INTUITIO

PPGFil/UFFS | e-ISSN 1983-4012

DOI: https://doi.org/10.36661/1983-4012.2025v18n1.14930

SEÇÃO: D O S S I Ê METAFÍSICA E SEMÂNTICA DA FICÇÃO

Truth in Fiction: Explicitism in Massive Serialized Collaborative Fictions

Verdade em Ficção: Explicitismo em Ficção Colaborativa Massiva Serializada

Felipe Zárate Guerrero [1]

orcid.org/0000-0003-3036-6110

f.zarate10@uniandes.edu.co

Abstract: This paper examines the semantic challenges posed by Massive Serialized Collaborative Fictions (MSC fiction) to traditional theories of interpretation in fictional literature, focusing on the debate between intentionalism and explicitism. MSC fiction, characterized by its scale, episodic structure, and multiplicity of authors, complicates the intentionalist approach, which relies on discerning authorial intent to interpret fictional truths. Instead, the explicitist framework, emphasizing intrinsic textual content and its connections across works, offers a more robust model for navigating the interconnected narratives of MSC fiction. The analysis begins with a definition of MSC fiction and its implications for interpreting fictional works, highlighting the limitations of intentionalism in addressing the complexities of serial and collaborative authorship. The paper further explores the role of retroactive continuity (retcon) in reshaping truths across interconnected fictional universes, challenging traditional notions of canonical authority. By investigating the concept of canonicity and proposing a hierarchy for resolving inconsistencies, the paper underscores the relevance of explicitism in maintaining narrative coherence across MSC fiction. Through case studies of iconic serial fiction, such as comic book universes and long-running literary sagas, the paper demonstrates how explicitism accommodates the dynamic nature of evolving fictional systems. By shifting the focus from authorial intent to the textual and intertextual dimensions of fiction, this approach provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the truths within MSC fiction. Ultimately, the study argues for the primacy of explicitism as a viable interpretive model for addressing the philosophical and semantic challenges posed by complex, collaborative narratives.

Key words: Truth In Fiction. Intentionalism. Explicitism. Canon. Massive Serialized Collaborative Fictions

Resumo: Este artigo examina os desafios semânticos apresentados pelas Ficcções Colaborativas Serializadas em Massa (MSC fiction) às teorias tradicionais de interpretação na literatura de ficção, com foco no debate entre intencionalismo e explicitismo. As MSC fiction, caracterizadas por sua escala, estrutura episódica e multiplicidade de autores, complicam a abordagem intencionalista, que se baseia na identificação da intenção autoral para interpretar as verdades ficcionais. Em contraste, o modelo explicitista, que enfatiza o conteúdo textual intrínseco e suas conexões entre obras, oferece um modelo mais robusto para navegar nas narrativas interconectadas das MSC fiction. A análise começa com uma definição das MSC fiction e suas implicações para

[1] Philosophy PhD student at Durham University in the UK, focusing on the nature of truth in fiction, especially serialised works. He explores the rules and principles that shape fiction, as well as the metaphysical questions they raise. Alongside his doctoral research, he has been a Foundation Fellow at the Durham Centre for Academic Development. Currently, he works as a Teaching Assistant for modules on Knowledge and Reality and Reading Philosophy in the Department of Philosophy of Durham University. His master's degree, also in Philosophy, was on Aristotelian Metaphysics, while his undergraduate studies at Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia, included Philosophy with three minors in Literature, Classical Studies, and German Language and Culture.

a interpretação de obras ficcionais, destacando as limitações do intencionalismo para lidar com as complexidades da autoria serial e colaborativa. O artigo também explora o papel da continuidade retroativa (retcon) na reformulação de verdades dentro de universos ficcionais interconectados, apresentando um desafio às noções tradicionais de autoridade canônica. Ao investigar o conceito de canonicidade e propor uma hierarquia para resolver inconsistências, o artigo ressalta a relevância do explicitismo para manter a coerência narrativa nas MSC fiction. Por meio de estudos de caso de ficções seriadas icônicas, como universos de quadrinhos e sagas literárias de longa duração, o artigo demonstra como o explicitismo acomoda a natureza dinâmica dos sistemas ficcionais em evolução. Ao deslocar o foco da intenção autoral para as dimensões textuais e intertextuais da ficção, essa abordagem fornece um quadro abrangente para compreender as verdades nas MSC fiction. Por fim, o estudo defende a primazia do explicitismo como um modelo interpretativo viável para enfrentar os desafios filosóficos e semânticos das narrativas complexas e colaborativas.

Palavras-chave: Verdade na Ficção. Intencionalismo. Explicitivismo. Cânone. Ficções Colaborativas Serializadas em Massa.

Introduction

Within aesthetics studies, two opposing perspectives emerge, both of which hold that the object of interpretation is "meaning". Intentionalism states that to look for the meaning of a text, one should identify the author's intention, and explicitism posits that meaning is to be found in the intrinsic language of a literary text. Massive Serialised Collaborative Fictions (MSC fiction), as discussed by Cook (2013), pose a significant challenge to intentionalist interpretations of truth in fiction. This challenge arises from its collective nature involving multiple authors, making it difficult to discern (individual) intentions and the serialized feature that gives interconnectedness to those artworks. These works often feature intricate connections with numerous preceding works across various artistic formats, such as video games, comics, books, and movies, adding to the complexity of preserving truth within their narratives. Given these challenges, intentionalist explanations need help in adequately addressing truth preservation in such fictions. This text explores why MSC fiction challenges traditional stances on the interpretation of fictional works while showing how MSC fiction demands and inquires more about the authority and legitimacy of a work than about the intentions of the authors.

This paper is structured into three sections. The first section defines MSC fiction and its connection to the intentionalist/explicitist debate. The second section examines the challenges MSC fiction poses to intentionalism and the proposed solutions, weighing their advantages and disadvantages. It also explores how retroactive continuity undermines intentionalism, leading to its rejection. Finally, the third section explores the concept of canon

and its relevance to explicitism, re-evaluating an argument against intentionalist interpretations of MSC fiction while rejecting destructive consequences regarding fiction.

1 Intentionalism and explicitsm

The two prevailing viewpoints in the philosophical interpretation of fiction are intentionalism, the perspective most often held by philosophers, and anti-intentionalism. Intentionalism asserts that the author's intentions should bind an acceptable interpretation of fictional literature, whereas anti-intentionalism rejects this notion. To elaborate, intentionalism holds that "there are ordinarily many truths in works of fiction which are not explicitly stated therein"(Matravers 1995, 379), which tends to lead to an intentionalist perspective that requires considering factors beyond the collection of fictional sentences to discern the set of fictional propositions. Proponents of this approach tend to argue that one should consider the author's intentions (Rouillé, 2021, p. 43).[2]

The explicitist perspective on fiction was labelled by D'Alessandro (2016). However, it has been known by other names before him, such as the *literal view* advanced by Phillips, according to which "what is true in a story is what is explicitly mentioned in the text" (1999, 275). In a slightly different account, explicitists consider that within a given work of fiction, all truths are either directly articulated through explicit statements in the text or are implicitly derived from such propositions. It is a less strict version of the literal view since it accepts that some truths may be accepted even when they are not explicitly said in one text but that they can imply them.

In this sense, explicitism is opposed to any form of intentionalism, especially the extreme kind of it, the actual intentionalism according to which a specific type of authorial intention is both necessary for the production of a certain kind of fictional content and sufficient to establish that content as belonging to that kind (Stock 2017, p. 14). Explicitism is also opposed to more moderate approaches of intentionalism, such as hypothetical intentionalism,[3] which involves conjecture about the author's intentions[4] but still asserts that the author's intentions are paramount in interpreting fictional literature, serving as a cornerstone for discerning the

[2] See (Rouillé 2021, 43).
[3] See (Knapp and Michaels 1982, 730), (Trivedi 2001, 196), (Levinson 2010, 139), (Livingston 1998, 836), (Livingston 2005, 144), (Davies 2007, 85), (Currie 2008, 87).
[4] See (N. Carroll, 1992, 97), (Stecker, 2006, 429), (Livingston, 2005, 135), (Irvin, 2006, 118), (Stock, 2017, 14).

underlying truths embedded within the narrative. As we will observe, relying solely on authors' intentions will prove insufficient for interpreting MSC fiction(N. Carroll, 2000, p. 76; Currie, 2008, p. 87; Davies, 2007, p. 85; Irvin, 2006, p. 118; Knapp & Michaels, 1982, p. 730; 2010, p. 139; Livingston, 1998, p. 836, 2005, p. 135; Stecker, 2006, p. 97; Stock, 2017, p. 14; Trivedi, 2001, p. 196).

When Cook (2013) coined the term MSC fiction' he wanted to describe fictions characterised by (i) structured components arranged in nonarbitrary sequences concerning both their creation and consumption, as well as the chronological sequence of events depicted within them; (ii) possessing a scale too vast to be comprehensively grasped as a unified entity; (iii) being crafted by multiple authors. One core feature of MSC fiction is its episodic structure: every story framed in this type of fiction depends on other stories. This means that what happens in one story is always connected with events occurring in others. Characters, plots, and settings are developed in an immense variety of texts, and not, as is usually the case with novels, just in one text. When the number of texts that are interconnected in these fictions is so immense that, in practice, we, as readers, are unable to “master” the fiction all at once, then the episodic configuration holds significance for comprehending a particular narrative within the confines of the fictional realm.

There are two forms of episodic structure: one develops elements of a main narration by explaining or expanding aspects of a character or a setting; the other takes a secondary element of the main story and develops autonomous tales based on it. Sequels and prequels would be classified in the first group, while spinoffs would count in the second. McGonigal (2013) includes both types of episodic structures in what he called *serial* fiction, i.e., works that exhibit two main characteristics in their creation and reception: (i) they are intricately linked to distinct, notably separate episodes or instalments that (ii) can aptly be interpreted as unfolding within a singular fictional universe. This structure leads us to ask how truth can be preserved in each episode of the MSC fiction. Furthermore, the episodic structure of many narratives often leads to multiple authors contributing to the creation process. This is particularly evident in media such as comics, but can also be observed in other forms of serialised stories, such as television series, video games, and various forms of interactive storytelling (Cook, 2013, p. 272).

1.1 Intentionalism and MSC fiction

Suppose one believes that understanding a fictional text hinges upon authorial intentions. In that case, when approaching MSC fiction, it becomes imperative to discern the authors' identities and decipher their intentions. This task presents a significant challenge, particularly in serialized fiction such as comics. According to intentionalist perspectives, readers engaging with it should not only identify the writer's intentions but also those of the editors. However, comics, primarily visual media, entail additional layers of intentionality from various contributors such as pencilers, inkers, and colorists. Consequently, the number of authors shaping the narrative expands, potentially reaching six or more. The complexity of coordinating these diverse intentions poses a formidable obstacle for readers who attempt to discern them simultaneously while engaging with the text.

Some versions of hypothetical intentionalism seek to overcome this obstacle by positing a fictional author (Currie, 2008, p. 80; Voltolini, 2021, p. 61). A fictional entity who speaks to an audience of his own time and, most likely, of his own culture. This author is not any individual, concrete person; on the contrary, it is a construction made by the reader to account for what is true in fiction by inferring what the fictional author believes is the case. This solution is useful to reduce the "number" of intentions that a reader might discern, i.e., if reading a comic, instead of identifying the intentions of the scripter, the colorist, the inker, the letterer, etc., it would be enough to dismiss their intentions and look only for one, namely the one from the fictional narrator.

To appeal to a fictional author does not solve the problem posed by MSC fiction; it merely displaces it. An (informed) reader will still need to compare the fiction with what the fictional author believes about it. This necessitates comparing works that lie "outside" the text, as serialized fiction always have connections (sometimes dependencies), such that what is stated in one text determines the truths in another. An (informed) reader should assume that the fictional author is aware of these interconnections. For example, any DC-comics author should know that Bruce Wayne is an orphan, that Flash owes his powers to the Speed Force, or that Superman is an extraterrestrial. This set of truths that a fictitious author should know and that exist outside the text itself can be found, no more and no less, in the canon of that serialized fiction. The problem shifts from identifying a multitude of intentions to identifying

the works that should be considered canonical and from which the author' beliefs should be contrasted.

Since MSC fiction is characterized by a deeper level of collaboration beyond the mere coordination of actual authors, even for hypothetical intentionalists, to comprehend a single text within an MSC fiction fully, it becomes imperative to reference other texts that form part of the serial fiction. However, which ones to consider? For instance, Flash comics have been published since 1940, with over 705 issues featuring the character as the main protagonist. Should all of them be considered to continue the Flash's story in a logical sense? How do we distinguish between those that are relevant and those that should be disregarded? MSC fiction is constructed from a vast array of texts, necessitating reference to other texts fully to understand characters, plots, and scenarios. Consider starting with a random comic and asking questions about the characters, their motivations, and the story's context. While many of these questions may find answers within the same comic, not all will. Hypothetical intentionalists may indeed provide insights into the intentions behind a particular comic. However, their approach is inherently less equipped to address the interconnectedness of multiple texts within serial fiction. Each text should have a fictional author, who would need to be informed about what the fictional author of the other text is also writing. Otherwise, it would not be possible to explain the serialized feature of MSC fiction; hypothetical authors would only be responsible for their own texts.

Nevertheless, intentionalism demonstrates an advantage in addressing explicit contradictions within a text. Consider the well-known case of Alice's milk-jug[5] in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which at times appears on the table and at other times does not (Phillips, 1999, p. 276). In Chapter VII, *A Mad Tea-Party*, the narrative initially states, "Alice looked all-round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea" (L. Carroll, 2000, p. 54). However, it later becomes evident that there was indeed a milk jug present: "The Hatter was the only one who got any advantage from the change, and Alice was a good deal worse off than before, as the March Hare had just upset the milk-jug into his plate" (L. Carroll, 2000, pp. 58–59). Intentionalists are comfortable accepting such discrepancies, as they do not view explicit statements in isolation but consider them alongside the author's intentions. Therefore,

[5] See (Phillips 1999, 276).

in this scenario, intentionalism acknowledges that Lewis Carroll may have made an error in writing and that the first quoted sentence should have included tea and milk.

Something similar happens with contradictions across texts featuring the same characters. A famous example of this is the inconsistency regarding Watson's injury. In *A Study in Scarlet*, it is stated that "His left arm has been injured" (Doyle, 1887, p. 21), whereas in the very next story, *The Sign of Four*, Watson mentions, "I made no remark however but sat nursing my wounded leg. I had had a Jezail bullet through it some time before" (Doyle, 1887, p. 132). This conflict raises the question: where exactly is Watson's wound located?

The discrepancy regarding Watson's injury prompts considering whether it was on the shoulder or the leg (it cannot be in both parts because it is never mentioned that he has more than one injury; on the contrary, the singularity of the injury is one of the reasons that Holmes had to discover that Dr. Watson went to Afghanistan[6]) (Doyle, 1887, p. 21). An intentionalist approach suggests that the answer lies beyond the text itself. If the author intended to place the wound on the leg, it should be interpreted as such; similarly, if the intention was for the injury to be on the shoulder, then that interpretation holds. However, it is plausible that the author himself may have been unsure of the exact location of the injury. Perhaps when writing the first novel, the intention was to locate the wound in the shoulder, whereas a different intention arose when composing *The Sign of Four*. This scenario is entirely plausible only if there is no connection between the two novels. Alternatively, one could adopt a more divisive perspective, considering the possibility that the two instances represent different characters (albeit with strikingly similar characteristics) — perhaps serving as counterparts of the same character.

In examining the role of intentionalism in understanding MSC fiction such as comics, the challenge lies in discerning the diverse intentions of numerous contributors, including writers, editors, and artists. Intentionalist approaches, prioritizing the author's intentions, complicate this process due to the multiplicity of involved creators. Hypothetical intentionalism offers a solution by positing a fictional author to streamline interpretation. Yet, this approach only shifts the problem to determining the canonical texts that inform the fictional author's knowledge. Despite the utility of intentionalism in resolving textual contradictions, such as inconsistencies within a single work or across related works, it struggles

[6] See *Study in Scarlet*, chapter 2 (Doyle 1887, 21).

with the extensive interconnectedness characteristic of MSC fiction. For instance, comprehending a character's full narrative arc across decades of publications becomes daunting. Intentionalism thus falls short of addressing the complex intertextuality of MSC fiction, necessitating recourse to other texts and the identification of canonical sources to fully grasp the narratives and character development within these fictions.

1.2 MSC fiction and the third source of truth

As noted above, Lewis (1978) identified three fundamental components necessary for a theory of truth in fiction to account adequately for the persistence of truths across various narratives. So, it can also be applied to understand how MSCFs work. The first component pertains to intrafictionality, where truth is maintained within the confines of the same work, even when not explicitly stated. The second and third components involve interfictionality: one where truths persist among works that share common features of fictional characters but may not be set within the same fictional universe, and another where truths endure among stories that occur within the same fictional universe but are distinct works. For MSCF, the three components are required to make sense of the fictional system.

Let us explore the first case where truth is preserved within the same work, even without explicit content addressing it. Lewis illustrates this phenomenon using *The Threepenny Opera*, where a random street singer is implicitly characterized as treacherous, despite the play never explicitly labelling him as such. This truth is sustained due to the pervasive theme of treachery among all characters in the opera. This type of preservation of truth is the one that guarantees the internal consistency of a text. Consider the famous declaration of Order 66 in the movie *Star Wars: Episode III*, which compels every clone trooper to execute Jedi. In this episode, seeing a Trooper not following a command would be inconsistent. However, this truth applies only to that episode and is not transferred to other parts of the Star Wars-MSCFs.

In the second scenario, truth can migrate from one narrative to another if they share common fictional elements, provided they exist within the same fictional universe. According to the second case, this truth transfer occurs in interfictional contexts, transcending the boundaries of individual works and resembling a broader fiction genre. Lewis (1978, 45) uses the example of Scrulch, a dragon whose narrative conforms to the conventions of its stylised genre. He explores whether Scrulch breathes fire in the story, even without explicit

confirmation, suggesting that this truth is derived from the common attributes of dragons in other stories.

In the third and final scenario, stories set within serial fictions are intimately connected to and influenced by the truths established within the primary narrative, orbiting around it in a symbiotic relationship. Hence, when examining interconnected "systems" of narratives rather than individual isolated works, it becomes plausible to transfer true propositions from one text authored by, for instance, *a-x*, to another text written by a different author, *a-y*, as long as they both take place in the same fictional universe. For example, the fictional-fact of Bruce Wayne being an orphan should remain consistent across all DC comics, even if it is not expressly articulated in each instance, and it ceases to hold true only when explicitly refuted within the narrative.[7] In such instances, authors are not obligated to state explicitly that Bruce is an orphan, yet it remains true within the narrative. Furthermore, the absence of this "fact" would leave many situations within the fiction incompletely explained. For instance, the dynamics between Bruce and his butler, Alfred, who serves as a paternal figure, or his relationships with the various Robins, where he assumes a paternal role himself, cannot be thoroughly analyzed without the knowledge that Bruce's parents were murdered in front of him.

Nevertheless, in MSCFs, truths not only transfer from one text to another, but previously unexplained mysteries can also be developed, previously accepted truths can be reevaluated, and aspects previously considered untrue can be accepted. Consequently, enigmas or elements left undeveloped within one narrative may find resolution or further elaboration within another narrative. This means that the truths of a work are not self-sufficient to elucidate all occurrences within that narrative. However, when these truths intersect with those of other narratives, they can collectively provide a sufficient framework for understanding the respective narratives' intricacies. This account is considered an intrafictional carry-over because it considers truths from "inside" the same fictional universe.

In MSCFs, intrafictional truth manifests within narratives stemming from the same fictional universe, which may be authored by different individuals. In such scenarios, an author would establish a connection between the world depicted in their own work and the world

[7] This was the case, for example, in comics such as *Batman/Superman #18* (2021) and Batman's rendition of *Flashpoint* (2023).

portrayed in another author's work (and similarly, this principle applies to narratives penned by the same author). This would imply that analyzing a narrative of this nature would, in principle, necessitate familiarity with or understanding the themes explored in other works set within the same "universe". Merely reading individual works in isolation would be inadequate for acquiring all the truths essential to comprehending a particular text.

It is noteworthy in Lewis's analysis that it can support both explicitism and intentionalism. Explicitism is bolstered because truths within fiction are not solely reliant on the content of a specific text; they can also draw upon other true statements by those that are explicit, even if they are implied. Intentionalism can also find support in this perspective because it facilitates the connection between the author's intentions and the truth expressed within the texts. Given that a single text may not be sufficient to uncover all truths within a particular work, it becomes straightforward to seek additional information by considering the author's intentions. This approach aligns with the principle that understanding the author's intentions can provide valuable insight into the truths conveyed within the text.

2. Solutions to the problem of inconsistency

We have discussed how inconsistencies within the same narrative seem to undermine explicitist views and favor intentionalism. However, this need not be the case. Perspectives like the one elucidated by Lewis offer avenues to address such contradictions and potentially prevail; likewise, the explicitist perspective holds promise.

Lewis's solution to inconsistencies involves constructing a revised version of the story that remains close to the original narrative (1978, 46). In this context, it would involve disregarding the explicit statements that specify the location of Watson's injury and instead formulating a general truth that acknowledges the Doctor's injury without specifying its exact location. Additionally, this general truth could specify that the injury occurred somewhere within the context of the Holmes stories while excluding locations that were not explicitly mentioned (for instance, it would be deemed false that Watson has an injury on his left big toe).

An explicitist solution would differ significantly from intentionalism and Lewis's approach. Instead of constructing a revised version of the story or entertaining the notion of counterparts of the same character, explicitism relies on the concept of *satellite* stories within a shared fictional universe. This concept was introduced by Lewis (1978, 45) to denote the

relationship exhibited by those fictional works, indicating the intricate and non-trivial manner in which they are interrelated. Such interconnectedness influences and alters the truth values within the narrative works affected by this interaction. As expected, this type of relationship also occurs in MSCFs. This approach to understanding the relationship resembles how we have addressed *serial fiction* when exploring the episodic structure of MSCFs. Moreover, it shares similarities with D'Alessandro's definition of canonical relatives, according to which some works have "the power to settle the truth values of certain propositions in the fictions to which they are related" (2016, 61). For the purposes of this paper, I will use serial fiction and satellite stories interchangeably, considering their overall concept and similarities suitable for the present discussion, thereby bypassing their subtle distinctions.

A "satellite" framework allows for continuity in character development across different narratives, as characters are understood to exist within the same fictional universe, thus preserving the integrity of the character's identity. When authors introduce inconsistencies in character descriptions across different stories, as seen in the case of Watson's injury, the explicitist stance offers a potential solution. One approach to address this issue is establishing hierarchical levels of canonicity within the stories. Being "canonical" is a property that a set of works has according to which they are considered "the official" or legitimate piece of work within a fictional universe (Altieri, 1990). They are deemed "genuine" in the sense that they form part of a set of propositions considered integral to a particular fiction (Derksen & Hick 2018, 3). Certain works may hold greater significance or authority than others within the overall framework. However, complications arise when two works of equal canonicity present incompatible elements. In such cases, resolving the conflict requires careful consideration of various factors, such as the coherence and plausibility of each interpretation within the broader narrative context. This dilemma underscores the need for a systematic approach to determine precedence among conflicting interpretations.[8]

A proposed solution involves establishing a hierarchy of canon to address inconsistencies that may arise within MSCFs. This hierarchy would prioritize interpretations that lead to the fewest inconsistencies within the intricate web of stories. For instance, in the case of Watson's injury, the version where the injury is located in the leg may be considered

[8] A comprehensive examination of this approach can be found in (Cowling & Cray, 2022), specifically within Chapter 5.

“more canonical” because it provides a plausible explanation for his use of a cane in stories like *The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax* (1907). Therefore, interpretations that offer the most coherent explanations should be given precedence, provided they are feasible. Conversely, contradictory versions could be deemed erroneous and considered canon only within the context of the specific story but not across satellite works.

Another issue that arises in intentionalism is when an author explicitly states that their work is not about what is explicitly stated in the text but about something else entirely. In such cases, since the focus is on the author’s intentions, readers are compelled to “accept” as true what the author is “saying” about their work, as it better reflects the author’s intentions rather than relying on interpretations derived from the text itself. So, should readers consider something that was never said (explicitly or implicitly) in a work but that the author said about their own work as true? For the explicitists, the answer is a categorical no: the written work ultimately holds the final *authority*. Nevertheless, a new problem arises in this scenario: *what* is the written work that would hold the final authority? The fastest answer will point to the published version of a text. But what if the author never publishes their work? Or has it published a revised edition (cf. *The Hobbit*)?

A published work holds greater authority because it is less susceptible to easy editing or revision than drafts or unpublished manuscripts. While subsequent versions or editions of a book may be released, these revisions typically aim to enhance consistency or address errors rather than fundamentally alter the narrative or thematic content. However, it is worth noting that authors may choose to produce new editions of their works for various reasons. While improving consistency may be motivation, it is not necessarily the sole purpose behind such revisions.

According to explicitism, once an author has published their work, it can be regarded as a finished product. As Phillips articulates, “the author's intentions play a role in how the story is constructed, but once this work is completed it is the product of this labor, and not the author’s intentions, which determines what propositions are in the story” (1999, 275). In this context, the narrative stands independently, separate from the author, and gains a sense of independence. This autonomy is facilitated by inherent self-governing rules that impart coherence and unity to the work, a concept I will delve into further in section 4. In the explicitist perspective, what holds significance is not whether the author expresses ideas

"outside the work" related to the truths depicted within it. Instead, the focus is on identifying the rules established by the author within the narrative, which govern the exploration of what is considered true or false within the fiction. To illustrate this point, let us examine a well-known case from intentionalist literature.

How should we address Albus Dumbledore's sexuality in the *Harry Potter* series? Throughout each book, there is no explicit evidence regarding Dumbledore's sexuality within the Hogwarts narrative. However, the author, J.K. Rowling, stated in an interview, "I always thought of Dumbledore as gay" (Grossman, 2007). Intentionalists may interpret Rowling's statement as a declaration of intention, thereby automatically assigning the character the identity of being gay (Irwin, 2015, 147). This poses a significant challenge because while authors may have personal thoughts about their own creations, including the plots and characters they have developed, it seems insufficient to fundamentally alter the entire meaning of a work based solely on what the author says about it. It can be the case that the text does not contradict Rowling's assertion, but even if that is so, it seems no textual evidence prompted or supported this affirmation. On this behalf, an explicitist would tend to dissociate themselves from Rowling's assertions. This does not mean it was irrelevant. Her declarations might prompt a re-examination of the text to search for evidence corroborating her perspective. It can also give an interpretation that would be appealing to be considered, but in any case, for explicitists, the text itself ultimately holds the final word.

Let us consider another example proposed by Phillips (1999, 277), which explores more significant consequences. Suppose Conan Doyle had intended to reveal, at the end of all the stories, that Sherlock Holmes was actually a Martian posing as a human. Would this mean that Holmes was not human? While it may seem intuitively false to claim that Holmes is a Martian, this would indeed be the case according to intentionalism. Suppose some diaries or letters were never published before but state these intentions on behalf of Doyle. In that case, we may need to reconsider the entire Holmes corpus from a very different perspective. The explicitist perspective would not face this challenge, as it focuses on what is explicitly stated within the Holmes texts. Even if we entertain the hypothetical scenario of the existence of a diary or a collection of secret unpublished texts in which Doyle wrote that Holmes was a Martian, such content would only be considered part of the canon if it aligns with the possibilities of consistency with the rest of the texts. However, this raises questions about what

constitutes canon, which will be addressed in section 4. Nevertheless, this case highlights another interesting phenomenon for both perspectives, and it is a main tool in the constitution of MSCFs: the retcon phenomenon.

2.1 Retroactive continuity

Retcon, short for *retroactive continuity*, is a literary device wherein the form or content of a previously established narrative is altered. The paradigmatic case is exemplified by Sherlock Holmes's apparent death at *Reichenbach Falls*, followed by Conan Doyle's explanation that it was a staged event[9]. However, such changes are commonplace in fiction, particularly within the comics industry. Retcon is significant in understanding fiction for two main reasons: (i) it highlights a problem inherent in intentionalism regarding the interpretation of external statements made by an author, and (ii) its comprehension within the explicitist perspective is straightforward and elucidates the occurrences every time a retcon phenomenon arises.

Retcon movements can revive a deceased protagonist and alter the entire interpretation of a character or an object. To illustrate, in MSCFs such as DC Comics, the concept of Mother Boxes underwent evolution since its initial introduction as powerful energy sources utilised by the *New Gods*. With the publication of Jack Kirby's *Fourth World* (1970), Mother Boxes were depicted with increased autonomy and multifaceted functions, showcasing decision-making abilities and self-directives. Subsequently, in alignment with this updated concept, newer iterations of Mother Boxes were further developed, featuring distinctive personalities (Starman Series 1994). This addition led to subsequent comics portraying Mother Boxes not merely as tools wielded by the New Gods but as entities engaged in a symbiotic relationship. In this dynamic, the New Gods offer security to the Mother Boxes in exchange for their guidance, counsel, and energy.[10] This serves as an extreme illustration of retcon, wherein the retrospective interpretation of a text is altered, and significant modifications are made to its narrative structure. Mother Boxes started being objects, to become sentient beings with thoughts, feelings, and their own personality. This example shows that there are instances wherein substantial changes can occur within a specific fictional work existing within the same fictional universe or system. These connections, often

[9] Check *The Final Problem* and *The Empty House*, (Doyle, 1887, 760-779;954-970).
[10] See *New Gods: Godhead* (2014) by Gene Ha & J. Michael Straczynski; and *Justice League Odyssey* (2018-2021) by Dan Abnett.

highlighted in “satellite stories discussions”, create an intricate web of interconnected texts that unfold within a shared fictional background and mutually influence one another.

This implies that the truth value of certain statements about one text can vary depending on other texts concerning the initial one. Even though *The Fourth World* never explicitly states that Mother Boxes are sentient beings, the statement “Mother Boxes are sentient beings” becomes true once the Starman Series is released. Therefore, when texts are regarded as part of a system of satellite stories, authors contribute new information to the narrative and can *revise* previously established elements within the story. In the forthcoming section, I will explain how this system operates and elucidate why it lends more support to explicitist perspectives than intentionalist ones.

D'Alessandro (2016, 61) introduced the notion of canonical relatives, referring to works that are inherently connected to a particular piece of literature within the realm of canon as a cornerstone of his argument against intentionalism. He suggests that these works can ascertain the truthfulness of specific statements within the fictional narratives with which they are associated. Without delving into the proximity of possible worlds, the concept of relatedness can clarify the interplay among various texts that inhabit the same fictional universe. This perspective is apt for comprehending MSCFs as it provides a framework for understanding each satellite story’s interconnectedness. Relativeness can elucidate the relationship between canonical and non-canonical perspectives, such as fanfiction, by differentiating canonical relatives based on their authority in determining “the truth values of certain propositions in the fictions to which they are related” (D’Alessandro 2016, 56). Therefore, a discussion on the distinction between canon and non-canon is warranted; a more in-depth analysis will be reserved for the next section.

3 On canon

> . “…where religious scholars debate whether the story of Susanna in the book of Daniel is apocryphal, fan scholars discuss whether *The Incredible Hulk* (2008) is part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe or not”
>
> (Busse 2017, 102)

In simple terms, “canon’ typically refers to a collection of works that are regarded as authoritative within a particular context.[11] While commonly used in fictional contexts to denote the official body of work within a specific narrative universe, it can also have broader applications, such as referring to the essential or most significant artistic works within a particular field, especially in aesthetic literature (Bloom 1994, 16). In religious scenarios, it has also served to recognise a collection of central texts as authoritative (Derksen and Hick 2018, 3). The central assertion remains: the canon consists of the recognised or acknowledged corpus of texts (propositions) within a fictional framework deemed legitimate or authoritative (by a community). Following this definition, inquiries arise: How does a text attain authority? What mechanisms facilitate its inclusion in the accepted corpus? Moreover, who determines its status as authoritative?

Let us try to answer the first question. An initial approach to addressing this question involves considering authorship. Initially, it may seem that only what the author writes should be considered legitimate. However, this overlooks the contributions of multiple writers who may have been involved either simultaneously or at different points in time. In numerous instances of contemporary fiction, authorship cannot be attributed to a single individual; instead, it involves the collaboration of multiple contributors in its creation. As evidenced, Massive Serial Collaborative Fictions poses a challenge to the intentionalist approach due to the impossibility of accounting for the author’s intentions and the necessity of referring to satellite stories to comprehend various propositions within the narrative. Indeed, MSCFs present a novel challenge concerning the treatment of canonicity: within the intricate network of texts comprising a fiction, some are deemed canon while others are not. Consequently, some texts must be disregarded in interpreting certain works, while others are indispensable. How do we distinguish which text should be counted as indispensable and which can be disregarded?

In MSCFs, the legal aspect of creation assumes a predominant role in establishing what is canon, and authority is closely tied to legal ownership (Derksen and Hick 2018, 4). Nevertheless, there have been multiple cases in which a work owned by a legal authority is considered out of canon. For example, Shueisha, holding the rights to the *Dragon Ball* franchise, has released multiple movies set within that fictional universe. However, it is highly

[11] See (Busse, 2017, 101), (Hellekson & Busse, 2006, 63).

unlikely that these movies would be accepted as part of the canon, primarily because they directly contradict details established in the main plot (Stone & Donohoo, 2024). Following this notion, it appears that coherence or internal consistency among stories that will be considered canonical should be ensured to consider their legitimacy in the entire fictional system.

The concept of "coherence" within fictional systems can be understood in two distinct ways: what is logically possible and what is plausible. While logical possibility does not necessarily imply plausibility, it is a baseline for exploring hypothetical scenarios. For instance, D'Alessandro (2016, 63) presents the hypothetical situation where Tolstoy, in a sequel to *War and Peace*, reveals that the marriage of Pierre and Natasha was orchestrated by conspirators from the Andromeda Galaxy. While logically possible, this scenario is highly implausible and would likely be dismissed by readers. Moreover, within this hypothetical context, it would technically be true within the narrative of *War and Peace* that the principal romance was influenced by an intergalactic plot despite its implausibility and incongruence with the original narrative.

This example highlights the intriguing aspect of time within fiction, demonstrating how authors wield the power to alter past interpretations and shift the trajectory of their narratives through subsequent writing. For instance, authors can unveil that a story initially perceived to be set in a fantastical realm actually unfolds in our own world but in a distant time period. Such revelations often unfold in later sequels or instalments of a series, reshaping the understanding of those MSCFs. Similarly, characters who appear to be consistent traitors may ultimately be revealed as double or triple agents, a twist that typically emerges in the final books of a series. This ability of authors to retroactively change the narrative course of their fictional worlds underscores their creative control and the dynamic nature of storytelling. Accepting these changes as canonical depends largely on the writer's ability to integrate them coherently within the overarching fiction.

The process of "canonicity" appears akin to a negotiation involving various intermediaries, including the author, fans, occasional producers, and other stakeholders. Numerous instances of modifications to canon have been analysed in depth.[12] We have

[12] Consider fans from relatively recent sagas: Star Wars (Lyden 2012, 778), Harry Potter (Camacci, 2016), (Martens 2019, 36), Middle Earth (Larsen 2023, 1), Game of Thrones (Peterson 2015, 11).

observed various scenarios, such as authors altering their narratives through retcons (Doyle rebirthing Holmes), audiences contributing to the creation of content that is later incorporated by the author (Martin using Dothraki)[13], authors making adjustments to prevent specific interpretations (Lucas adding a scene in *A New Hope* to avoid the "Han Shot First" problem), or authors expanding their own perspectives to integrate stories initially not intended for a specific fictional universe (Tolkien modifying *The Hobbit*). Therefore, determining what should be considered canon appears to hinge on a multifaceted relationship involving the author, the institution holding ownership rights over a work, and the fans.

It is evident that once the canon is set, debates can arise among those who question these decisions, a phenomenon also observed in religions, such as the distinctions between orthodox and apostolic Catholics (Hills 2000, 133). However, unlike in religions, where debates often extend to questions about who has the "right" to interpret a text, fiction has an audience that, in a way, has made determinations of authority more democratic (Lyden 2012, 783) due to the platforms available in the twenty-first century. Additionally, as previously discussed, elements accepted as canonical can undergo changes through modification devices like retcons or new editions of a text. The motivations behind such alterations are diverse, ranging from rectifying past inconsistencies and meeting reader expectations to addressing interpretations deemed problematic by the author concerning their own works.

3.1 Argument against Intentionalism

Let us sum up some ideas on what we have said until now. Lewis's carry-over concept sheds light on how truth can be preserved and altered as texts interact within a system, such as an MSCF. While Lewis primarily considered the transference of truth statements, we have observed that texts can add, suppress, or modify one another. The truth value of certain statements within fiction can fluctuate depending on what is accepted to be true or false within that narrative context. These changes can occur either *according to* the events or information presented within a specific text, or *in relation to* the overall framework of the fictional universe. This interconnectedness, a system akin to Lewis's notion of *satellite stories*, underscores the importance of an explicitist stance where the written work holds ultimate authority. I have also said that when a work is considered canon, it is because it pertains to

[13] See (Uckelman 2019, 10).

stories officially acknowledged within a fictional universe and that these stories are regarded as “genuine” in that they constitute a set of propositions deemed integral to a specific fiction (Derksen and Hick 2018, 3). Moreover, I have discussed how something can attain the status of canonical. Now, let us explore how the concept of canonicity poses a challenge to intentionalism.

I already explained D’Alessandro’s use of the term canonical relatives, and I have said that it can be equated to Lewis’ idea of a satellite story. That concept is used by D’Alessandro to formulate an argument against intentionalism (2016, 57), and to conclude that there are no explicit truths in those fictions. This realization leads him to a nihilistic perspective regarding fictional truth, which means that there are no explicit truths in fiction (2016, 79). The core of the argument levers the retcon capability inherent in every canonical relative (W_2) concerning a proposition (p) in a fictional work (W_1). The argument seeks to show that it is impossible to address the truthfulness of any statement in fiction. According to him, when examining any explicit proposition, denoted as p, within any work W, one may find it innocuous, harmoniously integrated with the larger story, or crucially important to the narrative. Regardless of p's significance, for any such explicit proposition p, there exists a possible canonical relative of W. Within this relational context, it is possible for a canonical relative to render p false within the story. Remarkably, the resulting fiction remains intelligible and consistent even after this alteration. Thus, it follows that for any explicit proposition p in any work W, there exists a possible canonical relative of W that renders p false in the story without undermining the coherence or intelligibility of the narrative.

Two main premises constitute the argument:

1. There exists a possible canonical relative W_2 of W_1 such that W_2 makes p false in fiction F, and the resulting story (in particular, the set $\{\sim p\} \cup F$) is logically consistent.
2. If the set $\{\sim p\} \cup F$ is logically consistent, then $p \notin F$.

Then

p is not true in F. In particular, p is not *implicitly* true (or false) in F.

Let us consider an example to illustrate the argument. In the DC continuity (Wonder Woman Vol 4 #3 – 2012), it is true that Diana is the daughter of Hippolyta and Zeus, but in a canonical relative (Wonder Woman Vol 6 #2 – 2023), it is suggested that she is not Zeus’s daughter. Although this story did not explicitly say she was not, the story potentially possesses

retcon capabilities. In case it is confirmed, the statement: *Diana is the daughter of Hippolyta and Zeus* would not be indispensable to the narrative coherence of the DC continuity. This scenario demonstrates that truths in fiction can be changed without relying solely on such statements. Therefore, the existence of canonical relatives with retcon capabilities challenges the intentionalist perspective by stating that "any proposition not explicitly false in a given fiction is made true by some possible canonical relative of the fiction" (D'Alessandro 2016, 63). Satellite stories have the capacity to alter the truth value of statements within different narratives that belong to the same fictional system. In the subsequent part of this section, I will elucidate the workings of this mechanism.

Satellite stories can add, reduce, and modify content within the fictional universe. Addition can occur in at least two ways, as proposed by Folde (2021, 39): (I) *Gollum is alive*, a sentence p_1, originally presented in *The Hobbit*, W_1, is subsequently rendered false in the fiction of *The Lord of the Rings* in the canonical relative *The Return of the King*, W_2. (II) *Gollum was named 'Sméagol'* statement p_2, such as originally presented in W_2, is subsequently rendered true in the fiction of *The Lord of the Rings* in the canonical relative W_1. Note that addition-changes (I) are implemented moving forward, meaning that the preceding text (which, within the fiction, also occurred earlier) retains its original truth value. This type of addition mirrors scenarios in our daily lives; when we use statements such as *it is raining*¸ just by "moving" forward in time, the same statement becomes false. Conversely, addition-changes (II) operate in the opposite direction. Statements introduced later in the narrative retroactively make the same statement true in a previous work. This type of addition is contingent on the functioning of retcon.

Walters (2015, 325) examines the former type of addition by considering "according to fiction operators".[14] Walters distinguishes between the "according to" operator and the 'in" operator. The latter possesses a compositional nature, which is inherent to its constituent elements; in other words, it is constructed by explicitly holding specific truths. Conversely, the former exhibits a non-constituent nature because it presents a truth not established within the specific work but rather carries-on a truth from a satellite story. Indeed, as Folde (2021, 39) sharply points out, in this perspective, p_2 is true according to *The Return of the King* and

[14] This bears resemblance to Lewis's (1978, 37) analysis of operators in fiction, albeit with a heightened level of subtlety.

not according to *The Hobbit*. However, it is true in *The Hobbit* (as well as in *The Return of the King*). Hence, propositions that alter their truth value due to retcon would exhibit similar behaviour: the satellite story *according to* which a particular proposition *p* has a determinate truth value would influence the truth value of sentences related to that proposition *in* other stories that are part of the same system. This terminology will prove useful for subsequent arguments in this paper.

The reduction of content in MSCFs can manifest through the suppression of something previously considered true, thereby rendering it false. This process can be viewed as another facet of the "addition" process, as every subtraction inherently involves an addition. For instance, consider *Crisis on Infinite Earths* (1985), where Barry Allen dies while facing the Overmonitor. This implies that in every story following that year, the statement.

(p_3) Barry Allen is dead

is deemed true. However, more than 20 years later, in the comic *Infinite Crisis* (2006), it is explained that a speedster cannot truly die; instead, their soul becomes part of the Speed Force, allowing for the possibility of rebirth. Consequently, according to *Infinite Crisis*, p_3 is false, and in every story following that year, p_3 will now be false.

3.2 Rejecting D'Alessandro's objection

As we already saw, according to D'Alessandro, the inherent capability of every satellite story to alter the truth value of a specific statement in a related world within that system implies a nihilistic perspective which states that there are no explicit truths in those fictions (2016, 79). However, the argument is misleading. The fact that something "makes false" a statement (by showing that the proposition was false at the very beginning) **does not** entail that it was neither true nor false. I will break down the argument to understand my rejection of the conclusion. The first statement asserts the existence of a possible canonical relative W_2 of W_1 such that W_2 makes *p* false in *F* (where *p* is a proposition), and the resulting story, specifically the set $\{\sim p\} \cup F$, is logically consistent. This means that when W_2 makes *p* false, the resulting set $\{\sim p\} \cup F$ is logically consistent. However, this applies only when W_2 comes on the scene (which changes retrospectively the truth of previous statements).

The second premise establishes a conditional correlation: If the combination of the negation of *p* and the set *F* ($\{\sim p\} \cup F$) remains logically coherent, then $p \notin F$. Put differently, if adding ~*p* to *F* does not create a logical contradiction, then *p* is not initially part of *F*. However,

it is important to emphasize that this condition is applicable only when the resulting set {~*p*}∪*F* maintains logical consistency, a scenario that occurs solely when W_2 renders *p* false.

Finally, by combining these two statements, D'Alessandro deduces that *p* is not true in *F*. The conclusion arises from the first statement, asserting the existence of a relative W_2 that renders *p* false in *F*, and the second statement states that if adding the negation of *p* to *F* remains logically consistent, then *p* is not already a part of *F*. However, based on my interpretation of these premises, the conclusion holds true only when *p* has been rendered false in *F*. Prior to that, *p* could indeed be a member of *F*.

Following this line of reasoning, we cannot reach the conclusion, as D'Alessandro does, that *p* is not implicitly true in *F*. Instead, we can only conclude that when W_2 renders *p* false, the set {∼*p*}∪*F* becomes logically consistent, indicating that *p* cannot remain true in *F*. However, this leaves the possibility of considering *p* implicitly true in *F* as long as no "new" evidence is represented by W_2 that contradicts it. While his conclusion does not follow, I agree with the general treatment that he gives to satellite stories: "Any proposition not explicitly false in a given fiction [can be] true by some possible canonical relative of the fiction" (D'Alessandro 2016, 63).

One reason to consider this stance true is by doing a reductio ad absurdum. Suppose that the truth value of any proposition cannot be changed by a possible satellite story. In this scenario, if one were to claim that "Holmes has a third nostril" is false based on the available evidence, and then later in a sequel, Doyle establishes that Holmes indeed has a third nostril, there would be a clash of two statements: implicitly, it would be considered true that Holmes does not have a third nostril, while explicitly, it would be considered true that Holmes does have a third nostril. As D'Alessandro points out (2016, 63), this supposition is incorrect.

Nonetheless, his conclusion appears to be a *non sequitur*. According to him what should follow is that: "the correct explanation is rather that it's reasonable for the reader to imagine, or to tentatively suppose, that Holmes has two nostrils" (2016, 68). Nevertheless, he supposes that a statement cannot be true at one point or false at another. It is almost as if he is omitting the fact that truth values of statements can change depending on various conditions. It's plausible that "Holmes lacks a third nostril" is true until evidence to the contrary is provided, which could occur when another canonical text appears specifying whether he has or does not have a third nostril.

4. Conclusion

I have pointed out that explicitism holds some troubles when responding to inconsistencies that some texts have (either because they were meant to be explicit contradictions, or because they were the result of authorial errors). Nevertheless, a solution to that problem was also addressed when discussing canonicity and hierarchy. When addressing the question of where Watson was injured, it looked like the most canonical answer should state that it was on the leg because, with this answer, there are more satellite stories that can be explained. However, intentionalists frequently put forward an argument against explicitist approaches, which lies in the existence of unreliable narrators. In some fiction, the one that is telling the story to the reader is a person that has either mental instability (which may lead to that person hallucinating, for example) or is very biased about something, so that it exaggerates some narrations. The counterargument against explicitist is straightforward: if the determinant factor in interpreting a text is solely its textual content, how should one assess the truth or falsehood of a statement when the narrator within the text itself provides inaccurate information about the fictional world being described?

When the answer cannot rely solely on the text, it should be considering the role of the reader. From what we have said the reader of MSCF should be aware of the interconnections that one specific text has with the rest of the satellite stories. In the same manner that an astronomer, pondering the existence of the moon, must account for the presence of a planet, a reader engaging with a comic book within a Massive Serialized Collaborative Fiction must consider its relationship with the broader body of fiction comprising that comic. In here we can recognize that the reader of comics is active in the sense that there are some requirements that should be fulfilled for him, when addressing a MSCF.

In MSCFs readers also bear the responsibility of discerning what is canonically accepted as truth within a particular fictional universe. While relying on an unreliable narrator poses challenges when they serve as the sole source of information in a text, this issue is mitigated within MSCFs. Each text within the fiction is interconnected with others, forming a chain of narratives where different narrators present their perspectives. However, despite the variation in narrators, the elements considered canon persist across texts, providing a consistent framework for interpretation. Readers should take on an active role in interpreting the overarching storyline. This participation enables them to acknowledge and navigate the

inherent biases and potential unreliability of individual narrators featured within each text. Unlike readers dependent solely on a single unreliable narrator, those engaging with MSCFs can cross-reference information across various narratives, discerning the "canonical truth" through the consistency found amidst diverse narrators and interconnected storylines.

Therefore, even though explicitism may encounter challenges with inconsistencies and unreliable narrators, the framework of the MSCF provides a unique solution. By acknowledging the fictional world's interconnectedness and the reader's active role in navigating its complexities, explicitism remains a viable approach to interpreting these narratives. It allows for a comprehensive understanding that transcends the limitations of individual narrators and inconsistencies, ultimately leading to a deeper appreciation of the MSCF as a whole.

In conclusion, while intentionalism offers a valuable perspective for interpreting fictional narratives, it faces significant challenges when applied to Massive Serialized Collaborative Fictions (MSCFs). The sheer number of authors, the complex interconnectedness of stories, and the potential for retroactive continuity all contribute to the difficulty of discerning and relying solely on authorial intentions.

Conversely, the explicitist approach demonstrates greater promise in navigating the complexities of MSCFs. By focusing on the textual content and established truths within the interconnected narratives, explicitism offers a more robust framework for interpreting these works. This approach acknowledges the collaborative nature of MSCFs and allows readers to engage with the intricate web of stories without getting entangled in the complexities of authorial intentions.

Bibliography

Altieri, C. (1990). *Canons and consequences: Reflections on the ethical force of imaginative ideals*. Northwestern University Press.

Bloom, H. (1994). *The Western canon: The books and school of the ages* (1st ed). Harcourt Brace.

Busse, K. (2017). *Framing fan fiction: Literary and social practices in fan fiction communities*. University Of Iowa Press.

Bye, E. (Director). (2013, September 22). *A Conversation between JK Rowling and Daniel Radcliffe* [Video recording]. Blue Planet. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BdVHWz1DPU

Camacci, L. (2016, November 10). What counts as Harry Potter canon? *In Media Res: A Media Commons Project*. https://mediacommons.org/imr/2016/11/10/what-counts-harry-potter-canon

Carroll, L. (2000). *The annotated Alice: Alice's adventures in Wonderland & Through the looking-glass* (M. Gardner & J. Tenniel, Eds.; The definitive ed). Norton.

Carroll, N. (1992). Art, Intention, and Conversation. In R. Iseminger (Ed.), *Intention and Interpretation* (pp. 97–131). Temple University Press.

Carroll, N. (2000). Interpretation And Intention: The Debate Between Hypothetical And Actual Intentionalism. *Metaphilosophy*, *31*(1/2), 75–95. JSTOR.

Cook, R. T. (2013). Canonicity and Normativity in Massive, Serialized, Collaborative Fiction. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *71*(3), 271–276. JSTOR.

Cowling, S., & Cray, W. (2022). *Philosophy of comics: An introduction*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Currie, G. (2008). *The nature of fiction* (Digitally printed version). Cambridge University Press.

D'Alessandro, W. (2016). Explicitism about Truth in Fiction. *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, *56*(1), 53–65. https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayv031

Davies, D. (2007). *Aesthetics and literature*. Continuum.

Derksen, C., & Hick, D. H. (2018). On Canon. *Contemporary Aesthetics*, *16*(1).

Doyle, A. C. (1887) [2021]. *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Collection*. Pandora's Box.

Folde, C. (2021). *Exploring Fictional Truth: Content, Interpretation and Narration*. Klostermann. https://doi.org/10.5771/9783465145622

Grossman, L. (2007, October 22). *Dumbledore = Gay* [Time]. https://techland.time.com/2007/10/22/dumbledore_gay/

Hellekson, K., & Busse, K. (Eds.). (2006). *Fan fiction and fan communities in the age of the Internet: New essays*. McFarland & Co.

Hills, M. (2000). Media fandom, neoreligiosity, and cult(ural) studies. *Velvet Light Trap*, *46*, 133–148.

Irvin, S. (2006). Authors, Intentions and Literary Meaning. *Philosophy Compass*, *1*(2), 114–128. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-9991.2006.00016.x

Irwin, W. (2015). Authorial Declaration and Extreme Actual Intentionalism: Is Dumbledore Gay? *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *73*(2), 141–147. JSTOR.

Johns, G., Adams, J., Sheridan, T., Xermanico, Risso, E., Janín, M., Frank, G., Fajardo, R., Mulvihill, P., Bellaire, J., Anderson, B., Leigh, R., & Gerads, M. (2023). *Flashpoint beyond*. DC Comics.

Johns, G., Jimenez, P., Pérez, G., Ordway, J., & Reis, I. (2006). *Infinite crisis*. DC Comics.

Knapp, S., & Michaels, W. B. (1982). Against Theory. *Critical Inquiry*, *8*(4), 723–742. https://doi.org/10.1086/448178

Larsen, K. (2023). Falling Stars: Canonicity and 'Meteor Man' in Amazon Prime Video's The Rings of Power. *Journal of Tolkien Research*, *16*(2). https://scholar.valpo.edu/journaloftolkienresearch/vol16/iss2/7

Levinson, J. (2010). Defending Hypothetical Intentionalism. *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, *50*(2), 139–150. https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayp072

Lewis, D. (1978). Truth in Fiction. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, *15*(1), 37–46. JSTOR.

Livingston, P. (1998). Intentionalism in Aesthetics. *New Literary History*, *29*(4), 831–846. https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.1998.0042

Livingston, P. (2005). *Art and Intention: A Philosophical Study* (1st ed.). Oxford University PressOxford. https://doi.org/10.1093/0199278067.001.0001

Lyden, J. C. (2012). Whose Film Is It, Anyway? Canonicity and Authority in Star Wars Fandom. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *80*(3), 775–786. https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfs037

Martens, M. (2019). *The Forever Fandom of Harry Potter: Balancing Fan Agency and Corporate Control* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108599092

Matravers, D. (1995). Beliefs and fictional narrators. *Analysis*, *55*(2), 121–122. https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/55.2.121

McGonigal, A. (2013). Truth, Relativism, and Serial Fiction. *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, *53*(2), 165–179. https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayt004

Peterson, D. J. (2015). *The art of language invention: From Horse-Lords to Dark Elves, the words behind world-building*. Penguin Books.

Phillips, J. F. (1999). Truth and Inference in Fiction. *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, *94*(3), 273–293. JSTOR.

Rouillé, L. (2021). *Disagreeing about fiction* [Ph.D., Université Paris sciences et lettres]. NNT : 2019PSLEE064. http://www.institutnicod.org/IMG/pdf/PhD_Louis_Rouille_Disagreeing_about_fiction.pdf

Stecker, R. (2006). Moderate Actual Intentionalism Defended. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *64*(4), 429–438. JSTOR.

Stock, K. (2017). *Only imagine: Fiction, interpretation and imagination*. Oxford university press.

Stone, S., & Donohoo, T. (2024, January 1). What Dragon Ball Movies Are Canon? *IMDB News*. https://www.imdb.com/news/ni64382772/

Trivedi, S. (2001). An Epistemic Dilemma For Actual Intentionalism. *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, *41*(2), 192–206. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjaesthetics/41.2.192

Uckelman, S. L. (2019). Fanfiction, Canon, and Possible Worlds. *Manuscript*. https://philarchive.org/go.pl?id=UCKFCA&proxyId=&u=https%3A%2F%2Fphilpapers.org%2Farchive%2FUCKFCA.pdf

Voltolini, A. (2021). Real Authors and Fictional Agents. *Organon F*, *28*(1), 60–75. https://doi.org/10.31577/orgf.2021.28104

Wolfman, M., Pérez, G., Giordano, D., De Carlo, M., & Ordway, J. (1985). *Crisis on infinite earths*. DC Comics.

Yang, G. L., Luis, J., & Reis, I. (2021). *Batman/Superman (2019-) #18* (Vol. 18). DC Comics. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=eUkvEAAAQBAJ

Recebido em: 14/01/2025.
Aprovado em: 25/11/2025.
Publicado em: 31/12/2025