem to be deepened by appeal to pretense. This makes it significantly more dubious that the hermeneutic fictionalist could be correct about more philosophically controversial cases, such as discourse concerning arithmetic or morals.

Appendix: adverbial "average"

As we have seen in Section III, there are (at least) two different readings of "average". On the first reading, "average" is an indexical adjective. Relative to a context, "average" expresses the property of being average in some contextually salient respect. So, for example, in the sentence:

(1)   The average man is worried about his falling income.

'average' might express the property of being average with respect to income. Where "Gen" expresses the quantifier "generally x", what (1) says, on this reading, is:

(2)   Gen x (if x is a man who is average with respect to income, x is worried about his falling income).

I have above called this the "predicative adjective" reading of "average". The predicative adjective reading of "average" is simple to accommodate within any semantic framework.

A sentence like (1) only has a predicative adjective reading.[liii] Occurrences of "average" in sentences like (3), in contrast, have both adverbial readings and predicative adjective readings:

(3)   The average mother has 2.3 children.

Of course, the predicative adjective reading of "average" in (3) results in the absurd claim:

     (4)   Gen x (if x is a mother who is average with respect to property R, then x has 2.3 children).

So, the only natural reading of (3) involves the adverbial reading of "average".

     Why do sentences such as (3) allow for adverbial readings of "average", and sentences such as (1) do not? The difference between (1) and (3) is that, in the case of (3), there is an obvious contextually salient scale, made salient in this case by the linguistic context. In the case of (3), the contextually salient scale is one ordered along the dimension of numbers of children, and whose points therefore represent numbers of children.[liv] This scale is made salient by the use of the measure phrase, "2.3 children".[lv]

     For the sake of definiteness, in giving the semantics of adverbial "average" in what follows, I avail myself of the general account of adjectives and comparatives presented in Kennedy (1997). So, the details of my proposal will depend upon specific features of Kennedy's analysis. However, I assume that the spirit of the syntax and semantics given below can be presented in any number of different degree-theoretic semantic frameworks.

     I assume that the syntax of (5), where "average" is used adverbially, is as in (6):

     (5)   The average American is five foot eight inches tall.
     (6)   The average [$_{XP}$ ∅ American] is five foot eight inches tall.

With Kennedy (1997), let us also assume that, typically, gradable adjectives denote *measures*. A measure is a function from objects to degrees, which we may, for the moment, simply identify with points on a scale.[lvi] Such a function is of type <e,d>. [JS2]I assume that '∅' in (5) is a phonetically empty adjective of type <<e,t>, <e,d>>. "American" is the argument of '∅'.

     I have said that gradable adjectives typically denote measures. But '∅' denotes a function the *value* of which is a measure. Why think that there are gradable adjectives

(even phonetically unpronounced ones) that denote functions whose values are measures? Kennedy (1997, p. 122, footnote 17) considers examples of gradable adjectives with internal arguments, such as "Delia was quick to poke holes in David's theory". According to Kennedy, the semantic type of adjectives like 'eager' and 'quick' in such constructions is $<<s,t>, <e,d>>$. That is, 'eager' and 'quick' denote functions from propositions to measure functions. So there is independent evidence for the existence of gradable adjectives which denote functions the values of which are measure functions. Similarly, '∅', relative to a context, denotes a function whose value is a measure, this time given a property as argument, rather than a proposition.

Relative to a context, '∅' denotes a function that takes something of type $<e,t>$ and yields a measure function that is defined only on the things for which $<e,t>$ yields t. So, the domain of the measure function that is denoted by XP is {x: NP (x)}. The values of the measure function are points on the contextually salient scale. So, '∅' denotes different functions of type $<<e,t>, <e,d>>$ in different contexts. Which function of this type it denotes is determined by the contextually salient scale. If, in a context c, the contextually salient scale is points ordered along the dimension of height, then '∅' denotes a function that takes a noun denotation, and yields a function from elements of the extension of that noun to points on the contextually salient scale (in this case, intuitively, the respective heights of those elements).[lvii]

'Average' then operates on the measure function. A measure function is a set of ordered pairs of objects and points on a scale. The primary semantic function 'average' is to sum up the second members of each ordered pair in the measure function, and divide by the cardinality of the measure function.[lviii] Finally, 'the average N' denotes the result of applying 'average' to the denotation of [XP ∅ N].

Again following Kennedy (1997), we take the semantic value of 'is five foot eight inches tall' to be the property named by the λ-formula in (7):

(7)   λx (Equal (tall(x),(five foot eight inches))).[lix]

As stated above, gradable adjectives denote measures. In the case of "tall", it denotes a function from objects to points on a scale ordered along the dimension of height.

We may further suppose that the denotations of adjectives such as 'tall' are also defined for degrees; they are just the identity function on degrees of tallness. In support of this supposition, consider:

(8)   Six feet is tall.
(9)   300 pounds is heavy.

If measures were not defined for degrees, then (8) and (9) would be deviant. But they are perfectly felicitous.

So, that is the basic syntax and semantics for adverbial "average". According to it, relative to a context, (5) true if and only if the sum of all the heights of Americans, divided by the number of Americans, is the same degree of height as five foot eight inches tall. This is of course the correct interpretation of (5). Similarly, according to this semantics, (3) is true relative to a context if and only if the sum of all the number of children of all of the mothers, divided by the number of mothers, is the same degree of child possession as the point on the scale that represents 2.3 children. This is again the desired interpretation. Notice that deriving this interpretation does not involve the postulation of any shadowy 'average mother things', that can have properties such as having 2.3 children.

Carlson and Pelletier (2000) point out that the adverbial paraphrase of "average" suggested in Higginbotham (1985) has difficulties with phrasal comparatives involving "average", as in:

(10)   The average American is taller than the average Canadian.

For there is no clear way to paraphrase (10) using "on average". But there is no problem treating phrasal comparatives on the syntax and semantics I have proposed. The meaning of the comparative morpheme 'er' suggested in Kennedy (1997, p. 146) is:

(11)   er = $\lambda G \lambda x \lambda y[MORE(G(x))(G(y))]$

'The average American' will, on the account I have just presented, denote the average height of Americans, and 'the average Canadian' will denote the average height of Canadians. (10) will be true if and only if the first height is more than the second height (again, we have to retain our assumption that measure functions are the identity function on degrees).

Note that if there is no contextually salient scale in a context, then there is no way to assign a value to '$\varnothing$'. So, the account successfully predicts that adverbial readings are only present when there is some contextually salient scale. Furthermore, 'average', on its adverbial reading, can only operate on a measure function whose values are *numeric* points on a scale. This explains why "average" in (12) does not naturally have an adverbial reading:

(12)   The average mother is pretty.

However, it is perhaps possible, given a sufficiently rich context, to interpret (12) on the adverbial reading of "average". Such a context would have to contain a scale of attractiveness whose points are numeric values. However, if such a scale is not contextually quite salient, (12) does not permit an adverbial reading of "average".

The account also neatly explains the contrast between:

(13)   The average red car gets 2.3 tickets per year.
(14)   The red average car gets 2.3 tickets per year.

(13) is perfectly acceptable. (14) is not ungrammatical. But it is certainly semantically deviant. On the account of adverbial "average" I have presented, there is a clear account of the contrast between (13) and (14). The denotation of 'average car', on the adverbial use of 'average', is a point on a scale measuring the number of tickets per year. This is not the kind of thing that could be red. So, (14), on the adverbial reading of "average", is semantically deviant. Since on the predicative reading of "average", (14) is also semantically deviant, the account predicts that (14) has only absurd readings. This explains why sentences such as (14), while grammatical, are nevertheless deviant.[lx, lxi]

NOTES

[i] For a recent exposition and defense of an account of fiction along these lines, cf. Thomasson (1998).

[ii] Nevertheless, some of my objections to hermeneutic fictionalist approaches also apply to a hermeneutic fictionalist who exploits Lewis' account of fiction.

[iii] I am deliberately vague in my talk of ontological commitment in this section in that I do not make the important distinction between the commitments someone who seriously uses a discourse incurs, and the commitments of the discourse (relative to a context). For example, the proposition expressed by the metaphor "Juliet is the sun", relative to a context, may be the absurd one that Juliet is strictly and literally identical to the sun, even though someone who seriously utters this sentence is not committed to this absurd claim. The reason for this vagueness, as will become clearer in the next section, is that hermeneutic fictionalism can be presented as a thesis about either notion of commitment.

[iv] Stephen Yablo (the arch-hermeneutic fictionalist about abstract objects) sometimes appears to bypass the notion of pretense, by drawing analogies between explicitly figurative speech and talk of mathematical objects. However, this simply raises the question of what the account of figurative speech is, and why discourse analogous to it is thereby freed from the ontological commitments given to it by the best semantic theory. Furthermore, Yablo himself appears to endorse a pretense account of figurative speech. As he writes: "The most important example for us [of figurative speech] is metaphor: but what exactly is that? I am sure I don't know, but the most promising account I have seen is Ken Walton's in terms of prop- oriented make-believe." Yablo (2000, p. 291). In addition, Yablo repeatedly talks of "metaphorical make-believe".

[v] According to Walton (1990, chapter 11), those who use negative existential sentences are alluding to a pretense, though not themselves pretending. I intend the use of my term "involve" to include this kind of account.

[vi] The account I describe is inspired by the ingenious and influential accounts of negative existentials in Walton (1990, chapter 11) and Evans (1982, chapter 10). However, each of these two accounts differs in details from the one I present, which is simply for purposes of illustration.

[vii] As Evans (1982, p. 369) puts it, "The audience must be engaged, or be prepared to engage, in the make-believe, in order to understand [what is said]."

[viii] I am not absolutely confident that Walton's account of negative existentials centrally involves a principle of generation like this. However, at times, Walton certainly writes as if it does. For example, "It is fictional that I speak truly in saying 'N doesn't exist' if N-ish attempts to refer fail, for whatever reason." (Walton (2000, p. 84)).

[ix] For a development of a worry along similar lines, cf. Szabo (forthcoming).

[x] For a brief discussion of the complexity lurking behind even these apparently simple principles of generation, cf. Gendler (2000, pp. 69-70).

[xi] Cf. Evans (1982, 358-60) on the distinction between "existentially conservative" versus "existentially creative" games of make-believe. Non-analogical principles of generation are the norm in the latter case.

[xii] This worry is due to Terry Horgan, who raised it in the question session of the 2000 Eastern Division APA symposium on pretense, where portions of this paper were presented.

[xiii] Walton (1990, p. 400) is clear that what someone asserts in a case of pretense does not concern her words or her linguistic actions. This is consistent with the view considered here, since Walton's notion of what is asserted by an utterance, on this view, is what is communicated by an utterance, rather than what is expressed. Nevertheless, Walton's reasons for not adopting the view about assertion are equally reasons for not adopting this view about what is expressed.

[xiv] Note that it is useless to appeal to scope over a modal operator to evade this objection, since there is no modal operator in the first sentence of (2). See Stanley (1997, section 6) for an elaboration of this point.

[xv] Hills (1997, p. 127) considers Grice's example of a professor writing a recommendation letter for a student for a philosophy post, who writes only 'Mr. X is punctual and has beautiful handwriting'. In this case, what is pragmatically communicated (but not expressed) is that Mr. X is not a good philosopher. But, as Hills notes, one cannot in this case follow the sentence by 'No he doesn't', and thereby assert that Mr. X is indeed a good philosopher. The ellipsis is sensitive only to what is expressed, not to what is pragmatically communicated. But in the case of 'Juliet is the sun', one can follow this with 'No she isn't', and thereby deny the 'literal' paraphrase.

[xvi] Furthermore, as I have mentioned in a previous footnote, at least one hermeneutic fictionalist, Stephen Yablo, finds the pretense account of metaphor the most promising account available.

[xvii] I am particularly indebted to discussion with David Velleman in this last paragraph.

[xviii] Velleman (2000) persuasively argues that pretending and believing are two species of the same psychological genus, distinguished chiefly by the truth-directedness of the latter. Velleman's view seems to gain support from the literature in psychology on 'theory of mind', that postulates a domain specific "theory of mind mechanism" that explains our grasp both of pretending and believing (e.g. Leslie (1994)).

[xix] Yablo (2000, p. 298) is aware of this point, and defends it via the surprising claim that whether or not we are speaking figuratively "…is very often unconscious, and resistant to being brought to consciousness."

[xx] Of course, there are many reasons for doubting very strong versions of first-person authority theses. For a useful (though not exhaustive) list of various first-person authority theses (in varying degrees of strength), see Alston (1971).

[xxi] Thanks again to David Velleman for discussion here.

[xxii] I owe this reply to Tamar Gendler.

[xxiii] Thanks to Jeff King for discussion here.

[xxiv] If one wanted to continue to pursue the line that the correct semantic theory for a bit of discourse does not reveal its ontological commitments, one would have to appeal to something like the "non-Quinean quantifiers" of Hofweber (2000). But if one has this sort of powerful machinery aboard, the need for a hermeneutic fictionalist analysis is obviated.

[xxv] Yablo's use of "on the face of it" would seem to suggest otherwise – that all that is required to motivate the claim that these sentences are in fact metaphors is that "on the face of it" they commit us to metaphysical absurdities. But surely this is incorrect. They need to be treated as metaphors only if treating them literally commits us to metaphysical absurdities. But treating them literally does not mean taking someone's subjective view of their "face-value" treatment to be the actual correct semantics. Treating them literally

means taking them as expressing what the best semantics says they express. Thanks to Zoltan Szabo for discussion here.

[xxvi] To give just one example, if we treat "the number of Democrats" as a function from times to numbers, and 'rise' as a predicate true of such functions (such a function is 'rising' just in case it has yielded greater and greater values over time), we obtain a perfectly smooth semantic account of such sentences. In fact, Montague (1974, pp. 267-8) famously maintained that such examples motivate a uniform intensional treatment of noun-phrases.

[xxvii] More reputable arguments of this form are discussed in Section III.

[xxviii] Various versions of this argument appear elsewhere, e.g. Hornstein (1984, p. 58).

[xxix] I should add that Melia does not himself explicitly endorse a pretense account of "average"; his point is rather to make the weaker point that "We should not always believe in the entities our best theory quantifies over." (Melia (1995, p. 229)). But Melia's arguments are nevertheless grist for the hermeneutic fictionalist's mill. In both Yablo (1998) and Yablo (2000), Melia's discussion of "average" is used to make a case for hermeneutic fictionalism.

[xxx] There is a second problem Melia raises for this paraphrase of (4), namely that it commits one to the existence of numbers. According to Melia, the only way to paraphrase (3) without committing oneself to numbers is via an infinite disjunction ('either there are n mothers and m offspring, or there are j mothers and k offspring…"). I will not discuss this in what follows.

[xxxi] Constructions such as (5) involve a hidden generic quantifier; their logical form is roughly 'Gen x (Fx → Gx)'. For an introduction to the 'Gen' operator, cf. Krifka et.al. (1995). Also, see Graff (forthcoming) for a theory of definite descriptions that seems to fit smoothly with the facts about 'the average N'.

[xxxii] Delia Graff has suggested to me that there may be a third use of "average" that is neither adverbial nor predicative. On this use, "the average N" means "more than half the Ns". I am somewhat skeptical whether this is a distinct use of "average", and will not discuss it in what follows.

[xxxiii] Even if (contra Melia) (6) is an appropriate paraphrase of (3), there is reason to reject a general adverbial paraphrase approach. As Carlson and Pelletier (2000) point out, there are adverbial uses of "average" that are resistant to such paraphrase, as in "The average basketball player is taller than the average jockey."

[xxxiv] Like many judgements of deviance, the deviance here can be overcome by the use of contrastive stress. So, without stress, (7b) and (8b) are clearly deviant. But with stress, they become acceptable (e.g. "The *conservative* average American has 2.3 children, not the liberal average American").

[xxxv] Thanks to Rich Thomason for *all* of the insights in this paragraph. Richard Heck has pointed out to me another significant difference between "the tallest N" and "the average N" (on its adverbial usage). "The student in my class who is tallest is from New Jersey" is fine, but the "The American who is average has 2.3 children" is decidedly not.

[xxxvi] Ludlow (1999, p. 174) discusses an argument that takes the fact that it is possible for "the average man" to license anaphora as evidence for the claim that the semantic function of "the average man" is to pick out an entity in the world. The example Ludlow cites (crediting Chomsky (p.c.)) is "Your report on the average family neglects to mention that it has 2.3 children." However, this argument presupposes that anaphoric

pronouns are either bound variables or referring expressions. But this presupposition is simply false (cf. Neale (1990, pp. 176-8) for discussion). In this example, "it" is functioning as a pronoun of laziness, in the sense of Geach (1980, pp. 151ff.). This occurrence of "it" simply abbreviates the definite description "the average family".

[xxxvii] For a detailed criticism of many of Crimmins' central points, see Mark Richard (2000).

[xxxviii] Counterpart theorists may dissent from this claim, since the postulates governing counterpart theory in Lewis (1968) are explicitly intended to allow for the possibility that one object can have two counterparts in another world.

[xxxix] I am particularly indebted to discussion with Jeff King in the following four paragraphs, as well as to the excellent discussion in Richard (2000, pp. 218-20).

[xl] This second example is due to Jeff King.

[xli] These very same worries of course arise for Crimmins' analysis of belief ascription. Why is "John believes that Hesperus is Phosphorus, and hence that they are distinct" always infelicitous? Richard (2000, pp. 219-20) also argues that Crimmins' pretense account has difficulties with factive attitudes.

[xlii] Here is another possible response. Perhaps the discourse is odd, because it's part of the pretense that Hesperus and Phosphorus are two planets, and it is odd for pragmatic reasons to mention explicitly rules of generation. But this can't be correct. Suppose we're playing Cowboys and Indians, and Billy has been designated as an Indian. Whereas it may be odd to point at Billy and say, "He's an Indian", it's clearly not false. But the discourses in (18) are clearly false.

[xliii] Simply use variables, as in "Whenever x and y are identical, then whenever x has a property, y has that property".

[xliv] James Woodbridge (ms.) uses this point to make a distinction between what he calls "intrinsic" pretense and "extrinsic" pretense. Intrinsic pretense is the pretense involved in a discourse that employs expressions that do not have literal uses.

[xlv] Interestingly, Walton's point does not generalize to discourses discussed by other hermeneutic fictionalists. For example, a grasp of "there are at least two prime numbers" does seem to require a grasp of the literal meaning of "two", which, according to the hermeneutic fictionalist about arithmetic, appears in a construction like "Two apples are on the table". So, Walton's way out of the incredulous stare objection is not open to the hermeneutic fictionalist about arithmetic.

[xlvi] I am once again indebted to discussion with Jeff King in the next three paragraphs. The examples in (19) are his.

[xlvii] Allan Gibbard has suggested to me that sentences somewhat like (19) are felicitous, as in "Zeus is too powerful to exist". I certainly have no account of the semantics of sentences like this. However, this sentence is not analogous to any of the sentences in (19). The infinitive "to exist" introduces a modal element which is lacking in the sentences in (19).

[xlviii] The occurrence of "it" in (20) is a lazy pronoun in the sense of Geach (1980), which is shorthand for "the fountain of youth".

[xlix] This account bears certain similarities to Evans' view of singular negative existentials. According to Evans, singular negative existential sentences contain a covert 'really' operator, whose semantics is taken relative to a contextually salient pretense. Modal

existence statements, in contrast, do not involve this operator. But I am not completely certain which of the following objections are also objections to Evans' account.

[l] Kroon (2000, footnote 107) recognizes the point, but does not bring out its implications.

[li] Walton (2000, p. 87) comes the closest of anyone in this literature to recognizing that a pretense account of idioms has few advantages over an account that doesn't appeal to pretense. After giving a list of idioms, Walton (Ibid.) writes, "These are familiar ways of saying things that, otherwise, have little, if any, salient connection with the standard literal meanings of the words used. One would be hard pressed to predict the idiomatic use of these sentences simply from the literal meanings and the context of utterance. Speakers must simply learn that pretending to assert that someone fixed someone's wagon, or pretending to assert this using these words, is, in English, a way of saying that the first person did the second one in…" But this account has no advantage over an account that bypasses pretense altogether.

[lii] I have been influenced in what follows by Nunberg, Sag, and Wasow's important (1994).

[liii] Higginbotham (1985) claims that "average" in (1) also has an adverbial reading. That is, according to Higginbotham, (1) has a reading roughly that can be paraphrased as "On average, men are worried about their falling incomes". On this reading, even Bill Gates is relevant to the truth of the proposition expressed. I seriously doubt that (1) has a reading where Bill Gates' financial concerns are relevant to its truth, and I think that subsequent discussions of the semantics of "average" , such as Carlson and Pelletier (2000), suffer from the adoption of Higginbotham's mistaken intuition.

[liv] There is a rather sizeable literature on the metaphysics of scales. For a classical discussion of this important topic, cf. Cresswell (1976, esp. pp. 280-285); for a recent discussion, cf. Kennedy (2000).

[lv] I am neutral on whether the presence of a measure-phrase is required to make a measure salient, or whether a measure can be made salient by the non-linguistic context (though see below).

[lvi] Taking degrees to be points on a scale rather than intervals on a scale is controversial (cf. Kennedy (2000)). A variant of the semantics presented here can be given for views that takes degrees to be intervals.

[lvii] There is a complication here, due to the fact that on Kennedy's account one and the same scale can be associated with different functions from objects to points on it. This allows, e.g., "long" and "wide" to denote different functions from objects to the same scale, yet impose different orderings on their domains (cf. Kennedy (1997, p. 100)). So, strictly speaking, the denotation of '∅' is only determined in part by the contextually salient scale; there is a further contextual factor that determines which kinds of measure functions are its values.

[lviii] The fact that 'average' operates on the measure function allows a smooth treatment of sentences such as "The average grade was 82", which would not be given the correct treatment if 'average' operated only on the set of values of the measure function.

[lix] From Kennedy (1997, Chapter 2), with 'ABS' replaced by 'Equal'.

[lx] There are two problems remaining to be solved on this account of adverbial "average". The first involves sentences such as "The average mother has 2.3 children and is five foot two inches tall". The second is that, as Mark Richard pointed out to me, if the average height of Canadians is the same as the average height of US citizens, it appears that the

account predicts that there can be a true utterance of "The average Canadian is identical to the average American". In forthcoming work, I treat both of these concerns in detail.

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