

AUTOMATIC TELLER

FACT OR FICTION—WHO KNOWS, WHO CARES

ASK ME THE DIFFERENCE between fiction and fact, about the relationship between the two. This is one of *those* questions, isn't it. I know it's no use if I just say that the only thing that matters about a story is whether you can believe it, whether you can go along with it while you are reading it. I am talking here about any story, fact *or* fiction. If we can't go along with what we are reading, we are inclined to say to the writer of history *this* really what happened and to the writer of fiction *am* I safe in believing this is all lies. We want clear categories, shelves marked FACT and shelves marked FICTION. A box of fact and a box of fiction. We grow bewildered and even angry when we suspect writers are chucking bits from one box into another, especially if they dump some fiction into the fact pile. Facts in the fiction box are more acceptable, and we can see why they are there, and can enjoy them.

Peter Ackroyd recently wrote a biography of Charles Dickens. In this biography the author speculates: *What if it were possible, after all, for Charles Dickens to enter one of his own novels?* Peter Ackroyd then goes on to write a short piece of the fiction that could result. Throughout the biography he slips, every now and then, into this fiction, always telling the reader that he is doing so. He is writing a life of Charles Dickens, but he occasionally makes bits up in a safe, legitimate way. We don't expect to find these things in a biography, but we know where we are with it. There is no confusion; we can take it or leave it. The author is just enjoying himself playing around with the fiction created by Dickens to make some more fiction with Dickens as a character. Peter Ackroyd is not shuffling the fact and fiction cards.

I read a book called *Poppy* by Australian writer Drusilla Modjeska. This is also a biography, but not of a famous writer; it is a biography of the author's mother. It is *also* a piece of fiction. A lot of it is invented by the author who

has written diaries and letters for her character (her mother) so that it will never be clear to the reader where the facts end and the fiction begins. You believe the story as you read it because it is well written. But are you believing it as *fact* or as *fiction*. The publisher lists the book as both biography and fiction, and it won prizes, sometimes as fiction and sometimes as non-fiction. In the end you would probably have to classify this book as fiction, allowing that fiction can employ true facts about specific people at the same time as it invents things. Non-fiction runs into trouble when it starts inventing things. But there's trouble too for the writer of fiction here—if certain facts in the life of my characters are recognisable from the real life of somebody, and if I add more 'facts' that are indistinguishable in quality from the first set of facts, will somebody get angry and sue me. This is a dilemma for the fiction writer who must make decisions all the time about how to use facts, how much to disguise them, how much to leave out, how much to put in, how much to invent. It would be nice to be able to say you must be conscious all the time of how you are twisting, bending and manufacturing the 'facts', but when you are writing fiction you have to work unconsciously much of the time.

Lately I've been thinking about the importance of houses in fiction and biography: I've read about vast, grand English houses; I've seen the film of *Howard's End*; and I've re-read *Wuthering Heights*. And I often think about the house I lived in when I was a child. I have not so far described this house in fiction, although I have been aware of some of its details as I wrote—a pear tree outside a window, a verandah. Once there was a gap of many years during which I did not visit that house. When I went back I experienced one of the truisms of the person who returns to the childhood house—the house had shrunk, had become a tiny dolls' house replica of the vast domain that was alive in my mind from my infant explorations. Or had the house expanded in my mind with time and distance. The garden that had stretched for such a long, long way was the size of an ordinary suburban block. So what of fact and fiction here.

If I wrote about this house and garden and the surrounding houses and streets and fields (the fields were still there, and were not figments of my imagination or distorted patches of green memory)—if I wrote about the house *before* I went back to be confronted by the true size, would my facts be wrong. Or if I write about it now that I have seen the truth with the dreadful eyes of age and the strange clarity of reality, will the facts come good. The facts, perhaps, but what about the heart of things, the meaning. It depends on the point of view, on who I am and what I know when I am

telling you about the house, and what I want you to know; on what I feel and what I want you to feel. You see how the facts could slip away in all this.

We used to have a tall thick cypress hedge at the front of the house. Tall? I know it must have been thick because I used to hide in it and crawl through it and I kept a small wicker arm chair in it. I remember or imagine that things in the hedge never got wet. Bandicoots lived there sometimes. The front garden was on a slope and there were lawns and rose bushes and pink paths. Pink paths? They are still there. Good memory, good fact. Once I rode my bike down the slope and ended up in a rose bush. When I looked at the slope recently I found it hard to imagine how I had done this. I remember doing it. Perhaps I dreamt it? No. But the reality of today stands oddly beside the memory. The hedge is gone.

On the front lawn there used to be a palm tree. Huge. So I say. I saw, long ago, a photograph of the palm tree that dominated the garden and the house. One of the little children pictured in the photograph with the tree is me, but I have no recollection of the tree in life. There is (or was) photographic evidence of its existence (and of mine) and when I was very young the tree was removed. None of this is known to me. I wonder how they got rid of that big tree. It's funny that I don't remember the time when it was cut down, or remember the remains, or remember playing with the palm leaves that were left behind. I believe we had birthday parties beneath the palm tree. There were photographs of the party tables, but you couldn't see the tree. It occurs to me at this point that autobiography must be a very hard thing to write. I could not confidently say that when I was a child we had parties underneath a large palm tree that grew on the lawn in front of the house. I have the evidence of people who claim to remember, and I have the so-called evidence of my memory of seeing the photograph of the tree and me and assorted other children, but I *know* I don't remember the tree. I can, however, imagine the tree, imagine me ... and the tree ... And now I am safe; I have moved into fiction. In *fiction* I can have the palm tree. I can claim to have *invented* the tree. What happens when one of the other children from the photograph I claim to remember comes along in the guise of an adult relative and says: *Gosh*, the old palm tree. fancy you remembering that. They got rid of it when you were three. Never thought you'd put it in a book. Do you remember the dying pig balloons we always had at parties? You ought to put those in a book. We blew them up and let them go and they made this terrible noise like a dying pig. You were frightened of them and used to cry.

I stare at this relative and feel my eyes begin to fill with tears. I think of the dying pig balloons as they fly wailing and shrieking above the lawn,

above the party food, up into the leaves of the palm tree, up over the hedge and into the street. Children in coloured paper hats laugh and run and watch the paths taken by the balloons. Night falls and every balloon is tied to a little light so that the swirls and zigzags made by the movement of the balloons are marked in the air. And their paths lead backwards and forwards from fiction to fact, fact to fiction.

Like paths you can draw with light if you wave a torch in the darkness. My father had a party trick with blazing Indian clubs. He moved around in the dark, swinging the clubs in intricate patterns and rhythms while somebody played the bagpipes. The *bagpipes*? Yes, these things I do remember. I remember a dear little round man in what I believe to be full highland regalia puffing into his wonderful bagpipes well out of reach of my father in his kilt and singlet executing a kind of slow dance in the centre of a pitch dark ballroom. This ballroom was in our local Tasmanian Albert Hall, a grand Victorian affair built in a corner of the City Park where there was a large dolls' house full of rabbits. These as some facts I remember. I think they are the kind of facts that are difficult to include in fiction. These facts have a look of being crudely invented. Life is a crude inventor; fiction will only be convincing if it is more artful than life. To make fiction take the reader in, you have to leave out lots and lots of remarkable things that happened in life, you have to re-assemble, you have to *make*. You are probably prepared to believe me when I say the story here about the bagpipes and the Indian clubs and the rabbits in the dolls' house are facts, are part of my autobiography. That's the stuff they got up to in Tasmania in the dark before they got television and all came to their senses on the living room sofa. Fiction has to do better than fact. Once I visited a museum in England where I saw a pair of gloves that were so small and fine they would fold up and go into a walnut shell. The gloves were made from the skin of a chicken. I have been *dying* to put those gloves into a piece of fiction, and perhaps one day I will. But so far I have not worked out how to do it. Do you believe me? I can scarcely believe myself.

Back to the reality of our back garden. It was full of fruit trees, flowers, vegetables and raspberry canes. As well as having a fowl house it had a Wendy house, a tool shed, a garage and two more buildings one of which I turned into what I thought was a studio. All this on the suburban block? Well I don't know. Perhaps it was bigger. We had love birds and rabbit and a dog. Somebody stole the love birds and a daphne bush. One day a galah knocked at the front door and when my mother answered the door the galah said hello and walked in. So we also had a galah. Under the back steps there was a kind

of tunnel. Under one of the 'other buildings' there was a trench dug during the second world war in case we were invaded by the Japanese. The walls of the trench were papered with beautiful pastel maps of the world, like huge Bible maps. I had a tulip garden under a nectarine tree when I was little, and later on I had a large plot of gladioli that I used to enter in competitions. (I find that bit hard to understand, hard to believe.) Do tulips grow under nectarine trees? They did.

I, the teller of this tale; I the liver of this life, feel the movement between fact and fiction as I write, see the edges as they blur. And why do I circle the house, dwelling on the hedge, the love birds, the maps on the walls of the trench. Did I live such an outdoor life? Did the sun always shine in this part of Tasmania? It did not. I spent hours and hours sitting on one of the wood boxes beside the fire. We had a black kettle on the hob. I read books and knitted and sewed and listened to women talking. My bedroom had a frieze of pink and green flowers and fruit running round at the level of a picture rail. I had a print of a picture of the statue of Peter Pan. Although all this is true, it is warped with falsehood. Did I do what I have said from the age of two to twenty? I am picking bright little memories from here and there among the dark leaves of a big tree. The bedroom curtains were floral; the bedspreads were pink. I pasted pictures of penguins onto the bedheads. Penguins? Penguins. There was pink and green floral linoleum and pink rugs. As I write, some section of my childhood, some mythic sliver of it, is a flowery, girly, misty whirl.

My china doll sat on my bed. I had a chest of drawers upholstered with floral chintz. I was fond enough of it all then, but the picture of it I am painting for you (and for me) *now* is terrible. But true. Is it true?

Let's get out of the funny flowerbed of the remembered bedroom. Go to the side of the house, outside, on the up side of the hill. This wall faces north, but the strip of land between the house and the fence is too narrow to get the sun. There is a raised garden bed filled with bushes of veronica and a carpet of catmint. At either end of the path is a tall green lattice gate so that the whole area is enclosed. I think they must have meant to put in a fernery. The light was always different in the world between the lattice gates. The *world* between the gates? It was mine.

The light was different, and the smell. When I came home from school in the afternoon, instead of approaching the house in the normal way I would walk through the front garden until I reached the first lattice gate. I was about twelve when I did this.

I get to gate, put down case, undo bolt on gate, pick up case, go through

gate, close gate. I am in. I take as long as possible to walk from one lattice gate to the other, to go the length of the house. I feel nothing, think nothing, am nothing. I cease to exist, merge with the place, drift. I am permitted to sit down on the edge of the raised flowerbed, but only to stare at the leaves and flowers, to pick them apart, sniff them and taste them. I can't read or draw. I can't *do* anything. I can only be.

There was no act of imagination. It was more an act of negation, an exercise in disappearing. Having disappeared, I possessed the place, possessed myself, was possessed by the place. It is hard to describe because it was against words and images. Perhaps it was something like meditation or hypnosis, but I don't like to say so because those words give a false impression. There was a feeling of going in, being trapped, fulfilling the requirements of nothingness, getting out. I knew I would emerge, would take up the real world again, be a schoolgirl with hat and gloves, go into the house, open the case, get out my books and pencils. However in the time between the lattice gates I was gone, I was nowhere, I was not. The place had no name, no language. It was a piece of the world sliced off for me where nothing happened. I did not feel safe there; it was not a refuge. It was a trap, a zone to be negotiated, navigated, where rules must be obeyed. Go slow, think nothing, head for the other gate. Slowly. Don't turn round.

I now realise I was creating a split in my real world, trying to find a way out of reality, a way that was not dreams or imaginings. I think this desire for getting into nothingness between the lattice gates is linked with my desire to write fiction. I am not even sure how it is linked, but I see the person who went into nowhere every day after school as closely related to me now when I am writing stories. When you write fiction you *go* somewhere, but it's really nowhere.

I have given you my version of what I used to do between the gates, and it's a kind of fact. Perhaps you could find a neighbour who saw me doing it, saw me dawdling along the side of the house. Hiding. Moping. Dreaming. Chewing catmint. A deficient diet? Getting out of piano practice, out of housework, out of homework. What I tell you is the inside fact of what I was doing. I try to explain how I felt, how I was. The neighbour tells you what she saw me doing, and how she interprets it. A scientist with a telescope watching from his tower on the mountain will tell you the girl is going to be a botanist. She puts plants in her pocket and takes them into the house to sketch them. It seems there are degrees of fact here, and degrees of fiction. My own interpretation of what I was doing might be closer to fiction than to fact. Is there a scale with pure fact at one end and pure fiction at the other.

The pure facts would be the lattice, the plants, the girl, the uniform, the case, the time of day. That's the solid beginning-point of fact. Then you move through points of view, interpretations, inventions, fantasies until you get pure fiction. Somewhere down at the school hat end you would get autobiography, and somewhere just past the middle of the scale you would get a sort of ordinary fiction. At the far end you get pure fiction and fantasy.

As I write fiction I see and feel the movement along this scale from fact to fiction. In fiction it doesn't matter how far you go along the scale. When writing fact it is important to stay as close to the fact end as you can. That's why I like writing fiction—there are no boundaries.

I enjoy reading facts, but when I write, I mostly write fiction.

In my fiction I get things from the fact end of my scale. Elements of reality and memory inspire me. I am interested in the play between fact and fiction, interested in the moment when the metamorphosis takes place, when the grub of fact becomes the butterfly of fiction. I wrote a story called 'The Woodpecker Toy Fact'. It is fiction. It is also a reflection on the way stories get told, fiction gets written. It is in the first person, and the narrator recalls things that readers can see *might* be the recollections of the writer. Readers ask me how much of it is true. It is not possible for me to give a satisfactory answer to this question, not possible to tease out the memory from the imagining, the fact from the fiction, to isolate the spot on the fact to fiction scale where a transformation begins.

About ten years ago I drove past a sign that said 'Woodpecker Toy Factory'. Perhaps all the letters were intact; perhaps some were missing; perhaps the last syllable was gone, leaving 'fact' for 'factory'. I might have dreamt or imagined I drove past the sign. In any case, I got the words 'Woodpecker Toy Factory' from reality or from imagination, and I played with the words until they (minus the last syllable) became the title of a story and were placed and justified and used in the story. They also gave rise to a place Woodpecker Point where this and another story were set. My book called *The Woodpecker Toy Fact* appears on the computer at Dymock's as *The Woodpecker Toy Factory*. I like that.

The first words of the story are 'My mother', words that sound like the words of an honest narrator. Reader prepares to believe narrator's story. It goes on 'My mother was a magger' explaining that magger means great talker and gossip, like a magpie. At this point the narrator's mother and the writer's mother are identical or very similar. I imagine a photograph of a woman (Mother) and a series of reproductions of the photograph, each print with a more pronounced double image until the second last print shows to

separate images of the same woman, and the final print shows only one image, that being the one that has moved off from the first one. The first Mother of Fact has gone, and the new Mother of Fiction has appeared. This is too simple because the Mother of Fiction has gathered habits and characteristics from other people along the way and she is not identical to the Mother of Fact. To show her transformation you would have to keep adding little changes as the second image slid into being.

Now as I write it is night and there is a wild storm outside. I can hear the wind and the rain. In front of me on the table is a blue and white pot with three white tulips blooming in it. The lowest leaves are broad and slightly flounced; the higher leaves are spears of soft green. Where the silky white cups of the tulips join the smooth pale green of the stems there is no grading of colour, just a sharp change from green to white. These are the facts. The flowers are strangely still. The strong light from a lamp shines on them, and huge on the white wall behind them is thrown a tulip-shadow. This shadow is the fiction. I search for ways to describe the switch from fact to fiction.

The story of 'The Woodpecker Toy Fact' begins with the fact of Mother brought from the life of the writer, and there are other facts that the writer could identify as the story goes on. These facts are re-arranged to allow for the creation of fiction. It doesn't matter whether the characteristics of the Mother of Fiction are those of the writer's mother, or of any other woman the writer heard or knew about. The only thing that matters to the reader and the writer and the story is the Mother of Fiction should be presented in such a way that she has a life in the writing.

From the first fact 'My mother was a magger' the story moves on twisting in and out of fact and fiction, shifting all the time along the scale away from pure fact until at the end of the story it reaches pure fiction when the narrator's dead grandmother appears to the narrator in the form of a small blue butterfly.

The text of this story, as printed here, is a revised version of the story published in 1987. Even if work has been published, it is still possible for the writer to work on it.

THE WOODPECKER TOY FACT

MY MOTHER was a magger. The verb 'to mag' means 'to gossip'. It derives from magpie for the magpie is the scandal monger of the woods.

A paling fence divided our garden from the garden next-door, and over the

back fence lived Mrs Back-Fence. My mother and Mrs Back-Fence might have been posing for a cartoonist as they stood on either side of the fence magging. Behind each woman was a clothes-line. We had striped tea-towels, white sheets, woollen singlets, pink pants and knitted socks hanging from dolly pegs. Some things were patched and darned, the mending being more obvious when the clothes were wet. It was unsafe to hang anything damaged but unmended on the line, as this would be noted by other magggers as a sign of degeneration in the family. Once a torn and unmended night-dress got through the washing and as far as the clothes-line and our rabbit attacked it and shredded it so that it had to be thrown out. My mother and Mrs Back-Fence wore floral aprons, and often their hair was with metal butterfly wavers covered by a chiffon scarf knotted at the front. They wore thick stockings and brown shoes.

Over the back fence these magggers passed hot scones wrapped in tea-towels, cups of sugar, bowls of stewed plums, and a continuous ribbon of talk. They sifted through the details of everything they heard and saw and thought and arranged them into art. Children under the age of ten were allowed to listen provided they were still and quiet. One of the most hypnotic habits of the magggers was the constant use of possessive pronouns and parentheses. They constructed sentences that could go on all day in dizzy convolutions as one relative clause after another was added.

‘Edna and Joe (his brother was Colin who married Betty Trethewey who later divorced him which was when he had his breakdown over the Kelly girl so that it was no wonder the business went down-hill) were having their twenty-fifth anniversary which was just before Easter which was early that year, and Pam (she’s the daughter, you realise) was there with her fiance who was Bruce French (his father had the hardware next to the Royal Park) when it turned out Joe was electrocuted in the cellar which was where he kept the wine (they drank a terrible lot of wine in those days) and it wasn’t long after that that Edna turned around and married Bruce , and Pam went to live next-door to them (this was fifteen years ago now) and she hasn’t spoken to them since which is very hard on the daughter Susan who doesn’t even know that Bruce is her father, not that Bruce can be certain himself really , but of course Edna knows, and she’s never forgiven Pam for not telling her she was going to have Susan when she was engaged to Bruce.’

My mother and Mrs Back-Fence used to go to the pictures together. They were fond of the Marx Brothers and would use expressions from the scripts in their conversation where the words of Groucho Marx took on a curious lifelessness. I never saw the films until much later, and then I was surprised to hear my mother’s phrases coming from the Marx Brothers. But when I was a child I accepted the words at face-value, expecting them to have their meanings revealed later. I applied the same acceptance to the name of the local toy shop. The end of the sign had fallen off leaving the words ‘Woodpecker Toy Fact’. I accepted the name of the toymaker as an ordinary name, Jack Frost. It might have been real. I thought our rocking-horse Dapple Grey had a name, not a description.

Once I tried to join in some magging. I thought that if I introduced some fabulous fact into the conversation I would be able to join in. I said Jack Frost had told me he carved the original of the miraculous statue of the Infant Jesus of Prague. Nobody took any notice of me at all. But after a while I noticed that people were referring to wild and silly lies as 'woodpecker toy facts'. There was a special quality to these toy facts. There was a desperation either to attract or to deflect attention.

Over the years the idea of the woodpecker toy fact has become very important to me. I have lived here in Woodpecker Point on the northwest coast of Tasmania all my life. My parents have died and my sisters have all married and left the island. I live alone in the house with the clothes-line and the old paling fence. Mrs Back-Fence is in a nursing home, and I have never seen the wife of the Turkish man who now lives in the house. There is a little Turkish girl who sings Baa-baa-black-sheep sadly and endlessly in the garden. It is a boring and irritating sound. Jack Frost has gone. One of my nephews took Dapple Grey to the beach and left him there and he was washed out to sea.

So many things have changed. The toy fact has changed, and has strangely come to dominate my life.

I see my life as a quest for toy facts. The quest began one day on the beach when I was a child. I had caught a star fish in my tin bucket. The tide was out and there was a cold breeze coming in across the shiny wet sand. I was sitting on pebbles shaped like eggs and I had the bucket between my legs so I could stare down at the star fish. As I stared, I seemed suddenly to have the ability to understand everything. But at that moment a red-haired girl in a green dress came up behind me and grabbed the bucket. She ran off across the pebbles with the star fish. My sister chased her; the girl attacked my sister with the spike of a beach umbrella. She drove the spike into my sister's lip. Blood flowed as the girl ran away with the bucket and disappeared.

I think the sky went dark.

I often thought about the star fish and the girl and my sister with blood all over her face and then I thought that if I put together all the interesting things I knew and added things every day for years and years I would eventually see something more beautiful and more wonderful than anything I could have imagined. I would add fact to fact to make more fact. I thought of how we called things woodpecker toy facts and I imagined I was on a great quest for the toy fact. It was like a fabulous story I didn't understand but had to write. I gave up school, gave up everything except listening to people and reading encyclopaedias and sitting on the beach and chasing one toy fact after another. I cared for my parents when they were ill and I worked in a cake shop. I know that one day I am going to know everything about everything.

I will know that makes one kind of apple different from another. I will know what it is that stops hydrangeas from having a scent. I will see the pyramids being built and I will survive the Hundred Years' War. I will understand the nature of fire and know the depth to which the longest tree root goes down into the earth. I will know what sorrow is made from, and joy. I will have con-

versations with Jung and afternoon tea with Marc Chagall. There are bound to be times when I can think in Chinese. I have a large collection of feathers and I am making a study of their colours—the way the iridescence ripples and changes on the necks of pigeons. And the skins of snakes and the wings of butterflies and moths. I have a photograph of myself when I was three with a cloud of cabbage white butterflies. I am standing in my grandmother's garden, wearing the blue dress my grandmother knitted me for me. As these were the days before colour photography the blue of my dress and the blue-green of the cabbages among which I stand are tinted with inks. My hair is the colour of butter and my shoes are magical red. The butterflies are untouched by the tinter's brush so that they possess a quality of ethereal purity. The picture was taken the day before Christmas and on Christmas day my grandmother died.

The night before the funeral my grandmother came to me when I was asleep. She had taken the form of a small blue butterfly like a flying forget-me-not. She alighted on my quilt and smiled and said one word. I was surprised that it was only one because she was a great magger. She smiled at me and she said listen.

The toy facts in the story come in two forms. The first is described as very silly lies whereas the second is an assembly of pieces of knowledge collected and arranged in the hope that eventually the collector will know everything about everything. That the lies come first and the truths come later is a reversal of the fact to fiction scale. These things can go either way. The grandmother's instruction for the girl to listen takes the story full circle so that the adult narrator is a child again trying to make sense of the world by listening to the talk of the women. In that circle is an intimation of one of the main differences between life and stories. Stories have, however they disguise it, a shape, some kind of observable and deliberate point. Life has a beginning and an end. Perhaps life has a shape. Stories are one attempt we make to describe a shape for life. The storyteller takes the material and shapes it for the reader, selecting, falsifying, transforming to make a chosen pattern. We all do this when we tell the stories of our days. We leave out the dreary bits and add some flourishes in order to make a good story, to get the attention of our listeners and to make our lives memorable at least to ourselves. Some minds embroider the facts more than others. People who write fiction feel they must alter the facts and move along the fact to fiction scale as far as possible.

I write fiction and read fiction and love fiction. I am inclined to think writing fiction is not a thing for good girls to do. Good girls should be careful to stay at the fact end of the scale. You shouldn't go turning your granny into a butterfly. And yet, and yet when you talk about fact and fiction, you are not

really talking about truth and lies, but about truth and truth. Sometimes the only way to tell the truth, to get at the meaning of what you are trying to say, is to tell it in fiction. I have always drifted towards the fun end of the fact to fiction scale, and in things I have written and things I have done I (at *least* I) can see the truth of the fiction.

Near the house where I lived when I was a child was a cliff of sandstone and hard clay. Children were forbidden to play there because it was wild and remote and concealed from the safe world by trees and gorse bushes. You would be murdered there by lurking assassins. You would ruin your shoes. I used to go there and scratch works of aboriginal art into the surfaces of the rock and clay. Then I took people there to let them discover these pictures from the past inhabitants of the land. Not far away was an old and gracious house that was open to the public. I adored that house with its romantic old doors and windows and sense of past lives. The nursery was a small room upstairs where I found a loose floorboard. I decided to plant beneath the floorboard some fake relic of a past age for someone to find in the future. I sewed a very small rag doll and put her under the floorboard. Was she found and placed in an historic collection; or was she eaten by rats. She and the drawings were two of my attempts to interfere with the line between fact and fiction, history and myth.

So you can see that as far as the question about the difference between fact and fiction goes, I am the worst person to ask.