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## Implicature and Implicit Truth in Fiction

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Consider the first sentence in Tolkien's Bilbo:

(1) In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.

By writing this, Tolkien made it true in the fiction that there lived a hobbit in a hole in the ground. The concept of truth in fiction has received considerable attention in the last 40 years. In particular, the conditions under which something is true in a fiction have been extensively debated. To illustrate, it seems clear enough that an author can make (1) true in the fiction simply by saying so. However, we also take facts that have never been explicitly mentioned by the author to obtain in the fiction, for instance, that Sherlock Holmes does not have a third nostril and that he has not had a case where the culprit was a purple gnome (Lewis 1978, 41).

There are two main approaches to such examples. First, there is the Reality Principle, famously advocated by Lewis (1978), according to which implicit story truths are generated by means of counterfactuality. What is implicitly true in a fiction is what would have been the case if everything that the author says was true. On the second approach, what is implicitly true in a fiction is established by what the author intends the reader to imagine (eg. Currie 1990).

I explore an alternative to these views, according to which all or at least many implicit story truths are generated by conversational implicature. The basic observation is that many examples of implicit story truths are such things that we would infer about the described situation also when the description amounted to regular assertion rather than fiction-making. Had the Sherlock Holmes stories been asserted as something that really had happened, the readers would similarly have assumed that Sherlock Holmes did not have a third nostril. I suggest that examples like this can be accounted for by Levinson's (2000) notion of "stereotypical inference", i.e., inference based on the heuristic "what is simply described is stereotypically exemplified". The mere fact that Doyle fails to mention any deviant characteristics of Holmes' appearance implicates that there are no such deviances.

I furthermore discuss an objection to the account, claiming that since the author is not asserting in the course of writing fiction, she can not be implicating anything.

**References:** • Currie, G. (1990). *The Nature of Fiction*. Cambridge University Press. • Levinson, S. C. (2000). *Presumptive Meanings: The Theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature*. MIT Press. • Lewis, D. (1978). Truth in Fiction. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15(1), 37–46.