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What's the story?

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Story Competence

People often ask each other "what happens" in a novel or film, and they are inclined to think that some answers are better than others. Some claims about what happens in a story are deemed inaccurate or false, while others are the object of a fairly widespread consensus. The fact that a statement about a narrative discourse is deemed accurate does not mean that it will or should be accepted as an adequate statement about the story told in the discourse. If someone asks me what just happened in a movie, even the most perfect description of the cuts and camera angles will be deemed irrelevant.

It would seem, then, that one component of a fairly widespread type of literary expertise is the ability to make appropriate inferences about what does and does not happen in stories related by fictional, narrative discourses.[1] I shall call this expertise story competence, and I want to propose that it can be modelled in part as the application of two kinds of heuristics, which I shall call the rationality and intentional heuristic

Story competence is partly a matter of what Joseph Magliano, Arthur Graesser and others have referred to as the "on-line" generation of inferences. The reader's immediate or quasi-immediate processing of a text is a necessary part of literary experience, but it does not alone constitute a self-sufficient ad adequate form of expertise. Students and critics alike normally get a chance to think it over before they decide what they take a text, or some aspect of a text, to mean. Literary competence involve some automatic processes of punctual, "on-line" comprehension, but it also requires the ability to make and evaluate the right sorts of deliberative inferences and judgements, including interpretive decisions based on close scrutiny of, and meditation over, passages in a work that readers have already read one or more times.

One good reason why our literary practices and standards involve reflective, deliberative inferences runs as follows. Readers cannot possibly make all of the inferences that follow validly from a text's most explicit propositions (those rendered when the text-token is interpreted literally and standardly in terms of the language[s] in which it was written). Time and cognitive resources are scarce, and the number of valid inferences is in principle infinite (just think of the trivially true conjunctions and disjunctions that follow from even a small number of propositions).[2] Limiting expertise to the inferences made on the spur of the moment places a rather severe restriction on

what readers can reasonably be expected to come up with, yet our literary practices and aesthetic norms require readers to produce complex and detailed understandings of literary works, including intelligent and well-informed statements about what happens in the story told in a work. Research into immediate comprehension is valuable, but it cannot answer all of our questions about literary expertise, if only because the literary expert is still "on-line" even after the text has been read.

The Rationality Heuristic

In arguing that at least some groups of readers have a basic story competence in common, I am sure to strike a familiar chord, for there has been a lot of work in this general area over the past two decades. Although I am not advocating a return to any one of the earliest story grammars, I think it important to retain some of their insights.[3] Unlike many literary treatments of narrative, these models assumed that action (goal-oriented problem-solving behavior), is central to stories. Various hypotheses have been advanced concerning the schemata and frames necessary to making sense of a story.[4] Along these lines, I propose that readers must apply a very general "rationality heuristic" in order to understand a story. This does not mean that readers ask themselves whether the characters in a story are rational or not--a thematic topic that would often yield a negative answer. Applying the rationality heuristic means, first of all, that the reader focuses his or her attention on those statements in the text that describe agents and their actions. Once these have been identified, the reader tries to find meaningful, purposeful relations between the characters' actions and the intentional attitudes, such as beliefs, desires, and emotions, that explain them.

Take, for example, the first few lines of Emile Zola's novel, L'assommoir:

> Gervaise had waited for Lantier until two o'clock in the morning. Shivering from having stood at the window in her night shirt in the cool air, she finally dozed off, thrown across the bed, feverish, her cheeks wet with tears. For eight days in a row now, when they left the Veau a Deux Totes where they had dinner together, he had sent her home with the children, only coming home in the middle of the night, saying he'd been out looking for work.

To make sense of the story begun with this passage, the reader has to rely not only on what the lines explicitly say, but also on a number of other unstated premises. Lantier's behavior is contrasted, for example, to a more typical pattern of not keeping someone up waiting until two in the morning. Gervaise's tears and waiting up late, even at the expense of her health, indicate, but do not directly state, her serious concern, which in turn only makes sense on the unspoken assumption that she does not like being left alone like this and is concerned about Lantier's nocturnal activities. The text explicitly informs us that Gervaise waits for Lantier, and readers may infer that she misses Lantier or is worried about him. The text tells us that Lantier says he has been

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out looking for work, but we are likely to infer that this is a falsehood and that he has business of his own that he does want to tell her about. Like Gervaise, readers may become curious to know what Lantier is up to, and will keep an eye out for more evidence concerning Lantier's motivation as they continue reading.

Story competence is in part, then, a matter of applying the rationality heuristic successfully in order to explain why agents do what they do in a story. This kind of emphasis on goal-related inferences is common in the literature. But work on story comprehension, ranging from early "story grammar models" to more recent modelling strategies, has often failed to underscore the differences between fictional and non-fictional narratives. If we are interested in readers' inferences and related norms, we should note that the differences between fiction and non-fiction can be very important, especially with regard to the reader's choice of appropriate background beliefs in generating inferences about a story's "implicit content," or what philosophers have dubbed the problem of "truth in fiction." I shall focus on this issue in what follows.

Truth in Fiction

It may be useful to begin with David Lewis's highly influential semantic account of "truth in fiction." According to Lewis, statements about what is true in a fiction can be analyzed as counterfactual statements, which means we consider what would be true if a story were told as known fact. Statements about what is the case in a fictional story, then, are to be viewed as abbreviations of longer sentences beginning with an operator, "In the fiction f... " Inferences only go through validly when based on sentences having the same prefixed operator. A prefixed sentence to the effect that Sherlock Holmes shook hands with Gladstone does not entail the nonprefixed sentence that (the actual) Gladstone had his hand shaken by Holmes. When, in interpreting a fiction, we draw upon background beliefs not directly reported in the fiction, we are implicitly attaching the fictional operator to these propositions, just as in reasoning about counterfactual situations, we make a selective use of factual premises, departing from actuality enough to describe a possible world where the counterfactual supposition is true, while holding constant those features of actuality that do not have to be changed to make the supposition true.[5]

Lewis's semantic account of truth in fiction is highly useful, but suffers from some basic problems. One problem has to do with his assumption that "Truth in a given fiction is closed under implication" (264), an assumption that follows from the basic idea that truth in fiction can be conceived along the lines of truth in a possible world. But a fictional discourse cannot determine a unique possible world, for the simple reason that a plurality of such worlds will be compatible with the propositions in any given fictional discourse. What is more, it is psychologically unrealistic to assume that a reader can construct a complete, possible world on the basis of a

fictional discourse; in regard to any given proposition, p, the reader must either believe p true or believe p false in the "fictional world." Readers cannot and should not be expected to form such extensive and irrelevant beliefs on the basis of the fictions they read, and such promiscuous inferential activities have nothing to do with prevalent forms of literary expertise.

Lewis recognizes that sentences prefixed with a fictional operator do not suffice to pick out a unique world, and in response to the special problem of the reference of proper names in fiction, he allows that "a fiction is a story told by a storyteller on a particular occasion" (265). Whether all fictions are stories is a point to which I shall return below, but note for now Lewis's recognition of the importance of viewing fictions not as strings of sentences having a special operator, but as acts of fiction making or story-telling. In other words, a pragmatic perspective on fiction is required.[6] As Lewis puts it, "Different acts of storytelling, different fictions" (265).

No one pragmatic account of fiction currently holds sway, but I think it safe to assume that the fiction/non-fiction distinction can usefully be described in terms of a special type of illocutionary force, which is determined, like all other types of illocutionary acts, by the kind of communicative intention that governs it. The intention in question is called "make-believe" and belongs in our commonsense psychology, alongside such propositional attitudes as belief and desire. Gregory Currie's account in The Nature of Fiction is the best I know of, and in what follows I shall adopt it with one minor revision.[7]

In Currie's pragmatic approach, the author of fiction has a reflexive (Gricean) communicative intention that the audience adopt an attitude of make-believe toward the propositions of the fictional work. Currie proposes that a work is fiction just in case it is the product of a fictive intent.[8] Currie defines the speaker's fictive intent as follows:

> A speaker, U, intends his or her utterance or work, W, to have some publicly available features and believes that members of a target audience have certain characteristics; let x be a variable ranging over the work's features, and let y be a variable ranging over the target audience members' characteristics.

> U's utterance or display of W is fictive if there is an x such that U utters W intending that anyone who has y will:
> (1) recognize that W has x;
> (2) recognize that W is intended by U to have x;
> (3) recognize that U intends the audience to make believe that p, for some proposition p.
> (4) make believe that p. U further intends that:
> (5) (2) will be a reason for (3);

(6) (3) will be a reason for (4).

Within this intentionalist framework for distinguishing between fictional and non-fictional works, Currie defends a particular, quasi-intentionalist manner of analyzing truth in fiction. I will return to this aspect of his proposal below.

The Reality Principle

First, however, it is necessary to return to another problematic issue raised by Lewis's analysis, namely, his considerations regarding the problem of the selection of relevant background beliefs in the comprehension of fictional discourse. Lewis delineates two different principles or "analyses" for the selection of background beliefs. The first is a matter of assuming that what happens in a fictional story is as close as possible to what we take the actual world to be, once adjustments are made for the text's explicit counterfactual statements. Kendall Walton has subsequently dubbed this "the Reality Principle." This is the principle that is being taken for granted when models of story comprehension assume that readers rely on aspects of their world knowledge. But the Reality Principle does not in fact describe our story competence because it warrants too many incompetent and inappropriate inferences. For example, in "The Purloined Letter," Poe's narrator tells us explicitly that Dupin and his associate frequently indulge in smoking tobacco, but it is wrong to infer, on the basis of our current medical knowledge, that the characters in Poe's tale were thereby increasing their chances of getting cancer, even though such an inference does follow validly from the text's propositions and our world knowledge.

Lewis's other proposal is what Walton has later called the "Mutual Belief Principle," which holds that the appropriate beliefs are those that were mutually believed in the author's community. This principle has the modest virtue of ruling out some irrelevant inferences; for example, it eliminates the inference about smoking causing cancer because there was no such overt or mutual belief in Poe's community. But again there are too many counterexamples-important inferences that this principle will not yield, and plenty of inappropriate ones that it warrants. The stories told in the Icelandic sagas often implicitly rely on archaic beliefs that were no longer mutually believed in the 13th-century Christian society where these sagas were initially written and read. We do not appropriately flesh out stories by such writers as Stanislaw Lem and Jorge-Luis Borges by turning exclusively to the beliefs held in their communities, nor even to the mutual belief system of an international literary community, if such a thing could be plausibly held to exist.

For example, in a short story by Borges, "The Secret Miracle," the reader has to assume that an omnipotent divinity answers a condemned man's prayer and freezes the physical universe for an entire year so that he can have time to finish the composition of a dramatic poem. The instant the

poem is complete, God unfreezes the universe and the firing squad puts the man to death. These assumptions about God's activities do not figure in readers' world knowledge, but they are nonetheless required to make sense of the story. Beliefs about an omnipotent God performing secret miracles are not part of the official community of international literati to whom Borges addresses his story, nor are the pertinent beliefs those of the Catholic church in Argentina or elsewhere. The story's theological assumptions are idiosyncratic.

In response to the limitations of Lewis's two analyses, Currie has proposed an alternative. According to him, what readers must rely on while drawing inferences about truth in fiction is the text plus what they take to be the implied author's beliefs, where the implied author is the fictional entity for whom what happens in the story is a matter of known fact. If the implied author believes that God performs secret miracles, then the reader can base inferences about what happens in the story on that belief.

Currie's proposal has the advantage of ruling out a lot of irrelevant beliefs that figure in the author's and reader's community. But it still does not solve the more general problem. The trouble with Currie's analysis is that it suffers from a crippling circularity. It tells us that in order to find out which beliefs are pertinent in determining fictional truth, we should refer to the beliefs of a construct known as the implied author. But how do we know what beliefs to attribute to the implied author? Using the text as a guide, we have to try to build a portrait of the particular belief system of the implied author. Currie grants that we cannot be realists about this belief system, since the implied author, and hence his beliefs, do not really exist. All we can assume is that the implied author believes as fact what is true in the fiction. Yet figuring out what is true in the fiction was our problem to begin with, and it is not solved if we have to rely on a notion of the implied author's beliefs, which in turn depends on what is true in the fiction. The idea of the implied author's beliefs only gives us another name for the result we are after, not any new principles for arriving at that result. In fact, Currie says that the way to find out what the implied author's beliefs are is to start with what was reciprocally believed in the real author's community, and only deviate from these beliefs when something explicit in the text contradicts them.

Currie is right, I think, to want to rule out unlimited adoptions of the writer's community's mutual belief system, which includes too many irrelevant beliefs and not all of those that are needed. Currie is also right in saying that we cannot make all of the real author's beliefs-nor even the reader's beliefs about the latter-the extra-textual basis of inferences about story content: Borges need not have believed in God's secret miracles to write a story in which assumptions about them have a crucial role, and many of Borges's other beliefs-including his beliefs about literature should not be used to make inferences about what happens in the story. It is clear that people tell fictional stories about events that they themselves deem unreal and even impossible. We also know that

when devising their fictions, storytellers sometimes work with beliefs they are aware of but do not sincerely hold.

Where else, then, may we turn in search of principles that effectively guide readers in judging what literally happens in a story?9 The reader's ideas about the genre to which a narrative belongs is one place to look. Once we are convinced that the text we are reading is a gothic novel, for example, we set aside aspects of our actual world view and work with the kinds of ideas, such as supernatural notions of causality, that we associate with this type of fiction. Decisions about genre, then, seem to contribute to story competence, but we have to say how a reader makes such a decision in the first place, and it is dubious to assume that the text's intrinsic features suffice. The reader's decision about a work's genre often depends on notions about the author's intentions, just as in everyday communication, decisions about irony, joking, and the like are not based on the text alone but require reference to the speaker's likely aims and intentions. What is more, generic concepts cannot explain the reader's ability to make judgements about what is happening in non-standard and hybrid narratives; we need to know how generic expectations and norms get established in the first place.

It may very well be that there are no general principles governing judgements concerning truth in fiction. Truth in the story, however, may be more constrained. In what follows, I propose some principles governing story content, which I take to be a subset of what is true in a fiction, namely, the subset of propositions having to do with the attitudes and actions of the agents, and the relevant consequences thereof. Not all fictions necessarily tell stories: one can easily imagine a scientist amusing his friends by elaborating a fictional description of some physico-chemical process devoid of goals, attitudes, and purposive activity. And not every truth about a fiction is a truth about the story it tells, when it does tell one.

The intuitive border between story and non-story discourses probably is not a sharp one, but there is some evidence to suggest that descriptions of the problem-solving actions of at least one animate agent is a minimal, necessary condition. There is also some--but certainly no conclusive--evidence in support of the idea that judgements about what makes a good story require not only the description of goal-directed activity, but obstacles to its success.10 Many people do not think of descriptions of routine problem-solving as stories. These assumptions about what is and is not part of a story in turn explain the central role of the rationality heuristic in story competence.

But the rationality heuristic alone cannot answer all questions about a story's contents, partly because it is neutral in regard to certain assumptions concerning physical and/or supernatural modes of causation and contingency, i.e. decisions about those event types that fall outside the sphere of action descriptions. The rationality heuristic can lead me to the inference that a certain

character wants to achieve a certain goal and has acted on that intention, and I may also infer that the desired state of affairs has been realized. Yet the rationality heuristic cannot tell me whether the action succeeds by means of implicit supernatural causation or merely by coincidence, or some other means. Only by selecting a framework of background beliefs can I decide such an issue, which in turn makes an important difference to my judgements about what happens in the story.

The Intentional Heuristic

In this regard, the hypothesis that I want to explore is that another type of heuristic guides the readers' choice of appropriate background beliefs, namely, an "intentional heuristic" that involves a search for those beliefs that the text's author or authors intended readers to adopt in making sense of the story. This heuristic instructs readers to make inferences about implicit causal connections, about instruments, states, and processes, not by obeying the Reality Principle or by activating entire belief systems of bygone or alien communities, but by thinking about the aims of the storyteller. My proposal is that in determining what happens in a story, competent readers are guided, not by all of the beliefs they have good reason to think the author had, but only by a subset of the latter, namely, those beliefs the author of the work effectively intended his or her target audience to employ in understanding the story. The concept of intention that figures in this proposal is not the vague notion that has plagued literary discussions of intentionalism; effective intentions are not necessarily conscious, nor are they a matter of an author's future-directed musing about what he or she may eventually write. Instead, effective intentions have a functional role in the immediate control of action, as well as a specific semantic content, the plan or goal the intention realizes if the action is successfully executed."[11]

My hypothesis is not that readers always get an author's story-relevant intentions right; rather, the point is that they rely on assumptions about the author's relevant intentions in trying to decide which frameworks to actualize in fleshing out the story's implicit content. In the terms proposed by Graves and Frederiksen, this is a matter of saying that readers' derived "frame descriptions" are often guided by the author-discourse perspective, especially when the topic is non-agential. The intentional heuristic entails that if I think an author wanted the story's causal processes to include magic and supernaturalism, I should allow that such things literally happen in the story, even if they are not explicitly stated. Whether the author really believes in magic is a logically distinct issue. It should be clear, then, that the intentional heuristic does not make biographical criticism the key to what happens in stories, for indeed, many of an author's sincere convictions, including convictions about literature, are not appropriate premises for inferences about story content. What matters to story meaning is not the author's private beliefs, but those causally effective attitudes that were manifested in the writing or telling of the story, and more specifically, the author's attitudes concerning which beliefs readers should adopt in making sense of the fiction. Please note

that my emphasis on this intentional heuristic is not an attempt to resurrect absolutist intentionalism, the discredited idea that all meaning is speaker's meaning.[12] I defend only a moderate version of intentionalism, which holds that some, but not all, of the aesthetically relevant meanings of literary works are relational properties involving the artist's intentional action of writing or uttering the text in a context.

How do readers get their ideas about which beliefs an author would have wanted them to work with in making sense of a story's literal events? Various paths to this goal may be followed. Some readers do in fact have specific information about an author's attitudes, and these extra-textual beliefs can contribute to the determination of the meanings of the work. Knowing when and where a text was written can, for example, support a number of reliable inferences about the author's basic assumptions and aims. If, in answering questions about "The Purloined Letter," we rule out the inference about smoking causing cancer, it is because we know that Poe had no knowledge of any such causal connection; similarly, our knowledge of Poe's interest in mesmerism informs us about beliefs that are relevant to the understanding of some of his stories, such as "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar." Poe can intend for his audience to employ certain supernatural ideas while understanding a story whether or not Poe himself actually believed in these ideas; in this regard (but not necessarily in others), the reader should follow the author's lead in making sense of the story.

For example, if you ask me whether I think mesmerism can arrest the encroachments of death, holding a man's soul in a state of suspension, my response is negative. Yet I also think that this is precisely what happens in Poe's story. I don't think this about the story because I believe Poe had any deep conviction about supernatural mesmeric powers. The evidence about Poe suggests that he probably thought this kind of supernatural occurrence was an unproven possibility, but certainly not a matter of fact. Yet the way the tale is written, and other facts about Poe's life, attitudes, and authorship, lead me to think that Poe intended his readers to adopt such supernatural assumptions in reading his story, and that is what they should do.[13]

Sometimes readers' inferences about the author's story-relevant intentions involve reference to a conception of the genre of work the author is thought to have had in view; on other occasions, readers work with a highly schematic, "default" conception of an unknown author's likely aims and interests. Readers then can tentatively "fill in" or project the author's intentions by supplying what they take to be an historical and context relevant variety of background belief. Often the reader simply works with those beliefs any author can be expected to deem relevant to the comprehension of a story. For example, anyone who undertakes to tell a story must want the readers to work with a number of basic assumptions about agency and intentionality, and indeed our reliance on what I have called the rationality heuristics a case in point.

There are interesting cases in which the rationality heuristic and the intentional heuristic seem to stand in contradiction, e.g. cases in which the author seems to promote a naturalist-reductionist view of human behavior. At times it seems that such authors as Zola and Dreiser may have wanted their readers to understand their novels as illustrations of determinist doctrines, in which case applying the rationality heuristic could seem inappropriate in light of the intentional heuristic. Yet in fact such intentions were not consistently realized by these authors, who after all wrote novels focusing on the intentional states and purposive actions of the characters. Readers are thus warranted in relying on the rationality heuristic in making sense of what happens in the stories told by naturalist writers. If prevalent assumptions about basic story elements are right, then an author cannot realize the goal of telling a story that could be successfully understood without any reliance on the rationality heuristic.

To recapitulate my hypothesis, then, I propose that story competence is a matter of making sound inferences about what happens in the story told by a narrative discourse. To that end, the reader bases inferences on the set of propositions explicitly presented in the text, plus propositions yielded by two heuristics, namely:

The Intentional Heuristic. In determining what is true in a story, the reader should work with the set of beliefs that he or she has good reason to believe the author intended his or her target audience to adopt in understanding the story

The Rationality Heuristic. In determining what is true in a story, the reader should focus on the propositions describing agents, their actions, and the consequences of these actions. The reader should try to understand the agents' actions in terms of attitudes that explain them; for example, given an action, the reader fills in reasons (desires, beliefs, intentions, etc.) that would make the action subjectively meaningful to the agent.

The Aesthetic and Polyvalence Conventions

I should conclude by saying that readers who perform well in terms of story competence can disagree on any number of other issues concerning the same narrative; they may, for example, have sharply divergent views concerning its deeper themes and moral and aesthetic value. It follows, I think, that my hypothesis about story competence does not contradict the hypothesis that literary expertise is governed by two basic macro-conventions, namely, the aesthetic and polyvalence conventions as they have been delineated by Siegfried Schmidt. Briefly, the aesthetic macro-convention dictates that actions undertaken with reference to literary texts should not be governed by norms of veracity and utility, but should be oriented instead towards a properly poetic or literary type of relevance, beginning with the concept of fiction. The polyvalence

convention entails in turn that participants in the literary system are free to optimize their own text-oriented activities and need not seek to contribute to the formation of an interpretive or evaluative consensus.[13]

These two conventions are compatible with the existence of binding norms of story competence as long as polyvalence is not construed in an extreme manner, as in the idea that every time a reader makes an interpretive claim about a literary text he or she must recognize the legitimacy of the contradictory claim as well. Such a convention would mean, quite literally, that "anything goes" in the game of interpretation, a thesis that is not supported by some fairly central aspects of literary practices. In a more plausible reading, polyvalence can be taken to mean that the individual reader is free to, and indeed should read the same literary text in different ways at different times and in different situations. Polyvalence also means that the reader must acknowledge the legitimacy of other readers' interpretations, including some (but not all) that are not compatible with some of his or her own readings. Polyvalence, then, amounts to the acceptance of the negative hermeneutic principle, namely: there is no one, true, complete, and best interpretation of a literary work. It does not follow that literary interpretations never have logical implications for the validity or veracity of other interpretations of the same text, and with respect to the same properties or relations. The convention is compatible, then, with a concept of truth in the story that preserves standard (non-fictional) norms of validity.

NOTES

1. In focusing on literary expertise in what follows, I adopt some of the basic assumptions articulated in Graves and Frederikson, whose study identifies some key differences between expert and novice reading strategies.

2. On this issue, see Cherniak's highly persuasive arguments.

3. For a review and penetrating critique of story grammars, see Johnson-Laird.

4. See, for example, Black and Bower, Ide and V4ronis, and Seifer, Dyer, and Black.

5. For background, see Lewis's Counterfactuals.

6. This point is also made by Bach, 214-18.

7. As defining fiction is not the goal of this paper, I shall not take up various objections that may be raised against Currie's specific formulation of a speech act theoretical approach. Various pragmatic theories of fiction are compatible with the rest of my argument, which requires only the assumption that readers do effectively distinguish in many cases between fictional and non-fictional narratives, and that in doing so they are confronted with the problem of selecting background beliefs to employ as a basis in forming inferences about the story's contents.

8. Currie adds another, externalist clause to the effect that if the work is true, then it is at most accidentally true, but I shall not include it here. My experience suggests that this clause is unnecessary because the counterexamples it is designed to rule out do not in fact evoke any

9. One could, of course, decide that there are no such principles, but such a conclusion leaves readers' inferential convergence--and the normative judgments related to them-unexplained. Walton, for example, seems to think that story comprehension does not obey any systematic principles, yet when pressed by Wilson on this point, he continues to insist on the difference between authorized and unauthorized games of make-believe and consistently refers to the "machinery of generation."

10. On this issue, see Stein.

11. For more details on this approach to intention, see Mele, and Mele and Livingston.

12. For a trenchant presentation of arguments against extreme intentionalism, see Hobbs. For additional arguments concerning the role of notions of intention in interpretive and literary theory, see Mele and Livingston, and Livingston and Mele.

13. For a more detailed discussion of this example, see my Literature and Rationality.

14. Here I am referring to the formulation given in Schmidt's Die Selbstorganisation des Sozialsystems Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert, pp.430-31. A different and more extreme version can be found in Meutsch and Schmidt, where the aestheticconvention requires agents to be "willing and able" to selct "virtually all constructible frames of reference" when interpreting a literary work (556). The latter hypothesis strikes me as psychologically unrealistic.

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