

## **Assertions in Fictions**

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Some philosophers currently writing on fiction endorse a view that ordinary people share, to wit, that fictions contain assertions, and may hence be criticized as false or praised as informative on account of them. Consider this compelling example from Kathleen Stock (2017): “Nonhuman animals have gone to court before. Arguably, the first ALF action in the United States was the release of two dolphins in 1977 from the University of Hawaii. The men responsible were charged with grand theft. Their original defense, that dolphins are persons (humans in dolphin suits, one defendant said), was quickly thrown out by the judge”, in K. J. Fowler, *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*. This proposition is an essential part of the content the fiction-maker is putting forward for us to imagine. However, given the theme of the novel, the moral seriousness with which Fowler pursues it, and perhaps relevant conventions for the genre to which the novel belongs, it is natural to take it also as a straightforward assertion, capable of transmitting testimonial knowledge. Thus, critics would object to the novel if the proposition were false, and ordinary readers could later use the information as if they had obtained it from a newspaper. As said, this is entirely correct according to several current philosophical accounts: we are entitled to acquire knowledge by testimony from reading this fiction. But what is the mechanism accounting for it? In this paper, I'll argue (against arguments by Currie and others) that it is just a case of indirection, akin to a Gricean conversational implicature. This will require to discuss views on which it is simply not possible to make assertions indirectly, and also to provide an account of indirection different from the most straightforward one; for in cases like this what is claimed to be indirectly conveyed is precisely the conventional semantic meaning of the relevant utterance.