TRUTHMAKING AND FICTION*

FREDERICK W KROON

1. *Introduction*

The topic of truthmakers has attracted much attention in recent analytic metaphysics. Its central idea is clear enough: a truthmaker is whatever makes a true proposition, judgement or statement true. Thus put, what seems almost inescapable is the following general principle: 'Every truth has a truthmaker', or, on its stronger modal version, 'Necessarily, every truth has a truthmaker' (call the latter principle *Truthmaker*). For a true proposition is surely never just true as a matter of brute fact — something must make it true, and any one of the things that makes it true is a truthmaker for the proposition.

Another way to approach the idea is via the notion of correspondence truth. To quote David Armstrong (1997), "Anybody who is attracted to the Correspondence theory of truth should be drawn to the [idea of a] truthmaker. Correspondence demands a correspondent, and a correspondent for a truth is a truthmaker" (p. 14). In fact, the notion of a truthmaker is in a happy position to help out the notion of correspondence truth. The correspondence theory of truth has attracted a great deal of criticism, much of it centred on the notion of a truthmaking relation of correspondence between propositions and the world. But the modern idea of truthmaker can be spelled out without appealing to anything very problematic and without, in particular, appealing to a relation of correspondence. Officially, a truthmaker for a true proposition, judgment or statement Q is simply something whose existence entails the truth of Q.[1] On this conception, there is thus no need for the controversial idea that to every truth there exists a unique correspondent fact. The

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[1] There are two reasons why I want to be neutral about truthbearers in this paper. First, believers in truthmakers have themselves had rather different views of the nature of the relevant truthbearers. Secondly, some of the examples of truths to be discussed in this paper place the notion of true *proposition* expressed under some pressure. From now on, I shall take the relevant truthbearers to be linguistic (sentences or statements, say).

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Truthmaker Principle simply says that, necessarily, given any truth Q, there is something — perhaps more than one thing — that logically suffices for the truth of Q; that is, necessarily every truth has a truthmaker. Believers in the principle then see their main task as spelling out and defending their account of the nature of truthmakers.[2]

Earlier, I said that Truthmaker seems almost a truism. Given a truth, surely something makes it true? That something is what we call a truthmaker! But of course things are seldom this simple in philosophy. There are no doubt many propositions with philosophically unremarkable truthmakers. George W. Bush, for example, is a truthmaker for the claim that George W. Bush exists; and both Bush and you are truthmakers for the claim that some human beings exist. But to secure the general form of Truthmaker we need to be sure that there must be a truthmaking entity in the case of every truth, not just existential truths; and securing that conclusion means, among other things, being sure that the quantifier 'something' in the little argument above is genuinely objectual. In certain sorts of arguments, such an objectual interpretation would be considered problematic (cf. 'Since Pegasus doesn't exist, surely *something* doesn't exist'). Why, then, should we accept it here?

I count myself among the doubters. Although I think that truth certainly supervenes on what there is, I doubt that it must supervene on what there is in quite the way Truthmaker says. There are a number of possibilities. Some truths are true simply because of what there is in the world. Others may be true because the world lacks the thing(s) that would make them false. Yet others are true because of *how* things are in the world, but maybe not in a way that yields a new kind of truthmaker.[3] Even ordinary predications may be like this. We can agree that what makes 'George W. Bush is a Texan' true is the fact that George W. Bush has the property of being a citizen of Texas. Bush by himself, of course, does not suffice to make the statement true, since in some worlds in which he exists he is not a Texan. But this doesn't yet prove that the statement has a *fact* as truthmaker (the "fact" that Bush is a Texan), unless we have overwhelming evidence that fact-talk of this kind can only be understood as talk of a special kind of object. And I doubt that there is such evidence. (Here is a quick reason for scepticism. Consider the possible truth that there are no contingent entities whatsoever. No contingent thing can make this true in worlds where it is true, yet surely *something* makes it true in these worlds: the fact that there are no contingent things, perhaps, or the absence of any contingent thing. Unless we choose to

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[2] See, for example, Armstrong (1997), Fox (1987), Martin (1996), and Mulligan, Simons, and Smith (1984).

[3] For a classification, see Lewis (2001).

regard our target proposition as implicitly contradictory, no such "fact" can count as a separate contingent thing of some kind.)

In short, I think that we shouldn't rule out the possibility of truthmaking without truthmaking entities — truthmakers — that logically suffice for the truth of propositions. While there are nominalising constructions that seem to suggest otherwise ('the fact that ...', say), these should be approached with a degree of scepticism. I'll signal this scepticism by using the terms 'quasi-fact' and 'quasi-state of affairs' in situations where we uncritically appeal to talk of "facts" or "states of affairs" to say what makes a proposition true, but where there is no evident reason to construe such talk as genuinely objectual. If you like, "quasi-facts" are the "somethings" that feature in our little truthmaker argument once this quantifier is construed substitutionally. Absent reasons to re-inflate talk of "quasi-facts", it leaves us with a deflationary account of what makes a statement true.

Not only might there be truthmaking without truthmakers. There might also be truthmakers without truthmaking: entities that logically suffice for the truth of propositions yet don't, in the sense intended, provide the ontological grounds for their truth. Necessary truths already show this, since the notion of a truthmaker implies that anything whatsoever, contingent or necessary, is a truthmaker for a necessary truth. Both Bush and the real number π^π, for example, are truthmakers for the statement '$1 + 1 = 2$'. The official definition of 'truthmaker' thus permits entities as truthmakers for necessary truths when these have no genuine truthmaking role to play.[4] But the problem extends to contingent truths. Suppose you mow the lawns on Saturdays just because God has made sure that you have this unusual desire implanted in you. Clearly every world in which God [exists and] wants you to mow the lawns on Saturdays is a world in which you mow the lawns on Saturdays. Yet this surely doesn't mean that the state of affairs of God's wanting you to mow the lawns on Saturdays constitutes the ontological grounds for the truth that you mow the lawns on Saturdays. At best, it constitutes the *causal* grounds.

Given this broad problem of relevance ('the problem of unintended truthmakers'), it seems that more needs to be done to clarify what makes something into a truthmaking entity on the intended realist sense of that word. But I won't try to advance the debate on this topic. What I aim to do in the present paper is far more specific, although it will touch on the problem of unintended truthmakers. I shall focus on a restricted class of truths in order to see what truthmakers, if any, these might have. The truths in question involve fictions, and include both in-the-fiction truths like 'Hamlet was a prince' and extra-fictive truths concerning fictions such as 'Hamlet is

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[4] For a discussion of this problem, see Restall (1996).

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a fictional character', 'Hamlet is both pitied and admired by readers', and 'Hamlet doesn't exist'. A quick look reveals the problem. Unlike ordinary positive or negative predications, it seems that truthmakers for these truths can't involve the object they are about, since there is no Hamlet. What then makes them true? By looking at some of the curious features of such truths, I'll present two broad conclusions. First, that on just about any reasonable theory of fiction there are truthmaker candidates for claims of this kind that do not provide the ontological ground for truth (the problem of unintended truthmakers again). Secondly, that on what I take to be the most promising theory of fiction, claims of this kind are nonetheless "made true" by certain perfectly respectable (quasi-) facts — facts that explain the impression that particulars ("Hamlet") are involved but that also show why this impression is illusory.

2. *Truthmakers and objectualist accounts of fictional terms*

Consider first fictional or in-the-fiction truths like 'Hamlet was a prince' and 'Holmes lived in 221B Baker St., London'. What is it about, or in, the world that makes such claims true? The question is especially difficult because there is lack of agreement as to whether such claims are really true, or in what sense they are true. A common reaction is to say that such claims are not really true, but only true in a fictional sense; that they are not true *simpliciter*, but true in, or according to, a fictional work. Still, that doesn't explain the robustness of the simple, unprefixed way of formulating such truths (as in: 'Who can tell me something true about that famous dramatic character Hamlet?' 'He was a prince of Denmark who sought to avenge his father's death.'). And even if we decide that the fundamental locution is the prefixed locution 'It is true in work W that S', the hard work still remains to be done. What is it about the world that makes the prefixed claim 'it is true in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that Hamlet was a prince' true?

Not surprisingly, there are theories that understand the truth of such claims, whether unprefixed or prefixed, in terms of properties "possessed" by genuine fictional objects. I'll call all such accounts 'objectualist'. There are classical Meinongian theories according to which fictional objects are incomplete concrete objects that literally exemplify properties like being a prince.[5] More plausible, in my view, are theories that take fictional objects to be abstract objects of a certain kind, for example Zalta's object-theory, or the recent artifactual theory defended in detail by Thomassen (and earlier by Kripke and perhaps van Inwagen) according to which fictional objects

[5] Parsons (1980) is one influential Meinongian account of this kind.
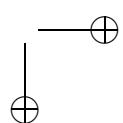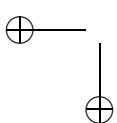
are abstract artifacts historically dependent on the activities of story-tellers.[6] These latter theories take the predication in question to be nonstandard. For Zalta, the abstract object Hamlet encodes the property of being a prince, but doesn't exemplify it; Hamlet only exemplifies properties like being a famous dramatic character, being written about by Shakespeare, and so on. For Thomassen, Hamlet is truly a fictional character, but is a prince only in the sense that this fictional Hamlet exemplifies being a prince *according to the play*. Van Inwagen similarly talks of the play's *ascribing* the property of being a prince to the character Hamlet.

Do claims like 'Hamlet is a prince' have truthmakers on such objectualist accounts? (Remember that a positive answer to the corresponding question about 'George W. Bush is a Texan' proved controversial. A positive answer seemed to require potentially problematic truthmaking entities like facts or states of affairs.) Surprisingly enough, it turns out that objectualist theories don't need to posit facts or states of affairs to play this role. All such theories — even Meinongian theories, so long as we take objecthood to be a weak form of existence — take the fictional object Hamlet to be a truthmaker for the claim that Hamlet is a prince (in whatever sense he is a prince). In all worlds in which Hamlet exists, he is, in the relevant sense, a prince; for that is a central part of the description given in *Hamlet* and a crucial feature of the creative act that gave us the play and its assorted characters.[7] Of course, it may also be a central part of this story that he is not *essentially* a prince, that he might have given up being prince when his father died, for example. On objectualist accounts, however, that is simply another property that he has according to the work; it not something that dictates that in certain alternative possible worlds it is false that Hamlet is a prince according to the work.

Should the truthmaking role of Hamlet please the believer in Truthmaker? Well, she might think that 'Hamlet is a prince' is like 'Socrates is human': the object suffices for truth since having the property is essential to the object. But note that the interdependence of linked fictional objects means that it is not only Hamlet who is a truthmaker for 'Hamlet is a prince'. So, presumably, are his mother, Polonius, Ophelia, ..., since every world in which they exist is surely a world in which Hamlet does so as well. This is perhaps clearest on Meinongian accounts and on an account like Zalta's, since these make central features of characters such as being the mother of Hamlet essential to the characters. But Thomassen's artifactual theory should agree, since it holds that Shakespeare's creation of Hamlet wasn't an isolated creation of a single character, but involved the simultaneous creation of a host

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[6] See Zalta (1988) and van Inwagen (1979). Kripke's contribution to the debate is in his unpublished John Locke lectures of 1973.

[7] See Thomasson (1999), pp. 108–111, and footnote 25, p. 163.

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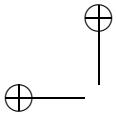
of linked characters whose very identity is linked to that of Hamlet.[8] And now my first worry about Truthmaker kicks in. Whatever the relationship between Ophelia and the truth 'Hamlet is a prince', it seems odd to say that the former provides (some of) the ontological grounds for the latter. This is not to say that there is no significant relationship between the two — there surely is a kind of relationship of necessary co-variance — but only that the relationship doesn't seem to be one of truthmaking. This seems no better than saying that Bush is a truthmaker of '$1 + 1 = 2$'.[9]

Perhaps, however, this is a conclusion we should just accept; perhaps it is simply an unexpected consequence of the idea of truthmaker when the latter is applied to an unusual domain. (I myself think our intuitive misgivings are more firmly based; that they show that we think of 'Hamlet' and 'Ophelia' as names of *people*, and that we know that people on their own don't have this kind of truthmaking ability.) More worrying, I suspect, is the idea that there is also another sort of truthmaker for 'Hamlet is a prince', namely the complex creative act on Shakespeare's part that gave rise to the play as well as the characters Hamlet, Polonius, Ophelia, etc. On the artifactual theory at least, any world containing this creative act is a world in which 'Hamlet exists' and 'Hamlet is a prince' are both true, making the creative act a truthmaker for both truths. And this conclusion does seem wrong, for a reason encountered earlier when we met the problem of unintended truthmakers. Shakespeare and his doings surely do not provide the ontological grounds for the truth of 'Hamlet exists' and 'Hamlet is a prince', but at most the causal grounds. Assuming there are such "things" as creative acts, the official definition of 'truthmaker' cannot in such cases distinguish between the ontological and the causal grounds of truth.

3. *An anti-objectualist account of fictional terms*

But such cases depend on forms of objectualism about fictional names. Is there an alternative? Probably the main argument for objectualism is the argument that statements like '[it is true in such-and-such a biographical work that] Bush is a politician' and '[it is true in *Hamlet* that] Hamlet is

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[8] Simply because the most notable properties assigned to them in the play directly involve Hamlet. See Thomassen (1999), footnote 25, p. 163.

[9] In some ways it is worse. First of all, on at least the artifactual account 'Hamlet is a prince [according to *Hamlet*]' is not a necessary truth, since Hamlet is not a necessary object. Secondly, appealing to a relation of relevant entailment is not likely to help, since we are not denying that there is a deep and relevant connection between Ophelia and the truth 'Hamlet is a prince'.
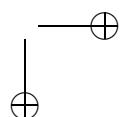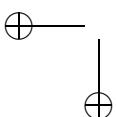
a prince' appear to be on a semantic par and so should be treated as being equally about objects. This argument is usually supplemented with other data that suggest that 'Hamlet' is just as much a name as 'Bush'. 'Bush exists' and 'Hamlet doesn't exist' both seem to be predications, for example, the first affirmative, the second negative. Similarly, 'Bush is a real person' seems to characterise Bush just as much as 'Hamlet is a fictional character' characterises Hamlet.

But there is a way of acknowledging the name-like behaviour of 'Hamlet' without accepting that 'Hamlet' is an actual name for a fictional object. We might simply insist that it is fictionally true rather than really true that an expression like 'Hamlet' is a name. Assuming something like the theory of direct reference for names, this means that it is [only] fictionally true — true in the story — that 'Hamlet' fulfils the semantic role of a name and directly designates some individual. From the point of view of the story, 'Hamlet' is a perfectly standard sort of name, standing for a perfectly ordinary sort of object; in reality, however, it isn't. This yields another and quite different sense in which sentences like 'Bush is a politician' and 'Hamlet is a prince' are semantically on a par and are equally "about objects".

But what sense can we make of the claim that 'Hamlet' is only fictionally a name? The answer I prefer finds its fullest development in the work of pretense theorists like Ken Walton, but anticipations of the view are found in the work of Frege and, rather more surprisingly, Meinong. Meinong, it might be said, was a Truthmaker fanatic. He thought that every truth corresponded to an underlying state of affairs, an "objective", that had "being" just when the statement was true. Even true negative existentials like 'Hamlet doesn't exist' had a truthmaker, one which existed or had being even though it had a nonexistent object as constituent (in this case, Hamlet) But Meinong acknowledged that this view faced a serious epistemological problem: how can we possibly have any knowledge about things that "aren't there" in any sense whatsoever? How can we access the truthmakers of claims about such things? His answer was that in such cases we exploit our ability to *imagine* that they are there:

> ...in order to give a thing some thought, a person "places himself in the situation in which there is such a thing". (Meinong 1983, p. 175)

In short, we pretend that there is such an object as the golden mountain; so to pretend, of course, is to pretend that our world contains a large mass that is both golden and a mountain. That is how we get to see that the golden mountain is indeed golden and a mountain. That is also the way we get to see that Holmes lived on Baker St., or that Hamlet was a prince.[10]

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[10] This interpretation is defended in Kroon (1992).

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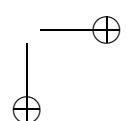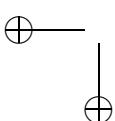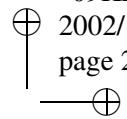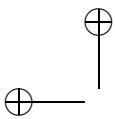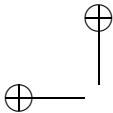
In the course of developing this view, Meinong came close to deciding that there was nothing more to talk of "objects" like the golden mountain or Hamlet than the mere *pretense* that there were such objects. But in the end he preserved talk of objects. The assuming or pretending he talks about became part of a quasi-psychological story about how we find out about certain kinds of genuine, albeit nonexistent, objects.

But there is an analogue of Meinong's story that does without special objects altogether, and in my view represents one of the most promising ways of dealing with the problem of our talk of apparently non-existing things. The view also appears, fleetingly, in Frege's work. Frege — who, unlike Meinong, was philosophically disposed against the idea of truthmakers — never fully made up his mind about the nature of fictional names. In "Sense and Reference" he thinks of them as the paradigm of an empty name. On such a construal, 'Hamlet was a prince' comes out as lacking in truth-value. Sometimes, however, he calls fictional names 'mock names', and he talks about the way sentences containing such names express "mock thoughts" rather than genuine thoughts.[11] On this perspective, those using fictional names merely act as if they are in possession of genuine names, used in the course of expressing genuine thoughts that are up for evaluation as true or false in the usual way. In reality, however, they are doing no such thing.

Like Meinong's account, this account makes crucial reference to the notion of pretending that the world has certain features that it may well not have. The 1970s saw the re-emergence of this idea, where it was interpreted by Kendall Walton in terms of the notion of a game of make-believe. On Walton's influential account, children as well as adults play games of make-believe on the basis of props that mandate that they imagine certain things.[12] Thus a children's game may require its participants to imagine that a certain oddly shaped stump is a bear, that actions done to the stump are acts against the bear, and so on. Another sort of game, indulged in by children as well as adults, involves reading / listening to a story or watching a movie, a game that requires its participants to imagine that certain events really happened (that there really was a famous detective called 'Holmes' who lived in Baker Street, for example, or that there really is a green, slimy creature approaching Charlie in some B-grade horror movie). In Walton's terminology, something is *fictional* or true in a game of make-believe when it is thus mandated to be imagined. Some such claims are truths internal to the story ('Holmes knew Watson' and the like) while others may involve the game-players themselves

[11] Frege (1979), p. 130.

[12] See Walton (1990) and Evans (1982). For an application of the pretense view to various issues in philosophical logic, see Crimmins (1998).
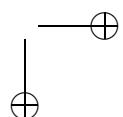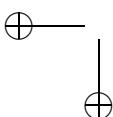
('I greatly admire Holmes' or 'We fear for Charlie', for example).[13] In children's games, of course, there is often no real distinction. Truths — or, rather, mock-truths — are largely created by what the participants do.

Now consider the claim that it is fictional that 'Hamlet' is a name. Understood in the manner described, this amounts to the claim that readers of the dramatic work *Hamlet* are to imagine that 'Hamlet' is indeed a name. In fact, it is a fundamental kind of fictional truth, one that lies at the root of many others, such as the fictional truth 'Hamlet is a prince'. Those who hear or utter statements involving 'Hamlet' are involved in an extended stretch of imaginative play — a game of make-believe — in which they are supposed to act as if the play *Hamlet* is a reliable record of actual events, one in which the name 'Hamlet' stands for a real individual. What is true about this individual is determined by features of the prop (the play), in particular the words used and the conventions used to interpret these words, but also by features of the underlying context: what is accepted as plain fact about the historical setting, for instance. That is why it is fictionally true that Hamlet is a prince of a small Scandinavian country, for example, even if this is never explicitly stated in the play. We are supposed to imagine this as fact in the shared game we play with *Hamlet*.

4. *Back to truthmakers*

What is important from the point of view of the larger ontological questions involved is the anti-realism of the pretense theory of fiction. When I remark to someone: 'Hamlet was a prince of Denmark' or 'I detest Hamlet for his treatment of Ophelia', I am speaking from the perspective of a shared game of make-believe in which I and other readers are reliably acquainted with an account of the doings and sayings of a man called 'Hamlet', whose character and deeds evoke reactions in much the same way as do the characters and deeds of historical persons. What I say is true from the perspective of this game only. There really is no person answering to the name 'Hamlet', whether a concrete Meinongian object or an abstract fictional character.

If this is so, what can we say about truthmakers for such broadly fictional claims? The first point to make is that, even if a truth like 'Charles is a prince' has a truthmaker, it is at best fictionally true that a fictional truth like

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[13] Walton holds that truths like "We fear for Charlie" are created by our reactions to the events depicted on the screen, understood from within the scope of the game of make-believe that we are playing. It is only fictionally true that we fear for Charlie as the Green Slime approaches, and what makes it fictionally true are our reactions and the implicit rule that having such reactions makes it true in the game that we experience fear. My admiring Holmes and your pitying Anna Karenina are to be understood in a similar game-bound way.

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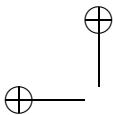
'Hamlet is a prince' has one. This is so even if we consider statements that
occur in a work of fiction and are true, not just fictionally true ('London is
a teeming metropolis', say). Such a statement may have a truthmaker, but
once we consider its status as a truth of fiction and then ask what makes it
true in that sense, we can only be asking what, *from the point of view of the
work*, makes the statement true. And if that question has an answer at all,
it can only be that it is whatever makes the statement true according to the
work, whether that is its actual truthmaker or something different.

We should be careful to distinguish this result from another one. The pre-
vious paragraph asked what makes a fictional statement true, when this ques-
tion is asked from the perspective of the game we are playing with the work.
We are not asking, from the outside as it were, what makes the statement *fic-
tionally* true. It is hard to understand this latter question in a way that gives
succour to the truthmaker programme, for it seems to be asking a causal
question: what made it the case that 'Hamlet is a prince' is a truth of fiction?
Presumably the answer to that question involves facts about the institution of
playwriting as well as the actions of the play's author, Shakespeare. By con-
trast, the question we are presently asking is supposed to be non-causal: from
the perspective of the work, or the game we are playing with the work, are
there any entities that logically suffice for the truth of the statement 'Hamlet
is a prince'? If the answer is 'yes', it will presumably invoke fictional truth-
makers; that is, entities that are truthmakers from the perspective of the work
or the game we are playing with the work.

But is it even fictionally true that a fictional truth like 'Hamlet is a prince'
has a truthmaker? That depends on what we are to count as true in a story.
David Lewis pointed out some time ago that if we analyse the notion of what
is true in a story in terms of what is true on the supposition that the story
is told as known fact, certain quite arcane claims turn out to be fictionally
true.[14] On a far more plausible analysis of truth in fiction, what is true in
a story depends on what is shared belief in the community to which the
author and the author's target audience belong; or perhaps shared belief in
the hypothetical author's community.[15] And that seems to spell the death-
knell for the idea that fictional truths have fictional truthmakers. After all,

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[14] Lewis (1979). Lewis mentions the example of psychoanalytic "truths" involving fic-
tional characters, eg the claim that Hamlet clearly had an Oedipus complex.

[15] See Lewis (1979) and Currie (1990).
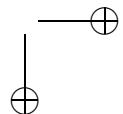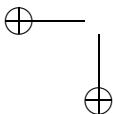
even if true statements do have truthmakers, the belief that this is so is an arcane metaphysical belief, unlikely ever to be among such shared beliefs.[16]

The matter may look rather different when we get to claims like 'It is fictionally true that Hamlet is a prince'. For this claim is surely true, not just fictionally true. But now we get to an altogether different difficulty. On the pretense account, it is only fictionally true that the name 'Hamlet' has a referent, so it is initially difficult to know what to make of the truth of 'It is fictionally true that Hamlet is a prince'. Do locutions like this offer reason to posit fictional objects after all (against the counsel of pretense theorists), and even to posit truthmakers involving fictional objects? I don't think so. In my view, claims like 'It is fictionally true that Hamlet is a prince' occur in the scope of conceptually more basic imaginings (ur-imaginings): we utter them from inside the pretense that through our use of the name 'Hamlet' we are able to secure reference to someone bearing that name. Perhaps, for example, what is imagined thereby is that a token of 'Hamlet' has its reference determined on the basis of a causal chain or network reaching back through our acquaintance with *Hamlet* (now treated as broadly historical) to a prince called 'Hamlet'; or that it has its reference determined on the basis of (a cluster of) favoured and/or weighted descriptions, say *the person I am acquainted with [through reading appropriate works] as being called 'Hamlet', being a prince of Denmark*, ..., and so on. The claim about what we are to imagine "about Hamlet" is then a claim about what we are to imagine against the background of our involvement in an ur-imagining to the effect that we have a referential fix of this kind on an individual called 'Hamlet'.

If this is right, we continue to have a way of keeping fictional objects at bay, and hence also the idea that such truths about fiction have objectualist truthmakers. But resistance may seem to become more difficult when we turn to two other categories of truths about fiction: true "characterising" claims like 'Hamlet is a fictional prince/character' and true negative existentials like 'Holmes doesn't exist'. For these seem to have the same logical grammar, and the same semantic status, as '[Prince] Charles is a bona fide prince' and 'Bush doesn't drink', say. Like the latter claims, they are genuinely true, not just true in some work of fiction, and, like the latter, they seem true in virtue of properties possessed by certain objects. They might even be made true by truthmakers involving these objects.

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[16] Of course, an author may make it quite clear that he is presupposing the truth of Truthmaker ('Armstrong looked around contentedly; his views had been confirmed, and the universe was indeed awash with universals and ...'). Any truth of that story would indeed have a (fictional) truthmaker. But this would be a rare story indeed!

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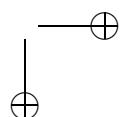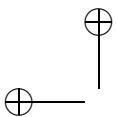
But we should continue to be cautious. As before, there appear to be un-intended truthmakers for truths belonging to this category. Given their nec-essary interdependence as objects, a fictional Ophelia and a fictional Hamlet would both be truthmakers for 'Hamlet is a fictional character' — and, in-deed, either one by itself would be a truthmaker for 'Hamlet and Ophelia are distinct fictional characters'! The same is true of the states of affairs of Hamlet's being a fictional object and Ophelia's being a fictional object. Con-trast this with the distinctive truthmaking role that a theory like Armstrong's assigns to states of affairs. For Armstrong, Prince Charles's being a prince serves as a truthmaker for 'Charles is a bona fide prince', but not for 'Edward is a bona fide prince'.

Couldn't we say instead that certain parts of the play — those that talk of Hamlet, whether or not there is mention of Ophelia — constitute the truth-maker for 'Hamlet is a fictional character', and others for 'Ophelia is a fic-tional character'? But this suggestion, as before, falls foul of the distinction between the ontological and the causal grounds for truth. Distinct parts of the play, or the creative activity underlying them, may be causally responsi-ble for the existence of the distinct fictional objects Hamlet and Ophelia, but how is this relevant to the question of the *ontological* grounds for the truth of claims like 'Hamlet is a fictional character'?

When we turn to negative existentials, the situation is even more unset-tling. According to objectualists, declaring that Hamlet doesn't exist is in effect to say that Hamlet is not a concrete existent (rather, he exists as an ab-stract object of some sort). This again means that both Hamlet and Ophelia are truthmakers for the claim. But it also means something even stranger. For objectualists, it is the presence, rather than the absence, of Hamlet, that makes the negative existential true, namely Hamlet's presence as an abstract object. I take this to be completely counterintuitive. If anything makes the claim true it is surely the *absence* of Hamlet.

Such an intuition counts against objectualism. But it also counts against the idea that 'Hamlet doesn't exist' has a truthmaker, namely the absence of Hamlet, for how, in the absence of Hamlet, can there be a bona fide state of affairs "the absence of *Hamlet*"? This feature of negative existentials is often seen as a problem for the Truthmaker Principle. David Armstrong thinks he has an answer: negative existentials have *totality facts* as truthmakers — second order states of affairs or facts according to which there is nothing more than certain first order facts.[17] But such totality facts look even more suspicious than first-order facts. They reify grammatical constructions that are arguably best left unreified, and they can't, in any case, do all that we

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[17] Armstrong (1997), pp. 134–5, 196–201. The last part of Lewis (2003) (by Lewis and Rosen) argues that counterpart theorists can take the world itself as truthmaker for negative existentials.

might expect from them.[18] (In particular, there can't be a contingent totality fact for the possibly true negative existential that there are no contingent things whatsoever.)

Pretense theorists offer the following perspective on the problem of negative existentials. As anti-objectualists, they think that Hamlet *exists in no sense whatsoever*. They point to certain other negative existentials, where it is much harder to believe there are corresponding abstract objects, including artifacts, but where exactly the same problems arise. Thus consider claims like 'That woman over there doesn't exist' (said to disabuse someone who is hallucinating that she is in the presence of another woman, say). Asked to explain what makes such a claim true, our theorist will once again point to the role of pretense. The speaker goes along with his audience's belief that there really is a woman of whom both speaker and audience are demonstratively aware, and so pretends that there is scope for the legitimate use of a demonstrative, 'that woman'.

Different pretense theorists offer different accounts of how to understand the ensuing predication that this person "doesn't exist". The best known is Kendall Walton's.[19] According to Walton, a speaker who utters "That woman doesn't exist" is involved in a game of make-believe in which she plays along with the hallucination that there is a woman and also pretends that 'exists' expresses a discriminating property that some things possess and others lack. The application-conditions for 'exists' in this game are as follows. In the game, it is to be imagined that 't exists' is true (ie, it is fictionally true that t exists) just when serious, non-pretended "t-ish" attempts at reference successfully secure reference to someone (here "t-ish" marks out a relevant kind of attempt). And it is fictionally true that its negation 't doesn't exist' is true just when genuine "t-ish" attempts at reference fail to secure reference to anyone. In particular, it is fictionally true to say 'that woman doesn't exist' if and only if all genuine, non-pretended, demonstrative attempts to single out a woman, say on the basis of a hallucination, fail to secure reference to anyone. Because a speaker involved in such a game of make-believe is interested largely in conveying whether or not the fictional-making circumstances do indeed hold, the speaker is thus able to assert that there is no woman to be demonstrated. It is this salient asserted content that we naturally assess as true or false (not just *fictionally* true or false) when considering whether a claim like 'That woman doesn't exist' is true.

On this account, what makes 'That woman doesn't exist' true (*really* true) is the fact that there is no woman to be demonstrated. Similarly, what makes

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[18] See also John Heil's "Truthmaking and entailment", this volume.

[19] Walton (1990, 2000). A different kind of pretense account is given in Kroon (2000).

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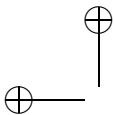
'Hamlet doesn't exist' really true is the fact that there is no man called 'Hamlet' whose tragedy is recorded in the story *Hamlet* (simply because genuine attempts to refer would have to be based on taking the story as fact, rather than just *pretending* that the story was fact). This way, then, we get distinctive ways in which distinct true negative existentials are made true.

Claims like 'Hamlet is a fictional character' go the same way as negative existentials, on the pretense account. This is all to the good, given the close link between the two. Such characterising claims are typically used to explain or elucidate negative existentials. Thus we say: 'Hamlet doesn't exist. He is a fictional character'. 'That woman doesn't exist. She is a figment of your imagination.' 'Vulcan doesn't exist. It is a failed posit of 19th century astronomy'. As before, objectualist moves seem implausible in the first example in part because they look so utterly implausible in the other examples. It is surely quite implausible to suppose that there are abstract (maybe artifactual) hallucinatory objects, needed to explain why 'That woman is a figment of your imagination' is true, for example.

The pretense theorist explains the role of such characterising claims in pretense terms. A speaker who utters a statement like 'That woman is a figment of your imagination' is involved in a game of make-believe in which she pretends that she and others are indeed demonstratively aware of a woman (hence, 'That woman ...'). She also pretends that the predicate 'a figment of your imagination' is a general term for a kind (in actual fact, it doesn't stand for a kind at all), where the application-condition for the predicate is roughly as follows: it is fictionally true that t is a figment of X's imagination just when X's thought that there is such a thing is to be explained in terms of X's imaginative but erroneous gloss on certain of her experiences. (Similarly, it is fictionally true that t is a fictional character just when the pretense that there is such an individual as t is based on pretending that a work of fiction is fact.) As before, the speaker involved in such a game of make-believe is primarily interested in conveying whether or not this fictional-making circumstance does indeed hold. This salient asserted content is what makes us hear an utterance of 'That woman is a figment of your imagination' as *really* true or false, not just *fictionally* true or false. Pretense theorists think that there is no reason why we should interpret characterising claims concerning fictions — 'Hamlet is a fictional character', for example — in any different kind of way.

On this pretense account, it is easy to see why we should see an explanatory or elucidatory link between the characterising statement and the corresponding negative existential. In no sense, it should be stressed, does the postulated link go via properties of fictional objects. Similarly, in no sense does truthmaking for either characterising or negative existential statement go via such objects. As in the case of ordinary fictional statements like 'Hamlet is a prince', it is at best *fictionally* true that statements like 'Hamlet is a fictional
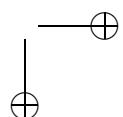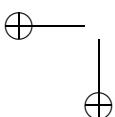
character' and 'Hamlet doesn't exist' have objectualist or object-involving truthmakers. At the level of *real* truth, such statements don't have objectualist truthmakers since there is nothing that corresponds to the fictional terms in question.

Do they have truthmakers of any sort? I remain sceptical. In my view, it is better simply to say that they are of course made true by "facts" about the world (including such "facts" as: there is no one called 'Hamlet' whose exploits are reliably recorded in the play *Hamlet*), but that there is no reason to think of these as anything more than quasi-facts. Better, that is, to accept talk of such "facts", but deny that they are the genuine referents of nominalised constructions that describe what makes the relevant statements true in the truthmaker sense. That way we can happily go along with saying that such statements are made true by "facts" about the world, while remaining sceptical that they have genuine truthmakers.

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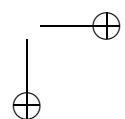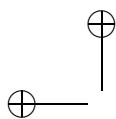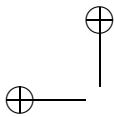
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