Real fictions: fictionality, factuality and narrative strategies in contemporary storytelling

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Real Fictions:

Fictionality, Factuality and Narrative Strategies in Contemporary Storytelling

Sam Browse, Alison Gibbons, and Mari Hatavara

Introduction[1]

"In the fiction of the future", writes Raymond Federman in the 1970s, "the distinction between the real and the imaginary, between the conscious and the subconscious, between the past and the present, between truth and untruth will be abolished" (Federman, 1981, p. 8). In the late 1990s, Marie-Laure Ryan spoke of a similar "crisis" whereby fiction dominated to the extent that non-fiction seemed less real. Certainly, in today's post-millennial and so-called "post-truth" age,

the boundary between reality and fiction seems increasingly hard to distinguish: politicians spin stories; everyday reality in (social) media is invested in live narratives; historical events are narrativized in literary texts; fantasy as a genre is more popular than ever; and new genres – such as autofiction and fanfiction – blur the boundaries between autobiography and artistic creation on the one hand and referentiality and readerly reception on the other. This post-truth sensibility reaches beyond the intentions of creators and beyond the fabric of texts, impacting the way people live their everyday lives together with and inspired by the stories that surround them. For all these reasons, stories as tools for making sense of human action in situated social realities are today more important than ever. Stories are, for example, one of the primary vehicles through which politics is articulated and debated (Andrews, 2014). In a study on a large, public deliberative forum, Polletta and Lee (2006) suggest that those who identify with minority opinions, prefer using personal stories as part of their argumentation, and so tend to get a more favorable response from those who have a different opinion. Moreover, the spread of new media affects the affordances and constraints available in interaction and interpersonal sense-making. These new media narrative forms and the hybrid ontologies of post-truth modes of storytelling in the twenty-first century make fictionality a more pressing critical concern. Stylistic and narratological tools and models must keep pace with the complexities of these narratives in order to remain relevant and to adequately elucidate their formal properties, the interpretive processes they involve, and the experiential effects they generate.

This special issue explores the theoretical and methodological consequences of post-truth modes of storytelling across a range of cultural contexts and narrative forms. In this introduction, we contextualise the contemporary post-truth zeitgeist with respect to previous narratological research and specifically link it to recent developments in the study of fictionality. The next

section provides an overview of 'post-truth' – its intellectual and journalistic origins and the political, social and cultural conditions the term designates. We then provide a historical outline of Fictionality Studies from the 1970s to the present before summarizing current debates around the distinction between fictionality and factuality and considering hybrid forms, such as refer-fictionality and cross-fictionality. Finally, we introduce the articles in this special issue.

A contemporary culture of post-truth

The term post-truth originates in Keyes' (2004) *The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life*. Keyes argued that American culture was becoming less predisposed to value truth. Spurred on by President Trump's electoral campaign and subsequent period in office, or political events such as Britain's vote to leave the European Union – both of which featured outlandish, truth-defying claims – several journalists have since published book-length accounts of the post-truth condition (Ball, 2017; D'Ancona, 2017; Davis, 2017; and McIntyre 2018), and academic research has emerged from a diversity of disciplines, including anthropology (Mair, 2017), communication studies (Hannan, 2018; Harsin, 2015, 2018), philosophy (Tallis, 2016), cognitive psychology (Lewandowsky, Ecker, & Cook, 2017; Munoz, 2017), politics (Fish, 2016) and stylistics (Browse, 2017, in press). As Browse (in press) notes, both academic and journalistic discourses on post-truth tend to converge on two broad claims: (1) that there is some change in contemporary cultures of reception that means audiences no longer invest traditional brokers of the "truth" with authority (for example, scientists and other forms of expert, journalists and traditional media organisations, 'mainstream' politicians and

political institutions); (2) that there has been a change in the journalistic or political practices of discourse production such that a rhetorical premium is no longer placed on "the truth", but the identity and emotions of the speaker. Some have suggested that these latter changes reflect a broader 'metamodern' cultural reconfiguration that is also expressed in literary and artistic production (see van den Akker, Gibbons, & Vermeulen, 2017).

Insofar as the first claim is concerned, a now familiar refrain is that a central cause of the declining authority of traditional institutions is the internet. Social media websites are governed by an "attention economy" predicated on predictive analytics (Harsin, 2015, p. 330). The algorithms which select the information with which we are presented create "filter bubbles" that link users to content which is similar to what we, or our "friends", have already read or shared (Pariser, 2011). This creates a self-reinforcing loop – an "echo chamber" – in which we are repeatedly provided with perspectives which confirm our own (cf. Lewandowsky et al., 2017). The effect is to couple our access and exposure to information with our online identities, enmeshing our conception of reality with our conception of ourselves and the social groups to which we belong. Some scholars have questioned the extent to which filter bubbles do in fact shape our beliefs and attitudes (Flaxman, Sharad, & Rao, 2016; Kelly Garrett, 2009; Prior, 2013). Others have asked whether the word 'post-truth' is "simply a rallying point for the outraged intelligentsia, one that describes nothing more than their chagrin at the fact that the wrong kinds of people are suddenly claiming authority and having their say?" (Mair, 2017, p. 3) Browse (in press) suggests that the trends in reception, identified by 'post-truth', are symptomatic of a broader crisis of legitimacy in establishment institutions – a crisis brought on by a failure to adequately deal with and explain economic stagnation and crashing living standards: "it is not, then, that audiences have ceased to care about the truth, but that official

truths have ceased to match lived realities" (Browse, in press). Whatever the causes, it is clear that there has been a shift in the manner that audiences convey legitimacy and authority upon sources of news and information. Similarly, the rise of hybrid literary genres, their reception, and the interactive and trans-medial quality of contemporary narrative forms all suggest a popular rebalancing of power and prestige from authors to readers and audiences.

The second claim of the discourse on post-truth culture focuses on a change in the rhetorical practices of public figures. The political activist, Naomi Klein (2017, pp. 55–56) notes that lying, or the production of "alternative facts", has become a regular feature of recent Whitehouse communications. In another English-speaking context, the "leave" campaign in Britain's recent referendum on membership of the European Union infamously claimed that were the UK to withdraw, it would free £350 million for investment in the National Health Service – money that has yet to be found, let alone committed to this end. While distortions of the truth – or sometimes outright lies – have long been a feature of political and media discourse, today's tumultuous political context has engendered a shift in the kinds of rhetorical arguments made by politicians. The trend has been noted in popular culture; in the 2005 pilot of his show, *The Colbert Report*, Stephen Colbert used the term 'truthiness' to criticise the then US President, George W. Bush Jnr., for his reliance on gut feeling. In his subsequent roast of the President at the 2006 Whitehouse Correspondents' dinner, Colbert joked:

Do you know that you have more nerve endings in your gut than you have in your head? You can look it up. And now some of you are going to say: I did look it up and that's not true. That's because you looked it up in a book. Next time look it up in your gut. My gut

tells me that's how our nervous system works […] I give people the truth unfiltered by rational arguments (Colbert, 2006).

The comedian thus identifies a particular rhetorical strategy. The speaker's cache as an authentic, gutsy and plain-speaking person is leveraged to warrant an assertion; what matters is less the veracity of the proposition but the extent to which – and the vigour with which – it is believed. Truthiness thus 'abandons the reality of truth as a legitimate register of signification' (Vermeulen, 2015). This echoes the online culture of reception identified above, which fuses issues of truth and reliability with identity and social belonging; the speaker "speaks their truth". We argue this reflects a more general cultural preoccupation with personal ethos and affect, manifested in the contemporary rupture of fictionality. Writers and readers collapse or foreground the distinctions between authors, narrators and characters not because they do not matter, but because the interplay of these identities is a source of personal involvement and ethical attachment.

'Truthiness' involves the performance of a local truth-for-the-speaker. Conversely, Roscoe and Hight (2001) analyze mock documentaries, arguing that they use strategies that impress upon their subject matter the status of fact, or rather perform 'factuality'. They point to a factual aesthetic which attempts 'to create a position for audiences in which we are encouraged to take up unproblematically the truth claims offered to us' (Roscoe & Hight, 2001, p. 23). The rhetorical claim travels in the opposite direction to truthiness – rather than abandon reality, the performance of factuality is a claim to accurately represent it. In the case of mock-documentary, Roscoe and Hight suggest this appropriation of factuality strategies can be parodic, critical, or used reflexively to deconstruct documentary. Factuality and truthiness strategies can also be

combined. The British Labour Party has issued two documentary-style party political broadcasts – a 1987 documentary about the then leader, Neil Kinnock, dubbed "Kinnock the movie" by its critics (Browse, 2017), and a 1997 broadcast which featured fly on the wall footage of, and biographical interviews with, the former leader and Prime Minister, Tony Blair (Browse, 2017; Pearce, 2001). In these contexts, the performance of unmediated access to the 'real lives' of political actors functions as a tacit appeal to their ethos and the public construction of their 'normalness' (Fairclough, 2000, p. 99). The rhetorical construction of factuality in these political documentaries is thus closely linked to the politicians' projected authenticity as public figures and the 'truthiness' of their rhetorical performances.

This combined documentary-style and 'truthy' rhetorical strategy prefigures the political rise of Donald Trump. Before becoming the President, Trump was the star and executive producer of the US version of *The Apprentice*, a reality television show. Some journalists have pointed to continuities between the Trump administration's handling of political affairs and entertainment: the 'presidency is being produced like a reality television show' (Klein, 2017, p. 57). Indeed, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich, said of the President's inauguration that he "is going to be the executive producer of a thing called the American government. He's going to have a huge TV show called 'Leading the World'" (as cited in Klein, 2017, pp. 53–54).

The contemporary political, social and cultural context has therefore produced a proliferation of different "regimes of truth" (Foucault, 1984) – new reality brokers, new ways of styling truth claims and new attitudes towards fiction. Narratologists are well placed to navigate this post-truth context in which ontological and ethical questions have been assigned a special cultural and political salience. In the following section we outline what we see as a key heuristic

for investigating these issues and which forms the touchstone of the contributions to this special issue: the concept of fictionality.

A Brief History of Fictionality from within Narrative Studies: From 1970s-2000

Fictionality is not originally a narratological question. As Dawson (2015, pp. 74–75) highlights, fictionality first emerged as a scholastic concern in its own right in the 1970s and 1980s. Schaeffer (2012) identifies three "major competing definitions" of fictionality that develop from this period: semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic (cf. Gorman, 2005; Zetterberg Gjerlevsen, 2016b). Rather than being an approach to literature per se, semantic approaches are grounded in analytic philosophy and logic, and focus their attention on the truth value of the subject matter (cf. Lewis, 1983; Harshaw, 1984; Prince, 1991). Related to this are accounts that utilise Possible Worlds Theory (Pavel, 1975, 1986; Ryan, 1980, 1985, 1991; Ronen, 1994; Doležel, 1998), and are still current in narratology today (Bell, 2019).

Syntactic approaches to fictionality prioritize linguistic and stylistic features that mark texts out as fictional. Hamburger's (1973) *The Logic of Literature* is a foundational text here. Although some of her arguments have been subsequently seen as outlandish − for instance, her insistence on narratorless or third-person narration, and her dissent against first-person narration (Hamburger, 1973, pp. 55–89) − it set an agenda for considering stylistics aspects (particularly narrative pronouns, and spatial and temporal deixis) that are (supposedly) markers of fictionality. Banfield (1982) is also centrally concerned with deictic markers, analysing these as part of what she calls a "grammatical account of narrative style" (p. 17). Her central focus is speech and

thought presentation, primarily free indirect discourse. She ultimately argues that there is "something essential to fiction in its representation of consciousness" (Banfield, 1982, p. 260). The relationship between two minds, one representing and the other represented in the text, that is narrator and character or the narrating-*I* and the experiencing-*I*, has been the target of narrative analysis at least for about 100 years (see Lubbock, 1921; Watt, 2001; Booth, 1983; Cohn, 1978). More recently, Herman (2011) offers an inclusive outline of consciousness representation in English language narratives and of the latest debates on possible differences and convergences between the interpretation and study of minds in and outside of fiction. Nevertheless, syntactic approaches have been criticized as essentialist (Schaeffer, 2012).

In strong opposition to syntactic categorisations of fictionality, pragmatic approaches are founded on Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1975). In 'The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse', Searle (1975) rejects syntactic theories outright: "there is no trait or set of traits which all works of literature have in common and which could constitute the necessary and sufficient conditions for being a work of literature" (p. 320). Instead, he casts fictionality as a speech act characterized by pretense: fiction is defined based on the "illocutionary stance that the author takes toward it, and that stance is a matter of complex illocutionary intentions that the author has when he writes or otherwise composes it" (Searle, 1975, p. 325). In turn, the conventions of fiction-making that surround the speech-act enable readers to recognize it as such. Currie (1990) subsequently substituted the concept of the fictive in place of pretense. Bruss (1976) takes a similar speech-act approach, considering the illocutionary force governing autobiographical speech-acts. She identifies three rules underlying the factuality of autobiography: the autobiographical author both created the text *and* shares identity with a character; the reported events are underwritten by a truth-claim (e.g., they actually happened); the autobiographical author believes in the veracity of

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their narrative (Bruss, 1976, p. 10–11). In the 1990s, Lamarque and Olsen (1994) published *Truth, Fiction, and Literature* which Gorman (2005) considered to be "the most detailed formulation of a pragmatic account yet offered" (p. 165). Lamarque and Olsen (1994, p. 1) defend a no-truth theory of literature: truth or knowledge do not concern literature, which rather explores and develops great themes of life such as moral dilemmas, emotions and an individual's relation to society. This is to say that even though literature sometimes appears to offer propositions about life, the assessment of these propositions or debate about their truth-value is not part of literary criticism (Lamarque & Olsen, 1994, pp. 332–334). Still, literature has a deep connection with life. Using analytical philosophy, Lamarque and Olsen discuss fictionality, mimesis and cognitive value in their effort to understand literature as a distinctive cultural practice that explores matters of human interest.

The late 1980s and the 1990s saw the publication of several landmark works which continued the syntactic school of thought. Critics such as Lejeune, Genette, and Cohn offer a formalist or what Fludernik (2018, p. 71) following Klauk and Köppe (2014) calls a "text-focused" approach. Philippe Lejeune (1989), for instance, outlined what he saw as the stylistic features of autobiography and claimed that the combination of the style and fictionality of a work put in place different 'pacts' between writers: autobiographical and fictional as well as phantasmatic – a pact which has since been applied to autofiction (for instance, see Gibbons, 2018). In 'Signposts of Fictionality', Cohn (1990) similarly identifies 'signposts' that make a piece of work fiction, focusing on three criteria: narrative levels (story and discourse), narrative situations (voice, mode, and point of view), and narrative agents (authors and narrators). Nearly a decade later, in *The Distinction of Fiction*, Cohn (1999, p. 110) moved towards a stricter division between fictional and non-fictional narrative realms and argued for the usefulness of a clear

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separation of the two whilst still arguing that borderline cases are those that are most helpful in crafting any distinctions. Genette (1993, p. 82) in *Fiction & Diction* also argues against any pure forms. Moreover, he saw narratology that only analyzes fictional texts as restricted narratology. For both Genette (1993, pp. 69–78) and Cohn (1999, pp. 123–131), the most important feature separating historiography from fiction is the author-narrator-relation: in historiography the two are the same, in fiction they are separate. They also pinpoint free indirect discourse as the narrative mode most characteristic of fiction (Genette, 1993, p. 63; Cohn, 1999, p. 26; see also McHale, 1978, p. 282) – a view later disputed through findings of FID in natural language such as journalistic writing (Fludernik, 1993, p. 92–94; Frus, 1994, p. 24). More generally Genette (1993, p. 66–67) argues that the thoughts of a real person can only be cited in historical narratives based on documentary evidence; psychological portrayal must rely on clear documentation or be explicitly offered as speculative and conditional. It is important to notice here that Cohn and Genette were mostly concerned with historical and to some extent also (auto)biographical texts in comparison to literary fiction; therefore, their scope of study differs greatly from today's discussions of fictionality, where everyday discourse, such as political speeches are studied alongside fictional narratives.

A performative approach to fictionality stems from Walton's (1990) thinking in *Mimesis as Make-Believe* wherein he discusses a range of text-types, including children's play alongside various representational arts (literature, visual art). Ryan (2006) credits Walton as putting "the theory of fictionality on the transmedial track" (p. 35), a strand of fictionality discussed further below. Walton's (1990) central tenet was that representations should be "understood as things with the function of serving as props in games of make-believe" (p. 105). Alexander Bareis and Lene Nordrum's (2015) edited book *How to Make Believe: The Fictional Truths of the*

Representational Arts studies different types of representations from novels to photographs, digital games, TV series and memoirs covering literature, visual arts, performative arts and games. Adopting a philosophical approach to fictionality as make-believe across a wide array of representational art, the book looks for similarities and differences between art forms in their ways to generate fictional truths.

Finally, Wolfgang Iser's (1993) *The Fictive and the Imaginary* draws on literary anthropology and is affiliated with reader response criticism (Tompkins, 1980). Iser (1993) finds that treating fiction and reality as binary opposites is problematic and moves to "replace this duality with a triad: the real, the fictive, and what we shall henceforth call the imaginary" (p. 1). He proposes three "fictionalising acts": *selection* of social, historical, cultural and literary parameters; *combination* of linguistic and semantic features in composition; and *self-disclosure*, in self-reflexive foregrounding of fictionality. Through his focus on textuality and imaginative construction, Iser's work is reception-oriented and stands as a significant precursor of recent attempts to develop a cognitive account of fictionality (Gibbons, 2014; Kukkonen & Nielsen, 2018).

Fictionality Studies in the Twenty-First Century

In the twenty-first century, the study of fictionality has become, once again, topical among scholars of narrative. The rhetorical approach, which stems from the pragmatic tradition, has amassed significant support. In 'The Pragmatics of Narrative Fictionality', Walsh (2005) rebukes semantic, syntactic, and performative approaches to fictionality, offering his own pragmatic

account using relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986). This chapter was subsequently republished as the opening to his influential monograph *The Rhetoric of Fictionality* (Walsh, 2007). The rhetorical trend has been continued more recently by Nielsen, Phelan, and Walsh (2015), Phelan (2017), and Zetterberg Gjerlevsen (2016a, 2017, 2018). Nielsen is also committed to this approach, though he spreads his allegiances between rhetorical and unnatural narratology (2010, 2011; Kukkonen & Nielsen, 2018). The rhetorical approach sees fictionality as "the intentional use of invented stories and scenarios" (Nielsen et al., 2015, p. 62), a definition that rests on the intention (*the intentional use*) of the sender in communication. The rhetorical approach of the 2000s has metamorphosized from strictly pragmatic predecessors by taking a more flexible stance on text-based markers. While Phelan and Nielsen (2017) clarify that the rhetorical approach does not believe that there are "one-to-one correspondences" between textual techniques, narrativity, and fictionality (p. 83), there is general consensus that markers can prompt contextual assumptions of fictionality, though through recourse to authorial intention. This inclusion of contextuality was previously advocated by Wilderkamp, van Montfoort, and van Ruiswijk (1980) in their article 'Fictionality and Convention'. They criticize prior pragmatic approaches to fictionality because these perspectives assume that "the intention(s) of the speaker can in principle be known to the hearer" yet in written communication, when readers may not be familiar with the discourse-producer, "this is virtually impossible" (p. 550). As an amendment, they propose the inclusion of situational conditions of production and reception.

Klauk and Köppe (2014) and Fludernik (2018) identify and outline that a sociological approach also took shape in this period. Fludernik (2018) outlines that such works "analyze authors' license to produce nonfactual accounts which open up a separate realm outside truth and lying and link fictionality to diverse practices of diversion and aesthetic recreation" (p. 71). We

also see these studies as diachronic since they often conceive of fictionality (both in terms of formal aesthetic and epistemological footing) relative to a historical context. In 'The Rise of Fictionality', Gallagher (2006) focuses on the eighteenth century novel. She argues that fictionality developed simultaneously with the rise of the novel and particularly with the introduction of novels "about nobody in particular" (Gallagher, 2006, p. 341): paradoxically, readers could apparently imagine these nobody-characters as fictional strangers whilst also empathizing with them as believably real anybodies. Gallagher's argument has been rebuffed by Fludernik (2018) for conflating fictionality with the trends of a particular genre and period and by Phelan (2018) for construing reading fiction primarily as an act of self-development. Whilst Zetterberg Gjerlevsen (2016a, 2018) affiliates with the aforementioned rhetorical approach to fictionality, her work also takes a diachronic and sociological perspective. She considers eighteenth century fiction in English (2016a) and Danish (2018) in order to show the understanding of fictionality and its relationship with realism and truth are temporally situated and contextual.

In *Five Strands of Fictionality*, Punday (2010) explores fictionality in relation to post-1960s American fiction and culture. In this contemporary context, he argues fictionality is a "central condition of culture" (Punday, 2010, p. 25), and its conception is subject to "the operation of an institution that legitimizes the creation of invented stories" (2010, p. 15). There are therefore coexistent, multiple, overlapping definitions of fictionality. Punday (2010) outlines five such definitions or 'strands': fictionality understood as myth and folktale; as archive; as lie; as style (relative to culture); and as game-play (pp. 27–29). Punday's approach is thus diachronic and sociological in general, though he does make use of Possible Worlds Theory in his analysis

of role-playing games (2010, pp. 151–176). In his consideration of several text-types, Punday's work is also implicitly related to transmedial discussions of fictionality.

Transmediality is itself a recent concept (Klastrup & Tosca, 2004; Jenkins, 2006; Kuhn & Thon, 2017). Thus, transmedia narratology – the study of narrative devices across media environments – has only recently sought to investigate fictionality. Taking a possible-worlds approach, Ryan (2008, p. 388–394) defines transfictionality as a relation between two or more texts which contain distinct worlds with readers familiar enough with those worlds to make connections between them. Such transfictionality can therefore also be transmedial if the texts take different medial forms. Building on Walton's aforementioned work, Ryan (2006) has also sought to augment fictionality into a transmedial concept by developing comparable criteria that will cut across semiotic modes and text-types. Similarly, Zipfel (2014) outlines a potential transmedial concept of fictionality which he sees as "multilayered" because it includes three components: fictional worlds, make-believe games, and institutional practice (p. 105).

Finally, a cognitive approach appears to be germinating. Indeed, Kukkonen and Nielsen (2018) debate the intersections between an unnatural, rhetorical account and a cognitive approach, ultimately agreeing that very little scholarship in cognitive narratology has explicitly tackled fictionality. Nevertheless, a few relevant studies do exist. In 'Fictionality and Ontology', Gibbons (2014) takes initial steps towards a cognitive approach, using Text World Theory (Werth, 1999; Gavins, 2007) to explore metaleptic crossings in mobile-phone narratives. To account for ontological blurs, she draws particularly on Herman's (2002) account of contextual anchoring whereby textual patterns such as "doubly deictic *you*" cause readers to experience analogies between the actual world and the imagined world. Spolsky's (2015) premise is that fictions "are not reliably distinguishable by their surface features from nonfiction, from the rest

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of the mental and material world in which we live and within which we struggle to keep our balance" (p.xiii). Her approach instead seeks to understand fiction as a social contract, that is how fiction provides abstract rules that serve communities in mediating with individual and social behavior.

Looking back at the historical development of fictionality studies, a variety of approaches are in force. In Table 1, we have sought to bring some clarity to the increasingly burgeoning field by categorizing the various contributions in relation to their school of thought or approach.[i] It should be noted: first, that the table is not exhaustive (there are certainly many other scholarly meditations of fictionality); and second, that these are fuzzy categories. We have been influenced by previous scholars but our categories are not necessarily identical with those of other critics (cf. Gorman, 2005; Schaeffer, 2012; Klauk & Köppe, 2014; Zetterberg Gjerlevsen, 2016b; Fludernik, 2018). Moreover, the critics listed for each approach do not together form a homogenous group: consensus within each school is not wholly absolute. For instance, amongst the theorists whom we have grouped as pursuing formalist, text-focused approaches to fictionality, there is disagreement as to both the absoluteness and the features of so-called 'signposts'. Similarly, within what is labelled as the pragmatic/rhetorical approach, debate continues about the narrator and the 'implied author' concepts (Booth, 1983): Phelan (2005, p. 38–49) retains and defends the latter whilst Walsh (2007, p. 82–85) and Nielsen (2010) repudiate it.

Semantic	Syntactic	Pragmatic/ Rhetorical	Diachronic/ Sociological	Philosophical	Cognitive	Transmedial
Pavel: 'Possible Worlds in Literary Semantics (1975), *Fictional Worlds* (1998)

Doležel: 'Narrative Semantics' (1976), 'Truth and Authenticity in Narrative' (1980), 'Mimesis and Possible Worlds (1988), 'Possible Worlds of Fiction and History' (1998), *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds* | Hamburger: *The Logic of Literature* (1973)

Banfield: *Unspeakable Sentences* (1982)

Lejeune: *On autobiography* (1989 [1971])

Cohn: 'Signposts of Fictionality' (1990), *The Distinction of Fiction* (1999)

Genette: 'Fictional Narrative, Factual | Searle: 'The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse' (1975)

Bruss: *Autobiographical Acts* (1976)

Wilderkamp, van Montfoort, and van Ruiswijk: 'Fictionality and Convention' (1980)

Walsh: 'The Pragmatics of Narrative Fictionality' (2005), | Gallagher: 'The Rise of Fictionality' (2006), 'What Would Napoleon Do? Historical, Fictional, and Counterfactual Characters' (2011)

Punday: *Five Strands of Fictionality* (2010)

Zetterberg Gjerlevsen: 'A Novel History of Fictionality' (2016), 'How to Do Things with Fictionality' (2017), 'The Threshold of Fiction' (2018) | Walton: *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (1990)

Currie: *The Nature of Fiction* (1990), *Narrative and Narrators: A Philosophy of Stories* (2010)

Lamarque and Olsen: *Truth, Fiction, and Literature* (1994)

Schaeffer: *Why Fiction?* (2010)

Bareis and Nordrum (Eds.) *How to Make* | Iser: *The Fictive and the Imaginary* (1993)

Herman: *Storytelling and the Sciences of the Mind* (2011)

Gibbons: 'Fictionality and Ontology' (2014)

Spolsky: *Contracts of Fiction* (2015)

Kukkonen: [in Kukkonen and Nielsen] 'Fictionality, Cognition and | Ryan: *Avatars of Story* (2006), 'Transfictionality across Media' (2008)

Zipfel: 'Fiction across Media' (2014) |

(1998)	Narrative' (1990), *Fiction & Diction* (1993)	*The Rhetoric of Fictionality* (2007)		*Believe* (2015)	Exceptionality' (2018)	
Ryan: 'Fiction, Non-Factuals, and the Principle of Minimal Departure' (1980), *Fictional Worlds, Articificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (1991)	Löschnigg: 'Narratological Categories and the (Non-)Distinction between Factual and Fictional Narratives' (1999)	Nielsen: 'Natural Authors, Unnatural Narration' (2010), 'Unnatural Authors, Impersonal Voices, Real Author, and Non-Communicative Narration' (2011) and [in Kukkonen and Nielsen] 'Fictionality, Cognition and Exceptionality' (2018)				
Lewis: 'Truth in Fiction' (1983)	Fludernik: 'Fiction vs Non-Fiction' (2001), 'The Fiction of the Rise of Fictionality' (2018)					
Harshaw (Hrushovski): 'Fictionality and Frames of Reference' (1984)	Hatavara and Mildorf: 'Hybrid Fictionality and	Nielsen, Phelan, and Walsh: 'Ten Theses about Fictionality'				

Prince: 'Narratology, Narrative, and Meaning' (1991) Ronen: *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* (1994) Bell: 'Digital Fictionality' (2019)	Vicarious Narrative Experience' (2017), 'Fictionality, Narrative Modes, and Vicarious Storytelling' (2017)	(2015) Phelan: 'Local Fictionality within Global Non-Fiction' (2016), 'Fictionality' (2017), 'Fictionality, Audiences, and Character' (2018) Zetterberg Gjerlevsen: 'A Novel History of Fictionality' (2016), 'How to Do Things with Fictionality' (2017), 'The Threshold of Fiction' (2018)				

TABLE 1: Approaches to Fictionality

The Fact-Fiction Distinction and Beyond: Factuality, Non-Fictionality, and Fictionalizing Strategies

Schaeffer (2012) claims that fiction and factual narratives are "generally defined as a pair of opposites" (2012). This assumption underwrites much recent research, which has continued to call for the clear separation between fictional literature and other narrative domains and methodologies used to study those narratives (see Andersson, 2016, Andersson & Sandberg, 2018). Greger Anderson and Tommy Sandberg (2018, p. 242) claim the existence and dominance of "sameness narratology," which has the intention to read fictional narratives in the same way as non-fictional, everyday narratives. Their polarizing attempt to (re)claim the distinctiveness of fiction from all other narrative genres might benefit from what another representative of the Örebro approach to narratology, Lars-Åke Skalin, wrote ten years ago: "certainly there is something to Hayden White's [1978, 121] observation: 'Readers of histories and novels can hardly fail to be struck by similarities.' But similarity is one thing, sameness another" (Skalin 2008, p. 226). Skalin's point is that finding similarities between fictional and nonfictional narratives does not actually mean claiming any sameness between them. A more fruitful way of approaching the problem may be one that recognizes that for any phenomenon, there are cases that are more and cases that are less prototypical. Certainly, Brian McHale (2016) has discussed the changes in narrative theory taken place since the fictional novel stopped being regarded as the prototypical narrative. He subsequently calls for a multiplicity of narratologies to study the multiplicity of narratives, echoing Genette's criticism of restricted narratology. Both fiction as a genre and fictionality as a quality certainly benefit from research that compares research methods and results across arts and naturally occurring language uses.

Fludernik (2018) - in her summary of ongoing studies of fictionality - makes the point that whilst operating under the topic of fictionality, much research is actually concerned with tracing what can be called non-fictionality, factuality, or referentiality (p. 70). Zetterberg Gjerlevsen (2016b) claims that the first discussion of fictionality that did not link it exclusively to fiction (i.e., that also considered non-fiction) is Wildekamp et al. (1980). Within the Nordic Network of Narrative Studies in the early 2000s, several scholars clarified the relationships between, for example, fictionality and literariness (Grishakova, 2008), fictiveness and fictionality (Bareis, 2008, p. 156), and two ways of defining fictionality: one in regard to the story content, the other in regard to the ways of telling (Hansen, 2005, p. 288).

Whilst the study of fictionality may have originated as a means of differentiating fiction from referentiality, much contemporary research is able to consider non-fictional narratives by arguing instead for an understanding of fictionality as a rhetorical resource rather than an ontological property. As Zetterberg Gjerlevsen (2016b) explains:

> fictionality is not just a term attributed to fictional narratives such as novels and short stories; nor is it equated with broad or abstract categories. Rather, fictionality, as a fundamental rhetorical mode, is understood as a means to communicate what is invented and as such transgresses the boundaries of both fiction and narrative. In this perspective, fictionality is not bound to any genre or limited to narrative representation.

This view is particularly aligned with work in the rhetorical tradition previously discussed (e.g., Walsh, 2007; Nielsen et al., 2015; Zetterberg Gjerlevsen, 2016a, 2017, 2018). As such, the study

of fictionality in relation to non-fiction is often (though not always) enmeshed with the rejection of the syntactic approach. Prince, for instance, notes the considerable variance between identified signposts of fictionality. Furthermore, he asserts:

> ...they are never quite conclusive even if their presence constitutes or contributes to a "fiction effect." I could, after all, begin a biography of Napoleon or Richelieu (entirely consonant with the truth and written for children or intended to highlight the legendary nature of the characters) with "once upon a time"... (Prince, 1991, p. 546.)

In speaking of a "fiction effect", Prince anticipates more recent debates which revision markers or "signposts" of fictionality instead as "fictionalizing strategies" (cf. Iversen & Nielsen, 2016; Hatavara & Mildorf, 2017a).

Lately, studies in fictionality have increasingly sought to account for hybrid texts that seem to point to both fictional and referential contexts. Previous examples include Lejeune, who positions his characterisation of fiction, autobiography, and what has since become known as autofiction as "essentially linguistic and formal" (Lejeune, 1989, p. 130). Simpson (2003) argues that satirical discourse is distinct in relation to fictionality, since satirical texts "steer a curious path through referentiality and fictionality" (p. 99) and as such appear to possess or signal what Simpson coins "referfictionality" (p. 99). He claims that such hybridity distinguishes satire from other forms of fictional writing, precisely because it "attaches a kind of 'insincerity' to its manner of delivery'. The textual strategies of satire, in other words, undercut the truth-claims made therein. (Simpson, 2003, pp. 99, 167.) Recognising the satirical intent of the text, therefore, entails complex text-processing strategies: "a real anterior discourse event" (p. 9) must be primed

by the text and then recognised through recourse to general or text-external knowledge whilst internal textual features open up a dialectical mismatch between that real discourse and the satirical text. It is in this way, Simpson argues, that satire produces its paradoxical referfictionality, at once signalling that its truth claims are appropriate as well as insincere.

Mari Hatavara and Jarmila Mildorf (2017a) focus on "fictionalizing strategies" or, in their words, "narrative techniques associated with fictionality" (p. 67) that can be found in non-fiction. Their analyses of such hybrid texts leads Hatavara and Mildorf (2017b) to introduced the term "cross-fictionality", which they define as "instances of storytelling where the contextual frame clearly marks the story and its narrative environment as nonfictional but where narrative techniques typically found in generic fiction still occur" (p. 405). Cross-fictionality attempts to bring fictionality studies together with narratology and textual analysis instead of speculating on authorial intentions or focusing on the referentiality of story content. As such, their approach is in line with, and develops from, Dorrit Cohn's early narratological attempts to locate signposts of fictionality. Their work also draws inspiration from important studies in forms like free indirect discourse, finding the form not exceptional to fiction but characteristic of it (see McHale 1978, pp. 282–283). The textual signposts of fictionality focus on mind representation, which appears to feature prominently in cases of narratives of vicarious experience, where someone tells what someone else has experienced.

Overview of volume

The long history of fictionality studies in narratology provides a useful basis on which to investigate the post-truth forms of story-telling outlined at the beginning of this introduction. Whilst we have sought to provide a historically grounded overview of the field, taken together the articles in this special issue also contribute to, complicate, and advance the study of fictionality. Questions raised include different approaches to fictionality together with questions of truthiness, authorial intention, readerly interpretation as well as textual and contextual features of fictionality and factuality.

In their contribution to the special issue, Kim Schoofs and Dorien Van De Mieroop address the question of "truth" and authorial intention by analyzing repeated WWII-testimonies by two Belgian concentration camp survivors. With the use of an interactional-sociolinguistic approach and the theory of master narratives, Schoofs and Van De Mieroop demonstrate the relativity of what is presented as the "truth" in different temporal and spatial contexts. Their data showcases the importance of the social storytelling context in guiding narrative as social action and affecting what is considered true, relevant, and worth narrating. Schoofs and Van De Mieroop show the interlinkage between the narrators' identity work and their spatio-temporally changing narratives and discuss how this undermines the possibility of determining whether the narrators possess intentionality over the fictionality/factuality of their narratives and whether they know that certain events are facts and others are not.

Jessica Mason is similarly interested in the relationship between intentionality and fictionality. She explores 'false flag' narratives produced to offer a counter version of an existing narrative. As conspiracy theories, false flag narratives by their very nature offer alternative versions of narratives commonly held as nonfictive. Mason argues they thus blur the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, containing elements of both fictive and nonfictive discourse.

Her cognitive, figure-ground analysis highlights how, by re-distributing attention and using fictional narrative modes, false flag narratives construct fiction out of facts. Like Schoofs and Van De Mieroop, Mason's findings problematize the notion of using an assessment of authorial intention in determining the status of a text as fictional or not, since authors may not know what they believe or may be conflicted about it. Therefore, separating fictive discourse from phenomena like lying proves impossible.

In his investigation into the interpretative practices of members of the antifeminist "manosphere", Nurminen outlines the manner in which the participants in this online community co-opt canonical literary works. Following Fetterley (1978) and Felski (2008), he suggests that they employ an inverted form of 'resistant reading' in which they 'recognise' or downplay narrative features of canonical novels, constructing a reading of these works which accords with their own misogynistic ideological perspective, and enacting a shared online identity as they do so. Nurminen links these interpretative practices to the post-truth concept of 'careless speech' (Hyvönen, 2018), coining the term 'careless interpretation'. The article therefore explores the uses of fiction in building an online community in the service of advancing an antifeminist ideological agenda.

Browse and Hatavara's contribution to this special issue considers the complex fictionality involved in satire through an examination of political journalism. Focusing on the satirical representation of mind style, their analysis is underwritten by the argument that representing and reading the minds of others entails the transgression of both a fictionality/ontological boundary as well as an epistemic boundary. Satire – Browse and Hatavara argue – is by nature cross-fictional in that whilst it is invented for rhetorical effect, it necessarily relies on an intimation of

truthfulness. Ultimately, Browse and Hatavara advocate cross-fictionality as a nuanced analytical category that can account for the real-world effect of fictionalized representations.

Rather than fictionality, Bjorninen instead considers the ways in which *factuality* is rhetorically constructed in the fraudulent feature journalism of the journalist, Class Relotius. Taking influence from Fludernik (1996, 2000) and Walsh (2007), he sets out a rhetorical and hermeneutic approach to factuality, defining it as a generic frame which structures our interpretation of textual features. The discourse modes involved in this frame all usually entail appealing to a factual authority. He defines four such authorities – referential, institutional, experiential and speculative – and employs this framework to analyse an article by Relotius, pointing to the interplay between generic frame, the genre conventions of feature journalism, and the discourse modes used in the text which produces the effect of factuality.

Maria Laakso investigates Alan Weisman's *The World Without Us*, a (global) non-fiction text that imagines the future after climate change has made humans extinct. Like Björninen, Laakso's approach follows the rhetorical tradition. As such, she considers Weisman's signaled use of fictional and factual rhetorical strategies: hypothetical futures and thought-experiments on the one hand; scientific evidence and expert interviews, on the other hand. It is precisely this combination of fictional and non-fictional rhetoric that – Laakso argues – gives *The World Without Us* its affective and ideological force.

Like Jessica Mason, and to some extent also Sam Browse and Mari Hatavara, Alison Gibbons formulates a cognitive approach to fictionality. Drawing on Text World Theory and mind-modelling, Gibbons analyses Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan Quartet, a series of novels that – although fictional – critics and readers often interpret as autobiographical or autofictional. Gibbons initially studies the textual style of Ferrante's novels in order to assess whether there are

explicit signposts of fictionality or of autobiography. Subsequently, she explores how features and themes of the novels, as well as extratextual knowledge, are used by readers to build a mind-model of the author through which they can deduce intentionality as to the fictionality of the work. However, as Gibbons argues, Ferrante's pseudonymic identity complicates access to authorial intention and thus thwarts judgments of fictionality. As such, Gibbons concludes that fictionality should be considered as a cognitive attribute that readers bring to the literary experience.

The final article in this special issue, by Elise Kraatila, analyses Kazuo Ishiguro's (2015) fantasy novel *The Buried Giant* as an exemplar of speculative fiction. As Kraatila outlines, Ishiguro's novel is set in a conspicuously fabricated world and utilizes thought experiments. These two techniques of fictionality are crucial for allowing readers to come to terms with the post-truth world. More specifically, Kraatila advocates the power and importance of fantasy as a genre and speculative storytelling as a narrative mode in equipping readers and audiences with critical tools with which to examine the various realities at work in the post-truth world.

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i In Table 1, we have only included studies written in English. Studies in other languages are discussed in Fludernik (2018) and Fludernik and Nielsen (forthcoming) particularly; see also Zetterberg Gjerleven (2016b).