

Special Issue

Names and Fictions

Piotr Stalmaszczyk

Guest Editor

Contents

Piotr Stalmaszczyk: *Preface* 2

Research Articles

Fiora Salis: *The Meanings of Fictional Names* 9

Mark Sainsbury: *Fictional Names: Reference, Definiteness and Ontology* 44

Alberto Voltolini: *Real Authors and Fictional Agents (Fictional
Narrators, Fictional Authors)* 60

Stefano Predelli: *Fictional Tellers: A Radical Fictionalist Semantics for
Fictional Discourse* 76

Eleonora Orlando: *Fictional Names and Fictional Concepts: A Moderate
Fictionalist Account* 107

Juliana Faccio Lima: *How Can Millians Believe in Superheroes?* 135

Merel Semeijn – Edward N. Zalta: *Revisiting the ‘Wrong Kind of Object’
Problem* 168

Nathan Hawkins: *Frege’s Equivalence Thesis and Reference Failure* 198

Louis Rouillé: *Anti-Realism about Fictional Names at Work: A New
Theory for Metafictional Sentences* 223

Eros Corazza – Christopher Genovesi: *On Anaphors Linked to Names
Used Metaphorically* 253

Preface

The landscape of fiction is marked with names. Contributions to this special issue of *Organon F* investigate the various relations holding between different types of names and fictions. Though the authors offer different theoretical stances and approaches, they successfully search for the internal logic governing the usage and interpretation of names in fiction. The papers demonstrate that the discussion between Millianism and the Fregean approach, the controversies between realism and anti-realism, and varying approaches to reference, result in further developments and modifications of the individual theories, leading to a better understanding of names in fictions.

In the opening paper **Fiora Salis** comprehensively discusses the meaning of fictional names and provides appropriate theoretical background for further discussion. Salis assumes that there are no fictional entities of any peculiar kind, no fictional people, no fictional places and no fictional objects, and she devotes her paper to explaining the apparent meaningfulness

of fictional names such as ‘Desdemona,’ and ‘Middle-earth’. The paper provides an overview of the two strands in the philosophical debate on the semantics of proper names: Millianism and the Fregean approach. Salis assumes that there are no fictional entities, hence names such as ‘Desdemona’ are referring expressions without referents; nevertheless, she argues that the correct semantics for discourse about fictional characters is Millian, and she develops a pragmatic account of the meaningfulness of fictional names that combines two aspects of meaning, social—or intersubjective—and psychologicistic—or subjective. The underlying assumption in this account is that fiction is a communicative effort, namely a social interaction between an author (or, possibly, group of authors) and an audience, and key to this account is the recognition that fictional names are introduced in works of fiction that function as scaffolding for the construction of intersubjective meaning. In search for the best solution, the integrated approach,



Salis follows Walton's account of fiction, and Stalnaker's idea of the notion of common ground. Her account is ontologically parsimonious and semantically uniform; it also provides the resources to explain key features of the intentionality of thought and discourse about fictional characters.

Mark Sainsbury discusses fictional names in the theoretical context of reference, definiteness and ontology. He starts from the premise that the use of definite expressions in speculation is a good guide to understanding the use of definite expressions, especially names, in fiction. He further observes that the underlying fact which makes fiction possible and gives guidance about fictional names is that there is no need to suppose that there exist entities to which such names refer. Following some other theorists, Sainsbury introduces a special convention, according to which iff x represents* y , there really is some entity, y , that x represents, but the weak reading, " x represents y ", does not have this entailment. Although " x represents* y " entails " x represents y " the converse entailment fails. In other words, representation is purported representation*. Fictional names are as readily introduced and understood as other expressions in fiction, and as names in non-fiction. Fictional names are distinctive in that typically there is

nothing they represent*, though they represent people and places. Sainsbury concludes that we can happily combine commonsensical realism about fictions (novels, plays), which really exist, with irrealism about the fictional characters, people and places they portray, which typically do not.

Alberto Voltolini observes that a suitable account of fiction must involve a conceptual distinction between (at least) the following figures, or roles: *real authors*, *fictional narrators*, *fictional authors*. Real authors are the real original utterers of fiction-involving sentences in their *fictional* use, the one mobilizing pretense. They may coincide either with fictional narrators or with fictional authors. A fictional narrator is the protagonist of a tale that is narrated in the first person: the *internal* point of view on the tale. A fictional author constitutes the tale's *external* point of view that vividly manifests itself when the tale is narrated by no protagonist. Fictional narrators, however, never coincide with fictional authors. For either one or the other is the *fictional agent*, the one-place factor of a narrow fictional context of interpretation whose contribution is to provide a fictional truth-conditional content to the fiction-involving sentences of the relevant tale. Voltolini provides in his paper a semantic

reason to draw a distinction between fictional narrators and fictional authors, independently of whether they are respectively the same as the real authors of fiction-involving sentences in their fictional use, as is sometimes the case. This reason hinges on the fact that in order for such sentences to have determinate fictional truth-conditions in their fictional use, there must always be *just one* fictional agent for the narrow fictional context that enables the relevant fiction-involving sentence to have those truth-conditions. Hence, there must be a fictional agent, yet such an agent can be either the fictional narrator or the fictional author, but not both. This reason allows for dispensing with appealing to an epistemic reason to draw the very same distinction, a reason that mobilizes the alleged omniscience of the fictional author. For, as concluded by Voltolini, there is no need that such an author be always reliable.

The next two papers are concerned with radical fictionalist semantics and a moderate fictionalist account, respectively. First, **Stefano Predelli** presents his approach and proposes a dissolution of the so-called ‘semantic problem of fictional name’ by arguing that fictional names are only fictionally proper names. His main thesis is that fictional proper names are *merely fictionally* proper

names. The ensuing idea that fictional texts do not encode propositional content is accompanied by an explanation of the contentful effects of fiction grounded on the idea of impartation. After some preliminaries about genuine proper names, Predelli explains how a fiction’s content may be conveyed by virtue of the fictional impartations provided by a fictional teller. This idea is in turn developed with respect to homodiegetic narratives such as Doyle’s *Holmes* stories and to heterodiegetic narratives such as Jane Austen’s *Emma*. Finally, he applies this apparatus to cases of so-called ‘talk about fiction’, as in the commentaries about those stories and that novel. Predelli concludes with an optimistic note about possible extensions of his approach, and about their relationships with many other properties of fictional discourse.

In the next paper devoted to the fictionalist account, **Eleonora Orlando** discusses fictional names and fictional concepts from a moderate perspective. The thesis that she defends in her essay is that a fictional name refers to an individual concept, understood as a mental file that stores information, in the form of different descriptive concepts, about a purported individual. Given there is no material particular a fictional name could be referring to, it will be construed as referring to the concept

of a particular, with which many descriptive concepts are associated, in the context of the set of thoughts constitutive of a fictional narrative. A fictional narrative will be thus characterised as a conceptual world, namely, a set of sentence-types semantically correlated with a set of thought-types. This conceptual world, initially instantiated by the exemplar created by an author, is then transmitted to future communities of readers through their insertion in a historical communication chain, on grounds of their interaction with new exemplars. Readers are replicators: their fictive uses of sentences containing fictional names are associated with singular thoughts that are of the same type as the ones originally entertained by the author. But they can also be reformulators and critics, namely, they can entertain singular thoughts involving an interpretation of the original ones, which are associated, respectively, with their parafictive and metafictives uses of those sentences. Consequently, there are interpretative extensions and critical analysis of fictional narratives, which, as opposed to their original, constitutive conceptual worlds, are not shared by all the readers. Parafictive and metafictive uses give rise to further conceptual worlds, closely related to the original ones, that overlap and crisscross among those

members of the linguistic community who get involved with literary issues.

Juliana Faccio Lima investigates the content of beliefs expressed by sentences with fictional names. She observes that Millianism has notoriously struggled to give a satisfactory account of this issue, and provides an overview of appropriate approaches within this tradition. Some Millians have argued that fictional names are empty names. But such a view entails that the belief that Superman has impressive superpowers and the belief that Aquaman has impressive superpowers have the same content, contrary to our intuitions. Others have argued that fictional names refer to fictional entities. But this view has a long-standing problem, Frege's Puzzle, and many philosophers are skeptical that Millians have successfully addressed it, despite commendable efforts. Faccio Lima puts forward a different Millian Theory of fictional proper names that by-passes these and other objections related to belief content. The novelty of her proposal partially rests on a distinction she draws between semantic content and belief content—as opposed to a distinction between belief content and belief state or a way of grasping the content, as it is commonly found in Millian accounts—in a framework where belief contents are not part of the meaning of names, but they

depend on evaluative perspectives and should be relativized to contexts.

Merel Semeijn and **Edward N. Zalta** start their paper with distinguishing *fictional* statements (such as ‘Frodo had a very tiring time that afternoon’), *parafictional* statements (e.g. ‘In The Lord of the Rings, Frodo was born in the Shire’), and *metafictional* statements (e.g. ‘Frodo was invented by Tolkien’). They observe that any uniform semantic treatment of fictional names (e.g. ‘Frodo’) across parafictional statements and metafictional statements runs into a variation of what is known as the ‘wrong kind of object’ problem. The problem arises when an analysis of one of these statements inappropriately attributes a property to an object. For example, it would be problematic if an analysis implied that flesh and blood individuals are invented by someone, and similarly problematic if an analysis implied that abstract objects are born in a certain region. Abstract object theory (as developed in an earlier papers by Zalta) has provided a solution to this puzzling situation by distinguishing two modes of predication (encoding and exemplifying), two kinds of object, and a primitive property of ‘being concrete’. Recently, Tobias Klauk has argued that the problem reappears for the analysis of explicit parafictional statements in this theory.

In response, Semeijn and Zalta formalize the objection and defend their approach to fictional names, by demonstrating that it provides a uniform semantic treatment of fictional names across parafictional and metafictional statements.

Nathan Hawkins turns to some aspects of Fregean semantics, and he examines Frege’s Equivalence Thesis and reference failure. Frege claims that sentences of the form ‘*A*’ are equivalent to sentences of the form ‘it is true that *A*’ (The Equivalence Thesis). Frege also says that there are fictional names that fail to refer, and that sentences featuring fictional names fail to refer as a result. The thoughts such sentences express, Frege says, are also fictional, and neither true nor false. Michael Dummett argues that these claims are inconsistent. But, according to Hawkins, Dummett’s argument requires clarification, since there are two ways The Equivalence Thesis has been formulated, according as the thesis equates the senses or the referents of the relevant sentences. Further in his paper Hawkins demonstrates that whereas sameness of *sense thesis* is inconsistent with Frege’s other theses, sameness of *reference thesis* is consistent with them, and therefore concludes that Frege ought to endorse a sameness of reference, rather than a sameness of sense thesis.

Louis Rouillé discusses a new theory for metafictional sentences and analyzes anti-realism about fictional names. He observes that the current debates focus on the question whether fictional debates should be considered as non-referring or referring terms (anti-realism and realism, respectively), and that this debate corresponds to a debate in metaphysics about the ontological status of fictional characters: the anti-realist claim that fictional characters do not exist while the realist say that they do exist in some sense. Although anti-realism is pretheoretically intuitive, it has been challenged by a powerful argument in favour of realism based on the so-called “metafictional” uses of fictional terms. Rouillé attempts to demonstrate that the existing anti-realist account of metafictional statements is wrong-headed, hence he proposes a new one in order to free the anti-realist from the realist pressure and to make anti-realism more attractive than it is today among philosophers of language. Throughout his discussion he points to the importance of appropriate analyses of metafictional statements.

In the final paper, **Eros Corazza** and **Chris Genovesi** investigate the use of anaphoric definite descriptions linked to a metaphorical use of a proper name. They are especially

interested in cases where speakers anaphorically refer fictional proper names to an actual referent. For example, in utterances of the sort “Odysseus returned home, *he*_i is hungry” or “Odysseus₁ returned home, *the/that brave soldier*₁ is hungry”, where “Odysseus” is metaphorically used to refer to the actual person, Bill, the individual the speaker has in mind. The important question connected with such utterances is how the anaphoric pronoun or description simultaneously carries the content from the fictional subject, and refers to Bill. On a cursory analysis, anaphora forces the properties attributed to the actual referent (e.g. Bill) into the background, like pragmatic presupposition. In the cases of anaphoric complex demonstratives and definite descriptions, the speaker emphasizes, or makes salient the further implications shared between the fictional character (e.g. Odysseus) and the actual referent (e.g. Bill; and that Bill, like Odysseus, had a harrowing journey). The authors conclude with further suggestion for research within this area, which would integrate findings in the theory of proper names, metaphor usage, and reference.

Two other journals have recently devoted special issues to related topics: *Disputatio* 11 (54) 2019, Special Issue: *III Blasco Disputatio, Singular terms in fiction. Fictional and*


“real” names; and *Argumenta* 6 (1) 2020, Special Issue: *Fiction and Imagination*, clearly demonstrating that the topic is invariably interesting and challenging. It is hoped that also papers gathered in this issue of *Organon F* provide new impulses for further research in this field.

I wish to thank all the authors and the reviewers who have made this issue possible, and the editors of *Organon F* for accepting the project.

Piotr Stalmaszczyk

University of Łódź

piotr.stalmaszczyk@uni.lodz.pl

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1407-7610>

The Meanings of Fictional Names

Fiora Salis*


Received: 19 May 2020 / Accepted: 23 November 2020

Abstract: According to Millianism, the meaning of a name is exhausted by its referent. According to anti-realism about fictional entities, there are no such entities. If there are no fictional entities, how can we explain the apparent meaningfulness of fictional names? Our best theory of fiction, Walton’s theory of make-believe, makes the same assumptions but lacks the theoretical resources to answer the question. In this paper, I propose a pragmatic solution in terms of two main dimensions of meaning, a subjective, psychological dimension and an intersubjective, public dimension. The psychological dimension builds on the notion of mental files; the public dimension builds on Stalnaker’s notion of common ground. The account is coherent with two main theoretical principles, parsimony and uniformity. Furthermore, it satisfies three explanatory conditions posed by the intentionality of our thought and discourse about fiction, object-directedness, counterfactual imagining and intersubjective identification.

Keywords: Fictional names, mental files, common ground, make-believe, Mill, Walton, Stalnaker.

* The University of York

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8258-0587>

 Department of Philosophy University of York, Heslington, York UK YO10 5DD.

 fiora.salis@york.ac.uk



1. Introduction

I assume that there are no fictional entities of any peculiar kind, no fictional people, no fictional places and no fictional objects. Yet, we talk about Desdemona, Middle-earth, Hop-o'-My-Thumb and the magic Seven League Boots. For example, we say that Desdemona is a Venetian beauty, that Middle-earth is the central continent on Earth, that Hop-o'-My-Thumb steals the Seven League Boots from the sleeping giant. If there are no fictional entities, how can we explain the apparent meaningfulness of fictional names such as 'Desdemona,' 'Middle-earth,' 'Hop-o'-My-Thumb,' and 'Seven League Boots'? This is the question I want to address in this paper.

Fictional names are names of the same semantic type as proper names, such as my name and your name, names of places such as 'Barcelona', names of things such as 'the Hindenburg'. Proper names are expressions that refer to something or at least are used under the presupposition that they refer to something. The philosophical debate on the semantics of proper names ideally divides in two main streams. The first started with Mill (1843), who considered the contribution of a proper name to language exhausted by its individual referent. According to standard versions of this view, understanding the meaning of a name comes down to some direct causal epistemic relation to its individual referent. The second was roughly initiated by Frege (1892), who argued that the contribution of a proper name to language is some kind of descriptive information that determines the referent of a name, if any. According to this view, understanding a name consists in grasping the relevant descriptive information. Correspondingly, there are two main views on the semantics of fictional names. According to Millianism, fictional names contribute their referents, if any, to the truth conditions of sentences containing them. According to descriptivism, they contribute properties and relations that determine their referents, if any. I assume that there are no fictional entities, hence names such as 'Desdemona' are referring expressions without referents. Nevertheless, I will argue that the correct semantics for discourse about fictional characters is Millian.

There are two standard objections against Millianism for names without referents, which regard the apparent meaningfulness of empty names and the meaningfulness of sentences containing them. The problem of the

meaningfulness of names is based on the premise that if someone understands a name, then she knows its semantic content. But names without referents have no semantic content. If fictional names have no referents and Millianism is true, they have no meaning. Yet, ordinary speakers judge them to be fully meaningful. Therefore, Millianism for names without referents must be false. The problem of the meaningfulness of sentences is based on the premise that if someone understands a sentence containing a name, then she knows its semantic content. But names without referents contribute nothing to the semantic content of sentences. If names like ‘Desdemona’ contribute nothing to the semantic content of sentences, and Millianism is true, then sentences containing them have no semantic content either. Yet, speakers judge them to be fully meaningful. Therefore, Millianism for names without referents must be false.

Standard solutions to the problem of the meaningfulness of sentences appeal to gappy propositions (Adams and Stecker 1994; Braun 2005; Friend 2011; Salis 2013a). The idea is that sentences containing non-referring names express incomplete propositions that are structurally similar to fully fledged propositions. On this proposal, a sentence such as ‘Desdemona was a Venetian beauty’ expresses an incomplete proposition having a gap in subject position and a property in predicate position, canonically represented as $\langle ___, \text{being-a-Venetian-beauty} \rangle$. Obviously, the main advantage of gappy proposition theories is that they preserve the structural similarity between sentences involving referring names and those involving non-referring names. The main disadvantage is that they do not have the theoretical resources to distinguish between different sentences intuitively having different meanings (and truth-conditions) but expressing the same gappy proposition, e.g., ‘Desdemona was a Venetian beauty’ and ‘Othello was a Venetian beauty.’ Something else must be key to an explanation of this datum. Proponents of gappy proposition theories usually build on solutions they offer to the problem of the meaningfulness of names.

Standard solutions to the problem of the meaningfulness of names have been put forward in terms of further types of meaning at the cognitive level.¹ These solutions distinguish between the semantic content of linguistic

¹ Millianism can be interpreted as a particularly strong version of referentialism, the view according to which the semantic contribution of a name is its referent, if it

expressions, including names, and the cognitive relations speakers bear to names. The idea is that ordinary speakers bear cognitive relations to non-referring names that are similar to those they bear to referring names. On one such proposal, the relevant type of similarity is cast in terms of the causal relation with information inputs, mental states and behavioural outputs (Braun 2005). On a slightly different proposal, the relevant type of similarity is cast in terms of the notion of mental files, which are cognitive representations of (real or fictional) individuals (Friend 2011, 2014; Salis 2013a). Coherently with Millianism, mental files involve qualitative information associated to names or other singular linguistic expressions that contribute to the cognitive meaning associated to names but not to their semantic content. The main advantage of these proposals is that they preserve the intuitive similarities between thoughts about concrete objects and fictional objects, independently of any ontological commitment to their existence. The main drawback is that by locating the explanation of the meaningfulness of names in the mind of speakers, these proposals risk to undermine the intersubjective construction of meaning that is essential to our engagement with works of fiction. Effectively, these solutions are psychologistic in spirit.²

In this paper I want to develop a pragmatic account of the meaningfulness of fictional names that combines two aspects of meaning, social—or intersubjective—and psychologistic—or subjective. The underlying assumption is that fiction is a communicative effort, namely a social interaction between an author (or, possibly, group of authors) and an audience. Key to this account is the recognition that fictional names are introduced in works

has one. Alternative, more liberal versions of referentialism recognise that proper names can have further dimensions of meaning, including linguistic, cognitive, and pragmatic, that are also truth-conditional. For example, Perry's (2001) critical referentialism submits that an utterance of a proper name comes equipped with a conventional reflexive content that makes reference to the utterance itself. I don't have the space to discuss this (or similar proposals) here. But I invite the reader to have a look at Salis (2013a) for a critical discussion of Perry's information based account of the meaning of empty names, which is integral to his critical referentialism.

² See Maier (2017) for a recent development of a fully psychologistic semantics of fictional discourse that is inspired by Kamp (1990) and relies on the analogous notion of internal anchors.

of fiction that function as scaffolding for the construction of intersubjective meaning. The best account of fiction is Walton's (1990) theory of fiction as a game of make-believe. This theory, however, does not offer any solution to the problem of the meaning of fictional names. Following Stalnaker (2002), I will argue that the social, intersubjective dimension of meaning can be spelled out in terms of the notion of common ground.³ This social dimension can be integrated with a psychological, subjective dimension of meaning spelled out in terms of the notion of mental files. On this view, fiction is a form of social interaction that effects the mental representations of its consumers. The author of fiction tells a story that encourages certain imaginings via the use of intersubjectively available linguistic tools. These tools are created for the purpose of encouraging imagining in certain ways and provide the manifest basis for the acquisition of information that can be shared by consumers of fiction and stored in mental representations.

2. What account of fictional names?

Addressing the key question of this paper requires that we first identify the criteria by which we want to evaluate a theory of fictional names. The most important criteria are two theoretical requirements, parsimony and uniformity, and three explanatory conditions, object-directedness, counterfactual imaginings, and intersubjective identification. Let us begin by considering the theoretical requirements.

According to the theoretical principle of parsimony, we should reject any unnecessary commitment to the existence of fictional entities. We face the initially intuitive datum that fictional entities do not exist as ordinary physical objects. For example, we say that Desdemona does not exist and that Middle-earth is just a fiction. Depending on the interpretation we give of this datum, we divide between realists and antirealists about fictional entities. Fictional antirealists take the nonexistence datum at face value

³ Geurts (2017) suggests that fiction is a form of communication and describes the possibility of developing what he calls an ecumenical account (one that combines interpersonal and psychological dimensions of meaning) in terms of negotiating commitments.

and argue that there are no fictional entities (Everett 2007, 2013; Sainsbury 2010; Walton 1990). Fictional realists believe that there are fictional entities and explain the nonexistence datum in different ways depending on their preferred metaphysics of fiction. Upholders of fictional Meinongianism distinguish between being and existence and argue that there are non-existent objects (Berto 2011; Castañeda 1990; Priest 2005; Rapaport 1978; Voltolini 2006). Abstract object theorists posit a difference between concrete and abstract existence and argue that fictional entities are abstract entities that do not exist as concrete objects (Currie 1988, 1990; van Inwagen 1977; Thomasson 1999). Fictional possibilists argue that fictional entities are merely possible objects that do not exist at the actual world (Lewis 1978, 1986).

The debate on the ontology of fiction is ripe with controversy and none of the linguistic and ontological arguments that fuel the ongoing discussion between realism and antirealism is conclusive.⁴ There is, however, one theoretical consideration that, in my opinion, trumps realism. Whatever data realists about fictional entities present, antirealists can provide equally plausible explanations that avoid ontological commitment to fictional entities. If there are alternative plausible explanations of the same data that do not require the postulation of disputed entities, then there is no need to commit to their existence. That is, fictional entities are dispensable. In particular, as I will argue, we do not need them to account for the meaningfulness of fictional names.

According to the theoretical principle of uniformity, fictional names have the same meaning across different types of discourse about fiction. It is common to distinguish between two main types of fictional discourse, intra-fictional and extra-fictional. Intra-fictional discourse is discourse we perform from within the fiction, from a participatory or internal perspective. This kind of discourse is commonly interpreted as involving a mental attitude of imagination and a conniving use of language, one wherein the utterer engages in pretence or make-believe.⁵ For example, in storytelling and in reports about the content of fictional stories we say that Desdemona was a Venetian beauty and that Middle-earth is the central continent on Earth.

⁴ See Salis (2013b) for a detailed review of these disputes.

⁵ The expression 'conniving' was introduced by Evans (1982).

Extra-fictional discourse, on the other hand, is the sort of discourse we perform from without the fiction, from a descriptive or external perspective. In this case, we assume an attitude of belief and we perform a non-conning use of language, one wherein the utterer engages in serious assertion that can be assessed for truth and falsity. For example, in meta-fictional discourse we believe that, according to Shakespeare's *Othello*, Desdemona was a Venetian beauty. Other types of discourse about fictional characters raise disputes between realists and antirealists. Realists usually construe literary criticism as extra-fictional discourse and claim that such discourse is committed to the existence of fictional entities. Among their favourite examples are sentences such as 'Desdemona is a fictional character', or 'Desdemona was created by Shakespeare', which seem to be straightforwardly true. Anti-realists reject this interpretation and extend the notion of intra-fictional discourse to literary criticism in ways that I will explain in the next Sections.

There are two main accounts of the meaning of fictional names in intra-fictional and extra-fictional discourse, mixed and uniform. According to the mixed account, fictional names are rigid non-designators (they have no referent, neither actual nor possible) when uttered by the author of fiction in intra-fictional discourse; they are rigid designators (they refer to the same entity in all possible worlds) when used by readers and critics in extra-fictional discourse that seem to commit us to the existence of fictional entities (Currie 1988, 1990; Kripke 1980, 2013; Van Inwagen 1977). The first use is ontologically foundational (it is the use through which fictional entities are created or selected among the range of fictional objects). The second use is parasitic on the first.

Mixed accounts face some well-known internal problems, which I won't have space to rehearse here.⁶ Moreover, there is linguistic evidence against the purported ambiguity in the different uses of fictional names. For example, we can say in one and the same breath that Desdemona was the daughter of Brabantio and a fictional character. This sentence is naturally interpreted as involving the attribution of two properties (being-the-daughter-of-Brabantio and being-a-fictional-character) to the same individual

⁶ See Salmon (1998) for influential criticisms.

(Desdemona). The mixed account would have us interpret the only instance of the name ‘Desdemona’ in two ways, as a rigid non-designator (with respect to the first property) and as a rigid designator (with respect to the second property). We, however, do not seem to make any such distinction. To reinforce this point, consider an analogous example where we say that Amie Thomasson is an American philosopher and a fictional character. This sentence is naturally interpreted as involving the attribution of two properties (being-an-American-philosopher and being-a-fictional-character) to the same individual (Amie Thomasson). This interpretation is as natural as the previous one. In each case, it seems that we are attributing different properties to one and the same individual. The postulated ambiguity of meaning in different uses of the same fictional name seems artificial and not backed up by the evidence.

Mixed accounts have been rejected as unnecessary by upholders of uniform accounts of fictional names, according to which fictional names have the same meaning in all discourse about fiction. Proponents of uniform accounts divide between fictional realists and fictional antirealists. Realists hold that fictional names are rigid designators referring to fictional entities since their first use in storytelling (Salmon 1998; Thomasson 1999).⁷ Antirealists hold that fictional names are non-rigid designators throughout discourse about fiction (Walton 1990; Everett 2007, 2013). Uniform accounts offer a uniform semantics for fictional names according to which the name ‘Desdemona’ is a rigid designator (realism) or a rigid non-designator (antirealism) throughout its different uses.

Realist uniform accounts seem to fare better than antirealist accounts with respect to the three explanatory conditions that a theory of fictional

⁷ Salmon argues that once one accepts that there are fictional entities, one better interprets uses of fictional names as referring to those entities. As he puts it: ‘Once fictional characters have been countenanced as real entities, why hold onto an alleged use of their names that fails to refer to them? It is like buying a luxurious Italian sports car only to keep it garaged’ (1998, 298). Similarly, Thomasson (1999) argues that storytelling is a sort of special performative speech act that immediately brings a fictional character into existence. Once the character is created, all uses of the name by the author in the story and by readers and critics refer back to the character.

names must satisfy, object-directedness, counterfactual imaginings, and intersubjective identification. These conditions emerge from Friend's (2011, 2014) considerations on the intentionality of our thought and discourse about fictional characters that upholders of fictional realism (in particular, Thomasson 1999) adduce in favour of the postulation of fictional entities. Effectively, these conditions pose a problem for upholders of antirealism.

Let us begin by considering object-directedness. Thoughts about Desdemona seem to be about Desdemona, not about Othello or Iago. They function like singular thoughts that are about a particular individual rather than about whoever is the Venetian beauty, daughter of Brabantio, and wife of Othello. In other words, when we think about Desdemona, we think about the fictional character herself rather than about whoever satisfies the set of descriptions associated to her name in the story. Realists can argue that it is by recognising the existence of fictional characters that we can account for the object-directedness of our thoughts about them. After all, how could our thoughts about Desdemona be about any particular individual if there is no Desdemona?

Second, we can engage in counterfactual imaginings about fictional characters, which involve a change in their properties. I can imagine that Desdemona may have had a different faith had she not met Othello, or that Middle-earth may have been a continent in the southern hemisphere. In these cases, we seem to imagine a particular entity as having properties that it does not really have. Realists can explain this phenomenon by postulating that our imaginings are about objects we can identify independently of the properties they have in the world of the story. But how could antirealists account for the same phenomenon if there are no fictional entities?

Third, we can intersubjectively identify characters even when we disagree about their properties. Was Hedda Gabler a victim of society, as a standard feminist interpretation suggests, or was she a true descendant of Iago and Edmund, as Harold Bloom (1999) has it? Did Hamlet suffer from an Oedipus complex, as suggested by Freud, or was he one of Shakespeare's hero-villains, as argued by Bloom (2001)? Realists can explain this datum by postulating the existence of a fictional entity we can intersubjectively identify and disagree about. In fact, how could we intersubjectively

identify something that does not exist when we attribute different properties to it?

In the rest of this paper, I will develop a pragmatic account of the meaning of fictional names that is coherent with parsimony and uniformity and that can satisfy the three explanatory conditions of intentionality.

3. Walton's fictions

Standard theories of fiction characterise it in terms of an invited response of imagination or make-believe.⁸ Most upholders of this view define works of fiction in terms of a characteristic speech act of fictionalising—or *fictive utterance*—that would distinguish it from non-fiction (Currie 1990; Davies 1996; Lamarque and Olsen 1994; Stock 2011, 2017). A fictive utterance is defined in terms of a Gricean intention. The idea is that an author intends readers of fiction to imagine certain things, and that readers of fiction recognise this very intention and imagine accordingly. In contrast, non-fiction is defined in terms of an author's speech act of assertion that invites belief. These proposals are inspired by Walton's (1990) theory of fiction as make-believe. Walton himself, however, rejects the idea that fiction be defined in terms of an author's intention and suggests instead that an author's storytelling involves mere pretend assertions. While I sympathise with Gricean approaches to fiction, nothing much will hinge on whether we interpret the act of storytelling as a genuine speech act or as an act of pretend assertion here.

Central to Walton's account of the nature of fiction is a fruitful analogy with children's games of make-believe. On this proposal, make-believe is a social imaginative activity constrained by the use of props. Sometimes we imagine something without a particular reason. But some other times our imaginings are prompted by the presence of a particular object, in which case this object is referred to as a prop. Props are ordinary objects that

⁸ An exception is Friend (2012) who argues that fiction should be defined in terms of the relational, historical notion of genre. García-Carpintero (2013) replies, correctly in my view, that Friend's argument fails to demonstrate that imagination is unnecessary to a characterisation of fiction.

make propositions fictional in virtue of there being a prescription to imagine something. Walton argues that any ordinary object can become a prop in virtue of the imposition of a rule, or principle of generation, prescribing what is to be imagined when presented with the object. If someone imagines something because she is encouraged to do so by the presence of a prop, she is engaged in a game of make-believe, and someone who is engaged in a game of make-believe is engaged in the activity of pretence.

It is natural to spell out the notion of truth in fiction—or fictionality—in terms of fictional worlds. The idea is that in telling a fictional story, the author indicates or creates a fictional world that readers and critics subsequently explore through their imagination. To be true in the fiction is to be true in the world of the story. Some take this interpretation literally and argue that fictional truth is a variety of truth and that being fictionally true is being true at a possible (Lewis 1978) or impossible (Berto 2011; Priest 1997) world. On this view, utterances about fictional characters are genuine assertions that can be assessed for truth and falsity throughout different varieties of fictional discourse. Others, including Walton (1990), reject this idea and argue that fictional truth is not a variety of truth. Rather, it is a property of the propositions that are among the prescriptions to imagine in force in a fictional story. On this interpretation, utterances about fictional characters are pseudo assertions that can only be correct or incorrect.⁹ Both proposals face some well-known internal problems that we will have no space to discuss here.¹⁰ Most importantly, however, the former typically underestimates the role of imagination in fiction and it naturally combines with a realist interpretation of fictional entities.

So, on Walton's notion, fictionality is a property of the propositions that are among the prescriptions to imagine of a certain game. The statement 'it is fictional that p ' is to be understood as 'it is to be imagined that p '. In this sense, Walton's notion of fictionality is both normative (it depends on the stipulation of rules that guide the imaginings of participants in the game) and objective (it is independent of the idiosyncratic imaginings of individual participants who may or may not imagine in conformity with a game's prescriptions). Moreover, fictional truths divide into primary truths

⁹ See Eagle (2007) and Currie (1990) for similar views.

¹⁰ See Woodward (2011) for a critical overview.

and implied truths, where the former generate from the original prescriptions to imagine while the latter generate indirectly from the primary truths via further principles of generation.

In one of Walton's favourite examples, children play a game where they pretend that tree stumps are bears. In this game, tree stumps are props that prescribe certain imaginings in virtue of the original prescription to imagine (that tree stumps are bears) and further principles of generation. So, for example, when children see a tree stump in the woods, they imagine that there is a bear in the woods, and if someone lassoes a tree stump, they imagine that someone catches a bear. Furthermore, some imaginings may be shared by all participants in the game, while others may not. If there is a tree stump hidden behind a bush and nobody can see it, it will be fictional that there is a bear hidden behind the bush even if nobody imagines so. Walton calls this type of game of make-believe unofficial, in the sense that the rule that generates it is *ad hoc*. Other games, however, involve stable and conventional rules and for this reason Walton calls them authorised. These games involve props that have been created for the purpose of prescribing certain publicly recognised imaginings. For example, hobby horses and babydolls prescribe imagining horses or babies respectively. Props that have been originally introduced in authorised games of make-believe are what Walton calls 'representations'.

Walton argues that the ability to engage in games of make-believe does not disappear when we become adults. In fact, he encourages us to interpret representational works of art, including literary works of fiction, as props that have been originally created for the purpose of generating certain games of make-believe. Literary works of fiction, in particular, are syntactic-semantic entities that can be perceived through concrete copies of texts in printed, digital or audio versions. They prescribe certain imaginings in virtue of an author's prescriptions. When reading *What Masie Knew*, we imagine that Masie lives in London in virtue of Henry James' prescription to imagine that this is the case. Further truths in the fiction can be generated from the primary truths via two main principles, the reality principle and the mutual belief principle. The reality principle keeps the world of the fiction as close as possible to the real world. From the primary fictional truth that Masie lives in London and our knowledge of Europe's geography,

we can infer the implied fictional truth that Masie's trip to France requires travelling on the Dover Calais ferry route. The mutual belief principle generates further implied truths by importing the mutual beliefs of members of the community in which the story originated. Many implied truths in Homer's *Iliad* are generated against the ancient Greek mythological beliefs. While Walton does not explicitly recognise it, others have already noticed that make-believe has the flexibility to include further principles of generation that may depend on particular genres and literary conventions. Of course, there are cases where determining what is fictional is difficult. For example, did Edna, the main character in Chopin's *The Awakening*, die by purposefully committing suicide or did she unintentionally get swept away in the waves? Did the governess in James' *The Turn of the Screw* really see the ghosts of Miss Jessell and Peter Quint, or was she of unsound mind? Importantly, our appreciation of these stories may depend on the fact that the ambiguity cannot be solved. But in the vast majority of cases, we have a clear grasp of what is true in the fiction and what is not.

Someone who imaginatively engages with literary works of fiction plays an authorised game of make-believe. This is often the case in intra-fictional discourse such as producing reports about the content of the story. There are, however, other ways of developing a story within the imagination that constitute unofficial games of make-believe and can therefore be interpreted as further examples of intra-fictional discourse. A typical case is offered by literary critics' practice of exploring a character's properties from a participatory perspective, as the natural continuation of stories, sometimes even in cross-fictional contexts. In these instances, critics talk about characters as if they were real, by predicting their behaviour, their thoughts, their feelings, comparing them to other characters and so on. Harold Bloom, reflecting on Hedda Gabler, the character, writes:

Whether commanding an army or an arms factory, Hedda would have acted like her forerunners Iago and Edmund. Her genius, like theirs, is for negation and destruction ... her intelligence is malign, not because of social circumstances but for her pleasure, for the exercise of her will. (quoted in Eagle 2007, 128)

Although this kind of imaginings are the result of Bloom's development of the story from a participatory perspective, none of them is among the

imaginings prescribed by the author or implicitly derivable from the story. They are moves in an unofficial game of make-believe.

Walton's proposal fits well with the two theoretical principles of parsimony and uniformity. It is ontologically parsimonious because while his framework is compatible with both realism and antirealism about fictional entities, Walton voices his preference for an antirealist account of fiction. Games of make-believe can involve imaginings about real objects and fictional objects. But imaginings do not commit us to postulate any fictional entities. Imagining a flying donkey does not commit one to the existence of a flying donkey. Moreover, the account is uniform because Walton suggests that fictional names are rigid non-designators in all their uses. He assumes a Millian account of names and recognises that fictional names have no referents and cannot contribute anything to the truth conditions of sentences. In fact, Walton argues that statements involving fictional names express no propositions and have no truth-conditional content. On this view, they are not descriptions of states of affairs but prescriptions to imagine in certain ways.

Walton's analysis inherits the problems of a Millian semantics for fictional names and it therefore fails to satisfy the explanatory conditions of object-directedness, counterfactual imaginings, and intersubjective identification. How can our thoughts and discourse about Hedda Gabler or any other fictional character be directed at any particular individual if Hedda does not exist? How can we imagine that Desdemona might have been different from the way she is in Shakespeare's *Othello* if there is no Desdemona? And how can we intersubjectively identify and even disagree about the properties of a fictional character if there isn't one? In the next three sections, I will develop an answer to these questions within the make-believe framework by appealing to the notions of mental files and common ground.

4. Mental files and the subjective meaning of names

Recent accounts of fictional names coherent with Millianism and Walton's account of fiction build on the recognition of the cognitive, psychological and subjective meanings that speakers associate with names. A key

notion in these accounts is that of a mental file. The notion is best introduced with an example.

Sally and Mary meet Harry at a party in the philosophy department. Harry has red hair; he wears blue jeans and a yellow shirt. Sally assumes that he is a philosopher. When Sally meets Harry, she forms a mental file H_S collecting all information she takes to be true of Harry. H_S is informed by the encounter, but it needs not involve exclusively information that is true of Harry. H_S contains Sally's personal perspective on Harry, which can but need not be the same as the set of properties he satisfies. Sally does not realise that Harry is Australian (she does not recognise his accent), and she does not know that he is not a philosopher, but a neuroscientist. Her mental file differs from the set of properties satisfied by Harry in all these respects. Mary learns about Harry from a common friend, Bob, who tells her that he's going to take a friend, a neuroscientist called Harry, to the party. So, Mary forms a mental file H_M of Harry before the party, through conversation with Bob. When Mary meets Harry, she already knows that he is a neuroscientist, but she also recognises his accent and adds the information that he's Australian to her file. Thus, the information she takes to be about Harry is partially different from the information Sally takes to be about Harry. Mary's and Sally's mental files H_M and H_S share some information (has red hair, wears blue jeans and a yellow shirt), but not other (is a neuroscientist, is Australian). Sally's and Mary's files are subjective and idiosyncratic in these respects.

Mental files are a philosopher's construct that is akin to that of a concept.¹¹ They are organization structures for the storage of information that a subject takes to be about a concrete object represented as an individual rather than as the possessor of certain properties.¹² Mental files can be formed in perception (like Sally's encounter with Harry) or in communication (like Mary's conversation with Bob). In both cases, there's a causal relation between the individual source of information (Harry), which can be direct (in perception) or indirect (in communication chains).

¹¹ Murez and Recanati (2016) emphasise the conceptual nature of mental files.

¹² Obviously, the notion of a cognitive representation is distinct and independent from Walton's notion of representation as a prop in an authorised game of make-believe.

Since their inception mental files have been deployed in accounts of non-referring names.¹³ Many have argued that mental files can lack referents and that the information stored in a mental file does not commit one to the existence of any particular object (Friend 2011, 2014; Perry 2001; Recanati 2012). In fact, one may conjecture a sort of teleological argument for the possibility that mental files lack a referent.¹⁴ Mental files are produced by cognitive mechanisms that have survived because they are good at producing non-empty cognitive representations. An empty file counts as a mental file just like a malformed heart that cannot perform the function of pumping blood is nevertheless a heart. The French physicist Le Verrier hypothesised that there existed a planet called ‘Vulcan’ that was responsible for the observed perturbations in Mercury’s orbit. Le Verrier theorised about Vulcan, he searched for it through astronomical observations and exchanged information and ideas with colleagues about Vulcan. He collected a large fund of information in a mental file about Vulcan, which really did not exist.

Something different, however should be told of mental files for fictional objects. In this case there does not seem to be anything corresponding to the idea of a malformation. Empty mental files of fictions may serve another function. As all other mental files, they are structures in which speakers store and organise information, but this is to track objects in pretence, as an exercise of the imagination. A mental file for Desdemona is formed while reading a copy of Shakespeare’s play *Othello*. As I will argue in the next section, writing and reading fiction constitute a communicative effort in which mental files are formed even without a direct or indirect causal relation with the individual referent of the file. This type of causal relation is merely imagined. Something else, however, is needed to guarantee that different speakers engaging with the fiction form mental files about the same fictional individuals. I’ll indicate my preferred solution to this issue in Section 6.

Information contained in mental files can be construed as a list of predicates that a speaker takes as satisfied by the individual referent of the file.

¹³ Grice originally introduced the notion under the name ‘dossier’ in his *Vacuous Names* (1969).

¹⁴ A similar argument was proposed by Sainsbury (2005) in relation to his notion of individual concepts, which I take to be analogous to mental files.

Predicates can be relational, and thus involve other mental files. As a consequence, two files could appear in each other's list. This happens, for instance, when a file involves a proper name. When Mary thinks that Harry is Bob's friend, she deploys two mental files, the mental file H_M containing the information 'is Bob's friend', and the mental file B_M , which she associates to the name 'Bob'. Effectively, there can be a hierarchy of files, but the files themselves contain only information (predicates) about Harry and Bob. They are associated to singular terms without including them. Moreover, mental files are not constituted or identified by their predicates and corresponding properties. The properties are merely associated with the file, and information can be added to and deleted from the file without changing the file itself. The day after the party, Sally and Mary chat about Harry. Eventually Sally learns that Harry is a neuroscientist, not a philosopher. She therefore updates her fund of information about Harry. She deletes the predicate 'is a philosopher' and adds the predicate 'is a neuroscientist' to H_s .

As far as the information stored in the mental file can be updated, no specific information is essential to the identity of the file. However, there may be a persistent core of information about Harry that Sally will not withdraw and that may be essential to Harry. Sally's mental file, for instance, could preserve the information that Harry is human, that he is identical to himself, and that he is a concrete individual. But these are not properties that she can use to keep track of Harry or to distinguish him from other individuals. The information that she can use in these cases is probably inessential to Harry, which means that it can always be updated, subtracted or added through the history of the mental file. The fact that this kind of information is inessential makes it also inapt to be used to fix the referent of the file, and hence knowledge of the information stored in a mental file is not equivalent to knowledge of reference conditions. Perception and communication chains open a channel of information flow from object to subject, and the source of information is undoubtedly important, but there is no guarantee that the information is accurate. Hence, the notion of a mental file cannot be reduced to that of the information it contains.

Mental files work as modes of presentation of particular individuals, and so they play cognitive roles akin to Fregean senses. Hence, they contribute

a solution to the problem of the cognitive significance of names, which is the problem of explaining how one can have different thoughts about the same object without realising that one is thinking about the same object. In Frege's classical example, one can think about Hesperus and Phosphorus in two distinct ways, as the morning star and as the evening star respectively, possibly without realising that one is thinking about the very same planet, Venus. Similarly, a reader of Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* can think about Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in two distinct ways, as the kind doctor and the evil creature, without initially realising that they are the very same person. The solution in terms of mental files is that the names 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' are associated with two distinct mental files each containing the relevant piece of information. One can believe that Hesperus will rise in the morning without believing that Phosphorus will rise in the morning because the names are associated with mental files involving different information. Similarly, the names 'Dr Jekyll' and 'Mr Hyde' are associated with different mental files. One can imagine that Dr Jekyll is a kind doctor without imagining that Mr Hyde is a kind doctor. Fregean senses are classically interpreted as descriptive modes of presentation that enter into the propositional content of sentences involving the relevant names. Mental files, however, are not necessarily interpreted in this way. The explanation in terms of mental files works at the level of thought, where mental files are the subjective components of an individual's cognitive relation to a proposition (including a gappy proposition).

Like Fregean senses, mental files can also contribute an explanation to the problem of informative identities, which is the problem of explaining why it is informative to be told that Hesperus is Phosphorus, but not to be told that Hesperus is Hesperus; or why it is informative to be told that Dr Jekyll is Mr Hyde, but not to be told that Dr Jekyll is Dr Jekyll. There are two different accounts of this phenomenon based on two different operations on files, merging and linking. On the merging model, accepting an identity statement requires the unification of two files which become one (Strawson 1974).¹⁵ On the linking model, accepting an identity statement requires the connection between files that remain distinct. Many have argued that the

¹⁵ The term 'merging' is introduced by Millikan (2000).

merging model is probably not adequate to describe the cognitive effects of many identity judgments. For example, Millikan (1997) argues that it would be risky to merge two files on the basis of an identity judgment that one may accept with less than 100% subjective probability, while the operation of linking may be less risky. Furthermore, the ability to distinguish between the different sets of information may be key to track objects and draw certain inferences. The ability to distinguish between Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde purely in terms of their properties may be relevant to understand the battle between the good and the evil within Mr Jekyll. A better model would explain the phenomenon of informative identities in terms of the linking of a multiplicity of files for the same object or individual, in reality or in imagination.

Cases of recognition and identification show different things. First, they show that referents may be shared by different mental files. An agent who thinks of Hesperus may not know that it is identical to Phosphorus: she has two distinct files for the same individual object. Similarly, someone who imagines Dr Jekyll may not know that she is imagining Mr Hyde. Second, they show that referents cannot be changed: a mental file has its referent forever, if any. There are two reasons for this claim, internal coherence and misidentification.¹⁶ An individual object imposes certain conditions on the coherence of the information stored in its mental file. If the predicate ‘is F ’ belongs to the mental file for x , then ‘is not F ’ cannot belong to the same mental file, otherwise we would have inconsistent information about the same individual. If the referent of a file could change, there would be no constraint on updating information. This is especially relevant when the attitude one has toward the information contained in the file is belief. Coherence and consistency, however, may not always be required in imagination. For instance, there may be a mental file for the round square, even though the information ‘is round’ and ‘is not round’ is contradictory.

Another reason why the referent of a file cannot change is misidentification. Suppose that Harry has a twin brother, Barry. Sally meets Harry first and forms an individual concept of him. Then she meets Barry, but she does not know that Barry is Harry’s twin brother. Sally thinks that she

¹⁶ These considerations are based on Sainsbury’s (2010) similar account of individual concepts, which are cognitive entities akin to mental files.

meets Harry again. She falsely believes that the individual she meets is Harry, while in fact he is Barry. She sees Barry for some time, and never sees Harry again. Now, is Sally's mental file about Harry or about Barry? We have two options. Either we say that Sally's mental file of Harry has shifted its reference to Barry or we say that, when Mary meets Barry, she forms a new mental file with a different referent. The first option, on which an individual mental file can change its referent, requires that we fix the referent by application. But we cannot fix the referent *ex novo* each time we use a mental file because in this case we could not give a systematic account of error and misidentification. If each time we misidentify an object, we just change the referent of the mental file there is no misidentification. Mental files can have at most one referent. If the same mental file applies to x and y , then $x = y$. If this were not the case, misidentification (and memory and recognition) could not be accounted for (barring confusion, of course).

In sum, mental files are cognitive representations of individual objects, if any, which function as Fregean modes of presentations. They contribute to explanations of well-known problems, including the cognitive significance of names, informative identities, recognition, identification and misidentification of (real and fictional) objects. As cognitive representations, however, they are also subjective and idiosyncratic components of the meaning of names. Hence, an appeal to mental files cannot contribute an explanation of the intersubjective, social dimension of the meaning of fictional names and of discourse involving them. It is now time to explore also this dimension.

5. Common ground and the imaginative stance

Storytelling is a communicative effort that involves two parties, the author of fiction and the audience. Successful communication requires that both author and audience share certain background information—or common ground. Stalnaker (1999) introduces an influential notion of common ground, which he bases on the concept of presupposition. Common ground is the body of information that is presumed to be shared by the participants in a discourse. Stalnaker (1973) gives a standard pragmatic characterisation

of presupposition as a proposition that a speaker presupposes at a given time in a discourse and on the basis of which she is disposed to act as if she takes its truth for granted and as if her audience recognises that she is doing so. He further explains that to presuppose something is a propositional attitude with a social dimension:

To presuppose something is to take it for granted, or at least to act as if one takes it for granted, as background information—as common ground among the participants in the conversation. What is most distinctive about this propositional attitude is that it is a social or public attitude: one presupposes that ϕ only if one presupposes that others presuppose it as well. (Stalnaker 2002, 701)

In this section, I will argue that we should assume a similar notion of common ground and pragmatic presupposition to develop an account of the social, intersubjective meaning of fictional names.

The standard analysis of common ground is usually couched in terms of belief. Common ground is common belief and what a speaker presupposes is what she believes that others believe. Thus, common belief is a property of a group, while speaker presupposition is a propositional attitude of the individual speaker. The common beliefs of participants in a conversation are the beliefs that they believe others share. For example, when having a conversation with a colleague, I may say: I cannot come to the seminar this afternoon, I have to collect my daughter from school. In this case, the presupposition that is common belief of both parties (myself and my colleague) is that I have a daughter. I presuppose that I have a daughter and that my colleague believes that I have a daughter. My colleague presupposes that I have a daughter and that I believe that I have a daughter. Accommodation, or informative presupposition, would be required in a situation where my colleague does not know that I have a daughter before the speech act and comes to know that I have a daughter after the speech act. In this case, my colleague would infer that I have a daughter after the speech act if she believes that I am being honest. In this case, she will add the presupposition that I have a daughter to the common ground after the speech act. The speech act, the utterance, is what Stalnaker calls a ‘manifest event’ (2002, 708), an event that is mutually recognised to have occurred by both parties in the conversation.

Stalnaker notices that in some cases what is presupposed may be different from what participants in the conversation believe. A more general notion of acceptance is therefore needed. On this view, acceptance is a propositional attitude that encompasses beliefs and other attitudes that may contrast with belief, such as supposition, presumption, assumption, and, as I will argue, make-believe. Acceptance is an attitude one party in a conversation assumes, perhaps for a limited time and only in the context of the conversation, when treating a proposition as true for a given purpose, ignoring the possibility that it may, in fact, be false. In the history class, teacher and students discuss the religious practices of ancient Rome and claim that the Romans worshipped Juno. Neither the teacher nor the students believe that Juno exists, yet they presuppose that there was such a goddess. They accept that Juno exists, ignoring the falsity of this proposition for the purpose of the conversation. It is common ground that Juno exists, and they believe that they accept that Juno exists, and they believe that all believe that all accept that Juno exists, etc.

Coherently with this framework, Sainsbury (2010) develops an account of fictional discourse and fictional truth in terms of acceptance and presupposition relative truth. On this view, we can evaluate the Juno sentence as true relative to the shared presupposition that there is such a goddess as Juno, which we know to be false. Similarly, we can evaluate a sentence like ‘Desdemona is a Venetian beauty’ with respect to the presupposition that there is such a Venetian beauty as Desdemona, which we accept (without believing it) for the purpose of engaging with the fiction. Sainsbury argues that the notion of presupposition-relative truth is independent of fiction, and this is an advantage of the view because ‘it’s not an *ad hoc* device designed to insulate an irrealist [read: antirealist] from problems special to fiction’ (Sainsbury 2010, 146).

Another advantage of this proposal is that the notion of acceptance naturally extends to other types of discourse about fiction. Consider a comparison between fiction and reality such as ‘Desdemona is a Venetian beauty, and she is more famous than any other real Venetian beauty’. If we regard the comparative sentence as true, presumably we do it with respect to the presupposition that Desdemona exists. This, however, would imply that her fame is greater than itself. Sainsbury’s solution is to recognise that most

uses of 'real' bring in some kind of metaphysical contrast, and that in this case the contrast is between reality and fictionality. The comparison is between a fictional character and real individuals. And while the realist would interpret it in terms of absolute truth, the antirealist would interpret it in terms of truth relative to the presupposition that there are fictional characters, which she would accept without believing.

While Sainsbury presents his antirealist account as alternative to Walton's theory of fiction as make-believe, I see it as one that can be specified in a way that makes it compatible with it. The propositional attitude of acceptance encompasses belief and other propositional attitudes that may contrast with belief. Acceptance is a neutral stance that one or more parties in a conversation hold toward a proposition in cases where they know that the proposition is true, in cases where they know that it is false, and even in cases where they do not know whether the presupposed proposition is true or false (for example, agnostics may find themselves in the latter situation when they engage in conversations about god). As such, acceptance is too broad to capture the specificity of our characteristic attitude toward fiction. As stated above, standard theories of fiction define it in terms of imagination or make-believe. And Stalnaker recognises that pretence could be one of the specifications of acceptance. So, what we need is a specification of acceptance in its imaginative variety.

The notion of imagination that is relevant in this context, and that is compatible with Stalnaker's (and Sainsbury's) notion of acceptance, is propositional imagination, which is an ability to entertain alternative (possible or impossible) states of affairs, scenarios and situations, with or without forming a mental image. This is an attitude that is typically characterised by three minimal core features emerging from the current literature on imagination in cognitive science and philosophy of mind, freedom, quarantining, and mirroring.

Imagination manifests freedom in virtue of its being typically unconstrained by reality (Currie and Ravenscroft 2002; Nichols and Stich 2000; Velleman 2000). This feature provides the key criterion for the specification of the imaginative variety of acceptance as distinct from belief. To believe that p is to hold p as true at the actual world, and whether the actual world makes p true or false is not up to us. To imagine that p , however, does not

commit us to the truth of p . We can imagine spontaneously, in dream and daydreams, without guiding the imagination in a conscious way. Or we can imagine at will, as when we engage in the activity of supposition and counterfactual reasoning for the purpose of exploring alternative scenarios. When these activities involve props, they become games of make-believe involving participants who together can make up their own rules. This fits well with the practice of story-telling, which combines a spontaneous imaginative effort (often described as *inspiration*) with a guided imaginative effort of conscious construction of a story through the generation of a text, the prop. In standard cases, the audience's imaginings will be encouraged and guided by the author's activity of storytelling via the mediation of the text.

Imagination manifests mirroring when it carries inferential commitments that are analogous to those carried by belief (Gendler 2003; Leslie 1987; Perner 1991; Nichols and Stich 2000; Nichols 2004, 2006). As propositional attitudes, belief and imagination can engage the same inferential mechanisms of reasoning taking propositions as their inputs. If I believe that p , and I believe that if p then q , then I believe that q . Similarly, if I imagine that p , and I imagine that if p then q , then I imagine that q . The inferences we make when we believe and when we imagine a certain proposition depend on background assumptions and on the specific aims and interests that direct our reasoning. Thus, a realistic story naturally imports many factual truths from the actual world, based on our shared knowledge of reality. An epic poem imports the mutual beliefs of the particular society where the poem originates. A fantasy story relies on different sets of background knowledge based on the particular rules of this genre. Some other—perhaps more interesting—cases rely on the cultural background of the interpreter, and may become the subject of disputes and controversies among literary critics, as in the examples of critical disagreement mentioned above.

Imagination manifests quarantining to the extent that its content is typically sealed off from belief (Gendler 2003; Leslie 1987; Nichols and Stich 2000; Perner 1991). That is, imagining that p does not entail believing that p . More generally, imaginings prompt affective responses and desires that are limited to a particular episode of imagination and they do not guide action in the real world. When reading Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, we may

feel sorry for Anna and we may even want that she not dies. But these emotions and desires do not motivate us to act in any of the ways we would expect in normal circumstances. Moreover, fictional presuppositions are not apt for transformation into belief. And it is often inappropriate to explicitly cancel an imagined presupposition, because objecting to a story on the grounds of untruth is to cancel a presupposition that no one (unless misinformed) was going to adopt. Quarantining, however, does not imply that nothing of real-world relevance can be learned from an episode of imagination. We can learn many historical facts from reading Gore Vidal's historical fiction *Julian* (which recounts the rise and rule of the Roman emperor Julian) if we export the relevant information from the imaginative context created by the novel onto reality.

In sum, imagination is a variety of acceptance that is distinct from belief and that is characterised by three main features, freedom, mirroring and quarantining. More specific varieties of propositional imagination can be spelled out in terms of more specific conditions.¹⁷ In particular, Walton characterises make-believe as a social imaginative activity involving the use of props. This type of imagination is not only a cognitive ability, but an imaginative activity involving different parties who can share the same imaginings via the use of props. These imaginings constitute the intersubjective, interpersonal meanings associated with fictional names and provide the foundation for the subjective meanings stored in the relevant mental files.

6. The meanings of fictional names

According to Millianism, names without referents do not have any semantic content. Yet fictional names seem to be fully meaningful. Now we can pull together the resources developed in the previous Sections to explain how the proposed account of the meaningfulness of names can satisfy the five desiderata identified in Section 2.

Storytelling is a communicative effort between the author of fiction and the audience. The author prescribes the audience to imagine in certain ways.

¹⁷ See Salis and Frigg (2020) for possible further specifications.

The audience imagines accordingly through the recognition of the author's prescriptions to imagine. This recognition is afforded by the use of props, which are ordinary objects that are publicly and intersubjectively available to participants in games of make-believe. In particular, literary works of fiction are props that were created by their author for the specific purpose of encouraging certain imaginings. They are representations that afford and constrain an audience's imaginings in virtue of their being concrete and intersubjectively available objects. The concrete character of a literary work of fiction is explained in terms of its smallest component units, particular marks on paper (or on a screen), which compose meaningful linguistic expressions and constitute the larger unit that is the text. Fictional names—or, better said, concrete instances thereof—are some of the meaningful linguistic expressions functioning as props within the larger prop that is the text. Their uses in fictional discourse support and encourage imaginings about fictional entities even though there are no such entities. Like all props, fictional names are perceptible entities that are originally created for the purpose of encouraging certain imaginings. In other words, they are representations (in Walton's sense) that are mutually recognised by participants in the communicative effort in virtue of their concrete character.

As argued above, fictional names do not contribute anything to the truth-conditional content of sentences involving them. This poses a problem for Millianism, which claims that the meaning of a name is exhausted by its individual referent. Explaining the meaningfulness of fictional names coherently with this view requires an appeal to two further pragmatic types of meaning, intersubjective and subjective. Intersubjective meaning is cashed out in terms of the notion of common ground. Subjective meaning is cashed out in terms of the notion of mental files.

Let us consider an example to illustrate these ideas in more detail. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* begins with the following sentence:

Mr. Utterson the lawyer was a man of a rugged countenance that was never lighted by a smile; cold, scanty and embarrassed in discourse; backward in sentiment; lean, long, dusty, dreary and yet somehow lovable.

Participation in the communicative effort initiated by Stevenson's storytelling requires imaginatively entering into the presupposition that the story told is true, and then speaking under that presupposition. Coherently with the author's prescriptions, the attitude an audience has toward that presupposition is imagination. The reader may fail to grasp some of the prescribed imaginings, so we cannot define reader's and author's engagement in the same make-believe as determined by the assumption of exactly the same set of presuppositions. What ultimately guarantees that readers engage in the same make-believe is that they defer to the author's storytelling. In the example, what is required is that they defer to Stevenson's activity of storytelling.

The author of fiction uses fictional names as props that signal which presuppositions are in place. When reading the fiction, sentence after sentence, chapter after chapter, the information flow initiated by Stevenson is accumulated into the set of presuppositions in place in the specific conversational background created by the story. Among these presuppositions are those triggered by fictional names. In the example above, recognising Stevenson's prescription to imagine requires presupposing that Mr Utterson exists. Both Stevenson and we, the readers, know that there is no particular man referred to by that name. Yet we add the proposition that Mr Utterson exists to the common ground. It is common ground that Mr Utterson exists, and we believe that we imagine that Mr Utterson exists, and we believe that all believe that all imagine that Mr Utterson exists, etc. Moreover, when reading the full sentence, we gather further information about Mr Utterson that we add to the common ground. For example, we add the propositions that Mr Utterson was a lawyer, that he was a man of a rugged countenance that was never lighted by a smile; that he was cold, scanty and embarrassed in discourse; that he was backward in sentiment; that he was lean, long, dusty, dreary and yet somehow lovable. All these are part of the common ground.

Of course, no individual reader will be able to store all that information in the common ground of the story. When reading about Mr Utterson, individual readers cluster the information they gather from the story in particular mental files. The information associated to the name Mr Utterson is stored in a mental file labelled with that very name. Each time a reader

meets that very name in the story or in conversations about Mr Utterson, she deploys the mental file labelled with that name. The information she associates with the name may be incomplete, or even inaccurate, or it may be integrated with further information that was not originally included in the story. For example, a reader with good imagistic abilities may enrich the information provided by Stevenson with mental images in different sensory modalities. These additions, however, are not part of the common ground, but only of the particular file the reader associates with the name. This is coherent with the subjective and idiosyncratic ways in which speakers gather, interpret, enrich, remember or even misremember information afforded by fictions.

Coherently with mirroring, the information that is part of the story and that enters the common ground can be integrated via further principles of generation of the kind indicated above. This usually requires that both author and audience share the relevant principles. Yet, this may not always be possible. Literary fictions are a sort of delayed form of communication, where the author tells a story to an audience that may receive it decades, centuries or even millennia after the original act of storytelling. And controversies about the correctness or the relevance of particular interpretations are often left unsolved. And this is how things are and should be.

Coherently with quarantining, imaginings are non-committal. While everything that Stevenson says involves the relevant presuppositions, and the conversation as a whole is sensible only if it is understood as committed to those presuppositions, we do not commit to the presuppositions in a way that carries over to contexts outside the scope of the fiction. Also, our dispositions are not to take seriously the possibility that we could come to believe what is currently imagined. When we read fiction, we are not deceived by the author's storytelling.

Fictional names can be used in intra-fictional discourse and extra-fictional discourse. With the exception of meta-fictional statements, which involve serious assertions and an attitude of belief, most other cases can be interpreted as involving conniving uses of language and an attitude of imagination. Thus, conniving uses of fictional names in storytelling, fictional reports and participatory criticism trigger the usual presupposition (e.g., there is such an individual as Mr Utterson), which is imagined by speaker

and audience in the relevant games of make-believe (authorised in the first two instances, unofficial in the third). Similar treatment applies to cases that are usually taken as evidence for fictional realism. For example, an utterance of ‘Mr Utterson is a fictional character’ involves a conniving use of the name ‘Mr Utterson’, which triggers the presupposition that there is such an individual as Mr Utterson for the purpose of cancelling it with the predicate ‘is a fictional character.’ And this is tantamount to convey the proposition that Mr Utterson does not exist. An utterance of ‘Charlotte Brontë created Jane Eyre’ involves a conniving use of the name ‘Jane Eyre,’ which triggers the presupposition that there is a fictional character such as Jane Eyre, but also the presupposition that Charlotte Brontë wrote a fictional story about a woman called Jane Eyre. One who does not know that Charlotte Brontë wrote a fictional story about a woman called Jane Eyre will learn this after the speech act, if she takes the speaker to be honest. In this case, we have a case of accommodation. With some flexibility, similar interpretations can be provided for similar cases depending on the context of utterance and mental states of participants in the conversation.

The account I just sketched clearly satisfies the two theoretical principles of parsimony and uniformity. It is parsimonious because it does not require the postulation of any fictional entities. It is uniform because it offers the same semantic interpretation of fictional names as rigid nondesignators throughout their uses in different types of fictional discourse. Furthermore, the account has the resources to satisfy the three conditions related to the problem of the intentionality of thought and discourse about fictional characters.

Let us start from the aboutness condition. We habitually think about fictional individuals and other fictional entities as if they were ordinary objects and yet there are no such objects. How can we explain the intuition that our thoughts and discourse about fictional characters are about something if there is no individual object to think about? Mental files offer a plausible solution because they contribute an explanation to the problem of object-directed yet objectless thought. When thinking about Desdemona, we deploy a mental file associated to her name. As we have seen, mental files are mental representations that stand for individual objects, without incurring any ontological commitments to real objects. Mental files are

organisation structures for the storage of information that someone takes to be about some particular object, independently of whether such an object exists. Mental files are usually associated with information that is about objects that exist. And so, it seems to us that whenever we deploy a mental file we think about a concrete object, even if there is no such object. Thoughts that seem to be about an object without there being one engage the same sort of cognitive resources as thoughts about concrete things. While there seems to be an object, this seeming object is just a construct of the imagination. And since imagination does not bring any ontological commitment, we can think about imaginary objects through mental files without committing to their existence.

An answer to the problem of counterfactual imaginings can build on similar resources. We not only think about fictional individuals as if they were concrete. We also engage in counterfactual imaginings about them. In other words, we imagine them as being different from the ways they are described in the original fictions. This usually involves changing some or most of their properties to explore the ways they could have been in some alternative, imagined scenarios distinct from the one specified by the fiction. Mental files explain how there seems to be an imaginary object that we can think about. Effectively, this seeming object is a construct of the imagination, without there really being one. In the imagination, however, we can explore and transform features of the imaginary object just like we would explore and transform features of a concrete object. What this actually means is that we only imagine to explore and transform the imaginary object. And we do this by manipulating the information associated to the mental file. We usually keep fixed a certain amount of information (a certain subset of predicates) associated to the mental file for Anna Karenina, and change some other information to explore possible alternative ways she could have been. What we really do is shifting, adding, or deleting information from the mental file for the imaginary object.

Finally, the account has also the resources to explain the problem of intersubjective identification. Speakers can disagree about certain features of fictional objects. But how can they seem to be talking about the same object if there isn't one? While mental files can explain aboutness and counterfactual imaginings with respect to individual speakers, they cannot

explain how different speakers can disagree about the same object when this does not exist. Fictional names as props come to rescue here. Fictional names are publicly and intersubjectively available objects that stand for particular fictional entities without any ontological commitment to their existence. They afford the recognition of the social and intersubjective meanings that are in the common ground of a particular communication exchange. Speakers can add or subtract propositions from the common ground by manipulating the information that is made available by the use of the same name. It is in virtue of using the name 'Hamlet' that Bloom can disagree with Freud's interpretation of the same character. It is in virtue of their participation in the same name-using practice, the one initiated by Shakespeare in the homonymous play, that Bloom and Freud can disagree about the same fictional individual even if he does not exist.

7. Conclusion

The integrated account sketched here provides a plausible, pragmatic explanation of the intuitive meaningfulness of fictional names. The underlying assumption is that fiction is a communicative effort between authors and their audiences. Communication is a social activity that requires manifest and publicly accessible tools for the construction of intersubjective meanings. In fiction, these are the text of the story wherein fictional names are introduced. In Walton's terms, they are props that afford and constrain an audience's imaginings coherently with the author's activity of storytelling. Successful communication requires the notion of shared information, or common ground. This contributes to the intersubjective dimension of meaning afforded by fictional names, and it further provides the foundation for the subjective dimension of meaning that is spelled out in terms of the notion of mental files. On this account, fiction is a form of communication that grounds the mental representations of involved parties. The author of fiction tells a story that encourages certain imaginings via the use of intersubjectively available linguistic tools. These tools are created for the purpose of encouraging imagining in certain ways and provide the manifest basis for the acquisition of information that can be shared and stored in mental representations. The account is ontologically parsimonious and semantically uniform. Moreover,

it provides the resources to explain key features of the intentionality of thought and discourse about fictional characters.

References

- Adams, Fred and Robert, Stecker. 1994. "Vacuous Singular Terms." *Mind & Language* 9: 387–401. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0017.1994.tb00314.x>
- Berto, Francesco. 2011. "Modal Meinongianism and Fiction: The Best of Three Worlds." *Philosophical Studies* 152: 313–34. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-009-9479-2>
- Bloom, Harold. (ed.) 1999, *Henrik Ibsen (Modern Critical Views)*, Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publisher.
- Bloom, Harold. 2001. *How to Read and Why*. New York: Simon and Schuster New York.
- Braun, David. 2005. "Empty Names, Fictional Names, Mythical Names." *Noûs* 39: 596–631. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0029-4624.2005.00541.x>
- Castañeda, Héctor Neri. 1990. "Fiction, Perception, and Forms of Predication." In *Thinking and the Structure of the World*, edited by K. Jacobi and H. Pape, 268–84. Berlin-New York: de Gruyter.
- Currie, Gregory. 1988. "Fictional Names." *Australian Journal of Philosophy* 66: 471–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00048408812343531>
- Currie, Gregory 1990: *The Nature of Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Currie, Gregory and Ravenscroft, Ian. 2002. *Recreative Minds: Imagination in Philosophy and Psychology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Davies, David 1996. "Fictional Truth and Fictional Authors." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 36: 43–55. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjaesthetics/36.1.43>
- Eagle, Anthony. 2007. "Telling Tales." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 107: 125–47. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9264.2007.00215.x>
- Evans, Gareth 1982. *The Varieties of Reference*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Everett, Anthony 2007. "Pretense, Existence, and Fictional Objects." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 74 (1): 56–80. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1933-1592.2007.00003.x>
- Everett, Anthony 2013. *The Nonexistent*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Frege, Gottlob. 1892. "Über Sinn und Bedeutung." *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Philosophische Kritik*, 100. Reprinted in Frege, *Collected Papers*, edited by B. McGuinness. Basil Blackwell, 1984.
- Friend, Stacie. 2012. "Fiction as a Genre." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 92: 179–208. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9264.2012.00331.x>

- Friend, Stacie. 2011. "The Great Beetle Debate: A Study in Imagining with Names". *Philosophical Studies* 153 (2): 183–211. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-009-9485-4>
- Friend, Stacie. 2014. "Notions of Nothing." In *Empty Representations: Reference and Non-Existence*, edited by Manuel García-Carpintero and Genoveva Martí, Oxford University Press.
- García-Carpintero, Manuel. 2013. "Norms of Fiction Making." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 53(3): 339–57. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayt021>
- Gendler, Tamar S. 2003. "On the Relation between Pretense and Belief." In *Imagination, Philosophy, and the Arts*, edited by Matthew Kieran and Dominic MacIver Lopes, 125–41. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199589760.001.0001>
- Geurts, Bart. 2017. "Fictional Commitments." *Theoretical Linguistics* 43 (1-2): 53–60. <https://doi.org/10.1515/tl-2017-0003>
- Grice, Paul. 1969. "Vacuous Names." In *Words and Objections*, edited by Donald Davidson and Jaakko Hintikka, 118–45. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Kamp, Hans. 1990. "Prolegomena to a Structural Account of Belief and Other Attitudes". In *Propositional Attitudes: The Role of Content in Logic, Language, and Mind*, edited by A. Anderson and J. Owens, 27–90. Stanford: CSLI.
- Kripke, Saul. 2013. *Reference and Existence: The John Locke Lectures*. Oxford University Press.
- Kripke, Saul. 1980. *Naming and Necessity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lamarque, Peter and Olsen, Stein H. 1994. *Truth, Fiction, and Literature: A Philosophical Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leslie, Alan. 1987. "Pretense and Representation: The Origins of 'Theory of Mind'." *Psychological Review* 94 (4): 412–26. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.94.4.412>
- Lewis, David K. 1978. "Truth in Fiction." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15: 37–46.
- Lewis, David K. 1986. *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Maier, Emar. 2017. "Fictional Names in Psychologicistic Semantics." *Theoretical Linguistics* 43 (1-2): 1–45. <https://doi.org/10.1515/tl-2017-0001>
- Mill, John S. 1843/2011. *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence, and the Methods of Scientific Investigation* (Cambridge Library Collection – Philosophy). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Millikan, Ruth. 1997. "Images of Identity: In Search of Modes of Presentation." *Mind* 106: 499–519. <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/106.423.499>
- Millikan, Ruth. 2000. *On Clear and Confused Ideas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Murez, Michael and Recanati, François. 2016. "Mental Files: An Introduction." *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 7: 265–81. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13164-016-0314-3>
- Nichols, Shaun. 2004. "Imagining and Believing: The Promise of a Single Code." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 62: 129–39. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-594X.2004.00146.x>
- Nichols, Shaun. 2006. "Just the Imagination: Why Imagining Doesn't Behave Like Believing." *Mind and Language* 21 (4): 459–74. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0017.2006.00286.x>
- Nichols, Shaun and Stich, Steven. 2000. "A Cognitive Theory of Pretense." *Cognition* 74: 115–47. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277\(99\)00070-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277(99)00070-0)
- Perner, Josef 1991. *Understanding the Representational Mind*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Perry, John 2001. *Reference and Reflexivity*. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.
- Priest, Graham 1997. "Sylvan's Box: A Short Story and Ten Morals." *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic* 38: 573–82. [doi:10.1305/ndjfl/1039540770](https://doi.org/10.1305/ndjfl/1039540770)
- Priest, Graham. 2005. *Towards Non-Being. The Logic and Metaphysics of Intentionality*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Rapaport, William. 1978. "Meinongian Theories and a Russellian Paradox." *Noûs* 12: 153–80. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2214690>
- Recanati, François. 2012. *Mental Files*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sainsbury, Mark. 2010. *Fiction and Fictionalism*. London: Routledge.
- Sainsbury, Mark 2005. *Reference Without Referents*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Salis, Fiora. 2013a. "Fictional Names and the Problem of Intersubjective Identification." *Dialectica* 67 (3): 283–301. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1746-8361.12031>
- Salis, Fiora. 2013b. "Fictional Entities." In *Online Companion to Problems in Analytic Philosophy*, edited by João Branquinho and Ricardo Santos, Lisbon: Centre of Philosophy, University of Lisbon. <http://hdl.handle.net/10451/10860>
- Salis, Fiora and Frigg, Roman. 2020. "Capturing the Scientific Imagination." *Scientific Imagination*, edited by Peter Godfrey-Smith and Arnon Levy. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190212308.001.0001>
- Salmon, Nathan. 1998. "Nonexistence." *Noûs* 32 (3): 277–319.
- Stalnaker, Robert C. 1973. "Presuppositions." *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 2: 447–57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0029-4624.00101>
- Stalnaker, Robert C. 1999. *Context and Content*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stalnaker, Robert C. 2002. "Common Ground." *Linguistics and Philosophy* 25: 701–21. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1020867916902>

- Stock, Kathleen 2011. "Fictive Utterance and Imagining." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 85: 145–61.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8349.2011.00200.x>
- Stock, Kathleen. 2017. *Only Imagine: Fiction, Interpretation and Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Strawson, Peter F. 1974. *Subject and Predicate in Logic and Grammar*. London: Methuen.
- Thomasson, Amie. 1999. *Fiction and Metaphysics*. New York: Cambridge.
- Van Inwagen, Peter. 1977. "Creatures of Fiction." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14 (4): 299–308.
- Velleman, David. 2000. "The Aim of Belief." In *The Possibility of Practical Reason*, 244–81. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Voltolini, Alberto. 2006. *How Ficta Follow from Fiction*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Walton, Kendall. 1970. "Categories of Art." *Philosophical Review* 79: 334–67.
- Walton, Kendall. 1990. *Mimesis and Make-Believe*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Woodward, Richard. 2011. "Truth in Fiction." *Philosophy Compass* 6 (3): 158–67.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-9991.2010.00367.x>

Fictional Names: Reference, Definiteness and Ontology

Mark Sainsbury*

Received: 26 February 2020 / Accepted: 18 June 2020

Abstract: Definite linguistic expressions, for example proper names and singular and plural pronouns, are easy to introduce. Indefinite expressions may pave the way, but are not essential. It is also not essential that there be entities to which the successfully introduced definites refer. This is the underlying fact that makes fiction possible, and it gives guidance about fictional names: we have no need in general to suppose that there exist entities to which they refer.

Keywords: Fiction, discourse representation theory, ontology.


1. Discourse referents and speculation

... the appearance of an indefinite noun phrase establishes a discourse referent just in case it justifies the occurrence of a coreferential pronoun or a definite noun phrase later in the text. ... We maintain that the problem of coreference within a discourse is a linguistic problem and can be studied independently of any general theory of extra-linguistic reference. (Karttunen 1976)

Karttunen is focused on the way in which an indefinite noun phrase can “justify” a subsequent definite one, as in the classic example “A man came

* University of Texas at Austin

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9030-9770>

 Department of Philosophy, University of Texas at Austin, 2210 Speedway, Stop C3500 WAG 316, Austin, Texas 78712-1737

 marksainsbury@austin.utexas.edu



into the bar. He ordered a martini". A singular pronoun like "he" is normally supposed to refer to a specific (male) person, and it is natural to suppose that understanding a token of the pronoun requires knowing what it refers to. In a sense, we do know what this occurrence of "he" refers to: the man who came into the bar. But more demanding tests for knowledge of reference may fail: we may have no further information to offer concerning the man, and we might be unable to distinguish him from other men. Since we understand the classic two-sentence example perfectly well, including its occurrence of "he", these failures show that the tests for understanding were overdemanding: understanding a definite pronoun does require neither any substantive ability to distinguish its referent from other things nor the possession of further information concerning the referent. Furthermore, our understanding is not undermined by our ignorance of whether the two sentences are true, and whether they were uttered with full assertive seriousness, or with some non-truth-involving intention. Understanding does not require that we believe that there exists a real referent for "he", or even that we believe the utterer believes this or wants us to believe it.

A discourse referent, as I understand its role in Karttunen's theory, and in the Discourse Representation Theories his work inspired, is a definite mental representational vehicle, singular or plural. There may or may not be some entity or entities to which it refers (so the expression "discourse referent" is somewhat misleading¹). When hearers encounter an indefinite noun phrase like "a man" or "some men", they should introduce a discourse referent as a precaution: in case there are subsequent anaphorically dependent pronouns, as in the classic example or its plural form: "Some men came

¹ See Kamp (1981), and the large subsequent research program. Kamp is clear that a discourse referent is a representation, not something represented; for example, he speaks of "a formula in which the predicate is combined with the chosen discourse referent" (Kamp and Reyle 1993: 61). Likewise the SEP entry on Discourse Representation Theory says that a Discourse Representation is a mental representation of which discourse referents are a part. (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/discourse-representation-theory/>, §3.1). Mental representations, like everything else that really exists, are metaphysically definite things, though they may, like an indefinite noun phrase, be indefinite in how they represent.

into the bar. They ordered martinis”. The discourse referent introduced in the interpretation of the indefinite is then in place to interpret the pronoun. This structure can be used to ensure the intuitively correct truth conditions: the two sentences in the classic example are true iff there is a man who came into the bar and ordered a martini; the discourse referent registers these facts, and their analog for the plural case. Despite the definite character of the pronoun, the sentences do not require it to have a referent. As Karttunen says, no “general theory of extra-linguistic reference” is needed. He illustrates the point by making the following comparison. The two sentences that follow pose just the same problem of understanding:

Bill saw a horse. *It* had a gold mane.

Bill saw a unicorn. *It* had a gold mane.

According to Karttunen, the mechanism employed by an understander is the same in the two cases. Encountering the indefinite in the first sentence, a discourse referent is introduced. This is then available for interpreting the definite pronoun in the second sentence. As everyone would agree, truth requires there being a gold-maned horse (in the one case) or a gold-maned unicorn (in the other). Ontological matters only enter the story when we consider truth. Since fiction is not aimed at truth, ontological matters are not likely to enter at the level of understanding fiction.

Discourse referents are what make possible the use of definite expressions in speculations which leave open whether they have referents. Speculation is more closely connected to truth than fiction, but developing a speculation is independent of its evaluation for truth. One form of backward-looking speculation seeks explanations. The detective plays out various possible scenarios that could have resulted in the primary evidence: a murdered body. Who could have done it? Perhaps a business rival. But would *he* really have resorted to murder? Who had a motive? His heirs? Who were *they*? How would the murderer have got to the right place? Maybe it was a woman, and *she* had an appointment – better check the call log. The speculations involving pronouns (as italicized) come without any commitment to their really having a referent. As the evidence accumulates, some scenarios will be rejected. In favorable cases, all but one will be excluded.

Forward-looking speculation is used in planning. One can review a range of possible things one might do. Shall I get a new attorney? *He* would need to be a member of a large practice. Or maybe I should hire a woman: *she* might be more understanding. Should we get some dogs? Maybe *they* should be lurchers. Or maybe poodles. But a pair of *them* would be too much to care for. Typically, at most one from among many scenarios which address the same issue is selected.

Whether we are trying to reconstruct the past or plan for the future, scenarios are essential, and as we entertain them we know that many or most are not factual, and that there are likely no referents for many of the definite expressions we use. Yet there is no problem about the intelligibility or metaphysics of the rejected scenarios. Intelligibility is mediated by the introduction of discourse referents, and these make no metaphysical demands. This humble ability to think about what is not yet the case and might never become the case, or about what might never have been the case, is the basis for fictional understanding. It is the key to the semantics and metaphysics of fiction. Its origins lie not in special conventions, but in the abilities we inevitably bring to bear when we explain and plan, both of which involve portraying non-factual scenarios, but neither of which counts as creating a work of fiction.

The use of definite expressions in speculation is a good guide to understanding the use of definite expressions, especially names, in fiction.

2. Fictional reference: A quietist view

One way to introduce a fictional name is by using generality as a preface, as in this typical example of an initial sentence:

There was a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it. ... Eustace Clarence liked animals.... (C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*)

The general expression (“There was a boy”) paves the way, inviting the introduction of a discourse referent, and makes the introduction of the fictional name as utterly straightforward as if it had been an anaphoric pronoun.

No such general preface is required. We can go straight into the story, as illustrated in this initial sentence:

Selden paused in surprise. (Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*.)²

We simply and automatically imagine a referent for “Selden”, and the tense of the verb requires us to imagine some past time, or period of time. The phenomenon is not specific to fiction. A serious history might start by using the name of one of the persons whose actions are being described, even if the historian knows quite well that few of her readers will have encountered the person before.³ When we encounter a name, we in some sense “supply” a referent. This section aims to say more about what this “supplying” amounts to.

Pronouns, too, can be introduced with no advance warning, as in this initial sentence:

Now I believe they will leave me alone. (Wallace Stegner, *Angle of Repose*.)

With no preparation, the reader has to supply imaginary referents for the two singular pronouns and the one plural one. Three pronouns effortlessly engage our imagination’s reference-supplying powers. And we need to supply an earlier time, not our own present⁴, for the “now”.

Supplying a referent typically does not consist in selecting from among a stock of already available referents. The reader, and not just the author, needs to engage in an imaginative act: making up a referent. Typically, the early outlines will be dim, waiting to be filled as the story progresses. Details are added, and sometimes revised. In successful cases, readers will come to feel they know a fictional character as well as they know some of

² The immediately following sentence of the novel gives us another unfamiliar name: “In the afternoon rush of the Grand Central Station, his eyes had been refreshed by the sight of Miss Lily Barr”. Perhaps “Grand Central Station” counts as a complex name, and for many readers interpreting it will not require the use of an imagination-specific skill. Interpretation will be equally effortless and automatic.

³ “Virginia’s first charter was prepared in the office of Attorney General Edward Coke, a sour-tempered man with a pointed chin ...” (Jill Lepore *These Truths* 34).

⁴ This results from our knowledge of such facts as that an encounter with a written text on a page occurs later than its initial utterance.

their own friends. The procedure seems plitudinously straightforward. What philosophical problems, semantic or metaphysical, could this process generate?

The idea of supplying an imaginary referent was intended to sound straightforward. “Selden” sounds like a man’s name; let’s start by assuming this is so, and use the name to collect further information. We are instantly able to use the name in thought. We can wonder how old Selden is, whether he is married, what surprised him, and so on. The conventions of fictional narrative ensure that we are unlikely to be disappointed: it is very unlikely, though not impossible, that it will turn out in the story that there is no such person as Selden, or that he has an indistinguishable double going by the same name. It’s true that, after reading just a few sentences, we don’t have a great deal to say if asked who Selden is, but that can be the same in the case of an early encounter with a non-fictional name. If readers can use a name in thought, they understand it. In a sense, they know to whom “Selden” refers, namely Selden. This knowledge is as helpful or unhelpful (depending in one’s views about understanding) as the knowledge that “Texas” refers to Texas, knowledge lacked by those entirely ignorant of the geography of the USA.

Given that a name can be successfully introduced without any preamble, it is not surprising that a general preamble can enable the introduction of an anaphoric pronoun, as in the example from C. S. Lewis (“There was a boy... he ...”). The same mechanism is at work in both cases. We’ve seen how an indefinite can prompt the introduction of a discourse referent. A new name does likewise. “Making up” or “supplying” a referent, understood in a leaden and literal way, is something we could not do: we have no spare persons on hand to supply, and our reaction cannot count as literally creating a person. All that happens is that we introduce a representation of an appropriate definite kind, a discourse referent, and hold it in readiness for further use. This kind of mental act occurs both when we encounter fiction and when we encounter non-fiction.

A crucial presupposition of the adequacy of this answer is that there may be nothing that a coherent representation, usable in thought, represents. This may sound paradoxical: a non-representing representation? But it is commonplace. “Pegasus” represents Pegasus, “Vulcan” represents

Vulcan; the painting represents a purely imaginary landscape. There are more complex examples: “If I were to get a dog, which I know I never will, it would be a poodle.” If we take the sentence to be true, “it” represents a dog; or, as we might say, represents nothing.

The choice between *dog* and *nothing* corresponds to two ways in which “semantic” words like “represents”, “refers” and “about” may be understood. These are all syntactically relational, having forms like “x represents/refers to/is about y. But in ordinary English, I claim, they are not semantically relational: the truth of such claims does not require a relation between two entities, as shown by such truths as “‘Pegasus’ refers to Pegasus”, and “We are thinking about unicorns”. As I will put it, these words are only “weakly” relational.⁵

Some theorists, however, take such words to be strongly relational, in that truth of the relevant sentences does require a relation between two entities. I will mark this usage by an asterisk. Thus “‘Pegasus’ refers* to Pegasus” is false if there is no such thing as Pegasus, and so is “We are thinking about* unicorns”. If x represents* y, there really is some entity, y, that x represents, but the weak reading, “x represents y”, does not have this entailment. Although “x represents* y” entails “x represents y” the converse entailment fails. One could connect the ideas by saying that representation is purported representation*. Reverting to our example of wanting a dog, the “it” represents* nothing (at least if the remark is true), but represents a dog.

Representation or reference is an intuitive notion, more so than asterisked analogs, as the examples have shown. Unasterisked notions are the ones to which we must appeal to explain how we can interpret a new name: by introducing a discourse referent, a mental representational vehicle that refers to what the name refers to. The condition of co-reference is, of course, met if there is co-reference*, but this is no more required than reference* is.

Interpreting a sentence involving a past tense requires one to “imagine some specific past time, or period of time” as relevant. But relevant in what way? If the sentence is known to be fictional, the relevance is not to the truth of the sentence, for author and reader know quite well that truth is

⁵ For further support see Sainsbury (2018) and D’Ambrosio (2019).

not at issue. We learn that some event we are asked to imagine should be imagined as lying in the past. But that does not give us a referent: there is no time concerning which we are asked to imagine it is the time the event took place.

This is no more puzzling than the role of the past tense in non-fictional utterances. If someone tells you she visited India, you know that, if what she said is true, a visit lies in the past. The utterance itself gives no basis for assigning one past time rather than any of the others during which the speaker was alive. On the other hand, it's not right to say that all you have available is knowledge that a visit lies in the past, so that the past tense really amounts to no more than "before now". For the presumed time can become an index for evaluating related utterances, as in "Then I spent a couple of days in Hawaii." If what the speaker said is true, there's a period of time she spent in India, and subsequent to *that time* she went to Hawaii. In order to express what we understand we need an apparently referential expression "that time". The past tense is typically indefinite, and then it works like any other indefinite, prompting the introduction of a definite discourse referent, available to interpret subsequent anaphorically dependent definite temporal pronouns.

These considerations suggest that what it takes to understand a name, a pronoun or similar definite expressions is fundamentally the same whether they occur within or outside fiction. Central to understanding the shared feature is the notion of representation (as opposed to representation*), as essential to factual as to fictional discourse. However, the basic similarity goes along with a number of less basic dissimilarities.

3. Names in fiction

Fictional names are as readily introduced and understood as other expressions in fiction, and as names in non-fiction. Fictional names are distinctive in that typically there is nothing they represent*, though they represent people and places. Likewise, even in fiction, tenses and temporal adverbs represent times. What could be problematic?

One answer is that fictional names seem to occur in truths that apparently require that there genuinely are things they represent*, though things

that do not belong to reality. Those who take this appearance at face value can be called realists about fictional names. Those who take the contrary position are irrealists. The paper up to this point has been intended as background for an irrealist view.

A standard problem for realists is that sentences like “Holmes” does not exist” strike us as true. Realists should predict that it is in fact false, or at least has a false reading. That is a tough problem; but realists may find some special story to deal with such cases, and go on to defend their position by appealing to various kinds of sentence that seem to pose problems for irrealists, for example, the following:

1. Internal: Holmes lived on Baker Street.
2. Authorial: Holmes was created by Conan Doyle.
3. Interfictional: Holmes is more cerebral than Christopher Robin.
4. Critical (metafictional): Holmes is more realistically portrayed than Hercule Poirot.
5. Cross-fictional: Holmes is famous.

A standard truth condition for subject-predicate sentences is this:

the sentence is true iff the subject expression refers* to something that the predicate expression is true of.

The notion of reference* appealed to in such a truth condition is the strong (relational) kind, as marked by the asterisk. Since fictional names typically don't refer* (though they do refer), the approach (extended also to two-place relational sentences) treats none of the sentences in the above list as true. But intuitively they are all true. This is evidence for a realist approach to the semantics and ontology of fiction.

If the examples are really true, and the semantics of “Holmes” requires it to refer* (as opposed to merely referring), then there must exist such a thing as Holmes. True, he is not one of us; he is a “fictional character”, with distinctive features that need to be explained. But, according to realists, fictional characters really exist, so there's a chance that we can regard the five sentences, along with countless others like them, as really true. Irrealism, according to realists, forces us to make the wrong predictions about the truth values of the sample sentences.

Suppose Holmes really exists, as a feature of our reality. He cannot be an actual concrete human being, else we could shake his hand (or we could have done so if we had lived in the 19th century), and we all know we cannot do that. He must, rather, be either an actual abstract entity, or a concrete entity that is either non-existent or merely possible. All three options have been tried, but all three have problems. Here I give a sample problem for each option.⁶

Fictional characters are actual abstract entities Abstract things don't smoke pipes or literally live anywhere, so we cannot regard (1) ("Holmes lived on Baker Street") as truly predicating *living on Baker Street* of Holmes, regarded as an abstract entity. Rather, the theorist has to say that fictional abstract entities generate a predicational ambiguity: sometimes when we speak of them we speak of how the entities are in themselves, but sometimes we speak of what they encode or represent⁷. The first reading of the ambiguity works best for (2) above: Conan Doyle brought a certain abstract entity, Sherlock Holmes, into existence, just as signatories to a contract can bring a contract (an abstract entity) into existence (as in Thomasson 1999). The second reading of the ambiguity works best for (1) above: the abstract entity doesn't live anywhere, but represents or encodes the property of living on Baker Street (along with all the other properties attributed in the novels, like smoking a pipe and being a detective).

In normal cases of ambiguity, it's always possible to hear the other reading, even if it's inappropriate. Normally, one would understand the sentence "I went to the bank to catch a fish" as speaking of a river bank; but one can also hear the sentence as claiming that the speaker, presumably misinformed or in an unusual situation, went to a financial institution to catch a fish. So one ought to be able to hear (1) as false, falsely predicating living on Baker street as a property of an abstract entity in itself; and (2) as false, as claiming that the abstract entity represents Holmes as a creation of Conan Doyle. But these readings are not available. The abstract artifact

⁶ A fuller discussion can be found in Sainsbury (2010).

⁷ The relevant encoding or representing cannot be encoding* or representing*, so this realist cannot object to the tools exploited by the irrealist. If abstract entities can refer in the weak sense, why not say that names can do the same, a significant simplification?

theory also has special trouble with “Holmes does not exist”, for according to the theory the abstract entity exists and represents Holmes as existing.

Fictional characters are non-actual, merely possible, entities. If Holmes is a merely possible entity, which entity is he? The one who has all and only the properties attributed to him in the novels? The early novels were not about that man, because there was then no fact about which properties would be attributed later. The one who has all and only the properties attributed at a given stage? In that case, there is a new Holmes with every new attribution of a property. The realist who takes this route is hard pressed not to end up with too many Holmes’s.

Fictional characters are actual non-existent entities I think there are many things that don’t exist, like dragons and round squares (Sainsbury 2018: 59–61). Not everyone agrees; those who disagree will be even more reluctant to regard fictional names as referring to non-existents. The problem even for those who are ready to believe that there are things that do not exist is that non-existent entities cannot have existence-entailing properties, like living on Baker Street. This is something only existent things can do.⁸ Think how overpopulated Baker Street would become if we supposed that nonexistent people lived there! Or do they manage to live there while taking up no space at all?

These quick observations are not intended to do more than make the case for examining an irrealist view according to which our reality contains no fictional entities, abstract or concrete, actual, merely possible, or non-existent.

4. Irrealism: Fiction without real fictional entities

In speculating — explaining and planning — we typically envisage scenarios. These are not made less useful by sometimes referring to events or objects that do not exist. This is the model to apply to fiction.

⁸ The notion of existence-entailing properties is introduced by Forbes (2006, 46). (More exactly, he introduces its converse: existence-independent properties.) Smoking is an existence-entailing property. But don’t dragons breathe fire (and so come close to smoking)? Not really. There are fables according to which dragons breathe fire, but the bare “Dragons breathe fire”, uttered in a fully serious context, is not true.

The realist position described in the previous section presupposed that the truth of a subject-predicate or relational sentence consists in the subject expression referring* to something that satisfies the predicate. That's why the truth of examples (1)–(5) supposedly required the existence of Holmes. For “Holmes lived on Baker Street” to be true on this view, “Holmes” needs to refer* to an entity that lives on Baker Street. Hence, according to realists, we need to recognize the reality of fictional characters like Holmes.

We saw earlier that linguistic features can push us towards the “irrealist” notion of reference, as opposed to the “realist” notion of reference*. Pragmatic pressures may work hand-in-hand with these linguistic features to achieve the same effect. In planning and explaining I may at some point be interested not in “real” truth, but in how things are according to the plan or the explanation: truth relativized to a context. Planning a heist, I may wonder whether we will encounter any guards at that time of night. A companion in crime suggests we will not. “That’s true” I exclaim, to myself or out loud. The notion of truth I am applying is relative to the plan. If we adopt another plan, or no plan at all, that does not make that very thought true, even if we would not have encountered any guards in this other scenario. The thought I have is relative to the scenario in which it occurs. Truth in this case is a matter of what would happen if we did adopt the plan. This relativization of truth is not special to fiction as such, for it is involved in speculation.

Similar mechanisms are at work in fiction. This is the explanation of the tendency we have to regard “Holmes lived on Baker Street” as true. It’s true in, or relative to, the story, but is not true in fact, for there is no such person as Holmes. We all believe there is a distinction between fictional and real truth. If we make the distinction explicit, and then ask whether (1) is *really* true, only the uninformed would respond affirmatively. The slight inclination to register fictional truth as real truth evaporates when we encounter less well known fictional sentences, like the one about Selden quoted earlier from *The House of Mirth*. It’s very unlikely that a standard reaction to that sentence would be that it’s true.

“Holmes was created by Conan Doyle” (2), though it concerns fiction, is not fictionally true: no fiction of which I am aware, and certainly not the Holmes stories, makes this claim. Rather, the sentence is really true. The

envisaged truth conditions for subject-predicate sentences (they are true iff the subject expression refers* to something that satisfies the predicate) entails that “Holmes” refers* to something satisfying the predicate “was created by Conan Doyle”, and so entails that Holmes exists. (2) is really true, so Holmes really exists. Or so realists argue.

Let’s consider what Doyle did to create Holmes. He did not act as the fictional Dr Frankenstein did, collecting body parts from the hospital and assembling them. Instead, he wrote words on the page. The creation of Holmes is derivative on the creation of the story. It amounts to no more than this: Doyle created a story according to which Holmes exists; and according to which Holmes is a detective of remarkable intellectual powers; and so on. These claims do not entail that “Holmes” refers* to anything. But they exhaust what it takes to have created Holmes. So (2) is really true, but does not entail that there is any such entity as Holmes.

This shows that we have to regard the envisaged reference*-involving truth conditions for subject-predicate sentences as restricted to existence-entailing-predicates. “Creates” in many contexts is existence-entailing. If I created a rose garden, then there has to be a rose garden that resulted from my labors. In fictional creation, there is an existence-entailing activity: I don’t create a novel unless a novel comes into existence as a result of my labors. But there is also a non-existence-entailing aspect: the novel makes no claim to truth, and so does not require the existence of the things it represents. Conan Doyle did, in a sense, create Holmes. He did so by genuinely creating novels according to which there was a detective, Holmes, who lived on Baker Street, etc. Novels are real things, but they are things that represent rather than represent*.

Interfictional examples like (3) (“Holmes is more cerebral than Christopher Robin”) are said by realists to be of the form *Rab*, and hence to require the existence of both Holmes and Christopher Robin for their truth. And so, in a way, they do. But we need to understand this within the framework of two ideas. One is that truth is relative, and the other is that stories, like testimonies, can be combined.

The relativity of truth I wish to point out is not intended in any post-modernist way. What is at stake is the manifest fact that planning, explaining, and speculative activities other than fiction, as well as fiction itself, can

generate a framework for a relativized notion of truth: truth in the fiction, or in the speculation. Truth thus relativized may not coincide with absolute truth, truth in the world as it really is.

Consider a very ordinary planning dialog:

A: Are you going home for the holidays?

B: I'm not sure yet, but I think so.

A: Will you fly or drive?

B: I'll drive.

Suppose that, as it turns out, B can't get away for the holidays. Is his final remark in the dialog true or false? Either answer may be regarded as correct. Within the context of the dialog, it's true. B has a phobia about flying and always drives when it's feasible; so driving was the plan. But considered outside the context, it's false: B did not drive home for the holidays. B spoke sincerely when he said he would drive, and what he said was true, as assessed relative to what was presupposed at that stage in his conversation. But since he didn't in fact drive home, what he said is false, assessed independently of the local presuppositions of the discourse.

That is one element needed for understanding claims like (3). The other element is the possibility of combining testimonies. Imagine two witnesses testifying. One says that a suspicious-looking man ran east out of the bank. The other says that a suspicious-looking woman ran west out of the bank. Neither witness says anything that entails that two people ran out of the bank, but the two testimonies together entail this. We can think of fictions as like testimonies. The Holmes stories and the Christopher Robin stories arguably together entail that Holmes was more cerebral than Christopher Robin. Relative to the context framed by these two stories it is (on this view) true that Holmes is the more cerebral. But it is not true absolutely. All we are saying is that this is what must be so if both stories are true. But they are not really true, and really, (3) is not true either.

Critical examples like (4) ("Holmes is more realistically portrayed than Hercule Poirot", which is also interfictional) make explicit that fiction is being discussed by a critic.⁹ In such cases, we wish to regard the critic as

⁹ This might be the kind of thought intended by (3): that Holmes is portrayed as more cerebral than Robin.

having said something true (or false) about the real world, which of course contains the fiction as a part. Such remarks are to be evaluated as about fictions, not as within them. The present example turns on the intensional verb “portrayed”, a verb that is not existence-entailing in its object position: x portrays y does not entail that y exists. The Unicorn Tapestries portray unicorns, but it does not follow that unicorns exist. Likewise, the portrayals of Holmes and Poirot do not entail that either detective exists. Portrayal is a species of representation, not representation*.

In sentences like “Holmes is famous” (5) a relation seems to be affirmed between fiction and reality. Holmes’ fame is fame among us: we are related to Holmes by his fame, and realists will say that if Holmes is famous among us, he must exist just as we must exist.

To be famous is to be regarded or thought of in a certain way by many people. *Regarding* or *thinking of* are intensional verbs, and are not existence-entailing in their second position: that x regards or thinks about y does not entail that y exists. Hence things that do not exist can be famous. Pegasus is a famous, though mythical, horse. Vulcan is a famous, though non-existent planet. Being famous is not existence-entailing, and so an irrealist can happily regard (5) as true.

In conclusion, once we appreciate the ubiquity in our thought and talk of reference, and related notions, as opposed to reference*, the arguments that seemed to favor realism about fictional entities lose all persuasive value. We can happily combine commonsensical realism about fictions (novels, plays), which of course really exist, with irrealism about the fictional characters, people and places they portray, which typically do not.

References

- D’Ambrosio, Justin. 2019 “Semantic Verbs Are Intensional Transitives”. *Mind* 128: 213–248. <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/fzx029>
- Forbes, Graeme. 2006. *Attitude Problems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kamp, Hans. 1981. “A Theory of Truth and Semantic Representation”. In *Formal Methods in the Study of Language*, volume 1, edited by Jeroen Groenendijk, Theo M. V. Janssen, and Martin Stokhof, 277–322. Amsterdam: Mathematical Centrum.
- Kamp, Hans, and Reyle, Owe. 1993. *From Discourse to Logic*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

-
- Karttunen, Laurie. 1976. "Discourse Referents". In James D McCawley (ed) *Syntax and Semantics vol 7: Notes from the Linguistic Underground*: 363–85. New York: Academic Press.
- Sainsbury, Mark. 2010. *Fiction and Fictionalism*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Sainsbury, Mark. 2018. *Thinking About Things*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thomasson, Amie. 1999. *Fiction and Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Real Authors and Fictional Agents (Fictional Narrators, Fictional Authors)

Alberto Voltolini*


Received: 27 February 2020 / Accepted: 15 November 2020

Abstract: A suitable account of fiction must involve a conceptual distinction between (at least) the following figures, or roles: real authors, fictional narrators, fictional authors. Real authors are the real original utterers of fiction-involving sentences in their fictional use, the one mobilizing pretense. They may coincide (although this would be rare) either with fictional narrators or with fictional authors. A fictional narrator is the protagonist of a tale that is narrated in the first person: the internal point of view on the tale. A fictional author constitutes the tale's external point of view that vividly manifests itself when the tale is narrated by no protagonist. Fictional narrators, however, never coincide with fictional authors. For either one or the other is the fictional agent, the one-place factor of a narrow fictional context of interpretation whose contribution is to provide a fictional truth-conditional content to the fiction-involving sentences of the relevant tale.

Keywords: Fictional agent; fictional author; fictional narrator; real author.

* University of Turin

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0400-1978>

 Department of Philosophy and Education Sciences University of Turin, Via S. Ottavio 20, I-10124 Turin, Italy

 alberto.voltolini@unito.it



1. Introduction

A suitable account of fiction must involve a conceptual distinction between (at least) the following figures, or roles: *real authors*, *fictional narrators*, *fictional authors*. Real authors are the real original utterers of fiction-involving sentences in their *fictional* use, the one mobilizing pretense. They may coincide (although this would be rare) either with fictional narrators or with fictional authors. A fictional narrator is the protagonist of a tale that is narrated in the first person: the *internal* point of view on the tale. A fictional author constitutes the tale's *external* point of view that vividly manifests itself when the tale is narrated by no protagonist.¹ Fictional narrators, however, never coincide with fictional authors. For either one or the other is the *fictional agent*, the one-place factor of a narrow fictional context of interpretation whose contribution is to provide a fictional truth-conditional content to the fiction-involving sentences of the relevant tale.

Now, the reasons why we need all such figures just partly overlap with those Currie (1990) provides. We do need a fictional author for the very *semantic* reasons that make a fictional narrator necessary; namely, in order to account for the fictional truth-conditions, and truth-values, of fiction-involving sentences in their fictional use. For we need either a fictional narrator or a fictional author, but not both, in order to have an agent, and just one, of the relevant narrow fictional context that enables a fiction-involving sentence in the above use to have a fictional truth-conditional content: to repeat, the fictional agent. Yet we do not need such an author for *epistemic* reasons, having to do with reliability in narration; namely, the idea (ungrounded, as I go on to argue) that unlike the fictional narrator, the fictional agent is reliable since she is omniscient as regards the world of a fiction. As a result, the semantic reasons for why we need a fictional author do not coincide with those Currie (1990), among others, defends, which appeal to an unmotivated ascription of omniscience (as regards the events in a fictional world) to the fictional author.

The architecture of the paper is the following. In Section 1, I provide the aforementioned semantic reasons that enable us to draw a distinction

¹ In Levinson's (1996, 148) terms, she is a *perceptual enabler*.

between fictional narrators and fictional authors (whether or not they are identical with the real authors). In Section 2, I point out why we do not need epistemic reasons in order to draw the same distinction. Section 3 concludes.

2. In favor of the semantical reasons to distinguish between fictional narrators and fictional authors

A fiction-involving sentence is a sentence that, directly or indirectly, has to do with the tale that constitutes a literary fiction. As such, it may be used in different ways. Its first use is the *fictional* use,² i.e., the use of that sentence that occurs in the pretense from which the corresponding tale originates; namely, when one makes believe that such and such is the case—typically, in pretense plays viz. make-believe games.

By my lights, the best way of semantically accounting for the fictional use of a fiction-involving sentence appeals to a *minimally contextualist* framework (Recanati 2000, Voltolini 2006, 2016). According to that framework, in that use a sentence behaves like an indexical sentence. This is to say, in order for it to get determinate truth-conditions, in particular fictional ones, a fiction-involving sentence in its fictional use must be paired with a certain narrow context of interpretation *à la* Kaplan (1989); namely, a narrow fictional context, i.e., a set-theoretical entity constituted by the saturation of certain parameters (typically, an agent, a space, a time, and a world) and whose ‘world’ parameter is saturated by a world of fiction.³ This world not only provides that sentence with fictional truth-conditions, by working as one of the parameters of the relevant narrow context of

² For this terminology, see Kroon and Voltolini (2018). Currie (1990) labels it the *fictional* use.

³ Whatever this world is from a metaphysical point of view: a possible, or even an impossible, world. (Im)possibilists *à la* Lewis (1983) or *à la* Priest (2016) would further say that such a world actually amounts to a set of (im)possible worlds, the worlds in which the sentence comes out as true. For my purpose, I am neutral on this option.

interpretation, but also allows the sentence to have a fictional truth-value, once it further works as a circumstance of evaluation for the sentence.

It is easy to show all this by means of an example. First of all, taken in its fictional use, the fiction-involving sentence:

- (1) Anna Karenina commits suicide

has fictional truth-conditions once it is interpreted in a narrow fictional context of interpretation whose ‘world’ parameter is saturated by a world of fiction, the world of *Anna Karenina*. Moreover, (1) is fictionally true when, so interpreted, it is true in that world, and fictionally false otherwise. As things do unfold this way in *Anna Karenina*’s world, (1) is fictionally true. On the other hand,

- (2) Anna is a rockstar

once interpreted with respect to the same narrow fictional context of interpretation, is fictionally false, i.e., is false when evaluated in the same world, for in *Anna Karenina*’s world things do not unfold this way.

Now, a specification is immediately required as far as the ‘agent’ parameter of a narrow fictional context is concerned. Normally, the agent of this context of interpretation does not coincide with the real producer of the relevant fictionally used sentence, i.e., the *real author*—for simplicity, just the real original utterer of the sentence, the real story-teller.⁴ The only exceptions to the above noncoincidence claim are fictionalized autobiographical tales. In such cases, the agent of the fictional narrow context of interpretation and the real author coincide—the real author pretends that *she herself* is such that certain things happen to her.

Let me again provide examples of both cases. In its fictional use,

- (3) For a long while I used to go to bed early

has fictional truth-conditions once it is interpreted in a narrow fictional context of interpretation whose ‘world’ parameter is saturated by the world of Marcel Proust’s *Remembrance of Time Past* and whose agent is not the

⁴ As a matter of fact, who is the real author of a fictionally used sentence may be a complicated matter. In the literature, there are many subdistinctions here.

same as Marcel Proust himself, the real original utterer of that sentence, the real author. Yet still in its fictional use,

(4) I wanted, I always wanted, I very strongly wanted

has fictional truth-conditions once it is interpreted in a narrow fictional context of interpretation whose ‘world’ parameter is saturated by the world of Vittorio Alfieri’s *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Vittorio Alfieri, written by himself*, yet whose agent is the same as Alfieri himself, the real original utterer of that sentence, the real author.

Interestingly enough, the distinction between the contextual agent (of a narrow fictional context of interpretation) and the real utterer (of a certain fictionally used sentence; hence, the real author) is not *ad hoc*. For not only is the above one of the many cases showing, following Predelli (1998, 2005), that one must draw a distinction between the narrow context of interpretation (the one relevant for providing a truth-conditional interpretation for a sentence) and the context of utterance (the situation of discourse in which the sentence is originally mobilized), but it is also one of the many cases showing that this distinction may well affect the ‘agent’ parameter of a narrow context (see Voltolini 2006). For example, if a translator translates in her own language the indexical sentence tokened by Donald Trump in addressing Kim Jong-un,

(5) I would NEVER call him ‘short and fat’

in the relevant token of the translating sentence, the corresponding first person pronoun refers to Trump, the agent of the relevant narrow context of interpretation, not to the translator, the real utterer of that token. Likewise, if a clairvoyant utters:

(6) I am Manitou

the agent of the relevant narrow context of interpretation for that sentence to which the token of “I” refers is Manitou, not the clairvoyant herself, who is the mere real utterer of the above token of (6).

But if the fictional agent of a narrow fictional context of interpretation is normally not the real utterer of the relevant fictionally used sentence, who is she? It seems that here we must face a choice. One option is that the agent of a narrow fictional context of interpretation is the *fictional*

narrator, i.e., the protagonist of the tale who, it is pretended, tells the story from an *internal* point of view. Since she narrates the tale in the first person, this is often labeled the homodiegetical narrator.⁵ Sometimes (there are a number of such cases, actually), the fictional narrator is also the same as the real author of the tale; namely, when the internal protagonist of the tale mobilizes a fictionalized autobiography, as in the Alfieri example involving (4). Yet mostly, the fictional narrator is an imaginary individual who exists only in the world of the tale.⁶ The other option is that the agent of a narrow fictional context of interpretation is not the fictional narrator, but the fictional author, i.e., the external point of view from which the tale is told in that context.⁷ This is often labeled the heterodiegetical narrator, the one that narrates the tale in the third person.⁸ Yet this label is somehow inappropriate. For sometimes (again, there are a number of such cases), the fictional author may even coincide with the real author herself, so that the first person is again mobilized.⁹ This happens if that author pretends that she herself, rather than simply some individual or other, tells the relevant tale, but without being one of its protagonists, and either keeping her persona or not.¹⁰ Here is an example of this situation; when Alessandro Manzoni, the real author of *The Betrothed*, enters the tale not as a protagonist of the tale itself, but as its external point of view:

⁵ Cf. e.g. Predelli (2020). Clearly enough, sometimes a tale is told by different characters. Yet for any single sentence of that tale, taken in its fictional use, there is just one fictional narrator, if any.

⁶ Lamarque-Olsen (1994, 62) simply call it a *narrator*, taking her as a figure in the world of the fiction.

⁷ Cf. Currie (1990). See also Levinson (1992). In Lamarque-Olsen's (1994, 62) terms, this is the *fictional narrator*.

⁸ Cf. again Predelli (2020).

⁹ Granted, there may be cases in which what seems to be a fictional author coinciding with the real author is just the fictional narrator (consider a 'metafictional' version of *The Betrothed* in which (7) below is uttered again.) But once the fictional author is severed from the fictional narrator, as I am claiming, she does not have to coincide with the real author (*pace* Kania 2005, Boyd 2017).

¹⁰ In Currie's (2010) terms, the real author is then a mere *implied* author.

- (7) My five-and-twenty readers may imagine what impression such an encounter as has been related above would make on the mind of this pitiable being.

Yet mostly, in being just the external point of view from which the tale is told, the fictional author is neither the real author, nor even, *pace* Currie (1990, 76,214), an imaginary individual, as the fictional narrator instead is. For she is not a protagonist of the tale that exists only in the fictional world of the tale. Rather, she is imaginatively located at the periphery of that world (Predelli 2017, 2020). For, as Predelli stresses (2020, 50,53), it is fictionally the case that, unlike the fictional narrator, she is causally immune from what happens in that world.¹¹

Now, this distinction between the fictional narrator and the fictional author arises because sometimes at least, there is no tale's protagonist who is pretended to tell the story, hence there is no fictional narrator. As a result, someone else must enter the fore as playing a descriptive role towards the fiction itself: the fictional author. This typically, but not exclusively (e.g., if paintings may display narratives, they also display fictional authors), happens with *mindless fictions* (Currie 1990), i.e., fictions in which one pretends that there is neither language nor intelligent life. In such a case, a real author indeed pretends that a fictional author tells a story that there is a both languageless and mindless situation (that a fortiori involves no fictional narrator). Thus, the fact that the tale is a third-person narration does not rule out that there is no contextual agent for it; no narrator, yet an agent, the fictional agent. See Currie's own example:

- (8) [It's a humanless world.] A lizard basked in the sun. A breeze stirred the leaves of a flower nearby. A bird flew past. Too bad there was no one around to record the event.

¹¹ When the fictional author does not coincide with the real author, she plays the same role as Currie's (2010) *implied* author *qua second* author. Granted, there is sometimes a narratorial self-effacement with which the real author disguises either the fact that she herself is the fictional author or the fact that she herself is the fictional narrator. Yet *pace* Kania (2005:50), this self-effacement does not prevent the need for distinguishing her, *qua* fictional author, from the fictional narrator. For *qua* fictional author but not *qua* fictional narrator, she is (fictionally) causally inert.

This form of pretense is not particularly problematic. First of all, it is just an extension of the case in which an author may pretend, not only about a previous time, but also about a time in which nobody existed, that *someone* describes how the world unfolded at that time. Cf.:

- (9) [Now it's 1940.] Hitler is attacking France
 (10) [Now it's the Big Bang.] Matters spreads everywhere.

Moreover, imposing a contextual agent in this way in order for a narrow context of interpretation to provide a sentence with determinate truth-conditions is not restricted to cases involving fiction, but it has an independent justification. In fact, as Predelli (2001) stresses, indexical sentences can be interpreted also in narrow *possible* contexts whose worlds contain no language and possibly no intelligent life either. Consider e.g.:

- (11) I am hungry now

and interpret it in a narrow possible context in which nobody utters sentences containing more than three words. So interpreted, the sentence in question is true in the possible world of that context iff the agent of the context, who obviously is not its utterer in that context, is hungry at the contextual moment in that world. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same holds of:

- (12) It is sunny now

when interpreted in such a context (there must be a contextual agent even if there is no contextual utterer).

As I said before, in a few cases, the fictional author who is the fictional agent of the relevant narrow fictional context of interpretation is also the real author. Consider e.g. how the previous mindless fiction narrated by (8) might be suitably modified:

- (8*) A lizard basked in the sun. A breeze stirred the leaves of a flower nearby. A bird flew past. Too bad, my dear readers, there was no one around to record the event.

What is important, however, is that the fictional author never coincides with the fictional narrator.¹² For, as I just stressed above, we need a fictional

¹² Pace Currie (2010), it is then improper to call the fictional author a *narrator*.

author for semantic reasons; namely, in order for the relevant narrow fictional context of interpretation to always have an agent, the fictional agent, and just one agent in order to saturate the ‘agent’ parameter of the context. Thus, when the context seems to lack an agent, because there is no fictional narrator, we must presuppose that there is a fictional author that plays that agential role.¹³ If instead there already is a fictional narrator in the context, she may legitimately work as the fictional agent, thereby ruling out a fictional author to play that role.¹⁴ In this respect, by appealing to the semantic necessity of a contextual fictional agent—who, as we just saw, may be either the fictional narrator or the fictional author (but not both)—I may adhere to the so-called Necessity Narrator Thesis, which always requires a narrator (an agent, in my terms) for a narrative.¹⁵

3. Against the epistemic reasons to distinguish between fictional narrators and fictional authors

As we have seen in the previous Section, a semantic reason is available as to why we must draw a distinction between fictional narrators and fictional authors. To recap, whenever there is a fictional narrator, there is no fictional author. For the ‘agent’ parameter of the relevant narrow fictional context of interpretation, which we need in order to supply the relevant fiction-involving sentence with fictional truth-conditions in its fictional use, is already saturated by that narrator.

As a result, we do not need fictional authors over and above fictional narrators for *epistemic* reasons; namely, because fictional narrators are

¹³ The fictional author is thereby a *minimal narrating agency*, in Matravers’ (2014) terms.

¹⁴ So not only we do not need to postulate a second narrator (i.e., the fictional author), as Matravers (2014, 127) says, but we must not do so.

¹⁵ Even though, as we have seen above, I do not require that the fictional agent be always distinct from the real author. For this thesis, cf. originally Chatman (1990). It is also presented but negatively discussed in Boyd (2007, 285). For a further discussion, see Livingston (2001). Furthermore, Currie’s (1995) *controlling narrator*, the narrator whose mode of presenting the story imaginatively coincides with the work’s text as a whole, should be the same as the fictional agent.

sometimes unreliable (Currie 1990, 1995), hence what it is pretended that they tell is fictionally false, i.e., false in the world of the relevant tale. For there is no guarantee that the fictional author is an omniscient descriptor of the tale's world. As the external point of view from which the tale is told, she may be unreliable as well. Granted, we have famous examples of unreliable fictional narrators: for example, the personage of Humbert Humbert in *Lolita*. In their fictional use,

(13) I am named "Humbert Humbert"

(14) I have been seduced by Lolita

are fictionally true and fictionally false respectively. For when interpreted in the relevant narrow fictional context of interpretation that has *Lolita's* world as its world, (13) is true in that world iff the fictional narrator who is the agent of that context, i.e., Humbert Humbert, is so named in that world, while (14) is true in that world iff the fictional narrator who is the agent of that context, i.e., Humbert Humbert again, has been so seduced in that world. But (13) is indeed fictionally true, for in that world Humbert Humbert does have such a name, while (14) is fictionally false, for in that world *he* has seduced Lolita. Yet we may well have examples of unreliable fictional authors as well. Suppose that the previous mindless fiction told by (8) continued as follows:

(8+) Darkness was spread everywhere.

Hence the sentence inaugurating (8), namely:

(8-) A lizard basked in the sun

would be fictionally false. For when interpreted in the relevant narrow fictional context of interpretation that has the world of that fiction as its world, that sentence is true in that world iff in that world a lizard basked in the sun. Yet in that world darkness was spread everywhere, as (8+) fictionally truly says; so, there is no sun in it. So, the agent of that context, who is the fictional author since there is no fictional narrator, would be as unreliable as the fictional narrator Humbert Humbert in *Lolita's* tale.¹⁶

¹⁶ For this way of accounting for inconsistent fictions, see also Predelli (2020, 113,115). Strangely enough, after having said that, Predelli converges with Currie's

This shouldn't be surprising. For in general, even when they are external, points of view are *partial* ways of grasping situations. Consider the case in which one *misdescribes* a past situation by pretending it is contemporary, as in the following variation of (10):

(17) [Now it's the Big Bang.] Dinosaurs are around.

This unreliability even of some fictional authors allows us to dispense with a well-known and widespread criticism of the idea of a fictional author that has precisely to do with her supposed omniscience (Byrne 1993, Matravers 1995, Kania 2005, Boyd 2017); namely, how can she know what happens in the tale, especially when the tale concerns what is in the protagonists' minds?¹⁷

This point has an interesting consequence. Since fictional authors have been introduced here just in order to account for the fictional truth-conditions of fiction-involving sentences in their fictional use, the semantic reasons for this introduction do not coincide with those Currie (1990) provides. For, in having to do with the real truth-conditions of fiction-involving sentences in their different internal metafictional use¹⁸—that is, the use in which such sentences say the same as the corresponding parafictional

idea that the fictional author—the *peripheral teller*, as he labels her) is omniscient (ib., 53). Yet he immediately admits that the peripheral teller is qualifiable in terms of factors that would make her immediately biased, such as belonging to a gender, having a certain psychology, or being a member of a certain cultural community (ib., 54,61,117). Currie (1990) might further reply that this case does not force one to consider the fictional author unreliable, for one might instead both take (8+) and (8-) to be fictionally true and ascribe the fictional author inconsistent beliefs in the truth-conditions of the corresponding parafictional sentences (see immediately below). Yet independently of whether this reply works (for some doubts, see Kroon and Voltolini 2019), it would make the fictional author hardly idealizable, as Currie wishes (again, see below).

¹⁷ On behalf of Currie, Kroon and Voltolini (2019) note that since “the postulation of a teller for every tale is simply a staple of literary and aesthetic theory (Currie 1990, 75–6), [...] not worrying about how the teller got her information [...] might be another such staple”. Yet, as they go on to say (ib.), “one worry about such a response is that it seems little different from saying we should treat the story as if it were told from a God's eye point of view.”

¹⁸ This is the use that (Currie 1990) labels *metafictional*.

sentences, i.e., sentences of the form “in story S , p ” (Bonomi 2008)—the semantic reasons for which Currie introduces a fictional author rely crucially on ascribing omniscience (as regards the facts of the tale) to the fictional author. According to Currie, what is (really) true in the story is a matter of what it is reasonable to infer as regards what the fictional author believes: “The belief set of the fictional author—the set of propositions he believes—is the set of propositions that go to make up the story” (1990, 76). More technically,

“ $\mathbf{F}_s(p)$ ” is true iff it is reasonable for the informed reader to infer that the fictional author of S believes that p (Currie 1990, 80).

Now, giving (real) truth-conditions of this sort for parafictional sentences is precisely to exploit the idea that the fictional author has a sort of omniscience as regards the relevant fictional world, insofar as she is pretended to tell the story as a *known fact* (“we make believe that the fictional author is presenting us with information he knows to be true”, Currie 1990, 94). It is indeed reasonable to make that inference insofar as the fictional author has cognitive authority about that fictional world: “the teller (the fictional author) is identified as the person uniquely responsible for this text” (Currie 1990, 153).

Yet at this point a problem may arise for my account. If one assumes Currie’s account of the real truth-conditions of parafictional sentences, one may wonder whether the previous example of the prolonged mindless fiction (fictionally) told by (8) plus (8+) supplies us with a genuine case of a fictional author’s unreliability. For in that case, one may indeed say that the really false parafictional sentence:

(16) In the prolonged mindless fiction, a lizard basked in the sun

is also false according to Currie’s account. For, given how the mindless fiction continues, it is *not* reasonable to infer that the fictional author believes that a lizard basked in the sun. Instead, reasonably enough, given how the prolonged mindless fiction ends, the fictional author believes that darkness was spread everywhere, hence she does not believe that a lizard basked in the sun. This explains why in its fictional use, (8-) turns out to be fictionally false, i.e., is false *in the world of the prolonged mindless fiction*, without postulating any unreliability on the fictional author’s part.

Yet in other cases, not only is there a mismatch between the truth-value that the relevant parafictional sentence really has and the truth-value that it should have according to Currie's account, but this mismatch is also due to the fictional author's unreliability. For in these cases the parafictional sentence is really false and yet it is reasonable to infer that the fictional author believes its embedded content; thus, implausibly, the relevant parafictional sentence turns out to be really true according to Currie's account. This situation typically occurs in a case where epistemic indistinguishability is not matched by metaphysical indistinguishability. Consider a version of Robert Stevenson's most famous tale where no protagonist tells the tale in the first person and the following sentence is fictionally used:

(17) It is unclear whether Dr. Jekyll is the same as Mr. Hyde.

Yet the version of the tale is such that what transpires in it is also the case in the standard version of the tale, namely, that the two guys, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, are identical. For example, in the modified version, it is (fictionally) told that whatever the first guy does, so does the second. In such a version, there is a fictional author that tells the story, yet she is unreliable. (17) is indeed fictionally false: in the world of this version's tale, it is still determinately the case that the two guys are the same. So, the corresponding parafictional sentence:

(18) According to the tale's version, it is unclear whether Dr. Jekyll is the same as Mr. Hyde

is really false as well. Yet it should, implausibly, come out as really true according to Currie's account. For it is reasonable to infer that the fictional author believes that it is unclear whether Dr. Jekyll is the same as Mr. Hyde.

Granted, Currie might reply as follows. Since, given her omniscience as regards the relevant fictional world, the fictional author is a *postulate* (Currie 1990, 126), hence an idealization, the above parafictional sentence must count as really false, not as really true. For it is unreasonable to infer that an *idealized* fictional author believes that it is unclear that Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are the same.

But there is no reason to idealize the fictional author in this way. For her being located in the (fictionally) causally inert periphery does not

prevent her from being essentially *biased*, by her belonging to a gender or anyway having a certain psychology as well as being a member of a certain cultural community, as Predelli (2000) repeatedly stresses (see fn.13 above). Indeed, remember that even the fictional author is essentially *perspectival*: she represents a *point of view*, albeit external, to the fiction's world. Hence, *qua* such a point, she may imperfectly grasp the facts of such a world.¹⁹ In the end, therefore, the fictional author may be as unreliable as the fictional narrator is, when there is any.

4. Conclusions

In this paper, I provided a semantic reason to draw a distinction between fictional narrators and fictional authors, independently of whether they are respectively the same as the real authors of fiction-involving sentences in their fictional use, as is sometimes (actually, rarely) the case. This reason hinges on the fact that in order for such sentences to have determinate fictional truth-conditions in their fictional use, there must always be *just one* fictional agent for the narrow fictional context that enables the relevant fiction-involving sentence to have those truth-conditions. Hence, there must be a fictional agent, yet she can be either the fictional narrator or the fictional author, but not both. This reason allows us to dispense with appealing

¹⁹ This would immediately transpire if we admitted *pictorial* narrators, as hypothesized above in the text. If there are any, pictorial narrators are peripheral. Indeed, a pictorial narrator represents the only proper and causally inert *pictorial* point of view from which, unlike the picture's *vehicle* - the physical basis of a picture - the picture's *subject* - the scene presented by the picture - is seen in the picture (cf. e.g. Hopkins 1998). Now, the phenomenon of anamorphosis shows that only from a certain physical vantage point, one activates the *proper* pictorial point of view from which the picture's scene is seen in the picture. From other vantage points, different *improper* pictorial points of view on that scene are activated. Consider Hans Holbein the Younger's *The Ambassadors*. If one wants to see in that painting the scene containing a skull located at the ambassadors' feet, one must endorse the proper pictorial point of view that is achieved from locating oneself on the painting's very side. If one faces the painting frontally, one can only endorse an improper point of view from which the scene's skull is not seen in the painting.

to an epistemic reason to draw the very same distinction, a reason that mobilizes the alleged omniscience of the fictional author. For there is no need that such an author be always reliable.²⁰

References

- Byrne, Alex. 1993. "Truth in Fiction: The Story Continued." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 71: 24–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00048409312345022>
- Boyd, Brian. 2017. "Does Austen Need Narrators? Does Anyone?" *New Literary History* 48: 285–308.
- Chatman, Seymour B. 1990. *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Currie, Gregory. 1990. *The Nature of Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Currie, Gregory. 1995. *Image and Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Currie, Gregory. 2010. *Narrative and Narrators. A Philosophy of Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hopkins, Robert. 1998. *Picture, Image and Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kania, Andrew. 2005. "Against the Ubiquity of Fictional Narrators." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 63: 47–54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0021-8529.2005.00180.x>
- Kaplan, D. 1989. "Demonstratives." In *Themes from Kaplan*, edited by Almog, Joseph et al. (eds.), 481–563. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kroon, Fred, and Voltolini, Alberto. 2018. "Fictional Entities." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/fictional-entities/>.
- Kroon, Fred, and Voltolini, Alberto. 2019. "Fiction." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/fiction/>.
- Lamarque, Peter, and Stein H. Olsen. 1994. *Truth, Fiction, and Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

²⁰ This paper has been originally presented in a seminar at the Department of Philosophy, University of York, 18.4.2018, York, and subsequently at the Peter Kraus Philosophy Conference: Themes from the Philosophy of Fred Kroon, Faculty of Arts, University of Auckland, November 22, 2019, Auckland. I thank all the participants for their stimulating remarks. I also warmly thank Fred Kroon for his important comments and Stefano Predelli for the discussions had with him on these topics.

- Levinson, Jerrold. (1992). "Intention and Interpretation in Literature." In *The Pleasures of Aesthetics*, 175–213. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Levinson, Jerrold. (1996). "Film Music and Narrative Agency." In *Contemplating Art: Essays in Aesthetics*, 143–83. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lewis, David. 1983. "Truth in Fiction." In *Philosophical Papers*, Volume 1, 261–75. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Livingston, Paisley. (2001). "Narrative." In *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, edited by B. Gaut and Dom Lopes, 275–84. London: Routledge.
- Matravers, Derek. 1995. "Beliefs and Fictional Narrators." *Analysis* 55: 121–22. <https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/55.2.121>
- Matravers, Derek. 2014. *Fiction and Narrative*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Predelli, Stefano. 1998. "I Am Not Here Now." *Analysis* 58: 107-15.
- Predelli, Stefano. 2001. "Names and Character." *Philosophical Studies* 103: 145–63.
- Predelli, Stefano. 2005. *Contexts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Predelli, Stefano. 2017. *Proper Names: A Millian Account*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Predelli, Stefano. 2020. *Fictional Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Recanati, François. 2000. *Oratio Obliqua, Oratio Recta: An Essay on Metarepresentation*. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press.
- Priest, Graham. 2016. *Towards Non-Being: The Logic and Metaphysics of Intentionality*, 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Voltolini, Alberto. 2006. "Fiction as a Base of Interpretation Contexts." *Synthese* 153: 23–47. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-006-0001-5>
- Voltolini, Alberto. 2016. "The Nature of Fiction/al Utterances." *Kairos* 17: 28–55. <https://doi.org/10.1515/kjps-2016-001>

Fictional Tellers

A Radical Fictionalist Semantics for Fictional Discourse

Stefano Predelli*


Received: 4 February 2020 / Accepted: 4 May 2020

Abstract: This essay proposes a dissolution of the so-called ‘semantic problem of fictional names’ by arguing that fictional names are only fictionally proper names. The ensuing idea that fictional texts do not encode propositional content is accompanied by an explanation of the contentful effects of fiction grounded on the idea of impartation. After some preliminaries about (referring and empty) genuine proper names, this essay explains how a fiction’s content may be conveyed by virtue of the fictional impartations provided by a fictional teller. This idea is in turn developed with respect to homodiegetic narratives such as Doyle’s Holmes stories and to heterodiegetic narratives such as Jane Austen’s *Emma*. The last parts of the essay apply this apparatus to cases of so-called ‘talk about fiction’, as in our commentaries about those stories and that novel.

Keywords: Fiction; fictional names; narrative; proper names; semantics.

* University of Nottingham

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8375-4611>

 Institute of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy. University of Nottingham
Nottingham NG7 2RD, United Kingdom.

 stefano.predelli@nottingham.ac.uk

0. Introduction

In this essay I present my approach to what is commonly called ‘the semantic problem of fictional names’. In section one, I distinguish my topic from a variety of related issues in the philosophy and semantics of fiction. Section two provides a brief description of (referring and empty) proper names, and section three introduces the main component of my approach, namely the thesis that fictional proper names are *merely fictionally* proper names.

Since what is merely fictional is nothing, the so-called semantic problem of fictional names dissolves: semantics, that is, the actual study of actual expressions, need not confront that which is not an interpretable expression to begin with. This dissolution is a double-edged sword. Surely, if fiction is populated by affairs that fail to encode fully-fledged propositions, an explanation must be provided of our *understanding* of fictional works. My solution appeals to a resource other than semantic encoding, namely the *impartations* engendered by a speaker’s discursive contributions. I start with actual impartations towards the end of section three, before I move on to fictional impartations in section four.

The first four sections of this essay tackle fictional names from the viewpoint of *fiction-making*, taking as their exemplars ‘Emma Woodhouse’ in Jane Austen’s *Emma*, or the occurrences of ‘Holmes’ in Arthur Conan Doyle’s stories. In section five, I move on to an adaptation of my views to the case of so-called *talk about fiction*, as when, during a discussion of that novel or those stories, we employ ‘Emma Woodhouse’ or ‘Holmes’ in our commentaries. My final section concludes with an optimistic note about possible extensions of my approach, and about their relationships with the many properties of fictional discourse that I could not discuss in this essay.

1. What’s the problem?

Some of us are fiction-makers. And most of us enjoy and discuss what fiction-makers produce. In many instances of making and appreciating fiction we employ language: some fictions are verbal affairs, and many of our reactions to fictions take the form of discourse about fiction.

Fiction in all of its forms is a rich topic of philosophical investigation. Even leaving aside the important issues raised by the aesthetic and occasionally artistic dimensions of fiction, much remains to be discussed that is of relevance for (among other things) metaphysics, social philosophy, epistemology, or the theory of communication. Even the preliminary issues related to what *counts* as fiction remain in dire need of clarification. What is required for fiction-making, and in particular for the making of fictions most intimately related to the linguistic domain? Is it sufficient that the prospective fiction-maker *intends* to engage in fiction-making? Or is some sort of quasi-institutional background required, so that, intend what I like, I may not engage in fiction-making unless I am officially invested with a certain role, or unless I am recognized as a fiction-maker by an appropriate audience? Or else: what does it take for your discourse to qualify as discourse about a particular product of fiction-making—rather than, say, as a piece of journalism, as a commentary about a different fiction, or as something else entirely? Are my intentions to do so sufficient, or are there dedicated occasions and/or linguistic signals that play an important role in these respects?¹

Some of these issues inevitably end up within the province of *linguistic* investigation, at least in a wide sense of ‘linguistic’. For some, for instance, makers of verbal fiction engage in a special type of speech-act, with its own felicity conditions and its dedicated illocutionary and perlocutionary effects. For others, in contrast, the ways of fiction are an independent specimen among the varieties of language-use, hardly explainable on the model appropriate for assertives, commissives, or declaratives. And so, what is it that lurks in the background of, say, Jane Austen’s 1815 inscription of

- (1) sorrow came ... but not at all in the shape of any disagreeable consciousness,

and that justifies our taking that inscription as part of her fiction-making effort, rather than as a report on someone’s actual state, or as a recollection of her own melancholy? Is her predicament a topic to be assessed from the perspective of speech-act theory, or is it a matter of some utterly idiosyncratic mode of speaking? Or else, in the case of discourse about fiction: what is it

¹ For an overview of these questions see for instance (Lamarque and Olsen 1994), (Lamarque 2009), and the sources cited therein.

that, on certain occasions, allows *us* to utter (1), thereby reporting on (as we casually put it) ‘how things go in the story of *Emma*’?²

These are interesting questions for the philosophy and linguistics of fiction at large, which may well bear interesting relations with some issues commonly subsumed under the heading of ‘the semantics of fiction’. But they are not the questions that occupy centre stage in what follows. With remarkable nonchalance, I can thus proceed on the basis of what must surely be relatively solid pre-theoretic intuitions, at least when it comes to central cases such as (1). And so, for one reason or another, when Austen penned (1) as part of her novel *Emma*, she tokened certain expressions as part of her fiction-making effort, rather than as a scientific report or as page in her personal diary. And, for some reason or other, when you and I token (1), we do so as parts of our talk about *Emma*, rather than as an instance of journalism or, for that matter, as a mere calligraphic exercise.

Still, after leaving these important issues aside, much with the aforementioned occurrences of (1) remains to be debated that comes closer to the core of the semantics of fiction. For instance, if the occurrence of (1) in *Emma* is not an exemplar of factual talk, does that leave it utterly indifferent to questions of truth? And, if an affirmative answer to this question is at all correct, does that also apply to *our* use of (1) in our commentary about that novel? If the latter, but not the former, is ‘truth-apt’, what distinguishes them? And if we speak truly when we utter (1) on those occasions, what sort of truth is it, if it does not aim at an accurate depiction of any actual state of affairs?

I shall not be able to bypass all of these questions with the same casual attitude with which I disregarded the issues mentioned at the beginning of this section (see in particular section four below). But I can still partially put them on the side at this stage, because my focus will be on yet another issue, one that is most aptly brought to light by examples other than (1). This is so because, at least according to a simple-minded approach, (1) is a

² For a discussion of speech-act theory from the viewpoint of fiction-making see among many (Ohmann 1971), (Urmson 1976), (Currie 1990), (Davies 2007) and (Currie 2010), and for my own misgivings about certain applications of speech-act theory to fiction (Predelli 2019) and chapter two in (Predelli 2020), with arguments inspired by (Searle 1975).

general affair having to do with sorrows and consciousness at large: on some occasions, according to (1), sorrows remain unaccompanied by disagreeable consciousness.³ So, on the basis of what (1) presumably encodes, we form our picture of what is fictionally the case: according to the story, so we conclude, sadness is sometimes not that unpleasant. If all of this is at least partially on the right track, then, a familiar semantic explanation may well suffice for the identification of the *content* in question: (1), the sentence tokened in Austen's manuscript and reproduced above, encodes a general proposition about sorrows, shapes, and the like. And it does so on the basis of regularities indistinguishable from those responsible for the interpretation of any other occurrence of that sentence: English nouns such as 'sorrow' or 'consciousness' combine with all the rest so as to give rise to a proposition, according to plain vanilla compositional processes.

Or so I can afford to assume here, since, as announced, my topic is most perspicuously highlighted not by (1), but by its contrast with affairs such as

- (2) Emma Woodhouse ... had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.

The important contrast between (1) and (2) has to do with the latter's apparent appeal to *particularity*: (1) may well ponder sorrows and consciousness in general, but (2) seemingly deals with someone in particular, namely the woman picked out by 'Emma Woodhouse'. But if all of this is taken at face value, a familiar problem ensues: since the story of *Emma* is fictional, there is nothing for 'Emma Woodhouse' to pick out. And so, *a fortiori*, no particular proposition is to be found, which may even come close to what (2) purports to be encoding. In other words, then, my uncritical optimism when it came to the proposition encoded in (1) must be inappropriate when it comes to (2): now, the matter has to do with proper names rather than with nouns and predicates, and especially with the putative particulars they attempt at designating.⁴

³ Or so I assume for the sake of the example. The tense in (1), for instance, may be interpreted as referring to a particular time or an occasion; this detail may nevertheless safely be left aside for my purposes.

⁴ I unashamedly depict the theoretical issue under discussion in terms consonant with the so-called direct-reference approach to proper names and particular (or, as

None of this is to say that *names* are the inevitable and unique source of this problem. For one thing, at least according to some views, more than a few proper names occurring in fictions unproblematically do what proper names are supposed to do: to cite a trite example, ‘Napoleon’ in *War and Peace* refers to Napoleon just as that name does when occurring in a history lecture.⁵ Conversely, and more importantly, names are not the sole harbingers of particularity: if ‘Emma Woodhouse’ is at all in the business of picking something out, so is presumably ‘her’, the pronoun that occurs at the end of (2). And so, eventually, what I am about to say will need to be tested against the evidence of putative particularity in general, rather than merely *vis a vis* instances of naming. But proper names are a good place to start, and they will keep me occupied throughout this essay.

To summarize, then: let us assume that, for one reason or another, some of us are makers of fictions in the verbal domain, and that, for one reason or another, most of us manage to comment about fictions of all sorts. The ensuing linguistic products may well engender a variety of interesting queries, one of which will remain in the spotlight in what follows: how can a sentence such as (2) be at all in the position of encoding a fully-fledged particular proposition, given that the proper name it contains is apparently unable to provide any propositional contribution?

2. Names, empty and full

The issue informally depicted in section one plays a central role in the philosophical debates on the semantics of fiction. Preliminarily, then, the problem arguably stems from the apparent clash between the following pre-

they are often called, *singular*) propositions, even though much of what I am about to say may be rephrased in terms of alternative frameworks. Regarding direct-reference theories see among many (Kripke 1980), (Devitt 1981), and (Kaplan 1989); for adaptations and extensions of my framework consonant with alternative views of names see (Predelli 2020), in particular chapter one.

⁵ The issue of so-called ‘real names’ in fiction is independently interesting, see among many (Voltolini 2013), (Motoarca 2014), and (Folde 2017); for my views on the topic see chapter four in (Predelli 2020).

theoretical notions (together with a few harmless additional hypotheses): (i) the semantic role of a name is that of referring, in the sense that a sentence containing an occurrence of a name *n* encodes a proposition having to do with *n*'s referent, (ii) the name 'Emma Woodhouse' in (2) does not refer to anything, and yet (iii) the occurrence in *Emma* of that sentence encodes an intelligible proposition.

The problem ensues from the widespread impression that, when the intuitions in (i) and (ii) are flanked by some decent additional assumptions, what emerges is that (2) does not encode any fully-fledged proposition, a conclusion that is taken to be incompatible with the insight recorded in (iii).⁶ And that insight appears to be beyond reproach: surely, so the story goes, we follow the sentences in *Emma* and we eventually 'get the story', that is, we manage to come up with a sequence of fully-fledged, well-endowed propositions. Accordingly, a variety of alternative hypotheses have been put forth, in the attempt at challenging the theoretical assumptions lurking behind either (i) or (ii). For some adversaries of (i), for instance, the propositional contribution offered by a proper name (within and/or without fiction) is not its referent but some sort of different affair, one which may presumably unproblematically be associated with 'Emma Woodhouse'.⁷ Or else, for others, it is (ii) that gets things wrong, given that, for them, 'Emma Woodhouse' refers to no lesser extent than our everyday uses of 'Napoleon' or 'London'.⁸

These attacks against the spirit of (i) and/or (ii) come in a wide variety of flavours, ranging from appeals to Fregean *Sinne* to even more exotic

⁶ 'Fully-fledged' is here intended as a preliminary informal term of contrast with the notion of a *gappy* proposition, as in influential current approaches to so-called *empty* names—see among many (Donnellan 1974), (Braun 1993), (Taylor 2000), (Braun 2005) and (Taylor 2014); see below for my views on the relationships between emptiness and fictionality.

⁷ For so-called *descriptivist* approaches to fictional names see for instance (Currie 1990); for (somewhat surprising) gestures in that direction see also (Lewis 1978).

⁸ See among many (Parsons 1980), (Zalta 1983), and (Deutsch 1985), and, to some extent, the recent wave of so-called *artefactualist* views of literary characters, for instance (Salmon 1998), (Thomasson 1999) and (Thomasson 2003), and, for a critical discussion, (Yagisawa 2001), (Everett 2005), (Everett 2013), and (von Solodkoff and Woodward 2017).

takes on proper names, and from inflated metaphysical landscapes populated by merely possible women to invocations of non-existent meddlers in the romantic life of equally non-existent others. The resulting positions deserve their fame, and they have been ably defended by armies of skilled philosophers and practised semanticists. But it would be futile for me to attempt to challenge all of them. For one thing, it would be futile for reasons of space and of my own limitations, since I cannot claim familiarity with all of the theories currently on the market, and since my misgivings with the few with which I am familiar would occupy many tedious pages. For another, my spirit here is constructive rather than critical: my aim is to provide my own positive view on these matters, to sketch some considerations in its favour, and to gesture towards some of its consequences. If you eventually like my view, I shall happily leave it side by side with its competitors.

One thing to note at the outset is that, in its customary form, the semantic quandary raised by (i) and (ii) may not seem to be related to fiction alone. Rather, according to common consensus, the problem with fictional particularity is but one instance of a wider problem, that of *emptiness*. In this view, ‘Emma Woodhouse’ may well be non-referring, that is, it may well be an *empty* name. But so are ‘Bozo’, as used by me while hallucinating a clown in the corner, or ‘Primo’, the expression you employ in your vain attempt at picking out the largest prime number. According to widespread agreement, then, all of these cases engender problems of the same type: barring this or that semantic or metaphysical gymnastics, those names’ emptiness seemingly entails that the sentences in which they occur do not encode fully-fledged propositions. Yet, so the story continues, they apparently do: ‘Bozo is in the corner’, to cite but one exemplar, does say something, indeed, to boot, it says something that we legitimately judge to be false. Since no fiction seems to be at issue here, a popular conclusion is that the crux of the problem is not fictionality but emptiness. And so, fiction may well be a site where empty names abound, yet, in this view, the issue will need to be approached independently of the peculiarities of fiction-making and of talk about fiction. Rather, it will need to be confronted from the viewpoint of naming *in general*.

I happily take this methodological advice on board, even though, in the end, my considerations about naming will lead me towards the rejection of

its starting point. For, as will eventually be apparent, for me the issue with (2) is not at all an issue with naming and/or emptiness, but a peculiar question about fiction. But, first, a few comments about proper names and emptiness are appropriate, if only as a term of contrast for that which matters. And so, in the remainder of this section, I leave fiction on the backburner, and I proceed with certain antecedent commentaries about names, full and empty. Armed with my conclusions, I return to (2) and its ilk in section three.

We are pre-theoretically sufficiently well-equipped for identifying names. The central exemplars, at least, are clear enough: affairs such as ‘London’ or ‘Napoleon’ occur in particular syntactic positions, they play a certain role in our language, and, typically, they take on a certain shape, with their characteristic capitalized first letter and all the rest.⁹ And, semantically, they appear to be among the expressions we customarily employ so as to pick out particular things, that is, so as to refer. Or more prudently, now that the spectre of emptiness has been brought to light, they are the sort of expressions that *purport* to refer, even though, as it sometimes happens, things go wrong. Yet, even when all works as it should, an obvious tension seems to emerge from these trivialities: in a nutshell, names are too few *qua* candidates for naming, that is, *qua* bearers of a semantically tractable notion of referring.

Homonymy is the name of the game: what we commonly call *one* name, such as the six-letter ‘London’, conceals a variety of naming devices, such as that which names the British capital and that which picks out a city in Ontario. These roles, of course, must be distinguished, if equivocations about what is being discussed are to be kept at bay. Admittedly, all of this may initially look like old news, with little of relevance for proper names in particular: after all, a wide variety of other expressions do just that. We call them *ambiguous* expressions. For instance, the common noun ‘bat’ may have to do with hitting devices or flying mammals, and it may thus provide very different contributions to the propositions encoded in the sentences in which they occur. That is: ‘bat’, the three-letter English type, conceals two

⁹ For general considerations about name-types, proper names, and their semantic treatment, see (Predelli 2017) and the literature cited therein.

semantic devices, one concerned with wooden sticks, and the other with pipistrelles.

The relationships between homonymy and ambiguity are controversial. Still, what suffices here is that, if the case of ‘London’ is at all analogous with that of ‘bat’, it is so for idiosyncratic reasons, having to do with naming in particular. The first point to note in this respect is that homonymy is, in a sense, ambiguity on a massive scale. Nouns and verbs may well ambiguously be associated with a few distinct semantic roles, and they may do so because of what we may casually call ‘the conventions of the language’. In English, it so happens that, as the vernacular puts it, the noun ‘bat’ has two meanings, due to the vicissitudes of etymological development or to the casual attitude of a distracted linguistic ruler. And so, two or three senses end up being enshrined in the dictionary, and that may well be all that needs to be said. An updated *dictionary of names*, though, would be an utterly unrealistic prospect. At any moment I may choose ‘London’ as the name of my dog, of a file in my computer, or of the cup on my desk. These uses of ‘London’ may well circulate only among my closest friends, yet, their unpopularity notwithstanding, they would unquestionably continue to do what a name should do: at least when occurring in my mouth on particular occasions, they would refer to my dog, to my file, or to my cup. Part of the reason why none of this ends up in any dictionary may well have to do with my irrelevant role as language-maker. But a more interesting part of the explanation lies in the fact that any dictionary that took me seriously would end up being unmanageably vast, and, at any instant, already outdated.

For pretty much *any* theory of names, then, names in the vernacular sense of ‘name’ may be subject to a full semantic treatment only on the basis of a variety of so-called *pre-semantic* considerations.¹⁰ At the very least, a *name-type* such as the capitalized six-letter sequence ‘London’ could be assigned a referential role (or an intension, a content, a character, or whatever is deemed to be semantically relevant) only on the basis of some antecedent considerations about ... How these dots ought to be filled is

¹⁰ For discussions of the sense of ‘pre-semantic’ relevant here see (Kaplan 1989), (Perry 2001), and my developments of that idea in (Predelli 2005), (Predelli 2013), and (Predelli 2020).

controversial: each sufficiently informative way of completing my uncontroversial beginnings inevitably betrays important theoretical commitments about naming, about semantics, and about language. Still, the slogans are familiar enough. For some, what refers (and/or has a content, a character, etc.) is not the six-letter name-like type ‘London’ but a *use* of that type on a particular occasion. Or else, it is a *token* of that type in a certain context, or perhaps that type *with respect to* such and such situation, circumstance of use, or disambiguation. Be that as it may, the conclusion that matters for me is that, in pretty much anyone’s view, what is a proper object of semantic evaluation is not ‘London’ in isolation, but ‘London’ together with certain additional parameters.

I need not provide a precise indication of what these parameters are and do. Still, given the facility with which naming procedures take shape, something having to do with the origin of a certain naming practice will inevitably have to play a role. And so, I *launched* ‘London’ *qua* name of my cup a few days ago, whereas ‘London’ *qua* name of the British capital had been in circulation for quite some time. And my or your tokens of ‘London’ will take on a certain referential role depending on their relationships to this or that launching: if you say ‘London’ on occasions that bear a suitable relation to my recent launch, you will end up referring to my cup, whereas on other occasions, you would have referred to the British capital. In all of its vagueness, much in may well be reminiscent of ideas more interestingly developed in the so-called *Historical Theory* of reference determination.¹¹ But my vague hints will do, since none of the controversies surrounding that theory are of relevance for my aims.

A theoretically biased terminology will also help me to keep my presentation concise: there is one familiar, six-letter long, capitalized *name-type*, ‘London’, which may be put to service as a variety of naming devices, that is, for short, as a variety of *names* in the semantically relevant sense of ‘name’. It is a terminology that departs from the vernacular, since in my sense of ‘name’ there are *many* names spelled and pronounced as ‘London’, such as the name of the British capital and the name of my cup. That is,

¹¹ See in particular (Donnellan 1970), (Donnellan 1974), (Devitt 1981) and (Kaplan 1989); for discussions of different aspects of the Historical Theory see among others (Evans 1973), (Berger 2002), (Soames 2003), (Jeshion 2004), and (Sainsbury 2005).

different names ensue from different launching episodes, which all appeal to the common, nice-sounding, and easily spelled name-type ‘London’. Crucially, nothing in this way of talking aims at smuggling in any controversial views about, for instance, homonymy, the token-type distinction, or the metaphysical conditions for names and words. I speak of name-types such as the six-letter name-type ‘London’ and of *names* such as ‘London’ *qua* namer of my cup. You may prefer to speak, say, of different uses of the unique homonymous name ‘London’, with the accompanying warning that what refers is not a name in your sense but its uses or its tokens. Either will do, but my way has the advantage of conciseness.

And so, launchings, those pre-semantic harbingers of naming, are an important object of inquiry. Once again, the details in the study of launchings are controversial, and the names of large African islands and indistinguishable twins have given cause of concern for more than a few theories about name-introduction.¹² Yet, once again, the details are not important, since a few common-sensical and relatively uncontroversial assumptions will suffice. For one thing, launching may well not be official ceremonies with invested authorities, dedicated scenarios, and accompanying fanfares. But they surely involve some sort of appropriate mental stance, since a distracted token of ‘London’ as part of a vocal exercise will surely not do as the launch of a name. Talk of intentions, and perhaps of a sufficiently focused attitude, seems to be appropriate, at least if taken with some latitude: I launched a name for my cup when I pronounced ‘London’ on a certain occasion partly because I did not intend to *replicate* any previous use of that name-type, and because I accompanied my introduction with a focused stare on the object on my desk.

Perhaps. Be that as it may, it seems clear that procedures of these sort may encounter more than a few glitches, emptiness included. In particular, I may well have uttered ‘London’ in the spirit of a launcher, and I may well have kept my gaze firmly directed towards the centre of the desk. But I hallucinated, and no cup was in fact there to serve as the referent for my name. There’s much one may say about cases such as these, including the idea that I ended up introducing a name for something other than what I

¹² The allusion is to the examples in (Evans 1973) and (Sainsbury 2005).

though, such as the empty central area of my desk or my mental image of the cup (or a merely possible cup, a non-existent cup, or some other extravaganza of this sort). More plausibly, some may opt for an opposite extreme: in the scenario I described, my launching misfired, so that no name was launched, be that a name for an extravagant possible cup or of a figment of my imagination. Most, including myself, tend towards a reasonable compromise: a name has indeed been introduced by my fleeting ceremony, but it is not a name for any metaphysical oddity or, of course, for a cup that is just not there. It is a name all right, but not a name of anything.

And so, empty names may well be a reality that semantics need to confront. And confronting it may not be that easy, as witnesses by the debate on the proper treatment of emptiness and of the semantic problems they might engender.¹³ But the important thing to note is that the launching of an empty name, if any such thing exists, is surely no easier business than the launching of a kosher, run-of-the-mill referring name. The aforementioned vocal exercise that casually tokens ‘London’, for instance, will not do even for my hallucinatory scenario: there, all the demands of launching were in place, and were zealously answered by my serious intentions, by my most official launching posture, and by my fixed stare towards the object of my mirage. Names, full or empty, are begotten by naming efforts, rather than by casual vocalizations or unfocused musings.

With this platitude, I conclude my detour on proper names at large, and return to my official topic: fictional discourse and ‘Emma Woodhouse’, as it occurs in (2). For I am now finally in the position of stating the starting point of my approach, and to present what, for me, is the key to the dissolution of the problem posed by (i)-(iii) at the beginning of this section.

3. Fictional names

For me, on any decent understanding of launching, Austen did not launch any name whatsoever: her aim was not that of putting forth a referential device, but rather that of making things up. Just as she failed to beget a spoiled young woman, her father, or her walks with Knightley,

¹³ See the sources on naming and gappyness mentioned in the footnotes above.

Austen also failed to create her name: in the sense of ‘name’ that matters here, ‘Emma Woodhouse’ is made-up, in the sense that it is not a name at all. In a slogan, fictional names are *only fictionally* names.

Of course, the occurrences of ‘Emma Woodhouse’ in *Emma* have a lot in common with proper names: they are not casual scribbles or exercises in calligraphy, and they conform to the graphic, phonetic, and syntactic roles appropriate for name-types. Yet, they do not raise to the status of proper names, since they are not tokened by a process supported by any actual, non-fictional launching. They are not, in other words, objects of interest from the viewpoint of semantics, that is, from the viewpoint of the study of the only names there are, actual names.

I cannot argue directly for this hypothesis since, in the end, it is a factual assumption about the ways of fiction and of fiction-makers. But I can show the direction in which an assumption of this sort should be developed: I can address its *prima facie* problems, and I can highlight the profitable outcomes it engenders. The problems will need to come first, since my starting hypothesis may well contain much that is intuitive and consonant with common sense, but it also includes something that is, at first, arresting.

Here is the obviously arresting outcome. In the view introduced above, ‘Emma Woodhouse’ fails to be a name not because it is some other type of interpretable expression. Rather, being a mere name-type unaccompanied by what is needed for its semantic functioning, it is not anything in the position of providing any semantic contribution whatsoever. As a result, (2) does not encode a proposition. It surely does not encode a proposition about any young lady, since none of the components of (2) refers to anything, young ladies included. But it does also not encode any of those less than straightforward affairs that may perhaps be appropriate in the case of empty names, such as a content involving some merely descriptive individual concept, or a proposition including what some semanticists call ‘the gap’.

The idea that (2) fails to encode a proposition is arresting because it seems to fly in the face of the alleged intuition recorded in (iii), namely the idea that (2) says something, and that its doing so is a pre-condition for our ability to follow Austen’s tale—for our capacity, as we would commonly put it, of ‘getting something out of *Emma*’. And I do not wish to challenge

this intuition in its entirety. When we read *Emma*, we do not merely follow the letters on the page, as in an inner recitation of some nonsensical sequence of word-type. Surely, when we read that novel, we understand it, at least in the sense that we eventually construct a certain picture of a charming young woman's interactions with an upright young man and with her petulant father. What I do challenge is an important gloss on this unassailable intuition: the notion that our ability to derive content from *Emma* may be explained only by the assumption that the sentences in that novel encode propositional content. For, as I am about to explain, content is in general obtainable in ways other than semantic encoding, and those, to an important extent, are the ways that are relevant in the case of *fictional discourse*.

In section two, I began my considerations with a somewhat lengthy excursus on actual names, such as the referring name 'London' or the empty name 'Bozo'. I did so in order to develop a point of comparison with the idea of fictional names. I adopt a similar strategy when it comes to fictional discourse: the study of discourse (that is, of actual discourse, the only discourse that there is) provides important hints for the treatment of fiction-making and of the ensuing merely fictional talk. For it is true that, in reality, fictional discourse is no discourse at all, just as fictional women are not peculiar women and fictional names are not a special type of names. But it is also true that fictional women are fictionally women, that fictional names are fictionally names, and that fictional discourse is fictionally discourse. And, as I am about to explain, fictionally just as in reality, discourse may give rise to information in ways different from the encoding of that information in the sentences it includes. So, the discussion of the ways in which actual discourse actually manages to engender content provides an apt preliminary for the explanation of how, in the end, I plan to deal with the intuition in (iii). Once again, then, fiction will remain temporarily on the backburner, and will return to centre stage only after yet another excursus, this time devoted to content-transmission in actual discursive interactions. I say

(3) Paris is in France

and, in standard cases, you understand that, according my contribution, Paris is in France. But you also understand much more besides. For

instance, by virtue of my utterance, you understand that I can speak, and, given a few additional harmless assumptions, that I can speak English. With only a bit more background in place, you also understand that I have tokened ‘Paris’ as a name, and hence that I aimed at referring to Paris by means of my token of ‘Paris’. Or else, you understand that, according to my utterance, the thing which I named ‘Paris’ has a certain property, that which I brought to your attention by tokening the English predicate ‘is in France’. Hence, among many other things, you understand that, for me,

(4) the bearer of ‘Paris’ is in France,

or more precisely that the bearer of that token of ‘Paris’, used in relation to the launching to which I was related on the occasion of speaking, has that property.

Or, at least, you understand all of that if you bother to pay attention to it. Many times, communication is geared towards encoding: in a conversation about geography, the notions that I am speaking and that I am tokening name may well remain mere background noise, an inevitable environmental disturbance whose main purpose is that of encoding a content about the location of a city. But on many other occasions that is not the case. As far as I can recall, none of my utterances of ‘she sells seashells by the seashore’ had anything to do with the purchase of molluscs, that is, with the encoded content that someone sells seashells by the seashore. Similarly, according to common sense, ‘I never utter personal pronouns’ has all the flavour of a contradiction, even though the proposition it encodes is the utterly non-contradictory notion that the individual in question has no use for certain expressions. What matters, in the former case, is not the irrelevant encoded proposition, but the notion that the speaker manages to utter certain difficult-to-pronounce types. And, in the second case, what catches our attention is not the plainly non-contradictory encoded content, but its clash with the fact that, in performing that utterance, the speaker has employed ‘I’, a personal pronoun.¹⁴

¹⁴ For a fuller discussion of these cases see (Predelli 2013); see also certain relevant anticipations in (Castaneda 1957), (Hintikka 1962), and (Kaplan 1989).

Discourse, then, involves more than the exchange of encoded content. I describe the content conveyed by virtue of (among other things) the act of speaking as *imparted* content, as opposed to semantically encoded content. And so, the *sentence* (3) encodes a proposition about the location of Paris, and it encodes nothing about my speaking skills, about my employment of ‘Paris’, or about any other property of that name. But my *utterance* of (3) as part of a discursive exchange does, on appropriate conditions, manage to impart that I can pronounce ‘Paris’, that I use ‘Paris’ as a proper name, or that ‘Paris’, as used by me on that occasion, is borne by an entity in France.

As I argue in what follows, the mechanisms of impartation provide a key component of the solution to the aforementioned quandary—that is, it provides the background for the reconciliation of the idea that (2), as it occurs in *Emma*, is not a proposition-encoding sentence, with the notion that it is in the business of content-transmission. My explanation will nevertheless benefit from momentarily moving away from *Emma*, and from briefly discussing a different kind of narrative fiction. I elect the hackneyed example of Arthur Conan Doyle’s stories as the prototypical exemplar of the sort of fiction that I have in mind.

4. Fictional tellers and fictional impartations

Here is an abridged example from the beginning of *The Adventures of the Speckled Band*:

(5) Holmes turned to his desk and drew out a small case-book.

When it comes to Doyle and to the fictional appellation of his equally fictional creation, (5) follows the meagre semantic pattern displayed by (2): for me, the detective and his name are figments of Doyle’s imagination, and figments of imagination are neither detectives nor names. As a result, here as in the case of (2), what confronts the reader is the mere display of a name-type, now the six-letter capitalized type ‘Holmes’. And so, here as in the case of (2), what appears in Doyle’s text is merely an exemplar of a sentence-type, rather than an instance of a fully-fledged, proposition-encoding sentence.

Mind you, fictionally, none of this semantic devaluation is of any concern to Watson, the utterer. When fictionally occurring in his mouth (or, presumably, his pen), ‘Holmes’ is a name in the full sense of the term, which he tokens with all the seriousness and intentional involvement required for the use of a name. It is, in other words, a name that reached the good doctor’s ears from some sort of distant launching, a launching presumably related to Holmes’ baptism and/or to the onomastic customs for the inheritance of a surname. As a result, (5), as fictionally tokened by Watson, is a run-of-the-mill affair, which flanks an unobjectionable verb-phrase with an equally unobjectionable proper name. Fictionally, that is, Watson’s inscription is the inscription of a fully-fledged sentence, with all the encoding effects that sentences achieve.

As always, though, fictionality is of no help for us, since what is fictional is nothing: merely fictional names are not names, merely fictional sentences are not sentences, and what is merely fictionally encoded is not anything we may actually understand. As a result, what confronts us, in actuality, is not anything that encodes a particular proposition. For us, there is nothing we could identify as ‘the proposition that Holmes turned to his desk’ since, in the absence of ‘Holmes’ and of Holmes, any such would-be particular proposition remains a chimera.

That is not to say that fictionality is of no help whatsoever. After all, what fictionally is the case in *The Adventures of the Speckled Band* is not only the occurrence of a sentence such as (5). What is also fictionally the case is Watson’s use of that sentence—his utterance of it, or his inscription in his private diary. And fictional utterances and inscriptions fictionally engender impartations, just as actual discursive contributions do. So, among other things, Watson’s fictional token of (5) imparts that

- (6) a bearer of ‘Holmes’ turned to his desk and drew out a small case-book.

Of course, it only fictionally imparts this much: Watson, his tokens, and his diary are denizens of the fictional domain to no lesser extent than Holmes and his case-book. And so, in reality, nobody is imparting anything to anyone, and, *a fortiori*, nobody is imparting the proposition that a bearer of ‘Holmes’ did such and such. But this actual deprivation is now accompanied by a positive result: the fictional occurrence of (5) in Watson’s diary

only fictionally imparts a certain propositional content, but it is a propositional content that we actually understand, believe, debate, or discuss.

In the absence of anything that actually contributes to particularity, then, there is no particular proposition that, as we would casually put it, is *about Holmes*. But Watson's fictional token of (5) engenders further contentful results. His imparting them may well be merely fictional, but what is being imparted is not. It is, rather, content which we understand, and which we may even encode in our own straightforwardly content-encoding sentences, as I just did when I penned (6): the relation of bearing a name holds between the six-letter type 'Holmes' and an individual who turned to his desk and drew out a small case-book. This, of course, is not the particular proposition we envision as fictionally being encoded in Watson's words. But it is a proposition nevertheless, and it is the best we may hope to bring home as a result of our access to Doyle's story.

In a sense, then, fictional *telling* takes the place of semantic encoding when Watson's tale is at issue: in the absence of any encoded proposition, what catches our attention are the impartations engendered by the teller's tokens. As a result, the idea that fictional names are only fictionally names deals with the intuition in (iii) from section two by giving due prominence to the act of utterance. As (iii) rightly insists, content must be in the air, if our approach to the text is to yield a picture of 'what goes on in the story'. And yet, it is not content encoded in the text, that is, in the would-be sentences it contains, but content imparted by the fictional utterances it depicts. Its analysis, then, is not the province of semantics, that is, of the study of actual proposition-encoding sentences and the equally actual proper names they may contain. The topic, rather, are the communicative effects generated by the fictional act of speaking.

The reason why I momentarily switched to *The Adventures of the Speckled Band* is that, in this case, fictional telling goes without saying. After all, Doyle's tale is not merely a tale in which an eccentric detective turns to his desk, takes out a small book, and eventually solves yet another baffling crime. It is also, explicitly, a tale in which that detective's sidekick describes his adventures. In a nutshell, *The Adventures of the Speckled Band* is an instance of *homodiegetic* narrative. And so, *The Adventures* wears the effects of impartation on its sleeves: fictionally, the good doctor does not merely do

this and that with his companion, but also, at some later time, bothers to record his adventures in the text that fictionally occurs before us.¹⁵

Yet, the idea of fictional telling is no less crucial in the case of *Emma*. It is so, incidentally, also for reasons that are independent from my take on fictional discourse, and that stem from the standard narratological approach to *heterodiegetic* narrative. For, surely, the teller that emerges from the pages of *Emma* is not Austen, the offspring of a Hampshire Anglican rector who eventually died in Winchester at the age of forty-one. It is, rather, a construct whose attitude, gender, demeanour, and tone are to be reconstructed from an attentive interpretive reading of the text. It is, then, a fictional construct. It is, to boot, a fictionally very chatty construct indeed, a teller who reports with almost infallible insight on Highbury's social life. The teller in *Emma* may take on a fictionally less explicit shape than Watson's, but it is nevertheless there for all of those who bother to access Austen's work. And so, as I am about to explain, the notion of impartation, which served eminently well in the case of *The Adventures*, also plays a central role in the explanation of our interactions with *Emma*.¹⁶

Austen may well have chosen her name-types with the care we expect from authors who leave little to chance. But the name that fictionally echoes in her tale, 'Emma Woodhouse', is not her creation, since that name is simply nothing. Her onomastic attention bears the responsibility for the name-type which, in her fictional teller's mouth, is tokened as the name of a charming young lady. But, for Austen and for us, 'Emma Woodhouse' does not name that lady, or for that matter anything else. Not, mind you, because it is an empty name, but because it is merely fictionally a name. And so, impartation is once again what, for Austen and for all of us, takes on the needed contentful responsibilities: the fictional occurrence of (2) as part of the teller's narration fictionally imparts the sort of content that utterances of that kind generally impart. It does, in particular, fictionally impart that

¹⁵ For classic discussions of the homodiegetic/heterodiegetic from the narratological viewpoint see for instance (Genette 1980), (Berendsen 1984), (Bal 1985), (Porter Abbott 2002), (Gunn 2004), (Fludernik 2009), and (Currie 2010).

¹⁶ For philosophical discussions of the idea of a teller in heterodiegetic narrative and related exemplars see (Levinson 1996), (Kania 2005), (Carroll 2006), (Wartenberg 2007), (Wilson 2007), (Currie 2010), (Wilson 2011) and (Matravers 2014).

- (7) a bearer of ‘Emma Woodhouse’ had lived merely twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.

Of course, it does all of that merely fictionally, since the speaking, the tokening, and the imparting are all made-up. Still, here as in the case of (6), what is being imparted is straightforwardly understandable, negotiable, and debatable: it is a content about the relationship of bearing, about the name-type ‘Emma Woodhouse’, and about the property of living for more than two decades in a comfortable state.

Once again, then, semantics, that is, actual semantics, is utterly indifferent to (2), as it occurs in *Emma*. What appears in that novel are merely name-types, such as the four-letter type ‘Emma’, and mere name-types are not a proper object of semantic investigation. They are, *a fortiori*, not as important an area of semantic befuddlement as the expressions which some uncritically took to be their natural companions, namely empty names. For empty names are names all right, and their workings are strange affairs that deserve the semanticists’ attention. But ‘Emma Woodhouse’ is not an empty name. To repeat: not because it is a name that names something, but because it is not a name at all.

What is not indifferent to (2), on the other hand, is the theory of impartation, that is, the study of the contentful effects achieved by one’s discursive contribution. This is so because we actually contribute to discourse by uttering, by writing, or anyway by tokening this and that, and because all of this is also fictionally the case—as with Watson’s use of ‘Holmes’, or with the tokens of ‘Emma’ in the discourse fictionally carried out by *Emma*’s teller. What is relevant, of course, is not a theory of *action*: that someone imparts anything is, in these cases, merely fictional, and merely fictional actions are not actions at all. But the study of actual impartations reverberates in the fictional domain, since that which is fictionally being imparted plays a central role in the explanation of our understanding of fiction. The results, of course, are not the sort of particular propositions fictionally negotiated by those equally fictional tellers, that is, propositions about a particular detective or about a specific young woman. But they do nicely enough when it comes to us, the inhabitant of a domain populated only by what there is, actual propositions included.

5. Talk about fiction

I granted that Austen (and probably Doyle) chose their name-types with some care: surely, ‘Emma Woodhouse’ does a better job as a prospective fictional name for an English young woman than ‘Oliver Cromwell’ or ‘Paris, Texas’. The authorial *display* of a name-type is thus not an inconsequential affair, for reasons that may in the end impinge on our appreciation and interpretation of the ensuing fiction. Yet, ‘display’ aptly emphasizes the semantic inertness of that which Austen tokened two centuries ago, and which we continue to access as we browse through the pages of our copies of her work. What is here, among us, are not uses of a name, but the mere presentation of a name-type.

As far as this essay is concerned, then, propositional encoding may well unproblematically be in place at many junctures of fiction, (1) being *perhaps* a case in point. And, at least as far as I have argued thus far, bits of propositional contributions may well straightforwardly be in place also in the case of (2), for instance when it comes to the nouns and predicates it contains. But particularity remains a chimera: (2) fictionally encodes a particular proposition about a certain woman, but it only fictionally does so. *A fortiori*, of course, truth remains a chimera as well, even after general questions of so-called ‘truth in fiction’ have been settled. As far as I am concerned here, for instance, (1) may well be true in *Emma*, at least in the pre-theoretic sense that, according to that fictional scenario, sorrows may come with no accompanying disagreeable consciousness.¹⁷ And, as far as this essay goes, (1) may well be false in actuality, as long as sadness is inevitably unpleasant among us, in the real world. In other words, as far as I can tell, (1) may well encode a proposition that conforms to how sorrows happen to be according to *Emma*, and that fails to accurately depict the ways of sadness in our world. Perhaps. Getting closer to a fully-fledged theory of truth-in-fiction remains nevertheless superfluous when it comes to my main target: for me, sentences such as (2) are not in the business of truth or falsehood for the fundamental reason that they do not encode propositions. And so, even taking for granted some decent approach to the idea of ‘true in

¹⁷ For a small sample of the extensive literature on narrative reliability see (Booth 1961), (Prince 1987), (Currie 1995), and (Nunning 1999).

Emma' (or, for that matter, of 'actually true'), there is simply nothing with (2) that qualifies as (true, false, or whatever) propositional content.

I have swiftly mentioned issues of truth not because they play an immediately relevant role in my account of *Emma* and of fiction-making, but because they may seem to raise independent difficulties when it comes to *another* type of occurrence of (2), namely its occurrence as part of our talk about fiction. And so, Austen may well have displayed that sentence-type as part of her making up a story. But we do also say things of that kind: if asked how things went with *Emma*'s protagonist, we may do worse than to begin with a similar sounding affair. And here, so the story goes, we surely say something true, just as we would say something false, had we opted for

(8) Emma Woodhouse had lived nearly forty years in the world

instead. Since truth is unachievable in the absence of propositional content, so this objection continues, there must be an explanation of how (2) or (8) encode propositions, and *a fortiori* of how 'Emma Woodhouse' contributes to them. At least when it is part of our talk about fiction, then, 'Emma Woodhouse' must be a proper object of semantic investigation, and it may not be reduced to the status of a merely fictional name.

The assumption lurking behind this objection is appropriate: no theory of fictional names is complete, unless it addresses their occurrences in cases of talk about fiction. That objection's target is however inappropriate since, as I am about to argue, the approach to Austen's display presented above may also be extended to occurrences of (2) in *our* mouths, that is, in the mouths of those who are not fiction-makers. In order to introduce my take on talk about fiction, I must nevertheless begin with a further detail in my analysis of fiction-making, having to do with the issue of co-reference.

In actuality, we freely re-employ names in order to refer to the same individual. I say 'Oliver Cromwell was born in 1599; in 1650 Cromwell led the Irish campaign', and you understand that a certain man was born at the end of the 16th Century and directed a particular military campaign. Or, at least, you do so on the basis of the usual hypotheses about co-reference: in the absence of indications to the contrary, it is eminently reasonable to suppose that, as I moved past my first sentence, I did not suddenly decide to employ 'Oliver Cromwell' as the name of the homonymous 20th Century

mountain climber. Of course, much remains to be said about the actual workings of co-reference, but what matters here is that, whatever regularities are in place in these scenarios also apply to the fictional domain. So, it is surely implausible to suppose that *Emma* is a confusing tale of massive homonymy, and that her teller seamlessly speaks of a variety of distinct bearers of ‘Emma Woodhouse’. In the absence of any plausible reason to the contrary, then, we suppose that all tokens of ‘Emma Woodhouse’ in *Emma* fictionally token the same name, and that the sentences in which they occur fictionally encode particular propositions about the same woman. As a result, for us, the ensuing impartations pertain to one and the same bearer of that type: a bearer of ‘Emma Woodhouse’ had lived nearly twenty-one years, and that very same bearer once chatted with her father, went on a walk with an upright young man, and enjoyed meddling in the romantic life of others.

The bounds of co-reference go well beyond the front and back covers of Doyle’s or Austen’s novels. Since the mechanisms of actual co-reference trickle down to fictional co-reference, I could afford to be utterly uncommittal when it came to anything resembling a theory of co-reference. And so, common sense will do also as an account of inter-fictional co-reference, even though the issue remains independently deserving of closer analysis: for one reason or another, adaptations, sequels, and other similar scenarios proceed on a presumption of co-reference with the original.¹⁸ Surely, for instance, the fictional bearer of ‘Holmes’ in Doyle’s 1902 tale *The Speckled Band* is, fictionally, the very same bearer of that name in his 1891 *A Scandal in Bohemia*, and the fictional bearer of ‘Watson’ is the very same fictional doctor across all of the canon. And, incidentally, they are so even if they end up satisfying importantly different properties in this or that tale—or, as in the infamous case of his war-wound, even if what is fictionally true of Watson in one story flatly contradicts what is fictionally true in another.¹⁹

¹⁸ Cross-fictional issues have generated an interesting philosophical debate, see for instance (Bjurman-Pautz 2008), (Caplan 2014), and (Friend 2014).

¹⁹ The fictional location of Watson’s unique war-wound apparently shifts across different stories in the Holmes canon. For discussions of fictional inconsistency see for instance (Walton 1990), (Byrne 1993), (Alward 2012), (Everett 2013), (Matravers 2014), and (Bourne and Caddick Bourne 2016).

Something clearly must play a determinant actual role in this respect. Perhaps, fictionally, all occurrences of ‘Holmes’ and ‘Watson’ across Doyle’s stories co-refer because, in actuality, Doyle designed his sequels with a certain intention. Or else: fictionally, the tokens of ‘Emma Woodhouse’ in Douglas McGrath film adaptation fictionally exemplify the name fictionally uttered by Austen’s narrator because, in actuality, it is rewarding or profitable to take them as exemplars of the same name. Or something along these lines, since any decent understanding of the informal ideas of ‘telling the same story’ or of ‘telling another story with the same characters’ will do for my purposes. In particular, as I am about to explain, it will do also in the case of *our* re-telling, as when we summarize *Emma* by uttering (2). Imagine then that I utter the sentence-type (2) and that, for one reason or another, I aim at reporting how things went in *Emma*, rather than at commenting about one of the many actual bearers of the name-type ‘Emma Woodhouse’. In both cases, a very actual relationship governs my use. But it is a relationship of a very different type. In the case of my remarks about an actual woman, my utterance takes place against the background of a suitable connection between my token and, eventually, the launch of a name spelled and pronounced a ‘Emma Woodhouse’. Whereas, in the case of my summary of *Emma*, what is at issue is my intention to tell the same story, that is, my intention to *retell* the tale of *Emma*, rather than to describe the actual course of events or, for that matter, to retell some other story.

What ensues is merely fictional co-reference. Since my actual utterance is appropriately related to Austen’s fiction-making, what is fictionally the case is that my teller relates to Austen’s teller according to the regularities required for the fictional employment of the same name. As a result, what ensues are circumstance that are, in some important respect, parallel to those appropriate for Austen: not unlike her, I display a sentence-type so as to make it fictional that someone employs a fully-fledged, proposition encoding sentence. Fictionally, then, my reteller reports on the fictional vicissitudes of the individual who, in the story, bears ‘Emma Woodhouse’. Fictionally, that is, he encodes the same proposition as that encoded by *Emma*’s teller in her initial description of Emma’s age and contentment. But it does so only fictionally, since my tokens of ‘Emma Woodhouse’ do not aim at replicating any actual name, or, of course, at launching a wholly

novel appellation. The actual result is, here as before, one of impartation: what my reteller fictionally imparts is that a bearer of ‘Emma Woodhouse’ had lived nearly twenty-one years, and all the rest. More than that: it imparts that the very *same* bearer of ‘Emma Woodhouse’ as the one depicted by Austen’s teller did such and such. And so, since no proposition is at issue, fictional retelling is of no greater interest from the semantic viewpoint than fictional telling: the semantic problem of fictional names dissolves in the case of talk about fiction to no lesser extent than in the case of fiction-making.

Moreover, since no proposition is being encoded, the question of truth fails to arise in either case. But something sufficiently close to truth remains of relevance for talk about fiction, namely fictional truth: my tokens of (2) fictionally provide true descriptions of *Emma’s* world, whereas tokens of (8) do not. They do so because they impart that a bearer of ‘Emma’ lived happily for twenty years, and because Austen’s teller reliably imparted that such a bearer did indeed lead a trouble-free, two-decade long life. Caught in the game, you may well react to my summary with an enthusiastic ‘true!’. But, appropriately enough, you would only be playing the game: not unlike my fictional use of (2) as a proposition encoding sentence, your exclamation populates the fictional domain, and the fictional domain alone.

6. Conclusion

In this essay, I sketched the main traits of my approach to what is improperly called ‘the semantic problem of fictional names’. For me, no such problem arises in connection with either fiction-making or discourse about fiction: fictional names are merely fictional names, and they are thus not anything of concern for the study of actual expressions and of their contentful contributions. My strategy centered around the ideas of launching and impartation, which I briefly discussed in relation to the actual use of language, and which I subsequently adapted to the case of fictional discourse.

Needless to say, much remains to be added to my suggestions. In particular, the following issues strike me as sufficiently closely related to fic-

tion-making and talk about fiction, and hence as targets for analyses consistent with my general approach. For one thing, my treatment of the homodiegetic/heterodiegetic distinction rested satisfied with a brief discussion of their common traits. Yet, tellers who, like *Emma's* teller, do not also populate the story-world raise idiosyncratic and independently interesting issues, first and foremost when it comes to names, to launchings, and to particularity.²⁰ For another, questions of ‘what is true in the story’, of narrative reliability, and of cross-fictional co-reference have only been cursorily mentioned, but all of them are deserving of a treatment grounded on the ideas of fictional telling and impartation.²¹ Last but most definitely not least, traditional quandaries more or less related to fiction have simply been put aside in all of the above, including the notorious question of so-called true negative existentials and the problem of prefixed instances such as ‘according to *Emma*, Emma Woodhouse lived for nearly twenty-one years’.²² Here, I rest satisfied with the hope of having stirred at least some curiosity for the approach to fictional names that I have sketched in these pages.

References

- Alward, Peter. 2012. *Empty Revelations: An Essay on Talk About, and Attitudes Toward, Fiction*. Montreal: Mc-Gill-Queen’s University Press.
- Bal, Mieke. 1985. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Berendsen, Marjet. 1984. “The Teller and the Observer.” *Style* 18: 140–58.
- Berger, Alan. 2002. *Terms and Truth: Reference Direct and Anaphoric*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bjurman Pautz, Anna. 2008. “Fictional Coreference as a Problem for the Pretense Theory.” *Philosophical Studies* 141: 147–56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-007-9156-2>
- Booth, Wayne. 1961. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Bourne, Craig and Emily Caddick Bourne 2016. *Time in Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁰ For my views on this topic see chapter three in (Predelli 2020).

²¹ I cover some of these issues in chapters three, four, and six of (Predelli 2020).

²² For my take on these issues see in particular chapter five in (Predelli 2020).

- Braun, David. 1993. "Empty Names." *Noûs* 27: 449–469.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2215787>
- Braun, David. 2005. "Empty Names, Fictional Names, Mythical Names." *Nous* 39: 596–631. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0029-4624.2005.00541.x>
- Byrne, Alex. 1993. "Truth in Fiction: The Story Continued." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 71: 24–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00048409312345022>
- Caplan, Ben. 2014. "Serial Fiction, Continued." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 54: 65–76. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayt050>
- Carroll, Noel. 2006. "Introduction to Film Narrative/Narration". In *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures*, edited by Noel Carroll and J. Choi, 175–84. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Castaneda, Hector Neri. 1957. "Some Nonformal 'Logical' Relations." *Philosophical Studies* 8: 89–92.
- Currie, Gregory. 1990. *The Nature of Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Currie, Gregory. 1995. "Unreliability Refigured: Narrative in Literature and Film." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53: 19–29.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/431733>
- Currie, Gregory. 2010. *Narratives and Narrators: A Philosophy of Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Davies, David. 2007. *Aesthetics and Literature*. London: Continuum.
- Deutsch, Harry. 1985. "Fiction and Fabrication." *Philosophical Studies* 47: 201–11.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00354147>
- Devitt, Michael. 1981. *Designation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Donnellan, Keith. 1970. "Proper Names and Identifying Descriptions." *Synthese* 21: 335–58. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-2557-7_10
- Donnellan, Keith. 1974. "Speaking of Nothing." *The Philosophical Review* 83: 3–31.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2183871>
- Evans, Gareth. 1973. "The Causal Theory of Names." *Aristotelian Society Supplementary* 47: 187–208.
- Everett, Anthony. 2005. "Against Fictional Realism." *Journal of Philosophy* 102: 624–49. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3655676>
- Everett, Anthony. 2013. *The Non-existent*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fludernik, Monika. 2009. *An Introduction to Narratology*. London: Routledge.
- Folde, Christian. 2017. "Non-Fictional Narrators in Fictional Narrative." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 57: 389–405. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayx026>
- Friend, Stacie. 2014. "Notions of Nothing". In *Empty Representations: Reference and Non-Existence*, edited by Manuel Garcia-Carpintero and Genoveva Marti, 307–32. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Genette, Gerard. 1980. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Cornell University Press.
- Gunn, Daniel. 2004. "Free Indirect Discourse and Narrative Authority in Emma." *Narrative* 12: 35–54. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nar.2003.0023>
- Hintikka, Jaakko. 1962. "Cogito Ergo Sum: Inference or Performance?" *Philosophical Review* 71: 3–32. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2183678>
- Jeshion, Robyn. 2004. "Descriptive Descriptive Names." In *Descriptions and Beyond*, edited by Marga Reimer & Anne Bezuidenhout, 591–613. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kania, Andrew. 2005. "Against the Ubiquity of Fictional Narrators." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 63: 47–54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0021-8529.2005.00180.x>
- Kaplan, David. 1989. "Demonstratives." In *Themes from Kaplan*, edited by Joseph Almog, John Perry, and Howard Wettstein, 481–563. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kripke, Saul. 1980. *Naming and Necessity*. 2nd edition. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lamarque, Peter. 2009. *The Philosophy of Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lamarque, Peter and S. H. Olsen 1994. *Truth, Fiction, and Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Levinson, Jerrold. 1996. "Film Music and Narrative Agency." In *Contemplating Art: Essays in Aesthetics*, 143–83. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199206179.001.0001>
- Lewis, David. 1978. "Truth in Fiction." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15: 37–46.
- Matravers, Derek. 2014. *Fiction and Narrative*. Oxford University Press.
- Motoarca, Ioan-Radu. 2014. "Fictional Surrogates." *Philosophia* 42: 1033–53. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-014-9522-1>
- Nünning, Ansgar. 1999. "Unreliable Compared to What?" In *Transcending Boundaries: Narratology in Context*, edited by W. S. Grünzweig (ed.), 53–73. Tübingen: G. Narr.
- Ohmann, Richard. 1971. "Speech Acts and the Definition of Literature." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 4: 1–19.
- Parsons, Terence. 1980. *Nonexistent Objects*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Perry, John. 2001. *Reference and Reflexivity*. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.
- Porter Abbott, H. 2002. *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Predelli, Stefano. 2005. *Contexts. Meaning, Truth, and the Use of Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Predelli, Stefano. 2013. *Meaning Without Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Predelli, Stefano. 2019. "Determination and Uniformity: The Problem with Speech-Act Theories of Fiction." *Erkenntnis* 84 (2): 309–24.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10670-017-9959-2>
- Predelli, Stefano. 2020. *Fictional Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Prince, Gerald. 1987. *A Dictionary of Narratology*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Sainsbury, Mark. 2005. *Reference Without Referents*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Salmon, Nathan. 1998. "Nonexistence." *Noûs* 32: 277–319.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/0029-4624.00101>
- Searle, John. 1975. "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse." *New Literary History* 6: 319–32. <https://doi.org/10.2307/468422>
- Soames, Scott. 2003. *Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century*, Volume 2. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Taylor, Ken. 2000. "Emptiness Without Compromise." In *Empty Names, Fiction and the Puzzles of Non-Existence*, edited by Anthony Everett and Thomas Hofweber, 3–16. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.
- Taylor, Ken. 2014. "The Things We Do with Empty Names: Objectual Representations, Non-Veridical Language Games, and Truth Similitude." In *Empty Representations: Reference and Non-Existence*, edited by Manuel Garcia-Carpintero and Genoveva Marti, 183–214. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199647057.001.0001>
- Thomasson, Amie. 1999. *Fiction and Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thomasson, Amie. 2003. "Speaking of Fictional Characters." *Dialectica* 57: 205–23.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-8361.2003.tb00266.x>
- Urmson, James. 1976. "Fiction." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 13: 153–57.
- Voltoolini, Alberto. 2013. "Probably the Charterhouse of Parma Does Not Exist, Possibly not even That Parma." *Humana Mente* 25: 235–61.
- von Solodkoff, Tatjana and Richard Woodward 2017. "To Have and to Hold." *Philosophical Issues* 27: 407–27. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phils.12107>
- Walton, Kendall. 1990. *Mimesis as Make-Believe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wartenberg, Thomas. 2007. "Need There Be Implicit Narrators of Literary Fiction?" *Philosophical Studies* 135: 89–94. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-007-9094-z>
- Wilson, George. 2007. "Elusive Narrators in Literature and Film." *Philosophical Studies* 135: 73–88. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-007-9096-x>

-
- Wilson, George. 2011. *Seeing Fictions in Film: The Epistemology of Movies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199594894.001.0001>
- Yagisawa, Takashi. 2001. "Against Creationism in Fiction." *Philosophical Perspectives* 15: 153–72. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0029-4624.35.s15.8>
- Zalta, Edward. 1983. *Abstract Objects: An Introduction to Axiomatic Metaphysics*. Berlin: Springer.

Fictional Names and Fictional Concepts: A Moderate Fictionalist Account

Eleonora Orlando*

Received: 3 March 2020 / Revised: 20 July 2020 / Accepted: 10 November 2020

Abstract: The main thesis I want to defend in this essay is that a fictional name refers to an individual concept, understood as a mental file that stores information, in the form of different descriptive concepts, about a purported individual. Given there is no material particular a fictional name could be referring to, it will be construed as referring to the concept of a particular, with which many descriptive concepts are associated, in the context of the set of thoughts constitutive of a fictional narrative. A fictional narrative will be thus characterised as a conceptual world, namely, a set of sentence-types semantically correlated with a set of thought-types.


Keywords: Fictional name; fictional narrative; fictionalism; fictive, parafictive and metafictional uses; mental file; singular thought.

1. Introduction

The main thesis I want to defend in this essay is that a fictional name, like ‘Funes’ in the following sentence of Borges’ short story “Funes the Memorious”,

* University of Buenos Aires

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0153-6558>

 Bulnes 642 - CP: 1176 Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

 eleonoraorlando@sadaf.org.ar



- (1) We, at a stroke, perceive three cups lying on a table; Funes would see all the shoots and clusters and fruit comprised by a vine,¹

refers to an individual concept, understood as a mental file that stores information, in the form of different descriptive concepts, about a purported individual. Given there is no material particular a fictional name could be referring to, it can be construed as referring to the *concept* of a particular, with which different descriptive concepts are associated, in the context of the set of thoughts constitutive of a *fictional narrative*. A fictional narrative will be thus characterised as a *conceptual world*, namely, a set of sentence-types semantically correlated with a set of thought-types. It is important to point out that the analysis will be thus restricted to *purely linguistic* fictional narratives, among which the most prominent and interesting ones are literary artworks.

Uses of sentences like (1) are what have been called ‘*fictive*’, namely, uses of the very sentences constitutive of “Funes the Memorious”, both in the original act, performed by Borges, of creating the fictional narrative and in the subsequent acts, performed by him and many other people, of reading, reciting, memorising or replicating it in some way. But, as is known, there are other kinds of uses of sentences containing fictional names. On the one hand, in *parafictives uses*, they are intuitively taken to convey the fictional story facts from an external perspective, as exemplified by an utterance of

- (2) Funes recovers consciousness with the skill of remembering everything,²

during a lecture on Latin-American literature. These uses can be considered to be reports of a fictional narrative’s content by means of different words.

¹ This is a translation of the original Spanish sentence: “Nosotros, de un vistazo, percibimos tres copas en una mesa; Funes, todos los vástagos y racimos y frutos que comprende una parra.” Below, I will make a brief comment on translation.

² Adapted from: “‘Funes the Memoriou’ tells the vicissitudes of Ireneo Funes, a peasant from Fray Bentos, who after falling off a horse and hitting his head hard, recovers consciousness with the incredible skill—or perhaps curse—of remembering absolutely everything.” (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/borges-and-memory-encounters-with-human-brain-excerpt/>)

On the other hand, there are also the *metafictive uses*, in which fictional sentences are intuitively construed as alluding to facts that are not part of the fictional story, like the use of

- (3) Funes manifests Borges' obsession with the infinite,

in writing a literary essay. Both parafictive and metafictional uses usually target sentences that are not part of what I have called 'the conceptual world of the fiction'. So, in accounting for them, it will be necessary to examine how that world is related to sentences outside its domain.³

A clarification point is in order. The core of the proposal may seem not to do justice to the phenomenology associated with the use of fictional discourse: it may be objected that in producing and consuming fiction, in particular, in fictively using sentences with fictional names, we have the impression of referring not to individual concepts but to flesh and blood people. Although I will not be concerned with the phenomenological aspects of our interaction with fiction, I would like to point out that (i) the impression at stake is under-described, since it is mingled with the element of pretence that is characteristic of fictive uses: in fact, in making those uses, we merely pretend to be referring to flesh and blood people, while being perfectly aware that this is not the case; (ii) be that as it may, the metaphysical nature ascribed to an object of reference does not rule out any particular phenomenology associated with an act of reference because no competent speaker can be assumed to have, *qua* competent speaker, knowledge of the metaphysics of reference. Accordingly, in using sentences containing standard general terms, a competent speaker may be thought to be holding *de re* attitudes towards substances whose underlying nature she most certainly ignores; likewise, in fictive uses, a competent speaker can be thought to be holding *de re* attitudes towards objects, in particular, the individual concepts allegedly referred to by fictional names, whose metaphysical nature she may ignore as well. Finally, the peculiarly declarative illocutionary force that will be ascribed to the production of sentences like (1) can also be taken to play a role in pointing to the existence of an

³ Bonomi (2008) introduces a similar distinction between textual, paratextual and metatextual uses. See also (García-Carpintero 2015, 2020, forthcoming).

“intuitively felt” difference between our dealings with standard and fictional discourse.⁴

The structure of the paper is the following one. In section 2 I will expand on the framework of mental file theory that is being used in the proposal. In section 3 I will try to show how it can be put to work to account for fictive uses. Then, in section 4 I will suggest how an explanation of parafictive and metafictive uses could be developed along similar lines. The last section is a conclusion, in which the fictionalist character of the proposal is brought to the fore.

2. On mental files

Thoughts (in particular, propositional attitudes) can be classified into singular and general ones. This classification is related to their *contents*, since singular thoughts are thoughts *about particulars*, while general thoughts are quantificational and hence purely descriptive ones.⁵ Likewise, the concepts they involve can be also classified into two main groups: particular concepts, such as individual and indexical ones,⁶ and general concepts, like classificatory and qualitative ones. In terms of an example, the singular thought BORGES IS A WRITER, is constituted, on the one hand, by an individual concept for Borges, what can be called ‘the BORGES file’, and, on the other, by the descriptive concept WRITER, which can be considered to be stored in that file, together with other ones.⁷ By deploying mental files a person is able to entertain singular thoughts. This capacity is thus naturally associated with the ability to use sentences containing genuinely referential expressions, like proper names and indexicals. Files have

⁴ I thank an anonymous referee for pressing me to add this clarification.

⁵ As is known, thoughts can also be classified in relation not to their contents but to their types; i.e., into beliefs, desires, doubts, predictions, etc.—according to the Representational Theory of the Mind, they can be distributed in different ‘boxes’. See, for instance, (Fodor 1990).

⁶ Some philosophers think that there are also particular concepts corresponding to the referential use of definite descriptions. See, for instance, (Recanati 2009).

⁷ As is fairly common, I use capital letters to designate thoughts and concepts.

been taken to be the mental counterparts of genuinely singular terms.⁸ In a nutshell, files have been put to work in defence of Singularism and against Descriptivism, namely, the general view that both thought and language have devices for singular reference.

Getting more specific, mental files are a new way of conceiving of particular concepts. A mental file is a mental representation (metaphysically, a mental particular) that stores information (and misinformation) concerning an individual under a certain label, which can be updated on the occasion of each new encounter with the individual at stake (Crimmins and Perry 1989, Crimmins 1992, Perry 2001, Jeshion 2009 and 2010, Korta and Perry 2011, Friend 2011, Recanati 2012, Salis 2013). Mental files are relationally, as opposed to satisfactionally, individuated: in a paradigmatic case, whereas a descriptive concept selects an individual by virtue of the fact that it satisfies a certain description (satisfactionally), a mental file does it by virtue of the fact that it is directly related to it (relationally). The kinds of relations between a mental file and the corresponding individual include perception, memory, testimony, and the historical chains of communication underlying the use of proper names: though being different kinds of relations, they are usually referred to by means of the global term ‘acquaintance’. So, the two main features of a mental file are (i) its aptitude for bundling information and misinformation, and (ii) the ascription of the bundled information and misinformation to a particular individual.

As mentioned before, ‘acquaintance’ is thought to encompass different kinds of relations, among which historical chains of communication can be considered to play a major role. The reason for that is that they allow for a close relationship between names and concepts: many individual concepts originate when the corresponding names are introduced in a public language, and they can be transmitted, along with names, across different times and communities. Now, as is known, historical chains of communication do not require a direct epistemic relation like perception to get off the

⁸ Moreover, files have been thought to play a key role in accounting for differences in cognitive significance between co-referential terms, which does not necessarily involve considering them to be playing a semantic function in relation to singular terms (i.e., to be an aspect of their meaning). I defended this option, a version of a two-level semantics, though, in (Orlando 2017).

ground. According to Kripke (1980)'s seminal work, the mechanism of reference fixing can be: (i) purely causal, (ii) mixed, that is, causal-descriptive, or (iii) purely descriptive. In the first case, there is a causal relation to an object underlying an act of perception, by virtue of which the name gets grounded on the object in question, which gives rise to a naming practice. The second case is exemplified by Kripke with the different baptisms of Venus: in one of them, 'Hesperus' is bestowed on the planet by means of a causal relation underlying an act of perception and the simultaneous use of a description, 'the evening star' (or something equivalent to it), that was thought to select it even if in fact it did not, since Venus is not a star; at any rate, reference fixing descriptions do not have to be true of the object they are used to pick out as the referent of the accompanying name. As for the third case, it is exemplified by Kripke with the baptism of Neptune: what anchors 'Neptune' in Neptune is exclusively a description, entertained by Le Verrier, along the lines of 'the planet that causes perturbations in Uranus' orbit'.

Moreover, closer to the present topic of concern, there are also cases in which not only is there no perceptual link at the baptism but also no object whatsoever to be perceived (or, for that matter, described). Kripke (2011, 2013) encompasses the possibility of a historical chain of communication to get started even when there is nothing whatsoever being named or talked about in the case of the introduction of fictional names by the creators of fiction. He claims that authors, when introducing names for their fictional characters, are merely pretending to name real people, while there is nobody they could be related to. Even if, afterwards, at a later stage, those fictional characters start playing the role of (abstract) referents, at an early stage, pretence gives rise to an empty naming practice. Likewise, Donnellan (1974) considers instances of historical chains ending up in what he calls a 'block', namely, certain events that preclude a referent from being identified, such as hallucinations, mistakes or cases of non-uniqueness. Along these same lines, Sainsbury (2005) claims that a baptism can be successful in originating a naming practice even if it fails to introduce an object: those are cases where there is reference (namely, an expression with a referential function is involved) without a referent. Devitt and Sterelny (1987) and Devitt (1996) seem to be endorsing a similar claim: in their framework, the singular

content involved in those uses is constituted by the causal networks themselves, which are taken to play the role of external senses. Therefore, the thesis that the competent use of proper names in natural language is one of the main sources of mental files should lead one to acknowledge the existence of files that are grounded on no object whatsoever.

These considerations prompt a restatement of the initial characterisation: a mental file is a mental representation that, *in the paradigmatic cases*, stores information (and misinformation) concerning a particular individual under a certain label. The two main features mentioned at the beginning of this essay still hold *modulo* that important modification: a mental file (i) bundles information (and misinformation) (ii) to a *purported* particular individual. Accordingly, a singular thought is a thought entertained as a consequence of taking some information flow to come directly from an *alleged* individual, namely, even if the object at stake does not exist. In a nutshell, thinking singularly involves an object-directed but not necessarily an object-involving mental activity.⁹

3. Fictive uses

3.1 *Fictional names: their introduction (or their reference fixing mechanism)*

In most cases, or at least, in the most interesting ones, fictional names are introduced as part of the process of creating a fictional narrative, which, also in the most interesting cases, constitutes a literary artwork.¹⁰ It may

⁹ As argued in (Orlando 2017), this should lead us to give up any kind of strong conception of acquaintance, according to which being acquainted with an object requires either having a direct epistemic relation to an object or belonging in a communication chain whose first member has a non-descriptive epistemic relation to an object. As is known, mental file theorists are divided among those allowing for such a strong interpretation of acquaintance (Evans 1982, Salmon 1986) and those opposing it (Perry 2001, Jeshion 2009, 2010, Friend 2011, Recanati 2012, Salis 2013).

¹⁰ Searle (1975) claims that fictional narratives cannot be identified with literary artworks because there are fictional narratives that are not considered to be part of literature (a comic strip, for instance) and, vice versa, there are literary artworks

be thought, fairly uncontroversially, that a fictional narrative is an abstract entity of some sort; more specifically, but still without intending to go deep into metaphysical issues, I propose to construe it in terms of what I've called a 'conceptual world', namely, a set of pairs of sentence-types and thought-types, grounded on the tokens entertained by the author during the creation process.¹¹ On this assumption, a fictional narrative involves the creation of a *prima facie* peculiar kind of abstract object—since, as is known, abstract objects are usually thought to be atemporal/eternal and as such they cannot be created. Even if this belongs in a set of well-known problems (such as the creation, disappearance and our epistemic relation to abstract objects) that are beyond the scope of this essay, they might be at least partially handled by appealing to the role of exemplars. In terms of Goodman (1968)'s classification of artworks into the allographic and autographic ones, literature belongs in the former group, which means that it allows for multiple instances, or exemplars, of the fiction in play. An author creates a fictional narrative by creating a particular exemplar of it: by semantically correlating, at a time and place, a certain set of sentence-types with a certain set of thought-types, grounded on her own thought-tokens.¹² The initial

that are not fictional (Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, Thucydides' historical narratives). Two clarifications may be relevant to this point. First, as pointed out in the introduction, the present analysis is restricted to purely linguistic fictional narratives—hence, those including a visual component, like comic strips and movies, are excluded. Secondly, although I will not be concerned with the difference between literature, journalism and history and there might well be cases that belong in the intersection of these fields, paradigmatic literary artworks, as opposed to paradigmatic journalist articles and historical works, are not factual, or based on alleged facts, but fictional narratives.

¹¹ This turns out to be more complicated than it may seem at first sight, since the conceptual world of a fictional narrative can be thought to include not only the thought-types literally expressed by the corresponding sentence-types but also other thoughts that are tightly related to them (either conversationally implicated by them or derived from them in some other way). I will ignore this complication in what follows. I thank Manuel García-Carpintero for a comment that prompts the addition of this footnote.

¹² From now on, I will use the feminine pronoun for the author and the masculine pronoun for the reader.

literary exemplar is the first set of sentence-tokens of those types that gets semantically correlated with the author's (set of) thought-types; literary exemplars might thus be construed as semantic vehicles of thought-types. In as far as my main topic, fictional names, is concerned, *a certain name-type gets semantically correlated with a certain fictional file-type, which thereby becomes its referent*.¹³ In what follows, I will try to justify this central claim.

According to the considerations put forward in the previous section, it is plausible to think that when an author introduces a fictional name, she will open a mental file for a fictional character, even if there is no material object she is related to. Notice that, in as far the fictional file is going to be tokened many times throughout the creation of the narrative, the different tokens give rise to a certain type of file. Now, whereas in introducing scientific names like 'Vulcano', and even mythological ones like 'Zeus', the speaker can be ascribed a referential intention that is directed towards a supposedly material object, this is not the case with fictional names: the author who introduces a fictional name *knows* there is not, and could not be (except for a spectacular coincidence) a corresponding material object.¹⁴

¹³ Strictly speaking, at a baptism it is not a name-type but an articulation-type (for instance, /Olivia/) that gets correlated with a particular (in the paradigmatic case, Olivia), since names are individuated in terms of their meanings, of which their referents are at least a part. So, the name-type 'Olivia' is the set of tokens referring to the same Olivia. Another Olivia has another name-type. I avoid this complication for the sake of simplicity.

¹⁴ What about the inclusion in fictional narratives of names associated with real people, as the trite example of 'Napoleon' in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*? There are two main positions concerning this issue: non-exceptionalism and exceptionalism. According to the former, paradigmatically represented by Kripke (2013) and Friend (2000, 2011), those names are standard names that are imported into the fiction. The latter position, defended by García-Carpintero (2015, 2020 and forthcoming), claims that those names are not imported ones but are as fictional as 'Anna Karenina': they do not refer to real people but concern characters that are similar, in some respects, to real people. I support exceptionalism, since I take all names occurring in fictional narratives to refer to individual concepts, and, as it will be clear below, in most of their uses, they are part of either what I have called 'the conceptual world of the fiction' or an equally conceptual interpretative extension of it.

Accordingly, it is possible to think that her referential intention is directed towards her own creation, the file opened in association with the character's name and functioning as an anchorage for the information and misinformation concerning that character.

This may be understood along the lines of the well-known Fregean *Thesis of Reference-Shift* depending on the kind of sentential context involved. As is known, according to Frege, if a word occurs within quotation marks, it does not refer to its usual referent but to itself:

If words are used in the ordinary way, what one intends to speak of is their reference. It can also happen, however, that one wishes to talk about the words themselves or their sense. This happens, for instance, when the words of another are quoted. One's own words then first designate words of the other speaker, and only the latter have their usual reference. We then have signs of signs. In writing, the words are in this case enclosed in quotation marks. Accordingly, a word standing between quotation marks must not be taken as having its ordinary reference. (Frege 1892, 58-9)

Moreover, if a word occurs under the scope of a psychological verb, in a so-called 'context of indirect speech', it does not refer to its usual referent either but to its customary sense. Quotation marks and psychological verbs are then indicative of the presence of a referential shift; words and senses are the possible entities reference might shift to. As is clear from Frege's account, they are both independently motivated kinds of entities: words are taken to exist all along, and positing senses is independently justified on account of the problem of the difference in cognitive significance between pairs of sentences containing different but co-referential terms—namely, the so-called 'Frege's Puzzle'.

My point is that positing mental files is also justified on independent reasons: the ontological commitment to mental files is motivated, as mentioned in the previous section, by the defence of Singularism against Descriptivism. Consequently, it can be considered that when there is no possible outward referential intention, there is a referential shift from the material world to the realm of thought. More specifically, since in creating a fictional narrative the author is definitely not concerned with the material world (at least, not primarily concerned with it), it may be thought that

the fictional names she introduces do not refer, as usual, to material individuals, but unusually to the mental files she opens for her characters, namely, to fictional individual concepts. Using a fictional name involves deploying a fictional file, namely, tracking not a material object but a concept. Falling short of any syntactic indicating device like quotation marks or psychological verbs, *the author's referential intentions* can be brought to the fore.¹⁵ Notice, though, that the Fregean *Thesis of Reference-Shift* is general enough not to necessarily involve some other Fregean theses, in particular, the thesis that what is referred to in non-standard sentential contexts might be a meaning component in standard ones, namely, a sense. Accordingly, fictive statements need not be construed as introducing an intensional, i.e., non-extensional, context.

The proposed reference-shift may get further support from the intuitive, and widely acknowledged, fact that in uttering a sentence like (1) the author does not have an assertive intention, namely, the intention to present a content as a candidate for being true or truth-assessable. As also Frege (1892, 1918) initially pointed out, fictive uses are not performed with the purpose of making assertions and hence cannot have a truth-value.¹⁶ Their function is not manifesting an aspect of the Truth but producing an aesthetic effect—which can be more clearly appreciated if we take into account, as before emphasised, that the introduction of fictional names should be viewed as part and parcel of the creation of a fictional narrative. Along these lines, many fictionalists, paradigmatically represented by Walton (1990), have suggested that fictive uses can be only *fictionally* true, namely,

¹⁵ As pointed out by Simpson (1964, 113-4), Frege does not provide us with a general criterion to recognise the kinds of sentential contexts that can motivate a reference-shift.

¹⁶ “In hearing an epic poem, for instance, apart from the euphony of the language we are interested only in the sense of the sentences and the images and feelings thereby aroused. The question of truth would cause us to abandon aesthetic delight for an attitude of scientific investigation. Hence it is a matter of no concern to us whether the name ‘Odysseus’, for instance, has reference, so long as we accept the poem as a work of art.” (Frege 1892, 63) This could be construed as another argument put forward by Frege to the effect that fictive statements are neither true nor false—the other one being jointly based on the lack of reference of fictional names and the Principle of Compositionality.

they can be considered true only in the framework of a pretence or “a game of make-believe”. Along the same lines, they have claimed that their use involves no referential intention at all—and that they are to be thus analysed, or paraphrased away, in terms of descriptive sentences. The alternative I am trying to suggest is that *there is still a referential intention in play but its target has shifted*: it is directed towards not the usual material object but an individual concept that originated in the process of creating a fictional narrative. It is a *sui generis* referential intention. As is known, referring is not a speech act on a par with, for instance, asserting, ordering or promising, since it can be presupposed by the performance of any kind of speech act.

Moreover, the fact that the author can be taken to be involved in a pretence or a game of make-believe may be considered to be also indicative of the fact that her referential intention is not what it should be and she may try to appear it to be, namely, an intention directed towards a material individual. This would be only what the author pretends to be doing. But then what she is in fact doing is something rather different: she has the intention to refer to the character—according to the present proposal, the individual concept—she has concocted, together with the story.¹⁷

There are two features that I would like to emphasise. First, the author’s performance is different from the common speaker’s introduction of a standard proper name, since it is an aspect of the complex process of creating a fictional narrative. Accordingly, introducing a fictional name involves establishing a correlation between a name-type and a file-type that will end up being part of a fixed system of correlations between sentence-types involving that name and thought-types involving the corresponding file. What is introduced is not a detached name for an isolated individual, as when a real person is baptised ‘Olivia’, but a name for a *fictional character*, namely, a “*piece*” of a certain narrative structure, playing a specific role in the whole it belongs to. (This will help explaining why any ensuing use of that name will be linked to the creation of the fictional narrative.)

¹⁷ As is clear, the pretence is completely explicit, and the reader agrees to play a role in it, as much as it happens to spectators in a theatre. So, both author and reader can easily identify the author’s real referential intention underneath the pretension.

Secondly, and closely related to the previous observation, this file-type can be taken to gradually incorporate, through the creation process, all and only the features and facts ascribed to the fictional character by the author. In terms of the example, in writing “Funes the Memorious”, Borges must have entertained, among others, the following singular thoughts concerning his main character: FUNES WOULD SEE ALL THE SHOOTS AND CLUSTERS AND FRUIT COMPRISED BY A VINE; FUNES KNEW THE SHAPES OF THE SOUTHERN CLOUDS AT DAWN ON APRIL 30, 1882; FUNES COULD COMPARE THEM IN HIS MEMORY WITH THE STREAKS ON A BOOK OF SPANISH COVER THAT HE HAD SEEN ONLY ONCE. Accordingly, Borges can be credited with having loaded his FUNES file with these pieces of information, among others: SEEING ALL THE SHOOTS AND CLUSTERS AND FRUIT COMPRISED BY A VINE; KNOWING THE SHAPES OF THE SOUTHERN CLOUDS AT DAWN ON APRIL 30, 1882; BEING ABLE TO COMPARE THEM IN HIS MEMORY WITH THE STREAKS ON A BOOK OF SPANISH COVER THAT HE HAD SEEN ONLY ONCE. Fictional files, in as far as they play specific roles in the context of a narrative structure, are initially loaded with all and only the information and misinformation that an author decides to store in them during the process of creating that narrative. (Notice that this includes the misinformation conveyed by the author by means of what has been called ‘an unreliable narrator’, namely, a point of view of the facts constitutive of the story that is not to be trusted for different possible reasons: the narrator is ignorant, confused or mistaken about those facts, she is deceitful, she is an occasional or systematic liar, she has a distorted perception of reality, etc.)¹⁸

It may be worth including a metasemantic aside. As mentioned in the previous section, a mental file is usually individuated in terms of not the information and misinformation it contains but the particular object it gets related to at a certain moment and place. If there is no object involved, as

¹⁸ The narrator may not be part of the story being narrated, as is the case with heterodiegetic narratives, as opposed to homodiegetic narratives in which the narrator is identical to one of the characters. For a comprehensive examination of the relationships between the author, the narrator and the characters in the story, as much as the different levels of a fictional narrative, see (Predelli 2020).

is the case with a fictional file, the individuation is still not descriptive but historical or based on the file's origin. In terms of the example, what makes the FUNES file the particular file it is is not the information and misinformation that Borges decided to store in it but the fact that it was originally opened by Borges as part of his process of creating "Funes the Memorious". Therefore, its belonging in a certain narrative structure ends up being essential to its identification. But this does not imply that the file identity is given by the list of descriptive concepts that are stored in it, or that reference to the file can be understood in terms of the application of a list of predicates corresponding to those concepts. The proposal does not then collapse into a version of descriptivism concerning the meaning of fictional names.

According to what has been argued so far, when Borges comes up with (1), he uses the name 'Funes' with the intention to refer not to a material object but to the individual concept he has just opened for a character that plays a major role in the narrative structure of "Funes the Memorious". But he is also storing a representation of the property of seeing all the shoots and clusters and fruit comprised by a vine in that character's file. As mentioned before, he can be taken to have entertained the singular thought FUNES WOULD SEE ALL THE SHOOTS AND CLUSTERS AND FRUIT COMPRISED BY A VINE. Accordingly, it is plausible to claim that the above-mentioned reference-shift also affects the *predicative* part of the sentence: the meaning of the predicate is not the property itself but a representation of that property, namely, a descriptive concept. It is then a *global* reference-shift. The semantic content of (1) would then be a thought, a purely conceptual content.

Notice that the proposed framework allows thus for a more natural motivation for the distinction between *exemplifying* and *encoding* a property, characteristic of different realist accounts (Zalta 1983, Castañeda 1989, Kripke 2013). Fictive uses express not the exemplification but the codification of a property (by a fictional character) because they express not external facts but thoughts.

3.2 A speech act hypothesis

Some fictionalists, such as Currie (1990) and García-Carpintero (2007, 2013, 2019), have attributed to fictive uses a dedicated illocutionary force,

the *fiction-making* force: according to this view, they are performed with the intention of making the occasional reader imagine to be imagining (or *de se* imagine) the content expressed by means of his recognition of that very intention. Without intending to get into the details of this position, I would like to suggest that if there is a fiction-making force it seems to me not to be on a par with other ones such as the assertive and the directive but to be a subkind of what Searle classifies as *declarative force*, namely, the force characteristic of those acts whose illocutionary point is to create something, “cases where one brings a state of affairs into existence by declaring it to exist” (Searle 1969, 358).

As is clear, the declaration in these cases is not explicit, namely, there is no illocutionary-force indicating device, as the verb ‘baptise’ in the famous “I baptised this ship *Queen Elizabeth*”; in this sense, they can be compared to cases like “You are fired”. The central point is that if the author successfully performs the act of creating a narrative in which certain characters feature in a certain fictional story, then there is such a narrative. An original fictive use is a speech act that plays a constitutive role in the creation of a fictional narrative, what I have called a ‘conceptual world’. In terms of the example, if Borges uses (1) as part of successfully creating a fictional narrative, then there is a fictional narrative in which a character who goes by ‘Funes’ sees all the shoots and clusters and fruit comprised by a vine, namely, “Funes the Memorious”. And, getting more specific, in this fictional narrative the character goes around doing different things and, in particular, performing different kinds of speech acts.¹⁹ One may even think that this kind of *declarational* act is backed up by an extra-linguistic institution, in a loose sense of the word, in which the author and her audiences occupy a special place, namely, the institution determined by the social practices of producing and “consuming” literature.

More specifically, the kind of speech act involved in an original fictive use, namely, in the fictive use made by the author of a fictional narrative, might be assigned two interrelated illocutionary points, along the lines of

¹⁹ When the narrator is not a character of the story (i.e., in heterodiegetic narratives), she still belongs, somehow, in the narrative, and all the different speech acts that she performs in narrating the fictional facts are, somehow, part of the narrative (even if they are not part of the fictional facts or the plot).

the promulgation of a law by a legislator (as opposed to its application by a judge): “Promulgating a law has both a declarational status (the propositional content becomes law) and a directive status (the law is directive in intent)” (Searle 1969, 368-369). Likewise, an original fictive use has also both a *declarational* status, its content becomes part of an artwork, and a *directive* status, since that content has a normative character *vis à vis* future uses. As will be explored in 3.3, the ensuing fictive uses of (1) can be construed as uses whose content replicates the content of its original use, namely, the one made in the context of creating the corresponding fictional narrative.²⁰

3.3 Fictional names: the transmission of reference (or their reference borrowing mechanism)

As is known, historical chains of communication have been basically put forward to account for the transmission of reference among the different members of a linguistic community across time and through different linguistic communities. If we stick to Kripke’s original proposal and some of its main developments, the mechanism of reference transmission or reference borrowing is mostly causal, which means that it does not require the presence of an epistemic component. Historical chains are not, in most cases, epistemic conveyers of information; they are different in this respect from perception, memory and testimony (namely, the other sources of singular thought mentioned by mental file theorists). Although Kripke explicitly says that he will not provide us with either necessary or sufficient conditions for someone to take part or adequately insert in a historical chain, the suggestion is that having *the same referential intention* as the person from whom the expression was borrowed is enough.

²⁰ As is known, declarative force is compatible with different sentence moods, namely, with declarative, imperative and interrogative sentences. Likewise, it is possible to make an assertion by using an interrogative sentence (“Hasn’t the government promised not to increase taxes?”), to give an order by using a declarative sentence (“You come back later”), to insult or express contempt for someone by using an imperative sentence (“Move to a separate line, you sudacas!”), etc.

By performing acts of reading, reciting, memorising or, in general, replicating in some way a fictional narrative, different people (in general, *replicators*) can access its constitutive conceptual world.²¹ They can be thereby thought to be part of multiple communication chains leading to the creation, by its author, of the conceptual world in question, namely, the moment in which a certain set of sentence-types, by virtue of the above-mentioned kind of referential shift, gets semantically correlated with a set of thought-types—and, in particular, in which a certain fictional name gets semantically correlated with a fictional file. In terms of the example, there is a communication chain connecting the reader's use of 'Funes' in understanding (1) with its original introduction as a name for the FUNES type-file (grounded, in turn, on the multiple token-files in Borges' mind).

More specifically, a replicator's insertion in a historical chain of communication involves, in most literary cases, his causal interaction with a particular exemplar of the work at stake, namely, a set of tokens of the sentence-types with which the author's thought-types were semantically correlated at the creation stage. The mediation of the exemplar makes it manifest that a fictional name is not the kind of name that is detachedly used for an isolated individual but one that is used as part of the interaction with a narrative structure in which it plays a certain role – and outside of which it does not make any sense or has a different meaning, as it happens to 'tower', 'bishop', 'pawn', etc. outside a player's interaction with a chess board, in the context of a game. Accordingly, the communication chain is made not just of isolated particular uses but of particular uses that take place in the context of the replicator's interaction with an exemplar. A particular use of a fictional name connects the replicator with its referent, the corresponding file-type, by means of presenting him with a particular instance of that correlation, provided by an exemplar. His referential intention determines his insertion in a communication chain leading to the original file-type.

By interacting with a particular exemplar, a replicator opens his own file for the fictional character, where all the corresponding information and misinformation gets gradually loaded. The individual concept instantiated in his mind is of the same type as the one originally correlated with the

²¹ This set may comprise the very author at a later stage, once the creation process is over.

name and of the many instances constitutive of the communication chain leading to it. So, in a sense, the concept is also part of a world *external to him* – though, not of course, the material world but *the conceptual world of a fictional narrative*. Fictional conceptual worlds are public, since they are introduced in (more or less institutionalised) social practices of creating and consuming literary artworks, and are shared by all those people who succeed in inserting in communication chains leading to those works.²²

As before mentioned, fictional conceptual worlds play a normative function in relation to replicating (and also, as explained below, reformulating) processes. Accordingly, the kind of declarative speech act involved in replication seems to be more similar not to the promulgation of a law by a legislator but to *its application by a judge*: the replicator enforces the narrative as much as a judge's decision enforces an existent legislation, to which she is supposed to be loyal or faithful—her declarative acts, whatever they are, are not free but regimented. Likewise, the declarative acts of a replicator are regimented by the fictional narrative she is replicating. Therefore, it seems more appropriate to classify them in terms not of truth and falsity but of *faithfulness* and *unfaithfulness* to the conceptual world of the fictional narrative—as suggested in (Sainsbury 2010). The faithfulness-conditions of a replicative fictive use of (1) are thus specified not in terms of an individual having a certain property (or belonging in a certain set of individuals) but in terms of the descriptive concept SEEING ALL THE SHOOTS AND CLUSTERS AND FRUIT COMPRISED BY A VINE belonging in the FUNES file in the conceptual world of “Funes the Memorious”.

Notice, though, that a replicator is free to store not just the adequate information and misinformation flowing from the short story but also, due

²² There is then an aspect in which fictional names may be found more akin to natural kind terms than to standard names. In general in using ‘water’ the speaker is related to a natural substance by being in touch with an instance of it, namely, a particular sample of water. Likewise, in reading “Funes the Memorious” the reader is related to Borges’ fictional narrative (a conceptual world) through an instance, namely, a particular exemplar of the short story. In particular, in understanding ‘Funes’ the reader is related to the original ‘Funes’-FUNES correlation through (grasping) a particular instance of it, i.e., the ‘Funes’-FUNES correlation offered, and prompted, by the corresponding exemplar.

to distractions or misunderstandings, some inadequate misinformation. The presence of some descriptive concepts in a certain fictional name file is then comparable to the presence of BORN IN SWITZERLAND and AUTHOR OF 100 YEARS OF SOLITUDE in the BORGES file. The inclusion of concepts that are different from the ones originally ascribed by the author is an issue that is closely related to the distinction between different kinds of uses of fictional sentences, which will be the focus of the next section.

4. Parafictive and metafictive uses

As mentioned in the introduction, fictional names can also appear in sentences that are used not in acts of creating or replicating the original narrative but in *acts of reformulating* it, the so-called ‘parafictive uses’, as exemplified by the use of (2), repeated below,

- (2) Funes recovers consciousness with the skill of remembering everything,

in giving a lecture on Latin-American literature. This sentence is not included in the set of sentence-types constitutive of the conceptual world of “Funes the Memorious” but its use is meant to report on an aspect of the fictional story—in particular, what happens to its protagonist—with words that are different from the ones chosen by the author. In the previous terms, it involves storing the concept RECOVERING CONSCIOUSNESS WITH THE SKILL OF REMEMBERING EVERYTHING in the FUNES file. Consequently, the case provides us with an example of a kind of information that can be stored in a fictional file, which does not flow directly from its original source but is the product of an interpretative process (however superficial it might be).

Anyway, a *reformulator’s* referential intention seems to be directed towards the corresponding file, so that the occurrence of ‘Funes’ in (2) can be taken to refer to the FUNES file, and its predicate, to express the same character’s aspect expressed by different predicates occurring in the conceptual world of the short story, namely, it can be taken to be semantically equivalent to a subset of them (like SEEING ALL THE SHOOTS AND CLUSTERS AND FRUIT COMPRISED BY A VINE). In other terms,

parafictive uses also involve a *global* reference-shift: the reformulator is talking about not the material world but a conceptual world that may be considered an *interpretative extension* of the fictional narrative. Accordingly, the semantic content of (2) is also a thought, namely, something constituted by a file and a descriptive concept and, hence, purely conceptual.

An act of reformulating a fragment of a fictional narrative could also be considered a declarative act, akin (not to a legislator's promulgation of a new law but) to a *judge's application of a standing law*. But it metaphorically alludes to those cases in which the law is not directly applied but involves a previous process of interpretation. Moreover, it may also be taken to provide us with an example of a mixed force or double illocutionary point, this time of what Searle has called 'representative declarations'. In his own words:

Both the judge and the umpire make factual claims: "You are out", "You are guilty". Such claims are clearly assessable in the dimension of word-world fit. Was he really tagged off base? Did he really commit the crime? They are assessable in the word-to-world dimension. But at the same time both have the force of declarations. If the umpire calls you out (and is upheld on appeal), then for baseball purposes you are out regardless of the facts in the case, and if the judge declares you guilty (on appeal), then for legal purposes you are guilty. (Searle 1969, 360)

Likewise, there is a sense in which a parafictive use can be assessed with respect to its relation to the world: it can be considered true or false depending on its accordance or discordance with the pre-existent narrative (representative force); but there is also a sense in which it involves the creation of an interpretative extension of that narrative (declarative force). Accordingly, the parafictive interpretation of (2) comes out true because it accords with the fictional facts originally included in Borges' short story, but it also gives rise to the creation of an equally conceptual extension of it.²³

²³ Notice that the corresponding sincerity condition is (what may be called) a parafictive belief: in the example, the belief that there is a fictional narrative, "Funes the Memorious", in which Funes recovers consciousness with the skill of remembering

In a nutshell, on its parafictive interpretation, a sentence containing a fictional name can be semantically correlated with a thought that does not belong in the conceptual world of a fictional narrative but determines an interpretative extension of it—common to all the people exercising the capacity to reformulate the corresponding narrative in different words. If that thought is equivalent to a subset of the thought-types constitutive of the original conceptual world, it can be taken to be true, namely, to accord with the original fictional story.

Without intending to go deep into the topic, I would say that *translation is a form of reformulation*: translated sentences are not part of the conceptual world of a fictional narrative. So, again, the translation of an original sentence (what (1) in fact amounts to, as specified in footnote 1) involves an act of reformulating the narrative – and it should be thus considered on a par with parafictive uses.

Moreover, as made explicit in the introduction to this essay, the interpretative task encompasses further uses: *acts of critically analysing* a fictional narrative, such as the use of the above-mentioned (3), repeated below,

(3) Funes manifests Borges' obsession with the infinite,

also not a constitutive part of the conceptual world of “Funes the Memorious”. A use of this sentence is meant to provide us with an analysis of the character, in this case, its relation to Borges' characteristic topics, namely, time, labyrinths, the universe, maps, books, libraries, repetition, circles, all of them alluding to infinity. It ascribes the character a feature that is certainly not stored in his file in the conceptual world of the short story.

Now, in this use, on the one hand, the speaker's referential intention can also be taken to be directed towards the FUNES file; accordingly, the occurrence of ‘Funes’ in (3) can be said to refer to the FUNES file. However, on the other hand, the predicate neither expresses a descriptive concept chosen by Borges nor can it be considered to be semantically equivalent to a subset of them but expresses a property that alludes to the fictional narrative in which the character belongs—more specifically, it expresses a property that the short story shares with other narratives by the same author.

everything or the belief that, according to “Funes the Memorious”, Funes recovers consciousness with the skill of remembering everything.

The property at stake is thus a literary property, the kind of properties that are ascribed to fictional characters by virtue of the critical reflection that is characteristic of literary theory and criticism. Accordingly, the semantic content of (3) is not a pure thought or purely conceptual, since it involves a combination of something conceptual, the FUNES file, and something not conceptual, the property of manifesting Borges' obsession with the infinite. The reference-shift only affects the fictional name but not the predicate; as opposed to the previous cases, it is a *partial* reference-shift.

Although a certain component of simulation is involved, the act of critically analysing a character seems to lead to genuine assertions, as it is intuitively the case. Accordingly, on its metafictional interpretation, (3) may come out as true or false depending on whether the property of manifesting Borges' obsession with the infinite can be ascribed to the FUNES file *in the framework of a literary informed analysis of the short story*—hence, independently of both the conceptual world of “Funes the Memorious” and any interpretative extension of it.

Now, as is clear, a literary property might be correlated with a literary descriptive concept, which could be also stored in a character's file. This case provides us with still a further example of a kind of information, stored in a file, which does not flow directly from its original source but is the product of an interpretative process – this time, not a superficial one but one requiring some literary competence or some literary informed reflection on the corresponding fictional narrative.

Summarising, as a consequence of the different possible kinds of uses, a fictional file can store three kinds of descriptive concepts:

- (i) fictive uses involve descriptive concepts belonging in the conceptual world of the fictional narrative (SEEING ALL THE SHOOTS AND CLUSTERS AND FRUIT COMPRISED BY A VINE);
- (ii) parafictive uses involve descriptive concepts belonging in an interpretative extension of that world (RECOVERING CONSCIOUSNESS WITH THE SKILL OF REMEMBERING EVERYTHING);
- (iii) metafictional uses involve literary properties but those properties can be associated with literary descriptive concepts (MANIFESTING BORGES' OBSESSION WITH THE INFINITE).

Accordingly, when a reader utters (1) he is *replicating* the author's ascription of a descriptive concept to an individual concept in the context of the creation of a fictional narrative; when he utters (2) he is *reformulating* the author's original ascription of a descriptive concept to an individual concept, in accordance with the facts originally narrated; when he utters (3) he is *asserting* that a certain individual concept has a certain literary property but he can be taken to also be storing the corresponding literary concept in the respective fictional file. Notice that, in a certain way, these literary concepts can be considered to be second-order ones, since they are theoretical (literary theory) concepts about fictional concepts.²⁴

5. Conclusion: Moderate Fictionalism

As is known, the different accounts of fictional names can be classified into two main groups: realist, and anti-realist or fictionalist. According to realist positions, fictional names refer to fictional entities, namely, entities with a peculiar metaphysical status; among them, there is Neo-Meinongianism, for which fictional entities are concrete but nonexistent (Parsons 1980, 1982); Possibilism, for which they are existent but merely possible (Lewis 1978); and Abstractism, for which they are actual but abstract (Kripke 1973, 2013, Thomasson 1999, Salmon 1978, 2002, Predelli 2002, Voltolini 2006). Without going into the details of each variety, realist positions have a theoretical advantage and disadvantage in common. Their main advantage consists in their conception of fictional names as being mostly devices for singular reference, which considerably simplifies the syntactic analysis of the fictional sentences containing them. As for the disadvantage, they increase the ontological commitment, by introducing some *sui generis* entities, to a level that, if possible, should be avoided. So, fictionalist positions have aimed at avoiding esoteric ontologies and claimed

²⁴ The fact that a fictional file can store different kinds of descriptive concepts has inspired the claim that two different kinds of files can be associated with a certain fictional name, as in so-called 'TwoFileness Accounts', such as the one put forward by Terrone (2018).

that fictional names are empty singular terms, which in turn have committed their defendants to the non sufficiently explanatory *gappy* propositions, and the consequent need to move the explanation from the semantic to the pragmatic realm (Everett 2000, Taylor 2000, Braun 1993, 2005). Alternatively, they have appealed to complicated paraphrastic analyses, in which fictional names ended up disappearing (Walton 1990, Sainsbury 2005, 2010). So, ontological austerity is not completely free.

The account hereby proposed can be considered to fall within the fictionalist camp. However, it does not take fictional names to be empty singular terms and hence does not make use of *gappy* propositions. Moreover, it is neither involved with paraphrases, since sentences like (1) are taken to be what they appear to be on face value: singular sentences concerning fictional characters. As must be clear, though, it involves an ontological commitment to individual and descriptive concepts, and to fictional narratives. As explained before, I construe fictional narratives, or fictional conceptual worlds, in terms of sets of pairs of sentence-types and its semantic correlates, namely, thought-types. Fictional names could be thus taken to refer to *parts* of the abstract objects that are the fictional narratives in which they occur. But notice, first, that the proposal does not involve an ontological commitment to peculiar or *sui generis* abstract objects that are created *simultaneously with* fictional narratives (hence, *on top of* them), as is the case with the cultural artifacts and the unobservables posited by literary theory, with which typical abstractist approaches identify literary characters. Secondly, those narratives' parts are individual concept-types, which in turn need not be conceived as universals but can be construed in terms of relations of resemblance among particulars, i.e., relations among qualitatively similar mental representations tokened both in the author's and the readers' minds (as it would follow from resemblance nominalism and class nominalism).²⁵ To emphasise, the only ontological commitment, aside from the commitment to narratives, is the relatively uncontroversial commitment to mental representations partly constitutive of them, which might be in turn conceived of in terms of resembling mental

²⁵ For a defence of resemblance nominalism, see, for instance, (Rodríguez-Pereyra 2002).

particulars—be that as it may, they are not peculiar or *sui generis* abstract entities.²⁶

Summarising, the main thesis hereby defended is that fictional names refer to individual concept-types, or mental file-types, which are components of the set of thought-types constituting the conceptual world of a fictional narrative. This conceptual world, initially instantiated by the exemplar created by an author, is then transmitted to future communities of readers through their insertion in a historical communication chain, on grounds of their interaction with new exemplars. Readers are replicators: their fictive uses of sentences containing fictional names are associated with singular thoughts that are of the same type as the ones originally entertained by the author. But they can also be reformulators and critics, namely, they can entertain singular thoughts involving an interpretation of the original ones, which are associated, respectively, with their parafictive and metafictives uses of those sentences. Consequently, there are interpretative extensions and critical analysis of fictional narratives, which, as opposed to their original, constitutive conceptual worlds, are not shared by all the readers. Parafictive and metafictive uses give rise to further conceptual worlds, closely related to the original ones, that overlap and crisscross among those members of the linguistic community who get involved with literary issues.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Piotr Stalmaszczyk for inviting me to take part in this issue, an anonymous reviewer for some interesting suggestions, and Manuel García-Carpintero for his insightful comments to a previous version of this essay.

²⁶ As suggested by an anonymous reviewer, I am aware that the difference between the position hereby defended and abstractist theories may be considered not a significant one. That is why I have called it ‘moderate’ fictionalism. As far as I can see, their respective kinds of ontological commitment are, though, different, as I have tried to make it explicit.

References

- Bonomi, Andrea. 2008. "Fictional contexts." In *Perspectives on Contexts*, edited by P. Bouquet, L. Serafini, and R. H. Thomason, 215–50. Stanford: CSLI Publications.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. 1944. "Funes el memorioso." In *Jorge Luis Borges. Obras Completas 1923-1972 (Ficciones)*, 485–90. Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores.
- Braun, David. 1993. "Empty Names." *Noûs* 27: 449–69.
- Braun, D. 2005. "Empty Names, Fictional Names, Mythical Names." *Noûs* 39: 596–631. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2215787>
- Castañeda, Hector-Neri. 1989. *Thinking, Language, and Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Crimmins, Mark. 1992. *Talk about Beliefs*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Crimmins, Mark, and Perry, John. 1989. "The Prince and the Phone Booth: Reporting Puzzling Beliefs." *The Journal of Philosophy* 86: 685–711. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2027014>
- Currie, Gregory. 1990. *The Nature of Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Devitt, Michael. 1996. *Coming to Our Senses. A Naturalistic Program for Semantic Localism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Devitt, Michael, & Sterelny, Kim. 1987. *Language and Reality*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Donnellan, Keith. 1974. "Speaking of Nothing." *The Philosophical Review* 83: 3–31.
- Evans, Gareth. 1982. *The Varieties of Reference*, edited by John McDowell. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fodor, Jerry. 1990. *A Theory of Content and Other Essays*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Frege, Gottlob. 1892. "On *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*." In *The Frege Reader*, edited by M. Beaney, 151–71. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Frege, Gottlob. 1918. "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry." *Mind* 65: 289–311.
- Everett, Antony. 2000. "Referentialism and Empty Names." In *Empty Names, Fiction and the Puzzles of Non-Existence*, edited by Antony Everett and Thomas Hofweber, 37–60. Stanford: CSLI Press.
- Friend, Stacie. 2000. "Real People in Unreal Contexts." In *Empty Names, Fiction and the Puzzles of Non-Existence*, edited by Antony Everett and Thomas Hofweber, 183–203. Stanford: CSLI Publications.
- Friend, Stacie. 2011. "The Great Beetle Debate: A Study in Imagining with Names." *Philosophical Studies* 153 (2): 183–211. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-009-9485-4>

- García-Carpintero, Manuel. 2007. "Fiction-Making as An Illocutionary Act." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65: 203–16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-594X.2007.00250.x>
- García-Carpintero, M. 2013. "Norms of Fiction-Making." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 53: 339–57. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayt021>
- García-Carpintero, Manuel. 2015. "Is Fictional Reference Rigid?" *Organon F* 22 (Supplementary Issue): 145–68.
- García-Carpintero, Manuel. 2019. "Normative Fiction-Making and the World of the Fiction." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 77 (3): 267–79. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jaac.12660>
- García-Carpintero, Manuel. 2020. "Referential Indeterminacy in Fiction." *Journal of Applied Logics* 7 (2).
- García-Carpintero, Manuel. (forthcoming). "Singular Reference in Fictional Discourse." *Disputatio*.
- Goodman, Nelson. 1968. *Languages of Art. An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc.
- Jeshion, Robin. 2009. "The Significance of Names." *Mind & Language* 24 (4): 370–403. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0017.2009.01367.x>
- Jeshion, Robin. 2010. "Singular Thought: Acquaintance, Semantic Instrumentalism and Cognitivism." In *New Essays on Singular Thought*, 105–40. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Korta, Korta and Perry, John. 2011. *Critical Pragmatics. An Inquiry into Reference and Communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kripke, Saul. 1980. *Naming and Necessity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Kripke, Saul. 2011. "Vacuous Names and Fictional Entities." In *Philosophical Troubles. Collected Papers vol.1*, 52–74. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kripke, Saul. 2013. *Reference and Existence: The John Locke Lectures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Based on the John Locke lectures originally delivered in 1973) <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199928385.001.0001>
- Lewis, David. 1978. "Truth in Fiction." In *Philosophical Papers vol. 1*, 261–80. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Orlando, Eleonora. 2017. "Files for Fiction." *Acta Analytica* 32: 55–71. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12136-016-0298-8>
- Parsons, Terence. 1980. *Nonexistent Objects*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Parsons, Terence. 1982. "Are There Nonexistent Objects?" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 19: 365–71.
- Perry, John. 2001. *Reference and Reflexivity*. Stanford: CSLI Publications.
- Predelli, Stefano. 2002. "'Holmes' and Holmes: A Millian Analysis of Names from Fiction." *Dialectica* 56: 261–79. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-8361.2002.tb00242.x>

- Predelli, Stefano. 2020. *Fictional Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198854128.001.0001>
- Recanati, Francois. 2009. "(Anti-)Descriptivism, Mental Files, and the Communication of Singular Thoughts." *Manuscrito* 32 (1): 7–32.
- Recanati, Francois. 2012. *Mental Files*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rodriguez-Pereyra, Gonzalo. 2002. *Resemblance Nominalism. A Solution to the Problem of Universals*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Sainsbury, Mark. 2005. *Reference without Referents*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
<http://doi.org/10.1093/0199241805.001.0001>
- Sainsbury, Mark. 2010. *Fiction and Fictionalism*. London: Routledge.
- Salis, Fiora. 2013. "Fictional Names and the Problem of Intersubjective Identification." *Dialectica* 67 (3): 283–301. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1746-8361.12031>
- Salmon, Nathan. 1986. *Frege's Puzzle*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Salmon, Nathan. 1998. "Nonexistence." *Noûs* 32: 277–319.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/0029-4624.00101>
- Salmon, Nathan. 2002. "Mythical Objects." In *Meaning and Truth. Investigations in Philosophical Semantics*, edited by J. Campbell, M. O' Rourke and D. Shier, 105–23. New York: Seven Bridges Press.
- Searle, John. 1969. "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts." In *Language, Mind and Knowledge*, edited by K. Gunderson, 344–369. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Searle, John. 1975. "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse." *New Literary History* 6: 319–32. <https://doi.org/10.2307/468422>
- Simpson, Thomas M. 1964. *Formas lógicas, realidad y significado*. Buenos Aires: Eudeba.
- Taylor, Kenneth. 2000. "Emptiness without Compromise." In *Empty Names, Fiction and the Puzzles of Non-Existence*, edited by Antony Everett and Thomas Hofweber, 17–36. Stanford: CSLI Publications.
- Terrone, Enrico. 2018. "Twofileness. A Functionalist Approach to Fictional Characters and Mental Files." *Erkenntnis*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10670-018-0097-2>
- Thomasson, Amie. 1999. *Fiction and Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511527463>
- Voltoolini, Alberto. 2006. *How Ficta Follow Fiction. A Syncretistic Account of Fictional Entities*. Dordrecht: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-5147-6>
- Walton, Kendall. 1990. *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Zalta, Edward. 1983. *Abstract Objects*. Dordrecht: Reidel.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-6980-3>

How Can Millians Believe in Superheroes?

Juliana Faccio Lima*


Received: 13 April 2020 / Accepted: 24 October 2020

Abstract: What is the content of beliefs expressed by sentences with fictional names? Millianism has notoriously struggled to give a satisfactory answer to this question. Some Millians have argued that fictional names are empty names. But such a view entails that the belief that Superman has impressive superpowers and the belief that Aquaman has impressive superpowers have the same content, contrary to our intuitions. Others have argued that fictional names refer to fictional entities. But this view has a long-standing problem, Frege’s Puzzle, and many philosophers are skeptical that Millians have successfully addressed it, despite commendable efforts. In this paper, I put forward a different Millian Theory of fictional proper names that by-passes these and other objections related to belief content. The novelty of my proposal partially rests on a distinction I draw between semantic content and belief content—as opposed to a distinction between belief content and belief state or a way of grasping the content, as it is commonly found in Millian accounts—in a framework where belief contents are not part of the meaning of names.

Keywords: Belief content, empty names; Frege’s Puzzle; belief ascription, Millianism.

* Ashoka University

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7842-6229>

 Department of Philosophy, Plot No. 2, Rajiv Gandhi Education City, National Capital Region P.O.Rai, Sonapat Haryana-131029, India

 jfacciolima@gmail.com

© The Author. Journal compilation © The Editorial Board, *Organon F*.



This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International Public License (CC BY-NC 4.0).

1. Introduction

Millianism is the view that the semantic content or the meaning of proper names is only its referent.¹ For instance, Millianism holds that the name ‘Marie Curie’ means Marie Curie because ‘Marie Curie’ refers to her. In this view, names function like tags to get hold of an object.

Millianism is typically paired with Standard Compositionality Principles to get the meaning of sentences. Such principles hold that the meaning of a complex expression, such as sentences, is determined solely by the meaning of its basic expressions.² In this way, the meaning of (1) ‘Marie Curie is a physicist’ is determined by the meaning of the name ‘Marie Curie’ and the predicate ‘to be a physicist’. There are different ways to represent the semantic content of (1).³ A convenient way that I will adopt here is as the ordered pair ⟨MC, PHYSICIST⟩, such that ‘MC’ stands for Marie Curie herself and ‘PHYSICIST’ stands for the meaning of the predicate ‘to be a physicist’.

As a semantic theory of proper names, Millianism has quite a few advantages. It captures intuitions that the truth-value of (1) depends solely on whether Marie Curie has the property of being a physicist—as opposed to rival theories that hold that (1) is true if, and only if, Marie Curie has uniquely identifying properties semantically encoded by the name ‘Marie Curie’, in addition to the property of being a physicist.⁴ It also correctly captures the modal profile of (1): in a world where Marie Curie is a pianist and was never interested in physics, (1) is false, even if in that world there is a physicist that resembles Marie Curie as she is in the actual world.⁵ Besides, Millianism is a simple theory, which is why it is also called ‘Naïve Theory’, and parsimony advises us to stick to simplicity whenever possible. Last but not least, echoing Salmon (1986, 121–2), “[The Millian Theory] has a prima facie claim on our endorsement”, as “[e]ven Frege and Russell,

¹ I will use ‘meaning’ and ‘semantic content’ interchangeably.

² For notable exceptions, see Fine (2008); Putnam (1954).

³ See Braun (2005, 598, specially fn. 6), and King (2014).

⁴ See Dummett (1981); Frege (1892); Heck (1995); Russell (1910, 2001); Schiffer (1978); Strawson (1959).

⁵ See Kaplan (1989); Kripke (1980). For replies, see Dummett (1991); Evans (1979); Stanley (1997a,b, 2002).

who argued in opposition to [Millianism], came to the philosophy of language with an initial predisposition toward something like [the Millian Theory].”⁶

Several objections and criticisms to Millianism have emerged ever since it was proposed by John Stuart Mill (1893).⁷ It is impractical and outside the scope of this paper to try and survey all of them. Here I will focus on objections related to fictional names, that is, names of fictional characters, such as ‘Superman’, ‘Sherlock Holmes’, ‘SpongeBob SquarePants’, ‘Princess Zelda’,⁸ and the like. In particular, I will discuss objections related to the content of beliefs expressed by sentences with fictional names, such as ‘Superman has impressive superpowers’, ‘SpongeBob SquarePants is goofy’, ‘Sherlock Holmes is a detective’, etc.⁹ The central question of this paper is: what is the contribution of fictional names to the belief content of sentences of the form ‘*fn* is Φ ’, such that ‘*fn*’ stands for any fictional name and ‘ Φ ’ stands for a predicate?

The paper is organized as follows. I start by explaining what belief contents are according to Millianism and a first challenge fictional names raise: given that fictional characters do not exist like you, me, and Marie Curie (if they exist at all), what is the referent of fictional names? Then I explain and discuss two of the most common ways Millians have addressed the challenge, and argue that both have serious problems. After that, I argue for a different type of Millian Theory, which is a hybrid view in as much as it combines Millianism with a version of Fregeanism. In the last section, I will consider four objections to my view.

2. Belief content

Millianism is typically taken to be a theory about the belief content of proper names in addition to a theory about their meaning. It is not without

⁶ See also Braun (1998, 557–61

⁷ For a small sample of objections, see Frege (1892); Heck (1995); Kripke (1979); Putnam (1975); Russell (1905); Schiffer (1992).

⁸ From the fantasy action-adventure video game *The Legend of Zelda*.

⁹ For an overview of the recent debate on the semantic content of fictional names see García-Carpintero (2019)

reason that the meaning of names has been traditionally identified with their belief content. I will talk about some of them throughout the paper, but for now, suffice to give an intuitive reason. We pick and choose sentences to express our beliefs depending on their meaning. We also ascribe beliefs to others using sentences that we choose partially in virtue of their meaning. We say that people believe (what is expressed by) (1) ‘Marie Curie is a physicist’, and what is expressed by (1) is its meaning. So, it is just natural to take the meaning of linguistic expressions, like sentences, names, predicates, etc., to be the belief content they express. The idea that belief content is the meaning of a name, or at the very least part of it, is so pervasive in the literature that trying to talk about one without the other, or even questioning it, as I will, is quite unsettling. But I urge the reader to keep an open mind.

Following the tradition, the belief content of (1), according to Millianism, is just its semantic content, that is, $\langle \text{MC, PHYSICIST} \rangle$. It is natural to extend the same scheme to get the belief content of sentences with fictional names, and many Millians have done so. In this way, the belief content of ‘Superman’ is its referent, and the belief content of (2) ‘Superman has impressive superpowers’ is a content represented by the ordered pair $\langle X, \text{IMPRESSIVE SUPERPOWERS} \rangle$, such that ‘X’ stands for the referent ‘Superman’, and ‘IMPRESSIVE SUPERPOWERS’ stands for the belief content of the predicate ‘to have impressive superpowers’.¹⁰ Here we have a first indication that fictional names may raise significant problems for Millianism: what is X? In other words, what is the referent and belief content of ‘Superman’, and fictional names in general?

Before I discuss possible answers, it is worth talking about different uses of fictional names to avoid the discussion to steer away from the main question. Philosophers working on the semantics of fictional names often distinguish three different uses of fictional names (García-Carpintero (2019)): textual, paratextual, and metatextual. A textual use of a fictional name is when the name is used in the story or to tell a story. A paratextual use is when a name is used to report what happens in the story—it is typically

¹⁰ I will not talk about the meaning of predicates in sentences with fictional names, but it is worth to point that they raise unique problems too—see Klauk (2014); Sawyer (2015).

but not necessarily accompanied by the locution ‘according to the story’. The metatextual use is when we use a name to talk about a fictional character outside the story, as in the sentence ‘Superman has more impressive superpowers than Aquaman’. The distinction among uses of fictional names is relevant because philosophers disagree about whether there is a uniform account of the meaning of fictional names across them. Some philosophers argue that, in textual and paratextual context, the function of names is not to refer to an object like in ordinary cases. In these contexts, a speaker just pretends to refer and such uses of fictional names should not be treated as ordinary names like ‘Marie Curie’. In metatextual contexts, however, it is less clear that there is some pretense involved, and there is good reason to extend the treatment of names like ‘Marie Curie’ to fictional names when used in this context.¹¹ To avoid complications due to possible ramifications of the discussion, I will focus only on metatextual uses of fictional names.

There are two ways Millians can answer the question about the referent and belief content of fictional names (in metatextual uses). They can be anti-realists about fictional entities and hold that ‘Superman’ refers to nothing. In this view, fictional names are empty names. Or they can be realists and maintain that ‘Superman’ refers to an entity of some kind. I shall argue in the coming sections that both views have serious problems.

2.1 Anti-realism about fictional characters

An anti-realist view about fictional characters holds that fictional characters do not exist; not even as abstract entities. Anti-realism together with Millianism (‘Anti-Realist Millian Theory’, or ‘*ARM*’ for short) entails that fictional names do not have a referent. A proponent of *ARM* does not necessarily hold that ‘Superman’ and other fictional names are not referring devices. Some proponents of *ARM* accept that they are. It just happens that there is no object for the name to refer to or to pick out. In this view, fictional names are genuine empty names and lack belief content.

¹¹ See García-Carpintero (2019) for an overview of some different combinations of semantic theories for different contexts.

At first sight, *ARM* might seem indefensible.¹² For, it is natural to think that if ‘Superman’ does not have or express a belief content, then (2) ‘Superman has impressive superpowers’ does not express a belief content either. But this means that no one can believe (2) because there is no content to be believed, which is absurd. A lot of people believe (2). Braun (2005) has offered an extensive defense of *ARM*. In reply to the prima facie objection, he argues that (2) expresses a belief content even though ‘Superman’ lacks belief content. Its belief content is a “gappy” content that can be represented as $\langle _ , \text{IMPRESSIVE SUPERPOWERS} \rangle$, such that ‘_’ stands for the lack of belief content of ‘Superman’. In this view, the belief content of (2) is different from the belief content of (1) ‘Marie Curie is a physicist’ in as much as the former, but not the latter, is a gappy belief content. Nonetheless, Braun maintains, a gappy belief content is still a content that can be believed, known, etc.¹³

Aside from the initial objection, *ARM* has been subject to many criticisms as a theory about the semantic content of fictional names. García-Carpintero (2019) has recently offered an excellent and comprehensive overview of some of the main problems and possible replies. Here I want to focus strictly on problems related to gappy contents as the belief content of sentences with fictional names, and, in particular, with two pressing objections: *The Transparency of Belief Content* and *The Problem of Conflating Unrelated Beliefs*.

The Transparency of Belief Content objection is about the impossibility of rational people believing gappy belief contents. The objection is based on an intuitive claim that a belief content a person believes is transparent to her, in the sense that she is capable of recognizing the content of her belief. It is difficult to give a precise definition of ‘transparency’ in this sense, but for this paper suffice to know that it entails that someone who believes (and knows she believes) (1) recognizes that the content of her belief is $\langle \text{MC}, \text{PHYSICIST} \rangle$. Moreover, if she also believes (3) ‘Marie Curie was born in Poland’, then she recognizes that the beliefs are about the same person. If

¹² See Braun (2005), 597.

¹³ Following Kaplan’s terminology, Braun calls this view ‘The Gappy Proposition Theory’, with ‘proposition’ being roughly synonymous to ‘semantic content’. For terminological consistency, I will call it ‘ARM’ in this paper.

belief contents are transparent in this sense, then, the objection goes, no rational person would believe a gappy belief content. For, when entertaining a gappy content, she would realize its “gappyness” and that it cannot be true. Consequently, she would refrain from believing it. Thus, if *ARM* is right and (2) expresses a gappy belief content, then no one would believe it. But this is absurd because people, in fact, believe (2).

The second objection, The Problem of Conflating Unrelated Beliefs, is about *ARM* conflating beliefs that should be distinguished. Consider (2) and (4) ‘Aquaman has impressive superpowers’. According to *ARM*, they express the same belief content, $\langle _IMPRESSIVE \text{ SUPERPOWERS} \rangle$. However, there are at least three reasons to think that they express different belief contents. First, they express belief contents that are about different characters. The former is about the character of a story written by Jerry Siegel whereas the latter is about the character of a story written by Paul Norris and Mort Weisinger. The best way of accommodating this fact is by distinguishing the belief content of (2) and (4). Second, someone could rationally believe the former but not the latter. But if they express the same belief content, then someone who believes one necessarily believes the other. Thus, they should express different belief contents. Third, someone could rationally believe both (2) and (5) ‘Aquaman does not have impressive superpowers’. But if (2) and (4) express the same belief content, then someone who believes (2) and (5) believes contradictory contents, which no rational person would do. Thus, (2) and (4) express different belief contents.

Braun’s defense of *ARM* against the criticisms above depends on his interpretation of a metaphysical analysis of belief commonly held by Millians, the *Tripartite Theory of Belief (TTB)*, following Spencer’s (2006) terminology. Since there are different versions of *TTB*, I will call Braun’s version of ‘Braun’s Tripartite Theory of Belief’ (*BTTB*).

Generally, *TTB* holds that a person *S* believes a belief content $\langle BC \rangle$ if, and only if, *S* is in a relation *R* with $\langle BC \rangle$ in one way or another. In Braun’s version of *TTB*, the relevant relation is *S* having a mental state M-BC the content of which is $\langle BC \rangle$. The way the relationship is borne is the type of intrinsic mental state, that is, M-BC. In *BTTB*, a person believes $\langle MC, PHYSICIST \rangle$ if, and only if, she has a mental state M-MC the content of which is $\langle MC, PHYSICIST \rangle$. According to Braun, $\langle MC, PHYSICIST \rangle$ is

the content of M-MC because there is an appropriate causal relation between them.¹⁴ Braun argues that many different mental states can have the same content as M-MC. Having different mental states with the same content $\langle \text{MC, PHYSICIST} \rangle$ corresponds to believing it in different ways. If M-MC and M-MS are mental states with the same content, then someone who has M-MC believes $\langle \text{MC, PHYSICIST} \rangle$ in one way, say, in a Marie-Curie way, and someone who has M-MS believes the same content in a different way, say, in a Marie-Skłodowska way. These different ways of believing $\langle \text{MC, PHYSICIST} \rangle$ can correspond to believing (1) and (6) ‘Marie Skłodowska is a physicist’, respectively. Thus, someone can believe (1) without necessarily believing (6), provided she has M-MC but not M-MS. If someone has both M-MC and M-MS, “she believes the same content ‘twice over’, so to speak” (Braun, 1998, 575). Lastly, in *BTTB*, someone could rationally believe a content and its negation if they are believed in different ways and she does not realize her beliefs have contradictory contents. That is, someone can believe $\langle \text{MC, PHYSICIST} \rangle$ and its negation, $\langle \text{NOT, } \langle \text{MC, PHYSICIST} \rangle \rangle$ if she believes the first in a Marie-Curie way and the latter in a Marie-Skłodowska way. It would not be rational, however, to believe both in the same way.

The way *BTTB* addresses The Transparency of Belief Contents is by assuring belief contents are not transparent. In this view, to believe (1) is to have the mental state M-MC that is causally related to Marie Curie. But this causal relation is “external” to the believer and there is nothing in the intrinsic mental state itself that indicates whether there is an object on the other end of the causal chain. If there is no object, the belief content of the mental state is gappy. But no introspective or a priori reasoning would reveal it. For this reason, someone who entertains a gappy belief content does not necessarily recognize its gappiness. Consequently, rational agents can believe gappy contents.¹⁵

¹⁴ The details of how and why $\langle \text{MC, PHYSICIST} \rangle$ is the belief content of M-MC should not concern us here.

¹⁵ Braun also argues that gappy contents can be true or false, contrary to the assumption in the objection that you would not believe gappy contents because they lack truth-value. I will leave this part of his reply aside to focus exclusively on issues about belief content.

As for the second objection, *BTTB* undermines the reasons we have to distinguish the belief contents of (2) and (4). It explains how someone can rationally believe (2) but not (4). To believe the first is to have mental state M-SM and to believe the second is to have mental state M-AQ. Since these are different and independent mental states, one could have one without the other. Informally, this means that one can believe (2) but not (4) because one can believe $\langle _ , \text{IMPRESSIVE SUPERPOWERS} \rangle$ in a Superman way without believing it in an Aquaman way.

Braun's view also explains how someone can rationally believe both (2) and (5). Even though they express contradictory belief contents, someone can believe them in different ways. And she is rational if she does not realize her beliefs have contradictory contents.

Braun's reply to the Transparency of Belief Content objection is often accepted by Millians since many hold that belief contents are opaque. Unlike them, I am unsatisfied with the overall solution because I hold that belief contents are transparent. While I do not have a knock-down objection to this part of Braun's view, I join the opposition. I consider it a disadvantage and a motivation to look for an alternative theory.

The reply to the second objection, *The Problem of Conflating Unrelated Beliefs*, is clearly insufficient. I have offered three reasons for distinguishing the belief content of (2) and (4) but Braun has replies to only two of them, namely, the ones about attitudes we can have towards belief contents. He does not consider the first reason—about (2) and (4) being about different fictional characters. What is more, it might not have been an oversight on his part. In an earlier paper, Braun (1998, 561) has suggested that appealing to attitudes someone can take towards belief contents is the best argument one could offer to distinguish belief contents in instances of Frege's Puzzle, which is how he understands *The Problem of Conflating Unrelated Beliefs* (2005, 603). So, he must not take the first reason I offered as an argument worth discussing.

But I think it is a mistake to take *The Problem of Conflating Unrelated Beliefs* as an instance of Frege's Puzzle. While there are similarities between them, there are also significant differences that suggest they are distinct problems. One important difference is about the co-referential status of the names in question. In typical instances of Frege's Puzzle, there is no

question about whether the names involved are co-referential. So much so that a proposed explanation that entails that ‘Hesperus’ and ‘Phosphorus’ do not refer to the same object (Venus) would be easily (and correctly) dismissed as nonsense. But the same is not true with the names ‘Superman’ and ‘Aquaman’. It is not nonsense to hold that they refer to different entities. In fact, it is our intuition that Superman and Aquaman are different entities that leads us to hold that (2) and (4) have different belief contents and motivates many plausible theories about fictional entities. This difference is significant enough to set *The Problem of Conflating Unrelated Beliefs* apart from Frege’s Puzzle. But Braun’s theory ignores it.

In defense of Braun, one might reply that the argument I offered to distinguish the belief content of (2) and (4) is weaker than his. My argument is based on a “direct” intuition, and intuitions are known to be poor guides, whereas Braun’s is based on a formal argument about the possibility of having contrasting attitudes towards (2) and (4). Therefore, there is no need to consider the argument based on direct intuitions. The objection can be put to rest once we appreciate the strength of our intuitions in ordinary cases. Consider how someone could argue that the sentences ‘Roses are red’ and ‘Poppies are red’ have different belief contents. She could simply say that they express different belief contents because the first is about roses, the second is about poppies, and these are different types of flowers. She does not and need not appeal to the fact that one could believe the first but not the latter. In fact, it would be rather unusual to offer it as a reason to distinguish their belief contents. Besides, in this case, an argument that appeals to contrasting attitudes someone can take towards them seems weaker than one that simply points to the fact that roses are not poppies. This shows that, when an argument that appeals to this sort of intuition is available, it is stronger than an argument of the sort Braun offers. For this reason, the proposed argument based on direct intuitions should not be dismissed.

Note that what I said here does not mean that Braun is wrong that the best argument to distinguish belief contents in typical instances of Frege’s Puzzle appeals to the possibility of a competent speaker holding contrasting attitudes. He might be right about this. But if I am right, I have pointed out that the case with ‘Aquaman’ and ‘Superman’ is not a typical instance

of Frege's Puzzle. Braun has failed to address a very powerful argument to distinguish the belief content of (2) and (4) and, consequently, The Problem of Conflating Unrelated Beliefs.

Perhaps an appropriate reply on behalf of *ARM* now has to turn into a metaphysical discussion about in which sense, if any, Superman and Aquaman are different entities. Proponents of *ARM* would have to argue that our intuitions that they are different can be somehow explained away. I do not wish to go into a metaphysical discussion because it would divert us from the main topic of the paper. I am content to end this section with a provisional conclusion that *ARM* entails that (2) and (4) express the same belief content, which is unacceptable unless we explain away the intuition that Superman and Aquaman are different entities. Moreover, The Problem of Conflating Unrelated Beliefs cannot be dealt with in the same way as instances of Frege's Puzzle can, contrary to what Braun supposes.

2.2 Realism about fictional characters

The alternative to anti-realism is realism. A realist view about fictional characters maintains that Superman and other fictional characters exist as some sort of entity. What kind of entity fictional characters are is a matter of disagreement. Some philosophers argue that they are abstract artifacts of the same category as stories (Salmon (1995); Thomasson (1999, 2003); Voltolini (2006)). Others argue that they populate the Platonic heaven (Currie (1990); Wolterstorff (1980); Zalta (1988)). Yet, others argue that they are Meinongian entities (Parsons (1980); Priest (2011)) or possibilia (Lewis (1978)). For this paper it does not matter much which view one endorses as long as it meets two criteria: (a) Superman and Clark Kent are the same entity, like Marie Curie and Marie Skłodowska are the same person; and (b) Superman and Aquaman are different superheroes, like Marie Curie and Shirley Ann Jackson are different physicists. I will call the view that holds Millianism for fictional names and realism about fictional characters of 'Realist Millian Theory' (*RM*).¹⁶

¹⁶ Everett, (2013, 188–204); García-Carpintero (2020); Kroon (2015), among others, have argued that assumption (a)—that Superman and Clark Kent are the same entity—raises unsurmountable problems for realist theories of fictional entities.

Everett (2013, 188–204) argues that realists have consistently failed to and cannot offer criteria of identity for fictional characters to account for the fact that Superman and Clark Kent are the same entity. Garcia-Carpintero and Kroon argue that creationism, a popular branch of realism, entails that fictional objects are vague entities and, for that reason, claims about their identities are indeterminate. If these objections are on the right track, then there might not be a realist theory compatible with the assumption that Superman is Clark Kent, as I assume in this section.

I recognize the strength of the objections but there are suitable replies to them. Everett's objection depends on the claim that criteria of identity should be different for each type of entity. But Brody (2014) (convincingly, to me) argues against Everett's assumption. He defends that general criteria of identity that encompasses the Law of Identity, the Indiscernibility of Identicals, and the Identity of Indiscernibles, are good criteria of identity for all types of entities, including fictional entities: Superman is Clark Kent if, and only if, they share all properties. Brody further argues that the worry that such general principles are unsuitable because they are circular, uninformative, or philosophically uninteresting stems from misunderstandings. One of them is to think that, to know whether *a* and *b* have all properties in common, one must first check *b* to see whether, like *a*, it has property *F*, for *each* property. Brody argues that this is incorrect. One can know that *a* and *b* have all properties in common by inferring from the fact that they have some properties in common, without, thereby, the need to check all of their properties. If Brody is right, Everett's objection does not undermine realist theories.

Garcia-Carpintero's and Kroon's objection depends on the claim that, according to creationism, there is no fact of the matter as to whether two vague entities are identical. For, *a* and *b* are identical if, and only if, they have all properties in common. But if some of *a*'s properties are indeterminate, there is no fact of the matter (by definition) of whether *a* has them in common with *b* to establish their identity. What's more, properties that are indeterminate in the fictional world created by an author can be determinate in different ways for *a* and *b* in some alternative fictional world, thereby, proving that they are different entities.

While these claims might be true in some cases, I do not think they are true the case of Superman and Clark Kent and other pair of fictional entities the names of which are commonly used to illustrate Frege's Puzzle. Regarding the first claim, there is a fact of the matter as to whether Superman is Clark Kent: Siegel's intention that Superman has the property of *being-identical-with-Clark Kent* and that Clark Kent has the property of *being-identical-with-Superman*. They are the truth-makers of identity claims between Superman and Clark Kent (García-Carpintero, 2020, 186) and are good as any other truthmakers to establish their identity. About the second

RM doesn't have The Problem of Conflating Unrelated Beliefs. Since it meets criterion (ii), it holds that Superman and Aquaman are different entities. This entails that (2) 'Superman has impressive superpowers' and (4) 'Aquaman has impressive superpowers' express different belief contents; the former expresses $\langle \text{SM, IMPRESSIVE SUPERPOWERS} \rangle$ and the latter, $\langle \text{AQ, IMPRESSIVE SUPERPOWERS} \rangle$, with 'SM' and 'AQ' standing for Superman and Aquaman themselves, respectively. But the view conflates *related beliefs*, so to speak, as a long-standing problem for Millianism arises: Frege's Puzzle. In the literature, we find different versions of Frege's Puzzle. Here I will discuss one version but my analysis should extend to other versions with some adjustments.

Intuitively, someone who does not know that Superman is Clark Kent could rationally believe (2) and (7) 'Clark Kent does not have impressive superpowers'. According to *RM*, such a person would believe a content and its negation. For, if 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' are co-referential and have the same meaning, they make the same contribution to the belief content of (2) and (7), respectively. Besides, according to *RM*, (2) affirms that an object has the property of having superpowers while (7) denies it. Thus, someone who believes both (2) and (7) believes contents of the form P and

claim, if Superman and Clark Kent have some indeterminate properties, they could not be determinate in different ways in alternative fictional worlds. For, if there is one property that is determinate in different ways for Superman and Clark Kent, then Superman and Clark Kent will not share all properties. By the Indiscernability of Identicals, it entails that Superman and Clark Kent are not the same entity. But this leads to a contradiction. As I have just explained, Superman has the property of *being-identical-with-Clark Kent* and Clark Kent has the property of *being-identical-with-Superman*, which establishes that Superman is Clark Kent. Therefore, there cannot be a possible fictional world where Superman's and Clark Kent's properties that are indeterminate in the world created by Siegel are determinate in different ways.

Moreover, the problem raised by Garcia-Carpintero and Kroon does not arise to some creationist theories. See Paganini (2019) for a notable exception.

Of course, the issues presented in this footnote are not settled by this undoubtedly short discussion. But it shows that realists have ways of addressing common concerns against their view.

–P. But no rational person would knowingly believe blatantly contradictory contents. So, *RM* is false.

There are possibly as many replies to Frege’s Puzzle as there are Millians—and there are many Millians. It would be impractical to survey and consider all of them. Since most common replies rely on *TTB*, the *Tripartite Theory of Belief*—with some Millians even claiming that this is the only way to successfully explain Frege’s Puzzle!¹⁷—we can go a long way by taking a closer look at it.

To recap, *TTB* holds that to believe a belief content $\langle BC \rangle$ is to be in a relation *R* with $\langle BC \rangle$ in one way or another. In Braun’s interpretation (*BTTB*), the relation is to have a mental state, and the way in which the relation is borne is the specific (intrinsic) mental state the believer has. In this way, to believe $\langle MC, PHYSICIST \rangle$ is to have a mental state *M-MC* the content of which is $\langle MC, PHYSICIST \rangle$. Informally, to have *M-MC* is to believe $\langle MC, PHYSICIST \rangle$ in a Marie-Curie way.

Salmon offers a different interpretation of *TTB*. He holds that to believe $\langle MC, PHYSICIST \rangle$ is to inwardly assent to it under a propositional guise. He does not explicitly say what a propositional guise is, but a common interpretation of his view takes them to be sentences (in a language).¹⁸ In this interpretation, a guise of $\langle MC, PHYSICIST \rangle$ could be (1) ‘Marie Curie is a physicist’, or any other sentence that expresses the same content, such as (6) ‘Marie Skłodowska is a physicist’. Here the relation *R* is to (inwardly) assent to a belief content under a (propositional) guise, and the way of being related with a belief content is a (propositional) guise. Replace *propositional guises by ways of thinking* or a sort of *mode of presentation*, and we have a version of *TTB* defended by Kaplan (1968) and Perry (1990).

Despite how Millians go about filling out the details of *TTB*, the reply to Frege’s Puzzle (at least to the version I am considering here) is roughly the same: someone can rationally believe (2) and its negation (7) because she can believe the former in one way and believe the latter in a different way without realizing she believes contradictory contents (because belief contents are not transparent). In Braun’s version of *TTB*, such a person believes $\langle SM, IMPRESSIVE SUPERPOWERS \rangle$, the belief content of (2) in

¹⁷ Salmon (1986, 111–13).

¹⁸ Braun and Saul (2002); Braun (2006).

a Superman way (and she has mental state M-SM). But she believes its negation, $\langle \text{NOT}, \langle \text{SM}, \text{IMPRESSIVE SUPERPOWERS} \rangle \rangle$, the belief content of (7), in a different way, namely, in a Clark-Kent way (and she has mental state M-CK). She would be irrational if she believed them in the same way; either in a Superman way or in a Clark-Kent way. But she does not.

In Salmon's view, such a person rationally believes $\langle \text{SM}, \text{IMPRESSIVE SUPERPOWERS} \rangle$ and its negation, $\langle \text{NOT}, \langle \text{SM}, \text{IMPRESSIVE SUPERPOWERS} \rangle \rangle$, by assenting to them under different guises of SM. She believes the former under the guise of (2) and the latter under the guise of (7). But they are different guises; not only because (7) but not (2) has an expression of negation ('not') but, more importantly, because they have different names, 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent', respectively. When SM is presented to her under the guise of 'Superman', she believes $\langle \text{SM}, \text{IMPRESSIVE SUPERPOWERS} \rangle$ under the guise of (2). But she believes its negation under the guise of (7) when SM is presented to her under the guise of 'Clark Kent'.

Millians offer two reasons for why someone might not realize she believes contradictory contents when she believes (2) and (7). First, belief contents are not transparent. So no amount of introspection will reveal to her the content of her beliefs, and, therefore, that she believes contradictory contents. Second, she is not in a position to derive a contradiction from (2), (7), and (8) 'Superman is Clark Kent', in the syntactic sense, because she does not believe (8). To be clear, Millians do not deny that these sentences entail a contradiction. What is relevant in Frege's Puzzle cases is whether the person is in a position to derive or "see" the contradiction.

While Millian's line of reply is ingenious, it falls short of explaining some instances of Frege's Puzzle. In particular, instances where a person believes (8) and is aware that her beliefs are about the same person, as in the following case that I call 'SM *vs.* CK'. Suppose we are talking about superheroes who have impressive superpowers. You believe Aquaman is one of them and I vehemently disagree. We both agree that Superman has impressive superpowers. Then you ask my opinion about Clark Kent and I say: "Look, Superman does not use his superpowers while he is wearing regular clothes and pretending to be an ordinary journalist (his regular outfit, for short). So, even though Superman and Clark Kent are the same person and

Superman has impressive superpowers, Clark Kent does not have impressive superpowers.”

If one accepts SM *vs.* CK as a plausible scenario, then it is a case where I rationally believe (2), (7), and (8). However, RM holds that I am irrational, contrary to our intuitions, because I am in a position to realize I believe contradictory belief contents. For, given that I know that ‘Superman’ and ‘Clark Kent’ co-refer, I also know that (9) ‘Clark Kent has impressive superpowers’ follows from (2) and (8) by Leibniz’s Law and that it entails a contradiction with (7).

Schiffer (1992) has offered a similar and by now famous criticism to Millianism, what he calls the “Fido’-Fido Theory’. He argues that someone can rationally believe (10) ‘Lois believes that Superman has impressive superpowers’ and (11) ‘Lois does not believe that Clark Kent has impressive superpowers’, even if she believes (8). But if RM is right, such a person would knowingly believe a content and its negation, which no rational person would do. So, Schiffer concludes, RM delivers the wrong verdict about our belief contents.

Salmon, Braun, and Braun & Saul have addressed Schiffer’s criticism. They argue that believing (8) is not enough to put the person in Schiffer’s case in a position to realize she believes contradictory contents (in the syntactic sense). Salmon argues that to be in such a position a believer also has to believe that ‘Superman’ and ‘Clark Kent’ have the same meaning and make the same contribution to the belief content of (10) and (11). Without knowing it, she will not be in a position to derive a contradiction because she will not recognize that the inference from (10) and (8) to (12) ‘Lois believes that Clark Kent does not have impressive superpowers’ is an instance of Leibniz’s Law and, therefore, legitimate. In fact, Salmon says, this is exactly the position Fregeans find themselves in: they know ‘Superman’ and ‘Clark Kent’ co-refer but not that they have the same meaning.¹⁹

Braun and Braun & Saul agree with Salmon that the person in Schiffer’s case is illogical because she lacks the disposition to use Leibniz’s Law and swap names in (10) and (11). But, they add, she is rational provided that there is a good explanation for her lack of disposition. The kind of explanation

¹⁹ This is also how Salmon could reply to Bonardi’s (ms) recent criticism to his view.

they offer brings out background beliefs the person has. In Schiffer's case, they appeal to the person's predictions of Lois' behavior. For instance, if someone believes that Lois would say (2) but never (9) in reply to the question 'Which of your acquaintances have impressive superpowers?', it makes sense that she would refrain from swapping names in (10) and (11). She is making a logical mistake, which makes her illogical but not irrational. Note that, unlike Salmon, Braun and Braun & Saul do not hold that she is ignorant of the meaning of 'Superman' or 'Clark Kent'. She might know it. But their view is that knowledge of their meaning does not prevent her from making logical mistakes.

Similar replies on behalf of Salmon, Braun, and Braun & Saul could be offered to my objection based on SM *vs.* CK case. Salmon could say that I rationally believe (2), (7), and (8) because I am ignorant of the fact that 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' have the same meaning and, therefore, belief content. Had I known it, I would not believe both (2) and (7). But Salmon's reply has a rather ad hoc flavor to it. He does not offer a principled reason to rule out the possibility of someone knowing the meaning of 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' yet believing (2), (7), and (8). Clearly, this cannot happen if his view is correct. But why think that such a situation is at all impossible? As a matter of fact, I like to think that I am such a person. I accept that 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' have the same meaning, yet I believe (2), (7), and (8) in SM *vs.* CK. So, even if ignorance of the meaning of 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' can explain some cases where a person rationally believes contradictory belief contents, it does not explain all cases.

Following Braun's and Braun & Saul's line of reply to Schiffer, they could say that in SM *vs.* CK I am illogical because I lack the disposition to use Leibniz's Law and swap names in (2) (or (7)) and (8). Nonetheless, I am rational because I believe a content and its negation in different ways and, they say, there is a plausible explanation as to why I do not realize I can swap names and derive a contradiction. But is there?

Indeed, Braun (2006) concedes it is difficult to come up with explanations in cases like SM *vs.* CK and does not offer a concrete case to support the claim that there is one. Someone might think that a possible explanation in SM *vs.* CK case can appeal to my predictions of my own behavior. If I believe that I would never say (9) in reply to the question 'Which fictional

characters have impressive superpowers?', then it would be rational for me to refrain from swapping names in (2) and, thereby, not be in a position to derive a contradiction. Just like in Schiffer's case, I am illogical but rational because there is a plausible explanation for my lack of disposition.

Such a line of reply has at least two problems. First, it begs the question. It explains why I refrain from swapping names in (2) by appealing to the fact that I would never say (9). But the reason why I would never say (9), even though I believe (2) and (8), is that I refrain from swapping names is (2) in the first place. In sum, it explains my hesitation to use Leibniz's Law with (2) and (8) appealing to my hesitation to use Leibniz's Law with those sentences. This hardly constitutes an explanation.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, it is not true I would never say (9). There are cases where I am naturally disposed to swap names and say (9). Consider the following case, that I call '*Counting*'. Suppose we are counting how many fictional entities I believe to have impressive superpowers among three: Aquaman, Superman, and Lex Luthor. Suppose further that I believe that Aquaman or Lex Luthor do not have impressive superpowers but that Superman does and that Superman is Clark Kent. Then you ask me if I believe (9) 'Clark Kent has impressive superpowers'. In this set up, I will be disposed to say both (2) and (9) for, at least, the following two reasons. Suppose, for reduction, that I do not believe (9). In this case, there would be one fictional entity of which I believe has impressive superpowers (Superman) and three of which I do not (Aquaman, Clark Kent, and Lex Luthor). But this totals four entities when we started with three. Thus, the assumption is false, and I must believe (9). Second, here we are counting entities with impressive superpowers. Because Superman only uses his superpowers when wearing his superhero outfit, it does not matter what I believe about him when he is wearing his regular outfits. What matters is what I think about him when he wears superhero outfits, and I believe he flies when wearing such outfits. This reinforces the claim that I believe (9) in Counting.²⁰

²⁰ SM *vs.* CK and Counting are intended to illustrate how context can interfere in how we assess the truth-value of belief ascription. Their purpose is similar to cases used to illustrate a contrast between *de dicto/de re* readings of belief ascriptions. Context determines what the correct interpretation of (10) is. In SM *vs.* CK, a *de*

If one accepts Counting as a plausible case, then it is not true that I would never say (9) as Braun's and Braun & Saul's explanation suggests. I would when counting how many fictional entities I believe have impressive superpowers. This undermines their explanation in SM *vs.* CK case because it shows that the explanation rests on the false claim that I would never say (9). One could reply to my objection saying that in Counting I am disposed to swap names because from one case to the other I changed my mind and came to believe (9). That is, before Counting, I would never say (9). But after Counting, I will always say (9) and never refrain from swapping names in (2). The problem with the reply is that it is false that I will always swap names in (2). I will still refrain from doing it whenever I find myself back in cases like SM *vs.* CK, where Superman's regular outfits are relevant to answer the question of who has impressive superpowers. So, saying that whenever we switch cases I change my mind is not the right analysis of the cases. A better explanation, I shall argue in the next section, is simply that which belief content 'Clark Kent' expresses depends on the context. In SM *vs.* CK case, it expresses a content that depends on how I think about Superman when he is wearing regular clothes and glasses. On the other hand, in Counting, it expresses a belief content that depends on how I think about Superman when he wears superhero outfits. Further, I believe (9) in the second case but not the first because only the belief content it expresses in the second case is in my belief box, so to speak.²¹

Proponents of *RM* are bound to deny that either SM *vs.* CK or Counting, or even both cases make sense. But, aside from the problems they raise to traditional accounts of belief content of fictional names (and proper names, in general), the cases are plausible. More generally, they suggest that a theory that entails that I cannot believe (7) and (9) in different contexts will have problems to explain the contrast in my beliefs in SM *vs.* CK and Counting. But this should not be automatically taken to mean that

dicto reading is more appropriate; whereas in Counting, a *de re* reading captures the intuitions. But the resemblance of the cases stops here as I do not defend that the difference between *de re* and *de dicto* readings can be reduced to a distinction between evaluative perspectives.

²¹ I am using belief boxes simply as a metaphor to represent the belief relation. See the next section for an explanation.

one or both cases are nonsense. If I am right, it suggests that we should revisit the assumption that the meaning of a name is its belief content.²²

3. A novel hybrid view

The last section ended with a conclusion that SM vs. CK and Counting cases suggest that the belief content of ‘Clark Kent’ and (9) ‘Clark Kent has impressive superpowers’ may vary from context to context. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that there are good reasons to keep the meaning of names the same across contexts because proper names are not context-dependent expressions like indexicals.²³ To accommodate the seemingly contradictory data—that belief content but not meaning of names can change—I propose that we abandon the view that belief content of proper names is their meaning or even part of it. In the remainder of the paper, I will develop and argue for a view along these lines. In particular, I will propose a “hybrid theory”, that is, a theory that embraces different theories for the meaning (or semantic content) and belief content of proper names.

For reasons mentioned at the beginning of the paper, I hold Millianism for the meaning of proper names. Thus, the meaning of ‘Superman’ is Superman himself, and ‘Superman’ and ‘Clark Kent’ have the same meaning. But I hold a version of Fregeanism for the belief content of names. More specifically, the belief content of a proper name is a bundle of finer-grained contents, both descriptive and non-descriptive contents, about the referent of the name with which they are associated. Belief contents are about the referent of the name either because the referent fits the descriptions in the belief content or because they are (somehow) causally related. For the sake of simplicity, I will use descriptive contents to explain and illustrate my view.

A belief content of a proper name is what is ordinarily thought to be a way of thinking of an object. In my view, the names ‘Superman’ and ‘Clark Kent’ can have different belief contents even though they have the same

²² The objection I developed here against *RM* is not exclusive to Millian Theory. With adjustments, a similar objection can also be raised against Fregean Theories.

²³ See Pelczar and Rainsbury (1998) for a defense of proper names as indexicals.

meaning. The belief content of ‘Superman’ can be “the superhero who wears a red cape and blue pants”—«RED CAPE», for short—and the belief content of ‘Clark Kent’ can be “the reporter of the Daily Planet”—«REPORTER», for short.²⁴ Precisely which belief content ‘Superman’ and ‘Clark Kent’ varies from person to person and from context to context. For someone who knows that Superman is Clark Kent, the belief content of ‘Superman’ and ‘Clark Kent’ could be the same, for instance, «RED CAPE». But for someone who knows Clark Kent but not his secret identity, they would be different contents.

The claim that the belief content of a name varies from person to person is fairly intuitive and not new. In Frege’s famous footnote (1892, 210), he acknowledges that such variations are inevitable since different people may have different ways of thinking about the same object.

“In the case of an actual proper name such as ‘Aristotle’ opinions as to the sense may differ. It might, for instance, be taken to be the following: the pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. Anybody who does this will attach another sense to the sentence ‘Aristotle was born in Stagira’ than will a man who takes as the sense of the name: the teacher of Alexander the Great who was born in Stagira.”

It is also not hard to find philosophers who agree with Frege. On the other hand, the claim that context can influence the belief content of a name without affecting its meaning (and without a speaker changing her mind) has remained quite unexplored, although it has been suggested before by Wallace and Mason (1990) and briefly mentioned by Austin (1975, 142). If the conclusions reached at the end of section 2.2 are correct, they are right; the belief content of a proper name varies from context to context.

To explain precisely how context influences the belief content of names, I begin by laying out the metaphysics of belief my view suggests. For pedagogical purposes, I borrow the belief box metaphor to represent the belief

²⁴ I will use double pointy brackets (‘«’ and ‘»’) to enclose belief contents and to distinguish them from meaning (or semantic content), which are enclosed in single pointy brackets (‘*‘*’ and ‘*’*’).

relation. But it is important to note that my view does not depend on belief boxes being more than simply a metaphor.

In my view, not only names have belief contents, but also predicates, sentences, and other simple and complex expressions. The belief content of a sentence (in a context *c*) is a function of the belief contents of its meaningful parts (in *c*). What we find in belief boxes are belief contents of sentences, such as (C) «REPORTER, IMPRESSIVE SUPERPOWERS» and (S) «RED CAPE, IMPRESSIVE SUPERPOWERS». When a belief content is in a person's belief box, it represents the fact that she believes it. In contrast, when a belief content is outside her belief box, she does not believe it. According to SM vs. CK, I do not believe Superman has impressive superpowers when I think of him wearing regular outfits. Assuming this way is captured by the description “the reporter of the Daily Planet”, it means that belief content (C) is outside my belief box. But I believe Superman has impressive superpowers when I think of him as wearing his superhero outfit. Assuming this way is captured by the description “the superhero who wears a red cape and blue pants”, it means that (S) is in my belief box. Figure 1 represents the state of affairs just described.

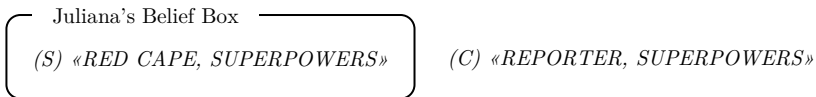


Figure 1

It should not be controversial that (S) is in my belief box but (C) is not; even Millians who disagree with me could accept it. The controversial claims are that (c) I do not believe (9) in SM vs. CK because (C) is outside my belief box; and (d) I believe (9) in Counting because (S) is in my belief box. For, according to the orthodox view—in which belief content is the meaning of names and the meaning of names is not context-sensitive –, if I (do not) believe (9), then I (do not) believe it across all contexts. Further, according to Millian Theory, I believe (9) if, and only if, «SM, SUPERPOWERS» is in my belief box. However, if my argument so far is on the right track, we have to revise the orthodox view because of contrasting intuitions in SM

vs. CK and Counting. To argue for (c) and (d), I offer what I take to be an intuitive explanation of what changed from one case to the other to entail a change in the belief content of (9).

I submit that what changed from one case to another is how my mental life is evaluated or the *perspective* from which my belief box is evaluated, what I call an ‘evaluative perspective’. By *evaluative perspective* I mean a point of view that determines a way of thinking of an object. It is that narrative, perspective, or explanation that naturally comes after you ask someone “Does Lois believe Clark Kent flies?” Often, and understandably, the answer is a variation of “It depends. From one point of view, yes. From another, no.” Throughout the paper, I have mentioned two perspectives: the perspective of how I think of Superman with his reporter outfit and another of how I think of him with his superhero outfit. These perspectives determine «REPORTER» and «RED CAPE», respectively.²⁵

If now we consider the question ‘Does Juliana believe that Clark Kent has impressive powers?’, we will get different answers depending on the evaluative perspective. From the first perspective (e’), I do not. Because from this perspective, the relevant belief content is (C)—it has «REPORTER», that is, the way I think of Superman with his reporter outfits—and it is not in my belief box. From the second perspective (e’'), I do. Because from this perspective, the relevant belief content is (S)—it has «RED CAPE», that is, the way I think of Superman with his superhero outfits—and (S) is in my belief box.

The suggestion that a belief box can be accessed and evaluated from different perspectives in the way just described should not be too controversial. So I will not argue for it here. I will now argue that whether I believe (9) depends on a perspective.

Echoing Wallace & Mason (1990, 182), when we ascribe beliefs to people, including ourselves, we typically do not do so without also bringing forward a narrative or other relevant background information. To appreciate their suggestion, consider again how ordinary people answer questions like ‘Does Lois Lane believe Clark Kent can fly?’ or ‘Does Lois Lane believe Superman

²⁵ There are many more perspectives from which my belief box can be evaluated, such as the perspective of any way of thinking of Superman, the perspective of how I think Lois thinks of Superman when he wears regular outfits, etc.

is a reporter?’ The answer is typically not a simple “yes” or “no”. It often comes with a narrative or some relevant background information to put the answer into perspective (in the ordinary sense), such as: “no, Lois does not believe Clark Kent can fly because she does not know he is Superman”; or “yes, she believes Superman is a reporter because she believes Clark Kent is a reporter, and they are the same person. But she would never use the sentence ‘Superman is a reporter’. So do not ask her ‘Write an article with Superman’ if you want her to collaborate with Clark Kent”. Narratives naturally narrow down how a belief ascription should be interpreted to avoid confusions like those that give rise to Frege’s Puzzle. The fact that we ordinarily use narratives suggests that we recognize that without clarification a belief ascription may be puzzling or ambiguous because it can be “seen” from different perspectives.

Bringing evaluative perspectives to determine whether a person believes what is expressed by a sentence legitimizes the role of narratives and background information already have when we talk about a person’s mental life. Once we acknowledge that such narratives intuitively play this role, it is not hard to see that different narratives may yield different verdicts with respect to whether someone believes what is expressed by a sentence. Evaluative perspectives capture essential information in narratives and background information to evaluate a belief ascription.

I can now explain what changed from SM *vs.* CK and Counting: the evaluative perspective in the narratives. The evaluative perspective that correctly captures the narrative in SM *vs.* CK case is e' . The narrative there is the explanation I offer for why I say I do not believe (9), namely, because Superman does not use his superpowers when wearing regular outfits. I make explicit that I am talking about my belief box (that is, what I believe) in light of the fact that Superman has different types of outfits, behaves in different ways depending on which type he wears, and focusing on one type of outfit. To determine whether I believe (9) in this narrative, my belief box should be evaluated from a perspective of how I think of Superman (or Clark Kent, they are the same entity, after all) when he wears regular outfits. Such a perspective is e' . Since e' determines a belief content outside my belief box, I do not believe (9) with respect to e' . Informally, I do not believe (9) in SM *vs.* CK case.

In contrast, the evaluative perspective that correctly captures the narrative in Counting is e'' . The narrative here is that we are counting fictional entities that have a certain property typically exhibited when they wear superhero outfits. I make explicit that I am talking about my belief box in light of the fact that Superman has different types of outfits, behaves in different ways depending on which type he wears, and focusing on the superhero outfit. To determine whether I believe (9) in this narrative, my belief box should be evaluated from a perspective of how I think of Clark Kent when he wears superhero outfits. This time e'' captures such a narrative. Since e'' determines a belief content inside my belief box, I believe (9) with respect to e'' . In other words, I believe (9) in Counting.

Before I continue, let me consider a natural alternative explanation of the cases. One might think that the belief content of (9) should be fixed to (C) (at least for me) and hold that what changed from one case to another is where (C) is relative to my belief box. (C) is outside my belief box in SM *vs.* CK but inside it in Counting. In this way, the suggestion goes, our intuitions are explained without appealing to a controversial claim that the belief content of (9) is contextually determined. The problem with this suggestion is that changing which belief contents are inside or outside my belief box represents the fact that I have changed my mind from one case to another. But, as I have argued before, this is an incorrect explanation.

How can evaluative perspectives explain Frege's Puzzle and rescue *RM*? To recap, the problem is to explain how one could rationally believe (2) 'Superman has impressive superpowers' and (7) 'Clark Kent does not have impressive superpowers', given that Millianism entails that they have contradictory meanings. In my view, these sentences have contradictory meanings because I take Millianism to be the correct theory about the meaning of fictional names. But they do not necessarily have contradictory belief contents. If the narratives surrounding (2) and (7) are captured by different perspectives that determine different ways of thinking of Superman, one would not believe a content and its negation and the puzzle disappears.²⁶

²⁶ Overall, there are three ways to explain from where the two perspectives come. One is to explain that the difference in the perspectives of (2) and (7) comes from the fact that they are considered in different contexts with different narratives. Another suggestion is to hold that they are considered in the same context with two

The narratives surrounding (2) and (7) (and in typical instances of Frege's Puzzle) are indeed captured by different perspectives that point to different belief contents. Part of the puzzlement in these cases comes from the fact that we recognize that the use of different but coreferential names to express beliefs with apparent contradictory contents indicates that a point is being made about two different ways of thinking of the same object. To formally capture this, I use different evaluative perspectives that determine *different* belief contents to evaluate whether someone believes (2) and (7). Thus, a person who believes (2) and (7) does without believing contradictory contents.²⁷

My proposed view differs from current Millian Theories in many ways. First, in my view, belief contents are not pragmatically conveyed when someone utters a sentence (Salmon (1986)). I do not deny that they could be pragmatically communicated in some cases. But even when they are, it is not what explains our intuitions about whether we believe the content of a sentence. Second, in my view, we have a simple metaphysics of belief according to which the belief relation is a two-place relation between belief content and a person. Translating it to the belief box metaphor, to believe «BC» is to have «BC» in one's belief box. Thus, my view is not a version of *TTB*. This sets it apart from most common versions of Millianism.²⁸ Besides, it is compatible with my view and the overall explanation of the cases that belief contents are transparent, which is not the case with many common versions of Millianism. Lastly, my view is not another version of pluralist views about meaning. As I have emphasized, belief contents are not the meaning or part of the meaning of names. I hold Millianism for the meaning of names, which is not a pluralist theory.

different narratives. A third way is to hold that one narrative can have different perspectives. I find the second option more plausible because it fits with how we ordinarily understand contexts. But I will not argue for it here.

²⁷ A similar explanation is available to solve Kripke's puzzle about beliefs and Matthes's problem with multiple iterations of attitude ascriptions. For lack of space, I will leave it to the reader to work out the details.

²⁸ Braun (2005); Braun and Saul (2002); Kaplan (1968); Perry (1990); Salmon (1986).

4. Objections

Here I will consider four pressing objections to my account. First, one might object that, in my view, no two people believe the same belief content. Thus, it is never true that two people, say, Lois Lane and I, believe (2) ‘Superman has impressive superpowers’. But of course, we can both believe it. So, my view is false.

It is true that, in my view, there is a sense in which no two people have the same belief when they both believe (2). But this is an advantage. As Frege and other philosophers recognized (see quote on p. 155), the way of thinking of an object can and often varies from person to person. My view captures this intuition by holding that belief contents vary from person to person. But, in my view, it is also true that Lois Lane and I believe (2), provided that our belief boxes are evaluated from a common and appropriate evaluative perspective. For instance, it is false that we believe (2) from a perspective *e*’ of how I think of Superman²⁹ when he wears superhero outfits. Perspective *e*’ determines my belief content, «RED CAPE», and, assuming that Lois Lane does not think of Superman in my way, she will not have the same belief content in her belief box. But it can be true from a perspective *e*’’ of how a believer thinks of Superman when he wears a superhero outfit. Such a perspective will point to different belief contents for each of us. Assuming that these belief contents are in our respective belief boxes, Lois Lane and I believe (2) in *e*’’, accommodating the intuitions brought up by the objection.

A second worry one might have is regarding naming belief contents. There does not seem to be anything preventing us from naming belief contents. In this case, belief contents will be the meaning of certain names which contradicts the claim that belief contents are not the meaning of names.

Contrary to the objection, my view can accommodate the fact that belief contents can be named. «RED CAPE» can be the meaning of a name, as long as it is not also its belief content. If we name «RED CAPE» of ‘Patrick’ and refer to it by using this name, then my view predicts that its belief

²⁹ Braun (2005); Braun and Saul (2002); Kaplan (1968); Perry (1990); Salmon (1986)

content is another content; a way of thinking of «RED CAPE». But it does not prevent belief contents from being named.

This brings us to a third objection. There is a close relationship between belief ascriptions with that-clauses and those without, such as the pair (13) ‘Juliana believes ‘Clark Kent has impressive superpowers’’, that I have been discussing throughout this paper, and (14) ‘Juliana believes that Clark Kent has impressive superpowers’. If the truth-value of the first depends on an evaluative perspective, as I argued it does, it is natural to expect the truth-value of the second to also depend on it. But how could that be?

Following Predelli (2005), I propose that evaluative perspectives enter as parameter of evaluations of (14). This entails that their truth-value is relativized to both worlds and evaluative perspectives—and possibly other parameters, such as time depending on the view one holds. Thus, (14) gets its truth-value with respect to not only a world but also an evaluative perspective. When it is evaluated with respect to the actual world and perspective e' , (14) is false. When it is evaluated with respect to the actual world and perspective e'' , it is true. Note that, even though (14) has the same meaning in both cases, the difference in truth-value its gets in different perspectives does not entail a contradiction. Since its truth-value is relativized to evaluative perspectives, a contradiction follows from a sentence getting different truth-values with respect to the same evaluative perspective (possible world, etc.), which is not the case here.

Lastly, one could argue that relativizing the truth-value of belief ascriptions is *ad hoc*. It is not far fetched to expect that all sentences should be relativized to the same parameters. Here I have offered some reasons to add evaluative perspectives to the parameters of evaluation of belief ascriptions. But there does not seem to be a reason to add them to parameters of evaluation of simple sentences, such as (9) or (2). So my view should be rejected.

The concern is legitimate, but it can be put to rest. Predelli (2005), Searle (1980), and Travis (1989) have argued that simple sentences should also be evaluated with respect to something like an evaluative perspective. To briefly explain the sorts of considerations that led them to such a conclusion, consider the following case discussed by Predelli (2005, 174–5). Take the sentence (15) ‘Bill cut the grass’. (15) is a perfectly good example of a sentence with no context-sensitive expression, aside from tense. As

such, it is expected to have the same truth-value across contexts within the same possible world. Now suppose that Bill employed a pair of scissors to separate each leaflet roughly perpendicular to the ground. Is (15) true or false? Despite appearances, it depends on the context. In a context where Bill's partner asked him to mow the lawn, (15) is false. From this perspective, only shortening the blades by slicing them along a direction roughly parallel to the ground is to cut the grass. In a context where Bill's partner demands that the number of grass blades in their garden is doubled by parting each leaflet in two, (15) is true. From this perspective, Bill cut the grass. So, even simple sentences like (15) need to be evaluated from some sort of perspective. Of course, here the perspective has less to do with way of thinking of objects and more with what counts as cutting the grass.

By bringing this case, I do not mean to suggest that there are not alternative accounts for the phenomenon. There are many of them.³⁰ My point is to show that there is a case to be made that the truth-value of simple sentences should be relativized to an evaluative perspective—shortening the blades or doubling the number of grass blades. In this case, my proposal would not be *ad hoc*, contrary to what the objection suggests.

5. Final remarks

I have argued that the cases considered here suggest that the belief content of a proper name (and a sentence it is part of) depends on an evaluative perspective and should be relativized to contexts. But I have not said much about the meaning of fictional names. And it is crucial to evaluate my view to know what the meaning of fictional proper names is—an abstract entity of some kind or are they empty names? The reason I have not said much about the meaning of fictional proper names is that I wanted to focus on their belief content and argue for a distinction between meaning and belief content of proper names. I then endorsed Millianism for the meaning of proper names. The issues with which I began this paper and that would require to take a stance and side with *ARM* or *RM* do not arise in my view

³⁰ See Berg (2002); Borg (2004); Cappelen and Lepore (2005); Recanati (2004); Stanley and Szabó (2000) for a few sample of alternative views.

because of the distinction I make. I have an inclination towards *RM*.³¹ But it is important to notice that, in principle, both views could be accommodated within my proposed framework of belief contents.

References

- Austin, John L. 1975. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198245537.001.0001>
- Berg, Jonathan. 2002. "Is Semantics Still Possible?" *Journal of Pragmatics* 34 (4): 349–59. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0378-2166\(01\)00044-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0378-2166(01)00044-3)
- Bonardi, Paolo. ms. "Salmon, Schiffer and Frege's Constraint".
- Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics*. Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/0199270252.003.0006>
- Braun, David. 1998. "Understanding Belief Reports". *The Philosophical Review* 107 (4): 555–95. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2998375>
- Braun, David. 2005. "Empty Names, Fictional Names, Mythical Names". *Noûs* 39 (4): 596–631. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0029-4624.2005.00541.x>
- Braun, David. 2006. "Illogical, but Rational". *Noûs* 40 (2): 376–79.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0029-4624.2006.00616.x>
- Braun, David and Saul, Jennifer. 2002. "Simple Sentences, Substitutions, and Mistaken Evaluations". *Philosophical Studies* 111 (1): 1–41.
<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021287328280>
- Brody, Baruch A. 2014. *Identity and Essence*. Princeton University Press.
- Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernest. 2005. *Insensitive Semantics: A Defense of Semantic Minimalism and Speech Act Pluralism*. Blackwell.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470755792>
- Currie, Gregory. 1990. *The Nature of Fiction*. Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511897498>
- Dummett, Michael. 1981. *Frege: Philosophy of language*. Harvard University Press.
- Dummett, Michael. 1991. *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics*. Harvard University Press.
- Evans, Gareth. 1979. "Reference and Contingency". *The Monist*, 161–189.
<https://doi.org/10.5840/monist197962220>
- Everett, Anthony. 2013. *The Nonexistent*. Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199674794.001.0001>
- Fine, Kit. 2008. *Semantic Relationism*. The Blackwell Brown Lectures in Philosophy. Blackwell Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470690826>

³¹ See fn. 16.

- Frege, Gottlob. 1892. "Sense and Reference". *The Philosophical Review* 57 (3): 209–30.
- García-Carpintero, Manuel. 2019. "Semantics of Fictional Terms". *Teorema* 38 (2): 73–100.
- García-Carpintero, Manuel. 2020. "Referential Indeterminacy in Fiction". *Journal of Applied Logics-IfCoLoG Journal of Logics and their Applications* (7) 2: 177–90.
- Heck, Richard G. 1995. "The Sense of Communication". *Mind* 104 (413): 79–106. <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/104.413.79>
- Kaplan, David. 1968. "Quantifying In". *Synthese* 19 (1-2): 178–214. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00568057>
- Kaplan, David. 1989. "Demonstratives". In *Themes from Kaplan*, edited by Joseph Almog, John Perry, and Howard Wettstein, 481–563. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- King, Jeffrey C. 2014. "Naturalized Propositions". In *New Thinking About Propositions*, edited by Jeffrey C King, Scott Soames, and Jeff Speaks, 47–70. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199693764.003.0004>
- Klauk, Tobias. 2014. "Zalta on Encoding Fictional Properties". *Journal of Literary Theory* 8 (2): 234–56. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jlt-2014-0012>
- Kripke, Saul. 1979. "A Puzzle About Belief". In *Meaning and Use*. Edited by Avishai Margalit. Dordrecht: Kluwer. 239–83. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199730155.003.0006>
- Kripke, Saul. 1980. *Naming and Necessity*. Oxford: Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-2557-7_9
- Kroon, Fred. 2015. "Creationism and the Problem of Indiscernible Fictional Objects". In *Fictional Objects*, edited by Stuart Brock and Anthony Everett, 147–173. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198735595.003.0007>
- Lewis, David. 1978. "Truth in Fiction". *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1): 37–46. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0195032047.003.0015>
- Mill, John S. 1893. *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*. New York: Harper & Brothers. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139149839>
- Paganini, Elisa. 2019. "Vague Fictional Objects". *Inquiry*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174x.2019.1610050>
- Parsons, Terence. 1980. *Nonexistent Objects*. Yale University Press.
- Pelczar, Michael and Rainsbury, Joe. 1998. "The Indexical Character of Names". *Synthese* 114 (2): 293–317.
- Perry, John. 1990. "Frege on Demonstratives". In *Demonstratives*, edited by Palle Yourgrau, 50–70. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2184564>

- Predelli, Stefano. 2005. *Contexts: Meaning, Truth, and the Use of Language*. Clarendon Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199281734.001.0001>
- Priest, Graham. 2011. "Creating Non-Existents". In *Truth in Fiction*, edited by Franck Lihoreau, 107–18. Ontos Verlag. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110326796.107>
- Putnam, Hilary. 1954. "Synonymy, and the Analysis of Belief Sentences". *Analysis* 14 (5): 114–22. <https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/14.5.114>
- Putnam, Hilary. 1975. "The Meaning of 'Meaning'". In *Mind, Language, and Reality: Philosophical Papers*, volume 2, 215–71. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511625251.014>
- Recanati, François. 2004. *Literal Meaning*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511615382>
- Russell, Bertrand. 1905. "On Denoting". *Mind* 14 (56): 479–93.
- Russell, Bertrand. 1910. Knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (11): 108–28.
- Russell, Bertrand. 2001. *The Problems of Philosophy*. Oxford University Press.
- Salmon, Nathan. 1986. *Frege's Puzzle*. Ridgeview Publishing Company, Atascadero, California.
- Salmon, Nathan. 1995. "Being of Two Minds: Belief With Doubt". *Noûs* 29 (1): 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2215724> Reprinted in Salmon, N. U. (2007). *Content, Cognition, and Communication: Philosophical Papers II*, volume 2, 230–48. Clarendon Press.
- Sawyer, Sarah. 2015. "Fictional Objects". In *Fictional Objects*, edited by S. Brock and A. Everett, 208–29. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schiffer, Stephen. 1978. "The Basis of Reference". *Erkenntnis* :13 171–206. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00160893>
- Schiffer, Stephen. 1992. "Belief Ascription". *The Journal of Philosophy* 89 (10): 499–521. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2941005>
- Searle, John R. 1980. "The Background of Meaning". In *Speech Act Theory and Pragmatics*. Edited by John Searle, Ferenc Kiefer and Manfred Bierwisch. Dordrecht: D. Riedel. 221–32. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-8964-1_10
- Spencer, Cara. 2006. "Do Conversational Implicatures Explain Substitutivity Failures?". *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 87 (1): 126–39. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0114.2006.00250.x>
- Stanley, Jason. 1997a. "Rigidity and Content". In *Language, Thought, and Logic: Essays in Honour of Michael Dummett*, edited by Richard G Heck, 131–56. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stanley, Jason. 1997b. "Names and Rigid Designation". In *Companion to the Philosophy of Language*, edited by Bob Hale and Crispin Wright, 555–86. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118972090.ch36>

- Stanley, Jason. 2002. "Modality and What Is Said". *Philosophical Perspectives* 16: 321–44. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0068.36.s16.12>
- Stanley, Jason and Szabó, Zoltan Gendler. 2000. "On Quantifier Domain Restriction". *Mind and Language* 15 (2-3): 219–61. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0017.00130>
- Strawson, Peter F. 1959. *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*. London: Methuen. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203221303>
- Thomasson, Amie L. 1999. *Fiction and Metaphysics*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511527463>
- Thomasson, Amie L. 2003. "Speaking of Fictional Characters". *Dialectica* 57 (2): 205–23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-8361.2003.tb00266.x>
- Travis, Charles. 1989. *The Uses of Sense: Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Language*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199245878.001.0001>
- Voltolini, Alberto. 2006. *How Ficta Follow Fiction*. Springer.
- Wallace, John and Mason, HE. 1990. "On Some Thought Experiments About Mind and Meaning". In *Propositional Attitudes: The Role of Content in Logic, Language, and Mind*, edited by Joseph Owens and Anthony C. Anderson, 175–200. Chicago University Press.
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas. 1980. *Works and Worlds of Art*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. <https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-5147-6>
- Zalta, Edward. 1988. *Intensional Logic and the Metaphysics of Intentionality*. MIT Press.

Revisiting the ‘Wrong Kind of Object’ Problem

Merel Semeijn* – Edward N. Zalta**

Received: 13 April 2020 / Accepted: 9 September 2020

Abstract: Any uniform semantic treatment of fictional names (e.g., ‘Frodo’) across parafictional statements (e.g., ‘In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo was born in the Shire’) and metafictional statements (e.g., ‘Frodo was invented by Tolkien’) runs into a variation of the ‘wrong kind of object’ problem. The problem arises when an analysis of one of these statements inappropriately attributes a property to an object. For example, it would be problematic if an analysis implied that flesh and blood individuals are invented by someone, and similarly problematic if an analysis implied that abstract objects are born in a certain region. Abstract object theory has provided a solution to this conundrum by distinguishing two modes of predication: encoding and exemplifying. Recently Klauk has argued that the problem reappears for the analysis of explicit parafictional statements in this theory. In this paper we formalize the objection and show that one can distinguish three issues in connection with the ‘wrong kind of object’ problem. We then address them in turn.

Keywords: Abstract object theory; story operator; hyperintensionality; mixed discourse; parafictional statements.

* University of Groningen


 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2841-9802>

 Faculty of Philosophy, University of Groningen, Oude Boteringestraat 52, 9712 GL Groningen, The Netherlands

 m.semeijn@rug.nl

** Stanford University

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6488-3496>

 Center for the Study of Language and Information, Stanford University, Cordura Hall, 210 Panama Street, Stanford, CA 94305-4115, U.S.A.

 zalta@stanford.edu



1. The ‘wrong kind of object’ problem

The semantics of statements about fictions requires a distinction between four different types of statements that feature fictional names (i.e., names of fictional entities). Consider the following four statements about Frodo:

- (1) Frodo had a very trying time that afternoon.
- (2) Frodo was born in the Shire.
- (3) In/According to *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo was born in the Shire.
- (4) Frodo was invented by Tolkien.

We shall categorize, and subsequently refer to these statements, using the following terminology:

- (1) is a *fictional statement*, i.e., it is part of a fictional narrative (e.g., (1) is a quote from Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*). Such statements are usually understood as neither true nor false but rather as fictional truth-makers; the act of storytelling determines what is true in the fictional story.
- (2) and (3) are *parafictional statements*, i.e., statements about what is true in some fiction but which are not part of the original storytelling. These statements are usually analysed as being true or false (depending on the content of the fictional story) and can be ‘explicit’ like (3) or ‘implicit’ like (2) (depending on whether the prefix ‘In/According to fiction/story *s*’ is overt).¹
- (4) is a *metafictional statement*, i.e., a statement about a fictional entity *as a fictional entity* that can be true or false.

Any uniform semantic treatment of fictional names across these different types of statements runs into a variation of ‘the problem of the wrong kind

¹ Here we follow Recanati’s (2018) terminology. Note that a sentence like (1) can also function as an implicit parafictional statement if used in a *discussion about* the content of *The Lord of the Rings*.

of object'.² If we adopt a realist approach and assume that the name 'Frodo' refers uniformly to an abstract object (e.g., Zalta 1983; 1988a or Inwagen 1977), we run into difficulties with the interpretation of (1), (2) and (3); abstract objects are not the right kind of things to have trying times or be born in certain regions. On the other hand, if we adopt an antirealist approach and take the name 'Frodo' to refer uniformly to a flesh and blood individual in a set of counterfactual or pretense worlds (e.g., Lewis 1978; Walton 1990; or Maier 2017), we run into difficulties with the interpretation of (4); flesh and blood individuals are not the right kind of things to be invented.

In this paper, we investigate fictional names by using the theory of abstract objects (hereafter *object theory*) as a theoretical framework (Zalta 1983; 1988a). We use this framework to solve the realist version of the 'wrong kind of object' problem. Before delving into this debate we shall examine what's required of a uniform semantic analysis of fictional names in light of the debate on 'mixed' discourse (section 2). We then turn to the solution that object theory offers to the problem of the wrong kind of object. This solution centers around a distinction between two modes of predication: *encoding* and *exemplifying* (section 3). We discuss a challenge to this solution that has recently been posed by Klauk (2014) according to which the problem persists for explicit parafictional statements (section 4). We offer a formalisation of this objection in object theory and show that it gives rise to three separate issues that need to be addressed. We explain how object theory addresses those issues by pointing out that the story operator creates a hyperintensional environment akin to that created by propositional attitude reports (section 5). We conclude with some insights that emerge about entailment relations among fictional, parafictional, and meta-fictional statements (section 6).

2. A uniform semantics for fictional names

In addition to the distinction between fictional, parafictional, and meta-fictional statements, discussions about the analysis of fiction have also

² We adopt this term from Klauk (2014) although he uses it only to refer to the realist variant of the problem.

introduced a distinction between discourse that is ‘internal’ to the fiction and discourse that is ‘external’ to the fiction. The distinction attempts to separate (a) discourse that describes the content of a fiction from a perspective within the fiction (e.g., talking about Frodo as a flesh and blood individual) and (b) discourse that describes the content of a fiction from a perspective outside the fiction (e.g., talking about Frodo as a fictional character). We’ll see below, however, that some sentences constitute ‘mixed discourse’ in that they combine internal and external forms of discourse. These sentences give rise to the question of whether a uniform semantic analysis of internal and external discourse is possible. And this question can be posed for our initial distinction among sentences: is there a uniform semantic analysis of fictional, parafictional, and metafictional statements?

In what follows, we shall examine some arguments in favour of a uniform semantic analysis across internal and external discourse. Second, we will reformulate the desideratum of a uniform semantic treatment of fictional names. As it turns out, the literature on mixed discourse only establishes a need for a uniform analysis across parafictional and metafictional statements. It is not clear whether this desideratum extends to a uniform analysis across fictional, parafictional and metafictional discourse.

2.1. *Mixed discourse*

An intuitive reply to the problem of the wrong kind of object is to assume (following Kripke 2011 and Currie 1990) that fictional names are ambiguous; they refer to concrete objects (e.g., a flesh and blood hobbit called ‘Frodo’) in fictional and parafictional statements and they refer to abstract objects (e.g., an abstract entity called ‘Frodo’) in metafictional statements. But a central problem with this analysis is that it doesn’t work for mixed discourse, where co-predication and the use of anaphoric pronouns is not only admissible but quite natural (Recanati 2018; Everett 2013, 163–78; and Collins 2019). For instance, consider:

- (5) Bond is a killer but remains as popular as ever. (Collins 2019, 1)
- (6) Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character created by Conan Doyle.
In Conan Doyle’s stories, he [Sherlock Holmes] is a private detec

tive who investigates cases for a variety of clients, including Scotland Yard. (Adapted from Recanati 2018, 37)

(5) is mixed discourse because Bond’s being a killer is said from a perspective within the story, but his remaining as popular as ever is said from a perspective outside the story. (6) is a similar, but more extended, example. The admissibility of such co-predications (5) and anaphoric dependencies (6) suggests that names like ‘Bond’ can’t be ambiguous in (5), and that ‘Sherlock Holmes’ and ‘he’ corefer in (6). This forms a *prima facie* reason to avoid an ambiguity analysis and to instead develop a uniform semantic analysis across internal and external discourse.³

2.2. *The internal/external distinction*

The internal/external distinction has been used to subcategorize sentences (1) – (4) in different ways, namely:

- to distinguish (1) – (2) from (3) – (4),
- to distinguish (1) – (3) from (4), and
- to distinguish (1) from (2) – (4).

For some theorists, the internal/external distinction helps to distinguish sentences (1) and (2) from (3) and (4). Clearly (1) is internal. But consider the analysis of implicit parafictional statements such as (2) when used in a discussion on what is fictionally true in *The Lord of the Rings*. In particular, consider a mini-discourse where you reply to the question “Where was Frodo from *The Lord of the Rings* actually born?” with (2) “Frodo was born in the Shire”. According to theorists such as Everett (2013) and Lamarque and Olsen (1994), (2) is an (unofficial) continuation of the fictional pretense initiated by Tolkien and hence obviously internal. However, when (in response to the same question) you utter an explicit parafictional statement such as (3) “In/According to *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo was born in the Shire”, you talk about *The Lord of the Rings* as a fictional work and

³ There are other interesting cases involving anaphoric dependencies and coreference in discourse about fiction, such as those described in Bjurman Pautz (2008). But since these cases don’t constitute a problem for object theory, we won’t discuss them here.

hence adopt an external perspective. The internal/external distinction thus separates fictional and implicit parafictional statements from explicit parafictional and metafictional statements.

Other theorists, such as Recanati (2018) and Evans (1982), consider implicit parafictional statements (e.g., (2)) to be abbreviations of explicit parafictional statements (e.g., (3)) and hence treat them on a par. Both types of parafictional statements involve a continuation of the pretense and hence both are internal (although, for Recanati, parafictional discourse does contain an irreducible external component). Thus, for some theorists, the internal/external distinction separates fictional and parafictional discourse in (1) – (3), from the metafictional discourse in (4).

Still other theorists, such as Currie (1990) and Zucchi (2017) also treat implicit and explicit parafictional statements on a par but would use the internal/external divide to distinguish fictional discourse from parafictional and metafictional discourse. The former involves pretense while the latter two kinds do not.

Note that the first two uses of the internal/external distinction do not distinguish between fictional and implicit parafictional statements (i.e., both kinds of statements are examples of internal discourse). In other words, the sentences used in the original acts of storytelling (e.g., the sentences in a copy of *The Lord of the Rings*) are treated on a par with unprefixed statements about fictional truths (e.g., your statement that Frodo was born in the Shire). This conflation can be misleading in the context of the debate on mixed discourse since the available examples of anaphoric dependencies or co-predication in mixed internal/external discourse involve only parafictional and metafictional statements and not fictional discourse. So while considerations of co-predication and the admissibility of anaphoric dependencies require a uniform analysis for the parafictional and metafictional statements in mixed discourse, there is (as yet) no warrant for a uniform analysis that includes fictional discourse.⁴

⁴ Recanati is, and Everett seems to be, aware of this; Recanati’s examples explicitly target only mixed (implicit and explicit) parafictional/metafictional discourse and Everett hints at the need for a distinction “between discourse which takes place within the original base pretense [fictional discourse] and discourse which takes place within an extension of that base pretense and which is used to convey information

Thus, an obvious question arises: can there be co-predication or anaphoric dependencies in fictional/parafictional and fictional/metafictional discourse, as some theories suggest? *Prima facie*, this is possible but once we try to concoct examples of such discourse the language loses all of its naturalness. Consider the following (attempts at) anaphoric links across fictional/parafictional, and fictional/metafictional discourse:

- (7) In the story I made up yesterday, a wizard called Brian falls in love with a cauldron. Let me tell it to you: One day, he was alone in his study trying out a new love-potion recipe...
- (8) Frey is a fictional character I made up and is the protagonist of my newest story. Here it is: One day she was walking through the woods near her home...
- (9) In order to capture the witch, Mary travelled to the woods and disguised herself as a potato.* In the woods she [Mary] encountered many perils...
- *I know this is weird but I invented her [Mary] while eating chips.
- (10) Hans and Gretel approached the skyscraper. “Maybe you should have a look inside, Gretel. They might have candy”, whispered Hans.* Gretel moved closer...
- *In this story, she is the hero that saves the day. He is the villain.

The anaphoric links seem possible (i.e., the statements are interpretable) but are very awkward. In order to clearly separate the parafictional and metafictional statements from the fictional discourse, the remarks outside the storytelling either have to be clearly marked in the language (e.g., “Let me tell it to you:” or “Here it is:” in (7) and (8)), or by some other means such as by changing the tone of voice as we do in an ‘aside’ (e.g., quickly murmuring the metafictional and parafictional statements in spoken versions of (9) and (10)) or by changing the layout for the written language (e.g., the metafictional and parafictional statements in (9) and (10) are part of footnotes), etc. Hence it becomes extremely challenging to come up with examples of *co-predication* involving mixed fictional and meta- or parafictional discourse. Moreover, the examples of anaphoric dependencies such as

about it [implicit parafictional discourse]” (2013, 165–66) and concedes that the given examples of mixed internal/external discourse are always of an extended pretense.

those above are decidedly not as common nor as natural as the examples we gave of mixed discourse.

In addition, once we do manage to ‘insert’ such non-fictional statements in the fictional narrative it is not obvious that anaphoric references are in fact permissible. It would be more appropriate to start the fictional discourse in (7) and (8) with use of the names ‘Brian’ and ‘Frey’ (or even better “Once upon a time there was a wizard/creature named Brian/Frey who...”). Similarly, it is more natural to use the names ‘Mary’ (or even better “this character”), ‘Hans’, and ‘Gretel’, rather than anaphoric pronouns, in the footnotes in (9) and (10).

We think, therefore, that the use of fictional names in (1) (during a storytelling) distinctively differs from the use of the fictional names in (2) – (4). When we closely examine the various kinds of mixed discourse, the following desideratum for a theory of fictional names emerges: the account of admissible co-predications and anaphora across different kinds of statements requires only a uniform analysis across parafictional and metafictional statements. So even though it might be thought that a uniform analysis of fictional names across all forms of discourse is desirable, the use of names in the pretense of fictional discourse seems to be quite different from the use of names in parafictional and metafictional discourse.

3. Object theory

Now that we have established the need for a uniform semantic treatment of fictional names across parafictional and metafictional statements (and hence the need to solve the problem of the wrong kind of object), let’s turn to a theory that attempts to give such an analysis: object theory.

3.1. Encoding and exemplifying

Object theory⁵ offers a solution to the ‘wrong kind of object’ problem by distinguishing two modes of predication, two kinds of object, and a

⁵ For details on object theory see Zalta (1983; 1988a). See especially Zalta’s (1983) chapter IV, (1988a) chapter 7 and Zalta (2000; 1987 [2003]) for the treatment of fiction.

primitive property of *being concrete* ($E!$). The exemplification mode of predication is the one used to read ordinary predicate calculus statements of the form Fx , Rxy , etc. But encoding is a form of predication used to characterize the way in which ‘abstract’ objects have the properties that define them. Using this distinction, the theory defines: x exemplifies being an *ordinary* object ($O!x$) just in case x could have exemplified being concrete ($\diamond E!x$). By contrast, x exemplifies being an *abstract* object ($A!x$) just in case x couldn’t have exemplified being concrete ($\neg\diamond E!x$). For example, numbers and sets are not the kind of thing that could be concrete, and so they are considered abstract. If an ordinary object like a particular table (t) exemplifies being round (R), it has the property of roundness in the standard sense. So natural language claims about ordinary objects can be represented using standard predicate logic notation:

- (11) This particular table is round.
 1. Rt

In contrast, by encoding a property, an abstract object ‘has’ this property as one of its constitutive characteristics, i.e., the properties that are encoded by some abstract object define this abstract object (and allow us to individuate between abstract objects). For instance, since the property of having no members is, in set theory, definitive of the empty set (\emptyset), object theory treats \emptyset as an object that encodes the property of having no members (M). So a simple predication to the effect that the null set has no members has to be represented as an encoding statement, in which the argument term is written to the left of the predicate:

- (12) The empty set has no members.
 2. $\emptyset M$

Ordinary objects do not encode properties but abstract objects do exemplify properties. For instance, the empty set exemplifies being widely discussed (W), i.e., it has this property but the property is not constitutive of its essence:

- (13) The empty set is widely discussed.
 3. $W\emptyset$

3.2. Fiction

On the view presented here, discourse about fiction involves two types of abstract objects: *stories* and *fictional characters*. A story s (e.g., *The Lord of the Rings*) is an abstract object that encodes the content of a narrative; it encodes *vacuous* or *propositional* properties of the form *being such that p is true* ($[\lambda x p]$), where p is a proposition that satisfies true natural language statements of the form “In/According to story s , p ”.⁶ A fictional character is an abstract object that is *native* to a story (e.g., Frodo is native to *The Lord of the Rings* but Napoleon is not native to *War and Peace*).

Contrary to analyses given by authors such as Recanati, Currie and Zucchi, object theory rigidly distinguishes implicit and explicit parafictional statements. ‘Implicit’ parafictional statements have a reading on which they are simple predications about what properties a certain abstract object encodes. This is possible given object theory’s realist approach to fictional characters: since they exist as abstract objects, we can talk about them as we do about ordinary objects (i.e., without a story operator or some type of pretense). So ignoring tense, one can read (2) as an encoding statement about Frodo (f) and being born in the Shire (S):⁷

- (2) Frodo was born in the Shire.
4. fS

Explicit parafictional statements on the other hand are analyzed by treating the prefix “In/According to story s ” as an operator. This operator applies to (complex) exemplification statements that make up the content of the

⁶ The logic of λ -expressions implies that all objects *exemplify* the same propositional properties, namely the ones derived from true propositions. For instance, take the proposition that penguins can’t fly (q). Then everything exemplifies *being such that q* , i.e., $\forall y([\lambda x q]y)$. However, only abstract objects *encode* propositional properties (see Zalta 1988a, 61).

⁷ Strictly speaking, fictional names and properties should be indexed to the fiction in which they originate (see Zalta 2017). So in what follows, we should, strictly speaking, use the notation f_l and S_l , where l is the story *The Lord of the Rings*. For the purpose of this paper, we omit the index for simplicity.

story. For instance (3) expresses that *The Lord of the Rings* (l) encodes the property of being such that Frodo exemplifies being born in the Shire:⁸

- (3) In/According to *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo was born in the Shire.
 5. $l[\lambda x Sf]$

The axioms and definitions of object theory imply that if x is a character native to a story s , then x encodes a property F if and only if x exemplifies F in s (1983, 94):

$$\forall x \forall s (Native(x, s) \rightarrow \forall F (xF \equiv s[\lambda y Fx]))$$

Thus, one can derive an equivalence between the readings of implicit and explicit parafictional statements about native fictional characters. The representations of (2) and (3) imply one another given that Frodo is native to *The Lord of the Rings*.

By contrast, metafictional statements are statements about what properties fictional characters *exemplify*. For instance, (4) expresses that Frodo exemplifies the property of being invented (I) by Tolkien (t):

- (4) Frodo was invented by Tolkien.
 6. $[\lambda y Ity]f$

With this basic analysis of parafictional and metafictional statements in object theory, we turn to fictional statements (e.g., (1)). These are part of a storytelling practice that is needed in order to secure a reference for names of fictional objects. Zalta (1987 [2003], 2000) suggested that the practice of storytelling constitutes an extended naming baptism of the fictional characters in the story. As such, the use of the names in a story is like an extended definition and reference doesn't take place until a storytelling has been completed.⁹ It is consistent with this idea to suggest that

⁸ Later in this paper, we'll note that the story operator creates a hyperintensional context and that this creates a *de re/de dicto* ambiguity. The following formal representation expresses the *de re* reading, and later we'll offer a second formal representation of (3) that expresses the *de dicto* reading. This applies to other explicit parafictional statements as well.

⁹ We admit that one can take a different view about the reference of names during a storytelling. Others might suggest that Tolkien is referring to a series of abstract

the use of names during the practice of storytelling involves pretend-reference.¹⁰ This pretend-reference in the practice of storytelling is needed to achieve real reference in parafictional and metafictional statements. For example, the reference of the name ‘Frodo’ is determined by Tolkien’s act of writing *The Lord of the Rings* saga; once the storytelling is complete, object theory yields a unique object for the name ‘Frodo’ to denote, namely, the abstract object that encodes exactly the properties F such that in the story, Frodo exemplifies F . In effect, object theory takes parafictional data of this latter form to determine the denotation of the name. The idea that reference to fictional characters supervenes on the practice of storytelling can also be found in Kripke (2013), Schiffer (2003) and Searle (1975) (this view stands in contrast to Hunter 1981). Hence object theory unifies the semantic treatment of fictional names across parafictional and metafictional statements, but treats fictional discourse as having a special status. This complies with the desideratum formulated at the end of section 2.

Prima facie, object theory’s treatment of fictional names straightforwardly solves the problem of the wrong kind of object, once it is recognized that the problem doesn’t arise for fictional statements like (1), which may involve pretend reference. But abstract objects are the right kind of objects for analyzing implicit parafictional and metafictional statements: they can *encode* properties like being born in the Shire and *exemplify* being invented by someone. And names in explicit parafictional statements involve reference to abstract objects as well, though under the scope of a story operator.

objects as the story grows. Still others might suggest that even though there is no reference during the storytelling, the Fregean sense of the name is in play as the story is being told or written. For our purposes in this paper, the exact analysis of the denotation of a name, if any, during a storytelling will not be crucial to our reply to the wrong kind of object problem for parafictional and metafictional statements.

¹⁰ We note that this is consistent with the views of Currie and Zucchi, since the internal/external divide distinguishes fictional statements from (implicit and explicit) parafictional and metafictional statements.

4. Does the problem return?

4.1. Is Tolkien's *Ring* trilogy about abstract objects?

Recently, Klauk (2014) has suggested that the ‘wrong kind of object’ problem threatens to reappear for object theory when we consider the analysis of explicit parafictional statements. He writes:

["In *Casablanca*, Rick Blaine is cynical"] would not mean anymore that an abstract object is cynical, but that, according to some movie, an abstract object is cynical. However, this is not persuasive. One way to see this is by remembering that recipients are typically prescribed to imagine whatever is the case according to a fiction. But viewers of *Casablanca* are not prescribed to imagine an abstract object that has a property (being cynical) that it actually cannot have. (Klauk 2014, 241)

In the first sentence of this passage, Klauk argues that the inference from “In *Casablanca*, Rick Blaine is cynical” to “In *Casablanca*, an abstract object is cynical” is valid in object theory. Presumably, he would also say that the inference from (3) to “In *The Lord of the Rings*, an abstract object was born in the Shire” is also validated by object theory. In the next few subsections, we shall formalize the inference and then show that these inferences are in fact not valid in object theory.

Note that in the next part of this passage Klauk then argues why such inferences should not be accepted. Indeed, we *agree* with him that if these inferences were valid, that would count against the object-theoretic analysis – object theory would in fact be subject to the ‘wrong kind of object’ problem. *Casablanca* does not mandate that we imagine:

- Rick Blaine is an abstract object and is cynical.
- Some abstract object is cynical.

and *The Lord of the Rings* does not prescribe that we imagine:

- Frodo is an abstract object and was born in the Shire.
- Some abstract object was born in the Shire.

That is, we agree that the following are in fact false:

- In *Casablanca*, Rick Blaine is an abstract object and is cynical.
- In *Casablanca*, some abstract object is cynical.
- In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo is an abstract object and was born in the Shire.
- In *The Lord of the Rings*, some abstract object was born in the Shire.

So, if object theory were to imply those claims, it would allow us to derive falsehoods from the truths that “In *Casablanca*, Rick Blaine is cynical” and (3).

We also agree with Klauk when he says, in a later passage (2014, p. 242), “Although we can make-believe almost anything, to make-believe category mistakes is special and remarkable.” He goes on to describe cases where this would be an acceptable result, given the unusual nature of the story in question (e.g., because the story is about strange abstract objects). But he concludes, in this passage, that the above cases about *Casablanca* and *The Lord of the Rings* are not cases of unusual stories. These are standard cases of fictions in which the story makes it clear that it is talking about concrete objects. Here again, we accept this conclusion.

Thus, Klauk’s argument against object theory turns on whether the theory endorses the invalid inferences outlined above. We therefore need to investigate the inferences that can be drawn in object theory between explicit parafictional statements, since these are the crux of his argument. We plan to show that from the data, one can only infer that “In *Casablanca*, a flesh and blood creature is cynical,” and “In *The Lord of the Rings*, a flesh and blood creature was born in the Shire.” We’ll focus primarily on the example from *The Lord of the Rings*, since what we say about it applies to the example from *Casablanca*.

4.2. Three issues revealed by formalisation

To see the concern more clearly (and eventually see where Klauk’s argument breaks down) it will be useful to represent the problematic claims formally in object theory and then check to see whether the undesirable consequences can be derived from its axioms and definitions. But we start with a principle of object theory that will play an important role in what follows, namely the principle that allows one to identify native fictional characters as abstract objects. Given that Frodo is native to *The Lord of*

the Rings, object theory implies (1983, 93): Frodo is the abstract object that encodes exactly those properties that, according to *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo exemplifies, i.e.,

$$7. \quad f = \iota x(A!x \wedge \forall F(xF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff]))$$

Henceforth when we discuss the technical description on the right side of this identity in our text, we abbreviate it as $\mathbf{a}_{\text{Frodo}}$.

Now datum sentence (3), i.e., “According to *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo was born in the Shire”, was represented in section 3 as 5:

$$5. \quad l[\lambda w Sf]$$

It is important to note here that, although object theory allows for failures of substitutions of co-referring expressions in natural language (we’ll discuss this below), its formal language is fully *denotational* (or ‘extensional’); it preserves the principle of substitution of identicals without exception in its formalism, i.e., substitution of co-referring terms preserves truth in *every* context. Hence we can substitute the description $\mathbf{a}_{\text{Frodo}}$ in 7 for the name f in 5 to obtain the following:¹¹

$$8. \quad l[\lambda w S\iota x(A!x \wedge \forall F(xF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff]))]$$

At this point, 8 has been validly derived. But now three issues about 8 arise.

First, 8 appears to attribute inappropriate content to *The Lord of the Rings* (namely, that $\mathbf{a}_{\text{Frodo}}$ was born in the Shire). When we *read* 8 in natural language, it appears to say something false.

Second, if we can substitute identicals within the encoding claims of object theory, then the following argument becomes valid:

¹¹ Those familiar with object theory will remember that, as it is currently formulated, a λ -expression of the form $[\lambda x \varphi]$ is well formed only if φ contains no encoding subformulas. So it might be thought that 8 is not well-formed given the encoding formula in the description $\iota x(A!x \wedge \forall F(xF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff]))$. However, 8 is well formed, for the definition of subformula implies that xF is not a subformula of the term $\iota x(A!x \wedge \forall F(xF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff]))$. So xF is not a subformula of the formula $S\iota x(A!x \wedge \forall F(xF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff]))$. The only expressions that have subformulas are complex formulas; the subformulas of the matrix of a complex term do not become subformulas of any formula which contains the term.

- (3) In/According to *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo was born in the Shire.
- (14) Frodo is the character portrayed by Elijah Wood.
- (15) In/According to *The Lord of the Rings*, the character portrayed by Elijah Wood was born in the Shire.

Thus, from two true premises, we seem to be able to derive a false conclusion.

The third issue about 8 is that, when combined with the theory of definite descriptions, it appears to imply that *The Lord of the Rings* asserts something explicitly about an abstract object. Object theory uses a version of Russell’s theory of descriptions (1905), for it adopts the principle *Descriptions* (1988a, 90). This tells us that a formula of the form ‘the Q exemplifies (or encodes) property P ’ is equivalent to ‘there is a unique y that exemplifies Q and there is a y that exemplifies Q and that also exemplifies (encodes) P ’, i.e.,

9. (a) $P!x (Qx) \equiv \exists!y Qy \wedge \exists y(Qy \wedge Py)$
 (b) $ix(Qx)P \equiv \exists!y Qy \wedge \exists y(Qy \wedge yP)$

This principle applies to the formula *embedded* in 8:

10. $S!x(A!x \wedge \forall F(xF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff])) \equiv$
 $\exists!y(A!y \wedge \forall F(yF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff])) \wedge$
 $\exists y(A!y \wedge \forall F(yF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff]) \wedge Sy)$

If we could then substitute the equivalent formulas in 8 we would obtain the following:

11. $l[\lambda w \exists!y(A!y \wedge \forall F(yF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff])) \wedge$
 $\exists y(A!y \wedge \forall F(yF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff]) \wedge Sy)]$

Let φ be the formula $A!y \wedge \forall F(yF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff])$. Then 11 says that *The Lord of the Rings* encodes that there is a unique abstract object y such that φ and that there is an abstract object y such that both φ and y exemplifies *being born in the Shire*. Thus 11 explicitly mentions abstract objects and says that one exemplifies being born in the Shire. We agree that even though both 8 and 10 are derivable in object theory, the ‘wrong kind of object’ problem would return if these two claims implied 11. But, in fact, they do not, as the following analysis will show.

In what follows, we address all three of the foregoing problems. Our investigations will address the first problem by showing why 8 should not be read in natural language and so does not assert anything seriously problematic about the content of *The Lord of the Rings*. We address the second problem by appealing to a *de re/de dicto* ambiguity and showing how object theory offers a reading on which (3) and (14) do not imply (15). We address the third problem by showing that 8 does not imply anything that suggests it is part of the fictional discourse of *The Lord of the Rings* that there is an abstract object that exemplifies being born in the Shire.

5. The realist reply

5.1. Hyperintensionality

For reasons of simplicity, we start with the third problem. To see that 8 and 10 do not imply 11, one only has to observe that substitution of necessarily equivalent properties is not generally valid in object theory. λ -expressions create *hyperintensional* contexts (i.e., necessarily equivalents *cannot* be substituted within them *salva veritate*). A context can be both extensional (i.e., allow for substitution of identicals) and hyperintensional because necessary equivalence does not imply identity in object theory. In particular, $\Box(p \equiv q)$ does not imply $p=q$ and $\Box \forall x(Fx \equiv Gx)$ does not imply $F=G$ (cf. Myhill 1963).

To see the guiding intuition here, consider the property *being a barber that shaves all and only those who don't shave themselves* ($[\lambda x Bx \wedge \forall y(Sxy \equiv \neg Syy)]$). Intuitively this is distinct from the property *being a brown and nonbrown dog* ($[\lambda x Dx \wedge Bx \wedge \neg Bx]$) even though both properties are necessarily equivalent (i.e., in every possible world, nothing exemplifies them). Property identity in object theory is defined in terms of encoding: $F=G \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \Box \forall x(xF \equiv xG)$. In other words, properties are identical whenever they are necessarily encoded by the same objects. Intuitively, we can tell a story about a brown and non-brown dog without it being a story about a barber who shaves all and only those who don't shave themselves. Given that these two properties are distinct, they can't be substituted for one

another in every context, though we may be able to infer that anything exemplifying the one exemplifies the other.

To take another example, the formulas $\neg Px$ and $\neg Px \wedge (q \vee \neg q)$ are necessarily equivalent. From the fact that an object a exemplifies $[\lambda x \neg Px]$ and the fact that this property is necessarily equivalent to $[\lambda x \neg Px \wedge (q \vee \neg q)]$ one cannot substitute necessarily equivalents to infer that a exemplifies $[\lambda x \neg Px \wedge (q \vee \neg q)]$.¹²

This is all we need to see that 8 and 10 do not imply 11. Suppose for the sake of argument that 10 is necessarily true, and that the properties involved in 8 and 11 are necessarily equivalent.¹³ This would not justify the inference from 8 and 10 to 11 – the λ -expressions create hyperintensional contexts and one cannot substitute necessarily equivalent formulas within those expressions. We can express this more intuitively by again using φ to represent $A!y \wedge \forall F(yF \equiv I[\lambda z Ff])$, for then we can say that being such that $\mathbf{a}_{\text{Frodo}}$ was born in the Shire is not the same property as: being such that there is a unique abstract object y such that φ and there is an abstract object y such that both φ and y exemplifies being born in the Shire.¹⁴ The inference is simply invalid in object theory.

¹² In this case, you can derive such a conclusion by λ -conversion, but this won't work in all contexts. In this particular case, $[\lambda x \neg Px]a$ implies, by λ -Conversion, that $\neg Pa$. And this is necessarily equivalent to $\neg Pa \wedge (q \vee \neg q)$. So by reverse λ -Conversion, it follows that $[\lambda x \neg Px \wedge (q \vee \neg q)]a$. So in this case, it looks like we have substituted necessarily equivalents and preserved truth. But this fails for belief contexts, for example. From the fact that someone believes that an object a exemplifies $[\lambda x \neg Px]$, it doesn't follow that that person believes a exemplifies $[\lambda x \neg Px \wedge (q \vee \neg q)]$. Similarly, from the fact that someone believes that an object a exemplifies $[\lambda x Bx \wedge \forall y(Sxy \equiv \neg Syy)]$ it does not follow that this person believes that a exemplifies $[\lambda x Dx \wedge Bx \wedge \neg Bx]$.

¹³ In fact, in object theory, the properties involved are not necessarily equivalent because 10 is not a necessary truth. Definite descriptions in object theory are rigid; $\iota x\varphi$ denotes, in every world, the object that uniquely satisfies φ in the actual world, if there is one. So the Russellian analysis of descriptions is not a necessary truth; it is a classic example of a logical truth that is not necessary. See Zalta (1988b).

¹⁴ There is in fact another reason why we can't derive 11. That is because it isn't even well-formed! Notice that the λ -expression in 11 begins $[\lambda w \exists!y(A!y \dots)]$. The uniqueness quantifier $\exists!y$ is defined in terms of identity formulas (i.e., $\exists!xPx \equiv \exists x(Px$

Thus, 8 doesn't imply that, in the *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo is an abstract object born in the Shire, or that some abstract object was born in the Shire. That is, object theory does not imply that it is part of the content of *The Lord of the Rings* that there is an abstract object that exemplifies being born in the Shire. So by addressing the third issue raised above, we have the beginnings of a reply to Klauk's claim that the 'wrong kind of object' problem has returned.

There is an analogous, but innocuous, argument involving descriptions and the object-theoretic translations of *implicit* parafictional statements. As noted before in section 3, object theory asserts that if a character is native to some story s , implicit and explicit parafictional statements about this character's properties in s necessarily follow from one another. Recall sentence (2), i.e., "Frodo was born in the Shire". We can represent (2) as 12:

$$12. \quad fS$$

Since Frodo is native to *The Lord of the Rings*, 12 follows from 5. From 7 and 12 we can infer 13 by substituting identicals:

$$13. \quad \iota x(A!x \wedge \forall F(xF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff]))S$$

Applying the principle *Descriptions* 9b to 13 gives us the following equivalence:

$$14. \quad \begin{aligned} \iota x(A!x \wedge \forall F(xF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff]))S \equiv \\ \exists! y(A!y \wedge \forall F(yF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff])) \wedge \\ \exists y(A!y \wedge \forall F(yF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff]) \wedge yS) \end{aligned}$$

This allows us to derive the following:

$$15. \quad \begin{aligned} \exists! y(A!y \wedge \forall F(yF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff])) \wedge \\ \exists y(A!y \wedge \forall F(yF \equiv l[\lambda z Ff]) \wedge yS) \end{aligned}$$

$\wedge \forall y(Py \rightarrow (y = x))$) and those in turn are defined in terms of encoding formulas (i.e., $x = y \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} (O!x \wedge O!y \wedge \Box \forall F(Fx \equiv Fy)) \vee (A!x \wedge A!y \wedge \Box \forall F(xF \equiv yF))$); see Zalta (1988a, p.21). So this λ -expression, when you unpack the defined notation, is not well-formed because it contains encoding subformulas. One can, in object theory, build λ -expressions with weaker notions of identity, such as identity among ordinary objects ($=_E$) and identity among the characters of *The Lord of the Rings* ($=_i$). But neither of those play a role in the uniqueness statements in 11.

15, however, is not problematic. It merely implies that there is a unique abstract object ($\mathbf{a}_{\text{Frodo}}$) that encodes being born in the Shire. Abstract objects are precisely the right kind of objects to encode such properties.

5.2. Reference to abstracta in parafictional discourse

As noted in section 4, the first problem with 8 is that it seems to entail that someone engaged in a discussion of the content of *The Lord of the Rings*, would be licensed to say that in *The Lord of the Rings*, $\mathbf{a}_{\text{Frodo}}$ was born in the Shire. In fact, object theory does not entail this since 8, even though it is a theoretical consequence of the theory, is not expressible in the language of the parafictional data. It is improper to read 8 back into natural language because this would amount to the following unabbreviated sentence being part of natural language:

- (16) In *The Lord of the Rings*, the abstract object that encodes exactly those properties that Frodo exemplifies according to *The Lord of the Rings*, was born in the Shire.

(16) includes the technical terms ‘encoding’ and ‘exemplifying’. These notions are part of the underlying intensional logic of object theory that was designed to disambiguate natural language and, as such, distinguish things that natural language conflates (e.g., the two modes of predication). Hence these technical notions cannot simply be ‘read back’ into natural language. Although (16) could be used by an abstract object theorist engaged in a technical discussion about the abstract objects Frodo and *The Lord of the Rings*, (16) is not part of the natural language data.

At this point, Klauk might express the following concern: even if (16) is not part of natural language, (3) definitely is. Object theory still implies that the name ‘Frodo’ in the seemingly unproblematic (3) refers to $\mathbf{a}_{\text{Frodo}}$. Since we are not prompted to imagine anything about abstract objects, explicit parafictional statements should also not make reference to them.

However, this worry is unfounded. It is not problematic for fictional names in parafictional statements to refer to abstract objects. As was discussed in section 3, the internal/external distinction cuts across (explicit and implicit) parafictional discourse and fictional discourse. So, even though it is true that explicit parafictional statements track or ‘echo’ the storytelling

practice of fictional discourse – and in this sense are statements that report on what is true in some fiction – parafictional statements like (3) are themselves *non-fictional* statements that involve reference to abstract objects. In parafictional statements, we are no longer pretending to refer. Hence parafictional statements prompt *beliefs* (about abstract objects) whereas fictional discourse (which may involve pretense) prompts *imagination* (and may involve pretend-reference to concrete individuals). The fact that parafictional statements refer to abstract objects does not entail that we are prompted or mandated to imagine anything explicitly about abstract objects.

5.3. *A de re/de dicto ambiguity*

Finally, we consider the second problem raised at the end of section 4. The inference from 5 and 7 to 8 shows one can substitute identicals within the encoding claims of object theory. This suggests that (15) follows from (3) and (14). The problem is that there seems to be a reading of these sentences on which the inference is not valid.

Although the formal language of object theory is fully denotational, it has a logic that explains failures of substitutions of co-referring expressions in natural language. The key is to note that the story operator creates a hyperintensional context like those in propositional attitude reports. So to understand how object theory undermines this second problem, we need to review briefly the treatment of such reports in object theory.

Consider a classical example of a failure of substitution, namely, the following inference in natural language:

- (17) John believes that Bill is happy.
- (18) Bill is the mayor of the town.
- (19) John believes that the mayor of the town is happy.

To explain the apparent failure of substitution, object theory distinguishes between a valid *de re* reading of the argument from the invalid *de dicto* reading. On the valid *de re* reading of the inference, all of the individual terms in the argument are analyzed as having their ordinary denotations. If a term is contributing its ordinary denotation to the reading, then substitution of identicals is valid. Specifically, since the name ‘Bill’ and the description ‘the mayor of the town’ only contribute their denotations to the

truth conditions of the *de re* reading of the belief statement, substitution is allowed. In object theory this *de re* reading is represented as follows, where B represents the belief relation between an individual and a proposition:

16. $B(j, Hb)$
17. $b = \iota xMx$
18. $B(j, H\iota xMx)$

Here 16 and 17 imply 18 because substitution of identicals is licensed in every context. Thus, 16 – 18 give us a reading of (17) – (19) on which the latter constitute a valid inference.

By contrast, on a *de dicto* reading of the inference from (17) and (18) to (19), the individual terms in the argument are analyzed as contributing their *Fregean senses* to the truth conditions of the report. This explains why substitution of identicals in natural language does not hold: the sense of ‘Bill’ and the sense of ‘the mayor of the town’ are not identical. On a Fregean analysis, the identity statement “Bill is the mayor of the town” is true because the terms flanking the identity sign have the same denotation, and it is informative because those terms have different senses. Indeed, on a *de dicto* reading, we may, for simplicity, suppose that all of the terms in the embedded belief report contribute their senses to the truth conditions, including the predicates. Now to represent the sense of a natural language term in object theory, one *underlines* the formal symbol representing that term. So the *de dicto* reading of (17) – (19) is:

19. $B(j, \underline{H} \underline{b})$
17. $b = \iota xMx$
20. $B(j, \underline{H} \underline{\iota xMx})$

In other words, from the fact that the identity in 17 holds, we cannot substitute the definite description for the name in a context where the name is not contributing its denotation but only its sense (i.e., 17 does not imply $\underline{b} = \underline{\iota xMx}$).

This analysis could be adapted to the story operator if the latter creates a hyperintensional context. The data suggests that it does. For clearly we are addressing the question of why there is a reading of (3) and (14) on which (15) does *not* follow. Thus, there seems to be a sense of ‘assertion’ for which “In/According to *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo was born in the

Shire” can be read as “*The Lord of the Rings* asserts that Frodo was born in the Shire”. This sense of assertion creates a context similar to propositional attitude reports. So story operators create hyperintensional contexts. The object-theoretic analysis, on which stories encode propositional properties, preserves the hyperintensionality of the data. By analyzing (3) as $l[\lambda x Sf]$, the story operator becomes analyzed as an operator that represents what propositions are asserted in the story.

Since explicit parafictional statements are analogous to propositional attitude reports, the ambiguity between a *de re* and a *de dicto* reading of these statements can be resolved. An explicit parafictional statement such as (3) can be read (a) *de re*, for which substitution of identicals is valid, or (b) *de dicto*, for which substitution of identicals is not valid. In the *de dicto* reading, what *The Lord of the Rings* asserts is sensitive to the senses of ‘Frodo’ and ‘being born in the Shire’. Thus, the argument from (3) and (14) to (15) is valid on a *de re* reading and not on a *de dicto* reading. We can derive (15) when (3) is read *de re*. But this doesn’t follow on the *de dicto* reading of (3). The valid *de re* argument is represented as follows:

5. $l[\lambda x Sf]$
21. $f = \iota x Pex$
22. $l[\lambda x S \iota x Pex]$

The invalid *de dicto* argument is represented as follows:

23. $l[\lambda x \underline{S} \underline{f}]$
21. $f = \iota x Pex$
24. $l[\lambda x \underline{S} \underline{\iota x Pex}]$

Thus, the problem is resolved in object theory by the fact that (3) and (15) are subject to a *de re/de dicto* ambiguity that is disambiguated by the two formal representations, namely, 5 and 23 for (3), and 22 and 24 for (15).¹⁵

¹⁵ For most purposes, the *de re* reading of (3) and (15) suffice. The *de re* reading usually captures the normal understanding of these sentences, just as for most purposes, the *de re* reading of belief statements suffices. But in contexts where substitution of identicals is relevant, the *de dicto* readings are necessary.

6. Story entailment

At this point someone might object that it is incorrect to suggest that the story operator creates a hyperintensional environment. After all, it seems like we *can* sometimes substitute (necessarily) equivalent formulas *salva veritate* in the context of story operators. For instance, in *The Lord of the Rings* we encounter the following statement (after one of its characters, Bilbo, mysteriously vanished into thin air at his own party):

(20) Frodo was the only one present who had said nothing.

Hence it is parafictional data that:¹⁶

(21) In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo is the only one that was present (at Bilbo’s party) who had said nothing (when Bilbo disappeared).

The *de re* reading of this is:¹⁷

25. $l[\lambda w f = \iota x(l[\lambda w (Px \wedge \neg Sx)])]$

Independently, given the theory of descriptions, the following is equivalent to (20):

¹⁶ Note that the definite description ‘the one that was present (at Bilbo’s party) who had said nothing (when Bilbo disappeared)’ denotes nothing. Hence, in what follows, when we represent the description formally, we interpret the description as ‘the one who, in *The Lord of the Rings*, was present and who said nothing’. Thus, in the formal representation, we include the story operator right after the description operator: $\iota x(l[\lambda w (Px \wedge \neg Sx)])$; see Zalta (1983, 126).

¹⁷ In the λ -expressions used in 25 and in the subsequent formal representations 27 and 28, the identity sign ‘=’ should, strictly speaking, either be read as the relation of *E*-identity ($=_E$) as defined in object theory or as the identity relation relative to *The Lord of the Rings* ($=_i$). As mentioned in footnote 14, ‘ $x = y$ ’ is defined in object theory and its definiens has encoding subformulas – one cannot form λ -expressions with encoding subformulas, as these can lead to paradox. But one can form λ -expressions with either $=_E$ or $=_i$, as these are not identity relations that relate every object whatsoever to itself. Instead $x =_E y$ holds just in case x and y are both ordinary objects and necessarily exemplify the same properties. And $x =_i y$ holds between x and y just in case x and y are characters of *The Lord of the Rings* and, according to the story, x and y are identical.

- (22) There is a unique thing that was present and said nothing, and something that was present and said nothing is identical to Frodo.

Formally, we can represent the equivalence of (20) and (22) as:

$$26. \quad f = \iota x(l[\lambda w (Px \wedge \neg Sx)]) \equiv \\ \exists! y(l[\lambda w (Px \wedge \neg Sx)]) \wedge \exists y(l[\lambda w (Px \wedge \neg Sx)] \wedge f = y)$$

It seems perfectly reasonable to infer from (21) and the equivalence of (20) and (22) that:

- (23) In *The Lord of the Rings*, there is a unique thing that was present and said nothing, and something that was present and said nothing is identical to Frodo.

even though this was never stated in this form in the story itself. The *de re* reading of this claim is:

$$27. \quad l[\lambda w \exists! y(l[\lambda w (Px \wedge \neg Sx)]) \wedge \exists y(l[\lambda w (Px \wedge \neg Sx)] \wedge f = y)]$$

The objection stated at the outset, then, is the concern that we cannot derive 27 from 25 in object theory because substitution of equivalents is not allowed within the story operator.

But, in fact, one can derive 27 from 25, but not by substituting the equivalent formulas in 26. Instead one applies another part of the object-theoretic analysis of fiction. Such *de re* inferences are valid in object theory because (20) *relevantly implies*, i.e., ‘story-entails’, (22); see Zalta (1988a, 124). If we use \Rightarrow_R to indicate relevant or story entailment, then this last fact can be represented as:

$$28. \quad f = \iota x(l[\lambda w (Px \wedge \neg Sx)]) \Rightarrow_R \\ \exists! y(l[\lambda w (Px \wedge \neg Sx)]) \wedge \exists y(l[\lambda w (Px \wedge \neg Sx)] \wedge f = y)$$

Object theory employs the principle that if p is true in story s and p story-entails q , then q is true in s , and this principle, given 28, is what validates the inference from 25 to 27.

What is story-entailed is determined by what an ordinary reader of the story would say the story implies, i.e., every proposition stated in a physical copy of the story (or uttered in a storytelling) plus all the *relevant*

consequences of those propositions.¹⁸ This is what the story ‘asserts’ – what is true in or part of the content of the fiction – and hence this determines the available parafictional information. So storytelling practices, or fictional discourse, should be construed more broadly than as consisting solely of sentences that have been written down by some author or uttered in a storytelling. Inferences made by readers while engaging with a fictional narrative (e.g., a reader’s inference that there was one person present at Bilbo’s party who did not say anything and it was Frodo) supplement the storytelling. Hence they may involve pretend reference (e.g., the reader’s inference may involve the same pretend reference to a flesh and blood hobbit as the fictional statement (1)).¹⁹ This analysis is consistent with the idea that, just as writing fiction may involve pretense on the part of the author (they may be pretending that what they write down is true fact), reading fiction also may involve pretense on the part of the reader (they may be pretending that what they are reading is a description of real events).

Parafictional statements track the storytelling practice in general; they are reports on what the story asserts, where ‘asserting’ is understood in a broad sense (cf. Maier 2019). Formulas expressing story-entailments such as 28 track a particular part of the storytelling practice; they are reports on the ‘story-entailment practice’, i.e., they track the inferences that ordinary readers make while engaging with fictional narratives. Assuming that someone who reads (20) would in fact conclude (22), they would be licensed to infer the parafictional data (23). And, as we saw earlier, the formal representations of this data preserve this inference: 25 and 28 imply 27.

It is for this reason that object theory preserves the inference from:

¹⁸ Unreliable narration complicates this picture since not all stated propositions should be taken at face value. We assume that an ‘ordinary’ reader takes into account this and other complicating factors when drawing inferences about what a fictional narrative implies. See also Friend (2017) who argues against the (common) analysis on which implicit fictional truths can be inferred from the statements given in the fictional narrative.

¹⁹ This means that sentences such as (2) that are not a verbatim part of the fictional narrative can be both implicit parafictional statements (when uttered in subsequent discourse) as well as fictional statements (when they result from inferences made while reading *The Lord of the Rings*).

- (3) In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo was born in the Shire.
 (24) In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo is a hobbit.
 (25) In *The Lord of the Rings*, hobbits are flesh and blood creatures.

to

- (26) In *The Lord of the Rings*, a flesh and blood object was born in the Shire.

given that the following three propositions:

- Frodo was born in the Shire.
 Frodo is a hobbit.
 Hobbits are flesh and blood creatures.

relevantly imply (i.e., story-entail):

Some flesh and blood creature was born in the Shire.

But the first three propositions do *not* relevantly entail propositions necessarily equivalent to the fourth, such as: some flesh and blood creature was born in the Shire and either the sun is shining or it is not. Object theory, therefore, does not imply that this last proposition is true in the story. The formal representations of (3), (24), (25), and (26) are analogous to the ones provided in the previous case and so we omit them here.²⁰ This discharges our promissory note in section 4.1, where we promised to show that one can derive “In *The Lord of the Rings*, a flesh and blood creature was born in the Shire” follows from the data.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, we have defended the object-theoretic approach to fictional names against Klauk’s charge that it is subject to the ‘wrong kind of object’ problem. In doing so, we’ve seen that it provides a uniform semantic

²⁰ By contrast, the key formal representations 8 and 11 are *not* the counterparts of parafictional data; they are simply theoretical facts about abstract objects that can be derived from the representations of the parafictional data.

treatment of fictional names across parafictional and metafictional statements. In our defense of object theory, we’ve developed three main points. First, although 8 *can* be derived in object theory, it is not problematic; it doesn’t attribute inappropriate content to *The Lord of the Rings*. Nor does reference to abstract objects in parafictional statements require us to imagine anything about abstract objects. Second, story operators create hyperintensional contexts similar to those in propositional attitude reports. Hence on a *de dicto* reading of explicit parafictional statements we *cannot* derive statements such as (15). Third, we cannot derive the problematic 11 since necessarily equivalent propositions aren’t substitutable within the hyperintensional contexts created by story operators, though we can infer that propositions relevantly implied by propositions true in the story are also true in the story.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the audience at PhiLang 2019, Emar Maier and two anonymous *Organon F* reviewers for their valuable feedback.

Funding

This research is supported by the Dutch Research Council (NWO), Vidi Grant 276-80-004 (Emar Maier).

References

- Björman Pautz, Anna. 2008. “Fictional Coreference as a Problem for the Pretense theory.” *Philosophical Studies* 141 (2): 147–56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-007-9156-2>
- Bueno, Otávio, and Zalta, Edward N. 2017. “Object Theory and Modal Meinongism.” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 95: 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00048402.2016.1260609>
- Collins, John. 2019. “The Diversity of Fiction and Copredication: An Accommodation Problem.” *Erkenntnis*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10670-019-00150-1>
- Currie, Gregory. 1990. *The Nature of Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511897498>
- Evans, Gareth. 1982. *The Varieties of Reference*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Everett, Anthony. 2013. *The Nonexistent*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

- Friend, Stacie. 2017. “The Real Foundation of Fictional Worlds.” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 95 (1): 29–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00048402.2016.1149736>
- Hunter, Daniel. 1981. “Reference and Meinongian Objects.” *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 14: 23–36.
- Klauk, Tobias. 2014. “Zalta on Encoding Fictional Properties.” *Journal of Literary Theory* 8 (2): 234–56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/jlt-2014-0012>
- Kripke, Saul. 1973 [2013]. *Reference and Existence. The John Locke Lectures for 1973*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199928385.001.0001>
- Kripke, Saul. 2011. “Vacuous Names and Fictional Entities.” In *Philosophical Troubles*, 52–74. Oxford University Press, Oxford. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199730155.003.0003>
- Lamarque, Peter, and Olsen, Stein Haugom. 1994. *Truth, Fiction and Literature: A Philosophical Perspective*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198236818.001.0001>
- Lewis, David. 1978. “Truth in Fiction.” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1): 37–46.
- Maier, Emar. 2017. “Fictional Names in Psychologistic Semantics.” *Theoretical Linguistics* 43 (1-2): 1–42. <https://doi.org/10.1515/tl-2017-0001>
- Maier, Emar. 2019. “On the Exceptionality of Reported Speech.” *Linguistic Typology*, 23 (1): 197–205. <https://doi.org/10.1515/lingty-2019-0009>
- Myhill, John. 1963. “An Alternative to the Method of Extension and Intension.” In *The philosophy of Rudolf Carnap*, edited by Schilpp, Paul Arthur, 299–310. La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company.
- Recanati, François. 2018. “Fictional, Metafictional, Parafictional.” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 118 (1): 25–54. <https://doi.org/10.1093/arisoc/aoy001>
- Russell, Bertrand. 1905. “On Denoting.” *Mind* 14 (56): 479–93.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/XIV.4.479>
- Schiffer, Stephen. 2003. *The Things We Mean*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/0199257760.001.0001>
- Searle, John R. 1975. “The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse.” *New Literary History* 6 (2): 319–32.
- Van Inwagen, Peter 1977. “Creatures of Fiction.” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14: 299–308.
- Walton, Kendall L. 1990. *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Zalta, Edward N. 1983. *Abstract Objects: An Introduction to Axiomatic Metaphysics*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.
- Zalta, Edward N. 1987 [2003]. “Erzählung als Taufe des Helden: Wie man auf fiktionale Objekte Bezug nimmt.” *Zeitschrift für Semiotik* 9 (1–2): 85–95.

-
- English translation: “Referring to Fictional Characters.” Transl. by Arnold Günther. *Dialectica* 2 (2003): 243–54.
- Zalta, Edward N. 1988a. *Intensional logic and the metaphysics of intentionality*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Zalta, Edward N. 1988b. “Logical and Analytic Truths That Are Not Necessary.” *The Journal of Philosophy* 85 (2): 57–74.
- Zalta, Edward N. 2000. “The Road Between Pretense Theory and Abstract Object Theory.” In *Empty Names, Fiction, and the Puzzles of Non-Existence*, edited by Thomas Hofweber and Anthony Everett, 117–47. Stanford: CSLI Publications.
- Zucchi, Sandro. 2017. “Games of Make-Believe and Factual Information.” *Theoretical Linguistics* 43 (1–2): 95–101. <https://doi.org/10.1515/tl-2017-0007>

Frege's Equivalence Thesis and Reference Failure

Nathan Hawkins*

Received: 25 February 2020 / Accepted: 20 November 2020

Abstract: Frege claims that sentences of the form 'A' are equivalent to sentences of the form 'it is true that A' (The Equivalence Thesis). Frege also says that there are fictional names that fail to refer, and that sentences featuring fictional names fail to refer as a result. The thoughts such sentences express, Frege says, are also fictional, and neither true nor false. Michael Dummett argues that these claims are inconsistent. But his argument requires clarification, since there are two ways The Equivalence Thesis has been formulated, according as the thesis equates the senses or the referents of the relevant sentences. I have two aims in this paper. The first is to demonstrate that a sameness of sense thesis is inconsistent with Frege's other theses. The second is to argue that a sameness of reference thesis is consistent with them. Thus, all else being equal, Frege ought to endorse a sameness of reference, rather than a sameness of sense thesis.

Keywords: Dummett; equivalence; fiction; Frege; true; reference.

* Cambridge University

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3565-8999>

 Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge University Trinity St, Cambridge, United Kingdom, CB2 1TA.

 neh37@cam.ac.uk

0. Introduction

Frege claims that sentences of the form ‘*A*’ are equivalent to sentences of the form ‘it is true that *A*’. I shall call this claim ‘The Equivalence Thesis’.¹ Frege also says that there are names that fail to refer, and that sentences featuring these names fail to refer as a result. Names and sentences that do not refer he calls ‘fictional’, as many of his examples are drawn from fiction. Fictional sentences, Frege says, express fictional (or mock) thoughts, which are neither true nor false.

Michael Dummett argues that The Equivalence Thesis is inconsistent with what Frege says about fictional thoughts. But his argument requires clarification, since there are two ways The Equivalence Thesis has been formulated, based on whether the thesis equates the senses or the referents of the relevant sentences. Dummett formulates the thesis as an identity of reference. But a close reading demonstrates that Frege intends to put forward a sameness of sense thesis.

I have two aims in this paper. The first is to demonstrate that a sameness of sense thesis is indeed inconsistent with Frege’s theses on fictional sentences and thoughts. This shows that Frege was inconsistent in his claims. The second is to argue that a sameness of reference thesis is consistent with them. Thus, all else being equal, Frege ought to endorse a sameness of reference, rather than a sameness of sense thesis.

The paper is structured as follows: §1 presents Frege’s theses on fictional sentences and fictional thoughts. §2 presents two versions of The Equivalence Thesis. §3 argues that Frege’s claims about fictional sentences and thoughts are incompatible with the identity of sense version of The Equivalence Thesis. I further argue that there is no way to resolve the conflict. §4 introduces a non-standard analysis of ‘it is true that *A*’ proposed in the literature and used to defend Frege. I argue that this analysis is also incompatible with Frege’s thesis regarding fictional thoughts. §5 argues that the sameness of reference thesis is consistent with Frege views about fictional

¹ This is the name given to it by Dummett. The same claim is alternately known as ‘The Redundancy Thesis’, e.g. (Schantz 1998), and ‘The Transparency Thesis’, e.g. (Kalderon 1997).

sentences, and §6 argues the same regarding Frege's views about fictional thoughts. §7 briefly recaps and concludes.

1. Frege's theses on reference failure

Frege's theses on reference failure each emerge from his claim that there are names that do not refer. Such names appear in fiction. For example: 'Frodo' or 'Anna Karenina'. But he also realises that names that do not refer can appear outside of fiction too. For example: 'Vulcan' (Le Verrier's putative planet) or 'the greatest prime number'. Nevertheless, Frege calls all names that do not refer 'fictional', and I shall follow suit.

By the time Frege discusses fictional names, he has a two-level semantics: sense and reference. The reference of a name is, roughly, the object a person thinks about when hearing the name. The sense of a name is, roughly, the way in which a person thinks about the object referred to when hearing the name. If a name refers, it does so by way of its sense (CP, 158; PW, 124)². Since things can be thought about in multiple ways, multiple senses can be associated with the same reference. Frege gives a now-famous example. 'The Morning Star' and 'The Evening Star' have the same reference: Venus. But the senses of the two names differ, for they each express a different way of thinking about Venus.

Frege says fictional names obviously have a sense, otherwise they would be empty sounds and it would be wrong to call them names (CP, 162; PW, 124). Presumably, we think something upon hearing a fictional name. After all, a fictional name 'behaves as if it names' something (PW, 122). But it equally seems clear to Frege that there is no object that such names refer to (CP, 162-3). So fictional names have a sense, but they lack a reference. Frege's focus when speaking of reference failure is *names*. Names refer (if at all) to objects. But there are also *concept-words* (PW, 124). For example: 'is a horse' or 'is a planet'. Concept-words refer (if at all) to concepts; what we might now call a 'property'. Frege thinks there are concept-words that have a sense but fail to refer. A concept-word fails to refer if the concept it

² I will regularly be referring to Frege's works and use a shorthand notation for this purpose. The key for this shorthand can be found in the references section.

purports to refer to does not have sharp boundaries (PW, 122). A concept has sharp boundaries iff every object either falls or does not fall under it.³ Not all purported concepts have sharp boundaries. For example: the concept of being a heap (CN, 177). Concept-words that fail to refer I shall also call 'fictional'.

The distinction between sense and reference applies to declarative sentences as well. (Henceforth the qualification 'declarative' will be dropped.) The sense expressed by a sentence is of a special kind. It is a thought. A sentence expresses a thought that is composed of the senses of its elements. (I use the term 'element' to describe a unit into which a sentence may be analysed.) So the sense of a name or concept-word is part of any thought expressed by sentences in which they appear (CP, 390). For example: the thought expressed by 'Frodo is short' is composed of the sense of 'Frodo' and the sense of 'is short'.

Just as sentences express a special kind of sense, they refer to a special kind of object: a truth-value. There are just two truth-values: the True and the False. Frege thinks that, just as the thought a sentence expresses is determined by the senses of its elements, the truth-value a sentence refers to is determined by the references of its elements. For example: whether 'Venus is a planet' refers to the True or the False is determined by the referent of 'Venus' and the referent of 'is a planet'.

Frege further believes that if a name or concept-word fails to refer, sentences in which they are an element fail to refer also. So if a fictional name is an element in a sentence, the sentence expresses a thought, but does not refer. The sentence itself is fictional. The passage in which Frege most clearly puts this thesis forward is the following:

A sentence containing a non-referring proper name is neither true nor false; if it expresses a thought at all, then that thought belongs to fiction. In that case the sentence has no reference... If a sentence can be split up into parts, each of which has a reference, then the sentence also has a reference. (PW, 194; cf. CP, 162-69).

³ Exception: If the concept under consideration is a higher-level concept, then the matter of sharp boundaries concerns whether concepts one level lower fall under it (CP, 137-46).

This thesis features heavily in what follows and deserves a name. I call it ‘The Contagion Thesis’.⁴ Reference failure is contagious. A proper name or concept-word that fails to refer ‘infects’ all sentences in which it is an element, and they too fail to refer. Conversely, if all sentential elements refer, the sentence itself refers. I formulate this thesis using a logical schema, where ‘*A*’ (hereafter) is any sentence:

Contagion_R: ‘*A*’ refers iff every element of ‘*A*’ refers.

The passage also says that sentences that fail to refer express thoughts that ‘belong to fiction’ (cf. PW, 233). So there is also a form of contagion surrounding the concept of being fictional:

Contagion_F: ‘*A*’ is fictional iff some element of ‘*A*’ is fictional, and ‘*A*’ is fictional iff the thought expressed by ‘*A*’ is fictional.

Sentences, names, and concept-words either refer or are fictional. So *Contagion_R* and the first conjunct of *Contagion_F* differ only in terminology. A person might also extend the concept of referring to include thoughts iff they are expressed by sentences that refer. After all, Frege thinks that it is senses that determine the referent of a sentence (PW, 124-5). If they did so, and I shall, the second conjunct of *Contagion_F* would be a terminological variant of “‘*A*’ refers iff the thought that *A* refers’, which could then conjoin to *Contagion_R* to provide a terminological variant of *Contagion_F*. Because of this, I treat *Contagion_R* and *Contagion_F* as the same thesis, and label it ‘*Contagion*’.

Now, what distinguishes fictional thoughts from other thoughts is that they are neither true nor false. All other thoughts are either true or false *tertium non datur* (CP, 373; PW, 186, 194).

The claim that fictional thoughts are neither true nor false is bound up with the reference failure of sentences expressing them. For a thought is true iff the sentence expressing it refers to the True. And a thought is false iff the sentence expressing it refers to the False. (Just as I have extended the concept of ‘referring to the True’ or ‘referring to the False’ to thoughts expressed by sentences that refer to the True or the False, I will extend the

⁴ This name did not originate with me. It was suggested to me by Alex Oliver and is based on the description of the thesis in *Plural Logic* (Oliver & Smiley 2016, 86).

concept of being true or being false to sentences that express thoughts that are true or false, as does Frege (CP, 393 fn. 22; PW, 233.) So, if a sentence fails to refer, the thought it expresses is neither true nor false (PW, 194, 233). I call this thesis, 'The Gap Thesis':

Gap: If 'A' is fictional, then the thought expressed by 'A' is neither true nor false.

The final thing to say about Frege's views on fictional thoughts concerns judgement. In a judgement, a person acknowledges that a thought is true (CP, 355-6). A judgement that rejects a thought as false is, Frege says, really a judgement that the contradictory thought is true. The contradictory thought is that expressed by the negation of the expressing sentence (CP, 381-5; PW, 198). In the case of fictional thoughts, both the fictional thought and its contradictory are neither true nor false. For example, the thought expressed by 'Frodo is short' is fictional because 'Frodo' is a fictional name. This thought is neither true nor false. The same applies to the contradictory thought: that expressed by 'Frodo is not short'. Since neither a fictional thought nor its contradictory is true, fictional thoughts cannot *correctly* be judged (CP, 373). The qualification 'correctly' here is important. Frege does not think it is impossible to judge fictional thoughts. Only that anyone who does, mistakenly takes all elements of the sentence to refer (cf. CP, 162; PW, 2).⁵

Since fictional thoughts cannot correctly be judged, they ought not to be used as a means of scientific investigation. Fictional thoughts are neither true nor false. And science is only interested in judging truth and falsity. This does not mean science ought to have no interest in fictional thoughts. For Frege distinguishes between judging fictional thoughts and judgements about fictional thoughts:

'Scylla had six dragon gullets'. This proposition too is neither true nor false but fiction, since the proper name 'Scylla' designates nothing. Such propositions can be the object of a scientific

⁵ When engaged in Fregean exegesis, labelling incorrect judgements 'judgements' is controversial. See, for example, (Kremer 2000) and (Ricketts 1986). The issue is irrelevant to the argument I make in this paper.

examination, e.g., one concerned with mythology, but no scientific investigation can be carried out using them. (BLA, II 76).

Here Frege makes a distinction between a thought as *an object* of investigation and a thought as *a vehicle* of investigation. When a thought is an object of investigation, judgements are made about which concepts that thought falls under; concepts such as the concept of being believed to be so. When a thought is the vehicle of investigation, judgements are made about the referents of the senses that constitute the thought. Consider, for example, the thought expressed by ‘Cleopatra was beautiful’. This thought would be an object of investigation when judging whether historians believe that Cleopatra was beautiful. But it would be a vehicle of investigation when judging whether the object referred to by ‘Cleopatra’ fell under the concept referred to by ‘was beautiful’, i.e. when judging whether Cleopatra was beautiful. In the case of fictional thoughts, Frege says they ought to only be objects of investigation, not vehicles. So while it is not possible to correctly judge whether Vulcan orbits the Sun, it is possible to correctly judge whether Le Verrier believed that Vulcan orbits the Sun.

Judgements about fictional thoughts, then, are much the same as judgements about any object. Fictional thoughts are part of the furniture about which science makes judgements. To make an assertion about a thought, fictional or otherwise, the thought must be referred to and then predicated of. To refer to a thought, a person can use the word ‘that’. According to Frege, ‘that’ indicates an *indirect* context for the sentence that follows it. In indirect contexts, sentences refer to the thought they ordinarily—in *direct* contexts—express (CP, 159). So while ‘Frodo is short’ is a sentence that expresses a fictional thought but lacks reference, ‘that Frodo is short’ is a name that refers to the fictional thought expressed by ‘Frodo is short’ and has a sense which is a way of thinking about this thought (CP, 166). Fictional sentences, fictional names and fictional concept-words are also things about which judgements can be made, for they may each be referred to by using quotation marks (CP, 159).

Now, I will be making rather heavy use of indirect contexts in what follows. Using the ‘that’ idiom for these purposes becomes unwieldy when attempting more complicated analysis. For while quotation marks provide a convenient way to mark the scope of the context change by providing a

start and end point, the word 'that' does not clearly mark its scope. This is especially unhelpful when indirect contexts become nested, such as in the sentence: 'that that Frodo is short is fictional is true'. Because of this, I will use angled brackets as indirect context indicators that function in a similar way to quotation marks. For example, the angled brackets notation can be used to turn the previous example into the much clearer: '<<Frodo is short> is fictional> is true'. In this notation, '<Frodo is short>' can be read as 'that Frodo is short'.

I conclude this section by summarising the discussion about judgement above, making the role of context clear. 'Frodo is short' cannot be correctly asserted; the thought it expresses is fictional and cannot be correctly judged. But '<Frodo is short>' and "'Frodo is short'" are not fictional; they refer to a fictional thought and a fictional sentence respectively. Since these names refer, assertions can be made about their referents. Importantly, these assertions include instances of *Gap*, e.g. 'if "'Frodo is short'" is fictional, then <Frodo is short> is neither true nor false', and instances of *Contagion*, e.g. "'Frodo is short" refers iff every element of "Frodo is short" refers'.

2. The Equivalence Thesis

There is some confusion regarding the content of what I have called 'The Equivalence Thesis'. Frege states it in several places. One is:

The sentence 'I smell the scent of violets' has the same content as 'It is true that I smell the scent of violets'. (CP, 354; cf. CP, 164; PW, 129, 141, 194, 233-4, 251-2).

Frege's discussion here, as elsewhere, mentions a specific case. But the examples he uses vary. The claim is obviously meant to generalise.

In *Frege: Philosophy of Language*, Dummett (1981, 445) formulates the thesis, immediately prior to his argument that I will discuss, using a biconditional schema:

Equivalence_R: <A> is true iff A.

'Iff' is a material biconditional. A material biconditional is, for Frege, a sign for identity between truth-values, i.e. it is a sign for identity of reference.

Equivalence_R implies, for example, that the sentences ‘I smell the scent of violets’ and ‘it is true that I smell the scent of violets’ refer to the same truth-value. So *Equivalence_R* can also be rendered: $\langle A \rangle$ is true = A .

Equivalence_R is not the formulation Frege intends. Frege’s claim concerns the identity of the expressed thoughts, not the identity of their truth-values. That Frege is concerned with identity of sense, rather than reference, is made especially clear in another instance in which he describes the thesis:

Again in the two sentences ‘Fredrick the Great won the battle of Rossbach’ and ‘It is true that Fredrick the Great won the battle of Rossbach’, we have, as we said earlier, the same thought in a different verbal form. (PW, 141).

Now, Dummett is not ignorant of the fact Frege took his thesis to be about sameness of sense. In an earlier article *Truth*, where Dummett (1959) presents the same argument, he formulates Frege’s thesis as one concerning sense:

Equivalences: $\langle \langle A \rangle$ is true $\rangle = \langle A \rangle$.

The difference in formulation Dummett provides in these places is liable to confuse. With the likely result being that Dummett’s conclusion is thought (presumably by Dummett also) to hold against both formulations.

Adding to this potential for confusion is the fact that the formulations are believed to be closely related. For example, Crispin Wright (1998) describes *Equivalences* and *Equivalence_R* as ‘tantamount’ to each other (66, cf. 60). But they are not tantamount at all. Reference does not determine sense. Since identity of reference is distinct from identity of sense, a person could claim there is a general identity of reference between sentences of this form (accept *Equivalence_R*), but that in each case they express distinct thoughts (reject *Equivalences*). This is a point made by Wolfgang Kühne (2003, 35 fn. 8). Yet Kühne thinks the reverse implication holds: ‘if you accept an instance of [*Equivalences*] you are committed to endorsing the corresponding instance of [*Equivalence_R*]’ (Kühne 2003, 35). Presumably, he thinks that this follows from the fact that sense determines reference (PW, 124-5). But he is incorrect. Fictional sentences have a sense but no reference. And in almost all cases in which Frege discusses The Equivalence Thesis, he speaks of fictional contexts too (CP, 164; PW, 194, 234, 251). So

what is expressed by 'it is true that Frodo is short' is, for Frege, the same as what is expressed by 'Frodo is short'. If 'A' were 'Frodo is short' then the relevant instance of *Equivalences* would be true (presuming *Equivalences*), while the relevant instance of *Equivalence_R* would not refer, and so be neither true nor false. Thus, *Equivalences* and *Equivalence_R* are distinct theses, and must be kept separate. Neither is a strictly stronger or weaker version of the other.

3. The incompatibility of *equivalences* with *contagion* and *gap*

In this section I demonstrate the incompatibility of *Equivalences* with *Contagion* and *Gap*. The incompatibility is two-fold. There is incompatibility between *Equivalences* and *Contagion*, and there is incompatibility between *Equivalences* and *Gap*. The latter is the incompatibility described by Dummett, but it is the former that demonstrates the nature of the incompatibility more clearly. I discuss it first.

The incompatibility between *Equivalences* and *Contagion* can be shown as follows: Let '*X*' (hereafter) be any fictional sentence. Then '*X*' does not refer. Now consider the sentence '<*X*> is true'. '<*X*> is true' has two elements: '<*X*>' and 'is true'. It says that an object, <*X*>, falls under a concept, the concept of being true. Although '*X*' fails to refer when standing alone, in '<*X*> is true' the sentence '*X*' appears in an indirect context, and '<*X*>' refers to the fictional thought expressed by '*X*'. If all elements of '<*X*> is true' refer, the sentence refers (by *Contagion*). This means that '<*X*> is true' is not fictional, i.e. it expresses a thought that refers. In contrast, '*X*' is fictional, i.e. it expresses a fictional thought. Since the thought <*X*> is fictional while the thought <<*X*> is true> is not, they cannot be the same thought by the indiscernibility of identicals. Conclusion: *Contagion* and *Equivalences* are incompatible.

There is no way to rescue *Equivalences* given a surface form analysis of '<*X*> is true'. Since <*X*> is fictional, any attempt would require <<*X*> is true> to also be fictional. This means '<*X*> is true' would have to be, despite appearances, a fictional sentence. This leaves only two options.

First, it might be argued that, even though the elements in ' $\langle X \rangle$ is true' refer, the sentence fails to. This would require weakening the relevant part of *Contagion* from a biconditional to a conditional: ' A ' refers only if every element of ' A ' refers. Second, a person could argue that there is an element in ' $\langle X \rangle$ is true' that fails to refer. There are only two candidates: ' $\langle X \rangle$ ' and 'is true'. By hypothesis, ' $\langle X \rangle$ ' refers to a fictional thought. This means it would have to be 'is true' that fails to refer.

The first option can be dismissed. For if ' $\langle X \rangle$ is true' fails to refer, it cannot be correctly judged whether $\langle X \rangle$ falls under the concept of being true. So there is no fact of the matter whether this thought falls under the concept of being true (if there were, it could be correctly judged (BLA, I 8)). In that case, since $\langle X \rangle$ is an object, the concept of being true lacks sharp boundaries, and 'is true' fails to refer after all. The first option would then become the second option.

The second option can also be dismissed. If 'is true' did not refer, in cases where ' A ' is not a fictional sentence, ' A ' would refer, while ' $\langle A \rangle$ is true', since it contains 'is true' as an element, would not refer. Hence $\langle A \rangle$ would not be a fictional thought, while $\langle \langle A \rangle$ is true \rangle would be a fictional thought. Since these thoughts are distinct, *Equivalences* has false instances. Only this time it is non-fictional sentences that produce false instances, rather than fictional ones.

Although I have demonstrated that *Equivalences* is incompatible with *Contagion*, it is still worthwhile examining Dummett's argument for its incompatibility with *Gap*, especially since Dummett aims his argument at *Equivalence_R*. His argument is as follows:

Suppose that A is a sentence which expresses a thought which may, in certain circumstances, be neither true nor false. Then the sentence 'It is true that A ' cannot be equivalent to A : for, when the thought expressed by A is neither true nor false, say because A contains a name which has a sense but lacks a bearer, the thought expressed by 'It is true that A ' will be false, although, by hypothesis, that expressed by A is not false. (Dummett 1981, 445; cf. Dummett 1959, 145-6).

Dummett's conclusion, as it stands, says that $\langle X \rangle$ and $\langle \langle X \rangle$ is true \rangle cannot be identical due to the law of indiscernibility of identicals (one being

false but not the other). Thus *Equivalences* has false instances given *Gap*. This is clearer when the argument is formulated step by step with an example:

- 1: <Frodo is short> is not true and <Frodo is short> is not false. (*Gap* instance consequent.)
 - 2: <Frodo is short> is not true. (From 1.)
 - 3: <<Frodo is short> is true> is false. (From 2.)
 - 4: <Frodo is short> is not false. (From 1.)
- Conclusion: <Frodo is short> and <<Frodo is short> is true> are not identical. (From 4, 3, and the indiscernibility of identicals.)

The argument succeeds, then, against *Equivalences*. But at the start of this quotation, Dummett says, 'the sentence "It is true that *A*" cannot be equivalent to *A*', which, given that he formulates The Equivalence Thesis with *Equivalence_R*, suggests that an equivalence of reference thesis also has false instances. I return to Dummett's argument in §6 to see how it might be adapted to apply to *Equivalence_R* and show why any attempt to do so fails.

4. Rescue by alternative analysis?

In the previous section I have demonstrated the incompatibility of *Equivalences* with *Contagion* and *Gap*, given an analysis of '<*A*> is true' according to surface form. But several exegetes believe Frege thought the sentence should not be analysed this way for reasons independent of Dummett's argument. Paul Horwich (2010), for example, says that by endorsing *Equivalences* Frege implies that the logical form of '<*A*> is true' is 'not what it would seem to be: i.e. not "*X* is *F*"' (39). (See also (Burge 1986; Davidson 1969; Grover, Camp, & Belnap 1975) for other analyses of '<*A*> is true' that differ from surface-form.) Some exegetical justification for ascribing to Frege an alternative analysis comes from what he says about the deceptive nature of the grammar of the sentence '<*A*> is true':

If we say 'the thought is true' we seem to be ascribing truth to the thought as a property. If that were so, we should have a case

of subsumption. The thought as an object would be subsumed under the concept of the true. But *here we are misled by language*. We don't have the relation of an object to a property, but that of the sense of a sign to its referent. (PW: 194; cf. CP: 164, 354-5; my emphasis)

Although the other analyses on offer differ in detail, they all fall under the umbrella of what Künne (2003, 34-5) calls a 'truth-frame' analysis. The truth-frame is the words 'that... is true' or 'it is true that...'. Or in my notation: '<...> is true'. Frege's thesis, according to Künne and others like him, says that if a person replaces 'A' in 'that A is true' with a sentence, the thought expressed is identical to that expressed by the inserted sentence (Künne 2008, 14). We might think of it this way: rather than analysing 'that A is true' as a case in which 'that' indicates an indirect context for 'A' such that it refers to the thought it expresses in direct contexts, and then predicates 'is true' of this thought; a person instead takes the sentence 'A' and inserts it into the frame 'that... is true' to produce another sentence. The truth-frame cannot be further analysed into 'that' and 'is true'. It must be taken as a whole. A whole that has no effect on the sense of the sentence inserted into it (cf. PW, 251-2). Hence in '<A> is true', according to the truth-frame analysis, 'is true' is not a concept-word, and the 'that' in 'that A is true' does not indicate a change of context. The context for 'A' in '<A> is true' is direct rather than indirect. Under such an analysis, as Davidson (1969, 749) says, it is only a 'freak of grammar' that 'that A is true' consists of a complex singular term and a predicate.

My purpose in this paper is not to adjudicate between analyses of '<A> is true'. It is only to examine whether some version of The Equivalence Thesis is compatible with Frege's theses about fictional sentences and thoughts. If it is credible to think Frege took '<A> is true' to have a non-standard analysis, and if that non-standard analysis resolves the incompatibility, then, all else being equal, this would seem to be the most charitable way to interpret him. However, as I will show in this section, the incompatibility remains regardless of analysis.

Now, the truth-frame analysis *does* resolve the incompatibility of *Equivalences* with *Contagion*. For in the truth-frame analysis, the context of 'X' in '<X> is true' is direct, not indirect. So the elements of 'X' are also

elements of '<X> is true'. This means the incompatibility is avoided. For suppose 'X' were 'Frodo is short'. 'Frodo is short' fails to refer because one of its elements, 'Frodo', fails to refer. And this element is also (given the truth-frame analysis) an element of '<Frodo is short> is true'. So '<Frodo is short> is true', like 'Frodo is short', fails to refer by *Contagion*. Since the thoughts expressed by both sentences are fictional, they could be identical, and thus the pair of sentences does not necessarily constitute a false instance of *Equivalences*. This observation generalises to all instances where 'A' is fictional since all fictional sentences contain a fictional element (by *Contagion*).

As regards the incompatibility between *Equivalences* and *Gap*, Künne (2003, 37-42) argues that under the 'correct' truth-frame analysis, no incompatibility of the kind Dummett describes arises. Presumably Künne therefore thinks there is no incompatibility at all. But, given a truth-frame analysis, a new problem arises that Künne does not address. The problem is that *Equivalences*, given a truth-frame analysis, means *Gap* is unable to say anything true about fictional thoughts. So although *Equivalences* coupled with *Gap* does not lead to contradiction, it is incompatible with the intent of *Gap*. For, given a truth-frame analysis of '<A> is true', *Gap* is unable to assert anything about fictional thoughts, the reason for which Frege stated it.

This point is best demonstrated by example. Under the truth-frame analysis, '<Frodo is short> is true' is fictional. The reason it is fictional, so the analysis goes, is because the context of 'Frodo is short' in the sentence is direct, and so 'Frodo' is an element of the sentence. But then, 'Frodo' must also be an element of '<Frodo is short> is not true'. This sentence is simply the negation of the previous one, and negation does not affect context. So '<Frodo is short> is not true' is also a fictional sentence. Since '<Frodo is short> is not true' is an element of '<Frodo is short> is not true and not false', this sentence must also be fictional. In fact, nothing about the above relied on the particular example, so, given the truth-frame analysis, '<A> is not true and not false' is fictional if 'A' is. Now '<A> is not true and not false', for some 'A', is an element of all instances of *Gap*. So, under a truth-frame analysis, any instance of *Gap* in which 'A' is fictional will be fictional rather than true. This means *Gap* could never

correctly assert that a fictional thought is neither true nor false. Although this is not a contradiction, I take it to be an incompatibility.

Note also that the problem just highlighted is independent of whether *Equivalences* or *Equivalence_R* is the way The Equivalence Thesis is formulated. It is a problem regarding the alternative analyses applied directly to *Gap*. So the alternative analyses cannot be of use in resolving the incompatibility, regardless of which version of The Equivalence Thesis is under consideration.

5. The compatibility of *Equivalence_R* with *Contagion*

In §3 I showed that, when ‘*A*’ is fictional, the relevant instance of *Equivalences* is incompatible with both *Contagion* and *Gap* given a surface-form analysis of ‘<*A*> is true’. In §4 I showed that alternative analyses are no help. So if The Equivalence Thesis, *Contagion* and *Gap* are to be compatible, The Equivalence Thesis could only be formulated by *Equivalence_R* and ‘<*A*> is true’ given a surface-form analysis. This section argues that, under these circumstances, The Equivalence Thesis is compatible with *Contagion*. The following section will argue it is also compatible with *Gap*.

Contagion says that a sentence refers iff all its elements refer. Consider ‘Frodo is short’. This sentence does not refer, because ‘Frodo’, an element of it, does not refer. Now consider ‘<Frodo is short> is true’. This sentence refers, because its only elements are ‘<Frodo is short>’ and ‘is true’, both of which refer. So, by *Contagion*, we can say both:

C1: ‘Frodo is short’ fails to refer and

C2: ‘<Frodo is short> is true’ refers.

To see what can be concluded from *C1* and *C2*, we need to do some analysis. All elements of *C1* and *C2* refer. “‘Frodo is short’” and “‘<Frodo is short> is true’” refer to the sentences ‘Frodo is short’ and ‘<Frodo is short> is true’ respectively, ‘fails to refer’ refers to the concept of not referring, and ‘refers’ refers to the concept of referring. Because all elements of *C1* and *C2* refer, they express thoughts that refer, by hypothesis, to the True. So these thoughts can be correctly judged, and the sentences *C1* and *C2* can be correctly asserted. What *C1* asserts is that the sentence ‘Frodo

is short' falls under the concept of not referring, while *C2* asserts that the sentence '<Frodo is short> is true' falls under the concept of referring. By applying the indiscernibility of identicals to the claims of *C1* and *C2* we can conclude that the sentences 'Frodo is short' and '<Frodo is short> is true' are not identical. But this conclusion is irrelevant since it was never in doubt. The relevant question is whether we can further conclude from *C1* and *C2* that *Equivalence_R* has false instances.

Now, it seems as though *C1* and *C2* are incompatible with *Equivalence_R*. For *Equivalence_R* seems to imply that the sentences 'Frodo is short' and '<Frodo is short> is true' co-refer. Since one sentence refers while the other does not, they cannot co-refer. But the case is not so simple. *Equivalence_R* contains no elements that refer to sentences. So it does not imply anything about sentences and whether and to what they refer. The instance of *Equivalence_R* that seems to be incompatible with *C1* and *C2* is:

E: <Frodo is short> is true = Frodo is short.

By *Contagion*, *E* does not refer, for 'Frodo' is an element of *E* (on the right-hand side), and 'Frodo' does not refer. So, given *C1* and *C2* or otherwise, *E* is not false but fictional. This means that the thought expressed by *E* is fictional and cannot correctly be judged, so neither *E* nor its negation can be correctly asserted, unlike *C1* and *C2*. The same would be the case for any fictional substitution for 'A' in *Equivalence_R*. The context of 'A' on the right-hand side is direct. So if 'A' in *Equivalence_R* is replaced by a fictional sentence, the result is a fictional instance. In other cases, where 'A' in *Equivalence_R* is replaced by a referring sentence, the result is a true instance. For if 'A' is false, both '<A> is true' and 'A' are false, so the instance is true. And if 'A' is true, both '<A> is true' and 'A' are true, so the instance is true. So then, *Equivalence_R* has true instances and fictional instances, but no false ones. The question to be answered, then, concerns what to do about instances of logical schema that are fictional.

Before turning to the case at hand, that of *Equivalence_R*, let me first point out that the question is more general than might be supposed. For example, the self-identity of objects is often expressed using the schema: $a = a$. Frege expresses it this way himself. In fact, he not only endorses

' $a = a$ ', he says that it holds *a priori* (CP, 157). Now, ' $a = a$ ' could hold *a priori* only under the proviso that ' a ' refers. If ' a ' does not refer, ' $a = a$ ' is fictional, not true. For example, it is not true that Frodo = Frodo, just as it is not true that Dr Jekyll = Mr Hyde. And whether ' a ' refers is only sometimes determinable *a priori*. For example, whether 'the greatest prime number' refers can, for Frege, be determined *a priori*, but whether 'Vulcan' refers can only be determined *a posteriori* (cf. FOA, 3-4). So then, ' $a = a$ ' is only *a priori* true, as Frege claims, if ' a ' can only be substituted for referring names.

Note further that *Equivalences* is not immune from proviso either. For if ' A ' were substituted by a senseless sentence, say 'the mome raths outgrabe', *Equivalences* would also have fictional instances. For in this case '<the mome raths outgrabe>' on the right-hand side of the instance would not refer because the sentence lacked sense. This to say the logical schema *Equivalences* also has fictional instances unless a proviso is adopted such that only senseful sentences may be substituted for ' A '.

Now, Frege is very aware that non-referring terms (and, by extension, senseless terms) cause logical difficulties. Difficulties that arise from the fact the law of excluded middle fails to hold concerning fictional thoughts (cf. PW, 155). He points to occasions 'even in mathematics' where signs that fail to refer have led to 'errors' (CP, 169). Hence he says:

A logically perfect language should satisfy the conditions, that every expression grammatically well constructed as a proper name out of signs already introduced shall in fact designate an object, and that no new sign shall be introduced as a proper name without being secured a referent. (CP, 169).

This is why Frege is at pains to secure both sense and reference for the primitive terms in his Conceptual Notation (BLA, I 50). And he makes it a principle that any other terms introduced by definition must also refer (BLA, I 45, I 51).

Of course, natural language is not logically perfect. There are many names that occur without reference. This is not a failing of natural language *per se*, for without it we would not be able to craft fictional characters. It is however, for Frege, a *logical* failing. If natural language were purely logical, every sign would refer. Such is the case with Conceptual Notation, it

is a language designed for logical purposes, thus Frege is at pains to secure a referent for every term (CN, 104-5).

The schemata we have been examining are not schemata of Conceptual Notation, they are logical schemata of natural language. Nevertheless, Frege implicitly assumes instances of logical schemata, even if they are instances of schemata of natural language, only hold on the presumption that all elements refer (cf. CP, 162-3). They are *scientific* schemata, and in the realm of science all signs have reference (PW, 232). If the thought expressed by an instance of the schemata is fictional then 'truth in the scientific sense' is not in question, and it must be placed to the side (CP, 373; PW, 186). It would be as scientifically (and logically) inappropriate to inquire whether $\langle \text{Frodo is short} \rangle$ is true = Frodo is short, as it would be to inquire whether the greatest prime number were odd.

This implicit proviso applies to all logical schemata of natural language, whether *Equivalence_R*, ' $a = a$ ', or ' A iff A '. All of these schemata have fictional instances when their schematic letters are replaced with fictional names or sentences. And this is why *Equivalences* is incompatible with *Contagion*, while *Equivalence_R* is compatible with it. For when ' A ' is fictional, *Equivalences* has an instance that makes a scientific claim, since all its elements refer. This claim is incompatible with the claims of *Contagion* and can be determined to be so. However, the corresponding instance of *Equivalence_R* makes no scientific claims. It is (scientifically) silent, so is not incompatible with *Contagion*.

Another way to approach it is to recall Frege's distinction between thoughts as vehicles and thoughts as objects. When ' A ' is fictional the instance of *Equivalences* refers to the fictional thought expressed by ' A ', making it an object of investigation. Thus a scientific investigation of the thought can proceed, one that runs into contradiction with *Contagion*. While the corresponding instance of *Equivalence_R* expresses, rather than refers to, the fictional thought, making it a vehicle of investigation, and thus not amenable to scientific investigation (cf. §1). The upshot is that *Equivalence_R* is compatible with *Contagion* because it speaks only when it is safe to do so.

6. The compatibility of *equivalence_R* with *gap*

There appears to be an incompatibility between *Equivalence_R* and *Gap* different from that which appeared to occur between *Equivalence_R* and *Contagion*. For given the obvious interpretations of the concepts of being true and the concepts of being false, it must be the case that:

Truth: $\langle A \rangle$ is true iff A .

Falsity: $\langle A \rangle$ is false iff not A .

Truth is, of course, *Equivalence_R* provided with a name more suited to this section. And *Falsity* is simply the analogue of it for 'is false'. Note also that *Falsity* is compatible with *Contagion* for just the same reasons *Equivalence_R* (i.e. *Truth*) is. If ' A ' is false, both ' $\langle A \rangle$ is false' and 'not A ' are true, so the instance is true. If ' A ' is true, both ' $\langle A \rangle$ is false' and 'not A ' are false, so the instance is true. And if ' A ' is fictional, *Falsity*, like *Equivalence_R*, is scientifically silent, and thus compatible with *Contagion*.

Now, *Gap* says that fictional thoughts fall under neither the concept of being false nor the concept of being true. In this respect, fictional thoughts are just like objects that are not thoughts. The Sun, the number 2, the tea in my teapot, and Frege, are all neither true nor false. This means that the left-hand sides of *Truth* and *Falsity* could never be correctly asserted concerning fictional thoughts. In addition, since fictional thoughts cannot be judged, neither ' X ' nor 'not X ' could be correctly asserted. This means the right-hand sides of *Truth* and *Falsity* could also never be correctly asserted concerning fictional thoughts. It seems, then, that *Truth* and *Falsity* are irrelevant to fictional sentences and thoughts. Hence their silence on the matter.

But suppose that we negate both sides of *Truth* and *Falsity* to get:

*Truth**: $\langle A \rangle$ is not true iff not A .

*Falsity**: $\langle A \rangle$ is not false iff A .

From these it appears that we can derive a contradiction from *Gap* as follows:

- 1: $\langle X \rangle$ is not true and $\langle X \rangle$ is not false. (From *Gap*)
- 2: $\langle X \rangle$ is not true. (From 1)

- 3: Not X . (From 2 via *Truth**)
 - 4: $\langle X \rangle$ is not false. (From 1)
 - 5: X . (From 4 via *Falsity**)
- Contradiction: X and Not X . (From 3 and 5)

Something puzzling has happened. Each step of the argument appears to be legitimate. There was no obvious contradiction before, and yet a contradiction was derived. Something has gone wrong.

In fact, two things have gone wrong. The first error was that we ought not to perform derivations from or using schemata. For Frege, inferences cannot be made by using schemata but only by using instances of schemata. He explains this in a letter to Hugo Dingler:

We can indeed prove the proposition... 'if $a > b$, then $a + 1 > b + 1$ '... This proposition seems to be of exactly the same kind as the proposition... 'if $3 > 2$, then $3 + 1 > 2 + 1$ '... and yet the case is entirely different. After we have recognised the proposition ' $3 > 2$ ' as true, we can use it to prove the proposition ' $3 + 1 > 2 + 1$ '; but we cannot use the proposition ' $a > b$ ' to prove the proposition ' $a + 1 > b + 1$ '; for ' $a > b$ ' is not a proper proposition because it does not express a thought, nor consequently can it be recognised as true. (PMC, 20-1).

In our case, *Truth** cannot license an inference from ' $\langle X \rangle$ is not true' to 'not X ' (step 3), but only from ' $\langle X \rangle$ is not true' (for a particular ' X ') to 'not X ' (for that same ' X ') via an instance of *Truth** (where ' A ' is that ' X '). So we must not assume that the derivations performed above can be used to establish a contradiction. Instead, to show that a contradiction follows from *Gap* via the schemata, it must be shown that a contradiction can be inferred from a particular instance of it via relevant instances of the schemata.

Let us correct this error now, and restate the slightly longer derivation for a familiar case:

- 1: $\langle \text{Frodo is short} \rangle$ is not true and $\langle \text{Frodo is short} \rangle$ is not false.
(From *Gap*)
- 2: $\langle \text{Frodo is short} \rangle$ is not true. (From 1)
- 3: $\langle \text{Frodo is short} \rangle$ is not true iff Frodo is not short. (*Truth** instance)

- 4: Frodo is not short. (From 2 and 3)
 5: <Frodo is short> is not false. (From 1)
 6: <Frodo is short> is not false iff Frodo is short. (*Falsity** instance)
 7: Frodo is short. (From 5 and 6)
 Contradiction: Frodo is not short and Frodo is short. (From 4 and 7)

The second error was to present an argument that engaged in pseudo-inference as if it engaged in inference. Frege describes the distinction between inference and pseudo-inference in an earlier letter to Dingler:

Suppose we have arbitrarily formed the propositions ‘ $2 < 1$ ’ and ‘If something is smaller than 1, then it is greater than 2’ without knowing whether these propositions are true. We could derive ‘ $2 > 2$ ’ from them in a purely formal way; but this would not be an inference because the truth of the premises is lacking. And the truth of the conclusion is no better grounded by means of this pseudo-inference than without it. (PMC, 17; cf. BLA, II 256-7).

Pseudo-inference occurs when sentences are derived from others in a formal way without judgement being made regarding the thoughts they express. It is akin to the notion of logical consequence (cf. Smith 2009). In Fregean terms, we demonstrated that a contradiction can be pseudo-inferred from *Gap* along with relevant instances of the schemata. In other words, we demonstrated that a contradiction could be derived from them in ‘a purely formal way’. Frege sees formal derivations of this sort as assertions of a (single) conditional compound thought:

Before acknowledging its truth, one cannot use a thought as premise of an inference, nor can one infer or conclude anything from it. If anyone still thinks this can be done, he is apparently confusing acknowledgement of the truth of a hypothetical [i.e. conditional] compound thought with performing an inference in which the antecedent of this compound is taken for a premise. (CP, 402-3).

The pseudo-inference argument (conditional compound thought) above, then, ought to be expressed as a single sentence:

If $\langle \text{Frodo is short} \rangle$ is not true and $\langle \text{Frodo is short} \rangle$ is not false
 (from *Gap*)
 and $\langle \text{Frodo is short} \rangle$ is not true iff Frodo is not short (*Truth** instance)
 and $\langle \text{Frodo is short} \rangle$ is not false iff Frodo is short (*Falsity** instance)
 then Frodo is not short and Frodo is short (Contradiction).

The problem is now made plain. This sentence cannot be asserted, for it contains non-referring elements, in particular both cases of 'Frodo' that appear on the right-hand side of each of the instances of *Truth** and *Falsity**. Thus the pseudo-inference argument we presented is fictional, not scientific. The argument is neither true nor false. In other words, a contradiction does not follow by 'logical consequence' from *Gap* and *Equivalence_R*. Neither can the argument be re-expressed in terms of inference rather than pseudo-inference for similar reasons. Inference involves judgements. A judgement is the recognition of the truth of a thought. And a judgement is expressed by an assertion. To qualify as an inference to a contradiction, each of the thoughts must be judged. And to express this inference, the premises must be asserted (CN, 117-20; BLA I, 25-6; PMC, 16-7, 78-9). But two of the premises, namely the relevant instance of *Truth** and *Falsity**, cannot be correctly asserted. And without being asserted, they cannot be used to further assert, say, 'Frodo is not short' on the basis of ' $\langle \text{Frodo is short} \rangle$ is not true'.

These observations generalise to block any attempt to demonstrate an incompatibility between *Gap* and *Equivalence_R* (*Truth*). Any 'Dummettian' argument towards a contradiction between *Gap* and *Equivalence_R* would have to be of the form we have been examining, and thus involve an incorrect assertion. Instances of *Truth*, *Falsity*, *Truth**, and *Falsity** that can be correctly asserted, i.e. are not fictional, could only be used to infer from *Gap* such general banalities as:

$\langle \langle X \rangle$ is not true \rangle is true and $\langle \langle X \rangle$ is not false \rangle is true (via *Truth*),
 $\langle \langle X \rangle$ is true \rangle is false and $\langle \langle X \rangle$ is false \rangle is false (via *Falsity*),
 $\langle \langle X \rangle$ is true \rangle is not true and $\langle \langle X \rangle$ is false \rangle is not true (via *Truth**),
 and
 $\langle \langle X \rangle$ is not true \rangle is not false and $\langle \langle X \rangle$ is not false \rangle is not false (via *Falsity**).

The second of these is the one that is inconsistent with *Equivalences* (see §3). But none pose a threat to *Equivalence_R*.

7. Conclusion

I take myself to have achieved the aims I set forward in this paper. I have shown that, while *Equivalences*, the equivalence thesis Frege's endorses, is incompatible with Frege's views on fictional sentences and thoughts, *Equivalence_R*, a related thesis, is compatible with them. I justified my positive claim by arguing that any attempt to demonstrate an incompatibility between *Equivalence_R* and Frege's theses on fictional sentences and thoughts requires an incorrect assertion. Thus, all else being equal, Frege ought to endorse a sameness of reference, rather than a sameness of sense thesis.

Acknowledgements

Foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Alex Oliver. His close readings of drafts and insightful comments have sharpened my thinking on these topics and improved the way in which I present my position. I am also grateful to the constructive comments I received on my submission to this journal from an anonymous reviewer. I also thank Prof. Michael Potter and Benjamin Marschall for comments on a late draft, and Wouter Cohen and Emma Curran for their useful feedback when I presented this material at a seminar. I would also like to thank the Gates Cambridge Trust for making this research possible.

Funding

Gates Cambridge Trust.

References

References to Frege's works:

- Frege, Gottlob. 1972. *Conceptual Notation and Related Articles*. Translated by Terrell Ward Bynum. Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press. [CN]
 Frege, Gottlob. 1980. *Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence*. Translated by Hans Kaal. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. [PMC]

- Frege, Gottlob. 2013. *Basic Laws of Arithmetic*. Translated by Philip A. Ebert, Marcus Rossberg, and Crispin Wright. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [BLA]
- Frege, Gottlob. 1979. *Posthumous Writings*. Translated by Peter Long & Roger White. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. [PW]
- Frege, Gottlob. 1980. *The Foundations of Arithmetic*. Translated by J. L. Austin. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. [FOA]
- Frege, Gottlob. 1984. *Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic, and Philosophy*. Translated by Max Black, V. H. Dudman, Peter Geach, Hans Kaal, E. H. W. Kluge, Brian McGuinness, and R. H. Stoothoff. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. [CP]

Other References:

- Burge, Tyler. 1986. "Frege on Truth." In *Truth, Thought, Reason: Essays on Frege*, 83–132. Oxford: Clarendon Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof>.
- Davidson, Donald. 1969. "True to the Facts." *The Journal of Philosophy* 66 (21): 748–64.
- Dummett, Michael. 1959. "Truth". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 59: 141–62.
- Dummett, Michael. 1981. *Frege Philosophy of Language*. London: Duck-worth.
- Grover, Dorothy L., Joseph L. Camp, and Nuel D. Belnap Jr. 1975. "A Prosentential Theory of Truth". *Philosophical Studies* 27 (2): 73–125. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01209340>.
- Horwich, Paul. 2010. *Truth – Meaning – Reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof>
- Kalderon, Mark Eli. 1997. "The Transparency of Truth". *Mind* 106 (423): 475–97. <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/106.423.475>
- Kremer, Michael Joseph. 2000. "Judgment and Truth in Frege". *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 38 (4): 549–81. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hph.2005.0032>
- Künne, Wolfgang. 2008. "Frege on Truths, Truth and the True". *Studia Philosophica Estonica* 1 (1): 5–42.
- Künne, Wolfgang. 2003. *Conceptions of Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Oliver, Alex, and Timothy Smiley. 2016. *Plural Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ricketts, Thomas G. 1986. "Objectivity and Objecthood: Frege's Metaphysics of Judgment". In *Frege Synthesized: Essays on the Philosophical and Foundational Work of Gottlob Frege*, edited by Leila Haaparanta, and Jaakko Hintikka, 65–96. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: D. Reidel Publishing Company.
- Schantz, Richard. 1998. "Was Tarski a Deflationist?". *Logic and Logical Philosophy* 6: 157–72.

- Smith, Nicholas J. J. 2009. "Frege's Judgement Stroke and the Conception of Logic as the Study of Inference not Consequence". *Philosophy Compass* 4: 639–65. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-9991.2009.00219.x>
- Wright, Crispin. 1998. "Truth: A Traditional Debate Reviewed." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 24 (1): 31–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00455091.1998.10717495>

Anti-Realism about Fictional Names at Work: A New Theory for Metafictional Sentences


Louis Rouillé*

Received: 22 February 2020 / Accepted: 2 October 2020

Abstract: In this article, I contribute to ongoing debates about the status of fictional names. The main debate in the philosophy of language focuses on whether fictional names should be thought of as non-referring terms (this is anti-realism) or referring terms (this is realism). This debate corresponds to a debate in metaphysics about the ontological status of fictional characters: the anti-realist claim that fictional characters do not exist while the realist say that they do exist in some sense. Although anti-realism is pre-theoretically intuitive, it has been challenged by a powerful argument in favour of realism based on so-called “metafictional” uses of fictional terms. This argument puts a lot of pressure on the anti-realist, for they have to come up with a theory of metafictional sentences which is in keeping with the anti-realist central tenet. I show that the existing anti-realist account of metafictional statements is wrong-headed. I thus propose a new one. In doing so, I hope to free the anti-realist from the realist pressure. However, I do not offer any argument against realism. Consequently, I merely claim that anti-realism be a live

* Institut Jean Nicod

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4807-460X>

 Institut Jean Nicod UMR 8129 Pavillon Jardin Ecole Normale Supérieure 29, rue d’Ulm F-75230 Paris cedex 05, France.

 louis.rouille@netc.eu



option. My modest proposal will, perhaps, make anti-realism more attractive than it is today among philosophers of language.

Keywords: Anti-realism; fiction; fictional terms; free logic; metafictional statements; reference.

0. Introduction

It is now clear that there are two kinds of philosophers of fiction. Those with the loaded guns are the realist and those who dig are the anti-realist. I am a digger at heart. In this paper, I will present a new direction I consider worth digging to.

Unfortunately, I will not provide a riffle to stir up an anti-realist revolution in the field: I have no argument against realism. I simply hope that by the end of this paper the realist will have new, interesting reasons to put away their guns and come digging with us. It is probable that most will prefer to keep going enjoying their threatening power and rebut at the idea of stooping to the ground. But who knows, they might enjoy the exercise.

1. The present state of the debate between realism and anti-realism about fictional names

I would say that the moment an object appears in a narrative, it is charged with a special force and becomes like the pole of a magnetic field, a knot in the network of invisible relationships. [...] We might even say that in a narrative any object is always magic. (“Quickness”, in Calvino 1988).

Realism about fictional names is the view that fictional names refer, i.e. that fictional names are not empty names. This semantic position entails a metaphysical position called realism about fictional characters, according to which fictional characters exist in some sense.¹ Yet, metaphysical realism about fictional characters should not be thought of as a unified group of

¹ The entailment is grounded on a principle of compositionality, as made explicit below.

theories. Indeed, metaphysical realists strongly oppose each other when it comes to the fictional entities' precise ontological status.² The central tenet they share, however, is semantic realism about fictional names.³

Anti-realism, by contrast, is the denial of realism.⁴ Anti-realism thus claims that fictional names never refer, i.e. that fictional names are always empty names. They thus hold that fictional characters do not exist in any sense. There are different versions of anti-realism not so much in the content of the views, but in the way they want to resist realism, as will become clear below.⁵

1.1 *The realist guns*

Here comes the powerful argument in favour of realism, based on so-called "metafictional uses" of fictional names:

- (i) Metafictional statements are truth-evaluable statements containing a fictional name in the subject place.
- (ii) The principle of compositionality requires that a name in the subject place of a truth-conditional statement refers.
- (iii) Therefore, fictional names refer.

² To name a few: Meinongians like (Meinong 1904) and (Parsons 1980) argue that they are nonexistent objects. (As such, my characterisation of metaphysical realism can be thought of as misleading and this is a reason why I focus on semantic realism below.) Neo-meinongian usually think of fictional characters as abstract objects akin to numbers, for instance (Fine 1982) and (Zalta 1983). Artefactualists, on the other hand, construe them as abstract artefacts, for instance (Kripke 1973/2013), (Van Inwagen 1977), (Salmon 1998), (Thomasson 1999) and (Schiffer 2003). Possibilists view them as concrete unactualised possibilities, for instance (Lewis 1975) and (Lewis 1983).

³ I should say right now that this first presentation of fictional realism is not committing for me, for I will call a "realist" in the rest of this paper anyone who accepts one version of the realist argument given in the next section. As will become clear later on, I focus on different versions of artefactualism stemming from Kripke's work.

⁴ As such, it can also be called "irrealism" or "non-realism".

⁵ Standard arguments leading to anti-realism can be found in (Evans 1982), (Walton 1990), (Everett 2013).

The argument is obviously valid.⁶

Now, here is a metafictional statement which is generally used to load the realist guns:

- (1) Emma Woodhouse is a fictional character.

(1) clearly sounds true. Moreover, there is no plausible paraphrase of (1) in which the name “Emma Woodhouse” is not in the subject place.⁷ Therefore, “Emma Woodhouse” refers. So Emma Woodhouse exists in some sense, for it is a fictional character.

1.1.1 On metafictional ammunitions

Metafictional statements are to be sharply contrasted with fictional statements. Fictional statements are statements containing a fictional name and describing the goings on of characters from within their fictional world. In a fictional statement, the name is thus used within pretence or in a game of make-believe⁸ to denote the fictional flesh-and-blood individual. Fictional statements are typically used to express what is true in the fiction. Here is, for instance, the opening line of Jane Austen’s *Emma*:

- (2) Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence.

⁶ Note that the argument is an instance of Quine’s indispensability argument schema, as (Thomasson 2003) rightly remarks. See also (Récanati forthcoming) for a recent, more specific formal rendering of this argument.

⁷ Some people are prepared to come up with such paraphrases using definite descriptions or using quotation marks. This strategy originates in Russell’s work, see for instance (Russell 1919). One can find contemporary views using the same strategy, see for instance (Currie 1990). See also (Dumitru 2015) for an interesting project using a free description theory. I will not follow this line of thinking in this paper though, for I consider that arguments in favour of direct reference for names in general and fictional names in particular are compelling. See in particular (Kripke 1972).

⁸ I take these expressions to be synonymous and use “pretence” systematically to denote the game of make-believe underlying a given fiction.

By contrast, metafictional statements are statements containing a fictional name and purporting to talk about the fictional character from a real-world perspective. The perspective on the fictional character and events is typically external to the pretence. Consequently, metafictional statements are usually not true in the fiction but true simpliciter.⁹ Indeed, (1) is not true in Jane Austen's novel, but it is true at our world. In metafictional contexts, fictional names are not used under pretence but in a serious tone of voice: one can thus define metafictional discourse as "serious discourse with empty fictional names" (Walters 2020, 13). Fictional names, in metafictional contexts, are used to refer to what is ordinarily called "fictional characters" (as opposed to real individuals). To contrast them with the fictional flesh-and-blood individuals, I call them "individuals of paper".¹⁰

Given this distinction, one can consider different types of metafictional statements. Here are some which have received a lot of attention in the literature:

- (3) Emma Woodhouse is happier than Emma Bovary.
- (4) My neighbour is in love with Emma Woodhouse.¹¹

Unfortunately, there is no agreed upon exhaustive typology for metafictional statements in the literature.¹² The more systematic attempt, to my knowledge, is to be found in (Woods 2018, 74). It will be useful to rely on his typology for further discussion, for it is quite transparent. I will henceforth say that (1) is a paradigmatic external sentence; (3) is a paradigmatic cross-over sentence; and (4) is a paradigmatic intensional sentence.

⁹ There are arguably complications with so-called metafiction, in which the fictional characters are fictional characters *in the story*. See for instance Pirandello *Six characters in search of an author*. I set aside these complications as borderline cases here.

¹⁰ This is a tribute to Plascencia's metafiction *The People of Paper*, published in 2005. The realists are those who accept individuals of paper into their ontology. However, the ontological status of individuals of paper is highly controversial, depending of each version of realism.

¹¹ This statement is meant to be akin to statements like "X pities Anna Karenina" or what Oscar Wilde puts into the mouth of Vivian in *The Decay of Lying*:

One of the greatest tragedies of my life is the death of Lucien de Rubempré.

¹² Though some non-exhaustive typologies have been very influential. Especially that of (Van Inwagen 1977) and (Currie 1990).

In principle, any kind of metafictional statement can be used to run the argument in favour of realism.¹³ However, it suffices that one recognises one kind of metafictional statement to run the above argument.

In the following, I will focus on external statements, for they are the least controversial and the more threatening to the anti-realist. However, intensional and cross-over statements will be useful in the following to explain why and how I think the anti-realist have dug their own grave.

1.1.2 The realist program

The above argument has convinced the majority of philosophers that fictional names sometimes (or perhaps always) refer to individuals of paper. In (Kripke 1973/2013), Kripke forcefully argued that fictional names are “ambiguous”: they do not refer when they occur in a fictional context and they do refer when they occur in a metafictional context.¹⁴ “Ambiguity”, however, is not the best choice of word. What Kripke meant was that fictional names are polysemous, as is generally agreed upon today, for the two distinct uses of fictional names are systematically related. The polysemy view of fictional names has thus become hugely attractive and many philosophers have subsequently worked on trying to elicit the systematic connection between the fictional and metafictional uses of fictional names. I consider this to be the most influential realist program today.¹⁵ In the same vein, (Récanati forthcoming) labels the polysemy view the “ecumenical view”, which he defines as “accepting there are two types of use of fictional names, and considering the fictional use as basic”. For this reason, I will

¹³ This point is made in (Everett 2013, 120–38) where he distinguishes between “three forms of argument for fictional realism”. These are versions of the above argument relative to each kind of metafictional statements.

¹⁴ It should be noted that (Van Inwagen 1977) arrived at a similar view independently.

¹⁵ Many philosophers thus take the polysemy view for granted. To name a few, see for instance (Dummett 1973), (Searle 1975), (Currie 1990), (Salmon 1998), (Thomasson 1999), (Schiffer 2003), (Braun 2005), (Williamson 2013), (Lycan 2015), (Maier 2017), (Terrone 2017), (García-Carpintero 2019), (Voltolini 2020), (Walters 2020), (Récanati forthcoming).

focus on the polysemy view in the following and see if and how the anti-realist can resist it.

The core idea of the polysemy view is that the metafictional use “comes after” or “derives” from the fictional use, in the sense that a fictional name, by definition, originates in a fiction and can later be used to produce metafictional statements. From an ontological viewpoint, it is as if the individual of paper’s coming into existence supervened on the pretence that there is a flesh-and-blood individual in the fiction. From a semantic viewpoint, it is claimed that once the pretence is shared and several people have imagined the flesh-and-blood individual in the way the fiction required them to, then they can refer back to the individual of paper which consists in the fictional flesh-and-blood individual “qua fictionally portrayed” (Récanati 2018, 10).

There are thus two interconnected theses underlying the polysemy view: one is a “metaphysical move” during which an individual of paper is “postulated as a product of [the original] pretence”; the second is a “semantic move” during which “a fictional name for a person [is transformed] into a name of a fictional person” (the quotes are in (Salmon 1998, 294) where Nathan Salmon makes explicit Kripke’s view). The important point is that polysemy view is essentially dynamic. From a metaphysical viewpoint, something was brought into existence; from a semantic viewpoint, the fictional empty name metamorphosed into a real name. The acceptance of this dynamic phenomenon has led to many sophistications which we need not get into here.¹⁶ As will be seen later on, my point of contention with this kind of realism hinges on a different interpretation of this dynamic phenomenon.

¹⁶ The most promising sophistication is now Récanati’s theory of dot-concept developed in (Récanati forthcoming). It combines this research program with the notion of dot-object coming from (Pustejovsky 1998) and reinterprets the notion in the mental file framework as developed in (Récanati 2012). See also (Terrone 2017) for an early contribution to Récanati’s view. The reader might like to also consult (Walters 2020) in which Walters independently develops a view which is inspired by Pustejovsky’s dot-object theory.

1.2 *The anti-realist shovel*

Anti-realist, threatened by the realist guns, began to dig. Ironically enough, as I aim to show in this section, the main response was to dig their own grave, without noticing it.

1.2.1 Digging with extended pretences

The main response to the realist argument leading to the polysemy view consisted in denying (i).¹⁷ They said: Although metafictional statements appear to be truth-evaluable, they are not so in fact. Rather, one should construe them as sophisticated fictional statements which are neither true nor false, but fictional.

Of course, metafictional statements cannot be placed down on the same level as their corresponding fictional statements. Indeed (1) is clearly not true in Jane Austen's novel, nor are (3) and (4). The idea is to defend that they are true in some other relevant fiction. In order to do so, anti-realist have come up with the powerful notion of an "extended" pretence.¹⁸ An extended pretence is a pretence which is parasitic on another pretence, called the "base" pretence. The base pretence corresponds to the original fiction. The extended pretence is a "metafiction", so to speak: it says how one can talk about the constituents of the fiction, and especially the fictional characters using their names.

To understand how this works, let us look at cross-over statements which are taken to be the most successfully accounted for using this notion of extended pretence.¹⁹ In order to understand (3), one has to merge the two underlying, relevant fictions by Jane Austen and Gustave Flaubert. The merging intuitively consists in having the two Emmas meet in imagination and then compare which is happier, in this imaginative scenario.

¹⁷ This strategy was first clearly advocated in the last chapter of (Walton 1990). As mentioned above in footnote, some anti-realists would rather deny (ii) but I think this strategy meets Kripke's (even more powerful) arguments in favour of direct reference.

¹⁸ The term comes from (Everett 2013) though the notion can be found already in (Evans 1982) and (Walton 1990).

¹⁹ See in particular (Crimmins 1998) for a seminal anti-realist account of cross-over statements.

This extended pretence is a “metafiction” in which both Emmas are characters. By definition of the extended pretence, both Emmas are identical to what they are in their fiction of origin. Given a reasonable principle of reality,²⁰ one understands what “happy” means in this pretence. In particular, since it is generally accepted as true in the real world that one who decides to get married is happier than one who commits suicide, it is fictionally so in the extended pretence. Emma Woodhouse, at the end of *Emma*, finally decides to get married while Emma Bovary, at the end of *Madame Bovary*, commits suicide. Hence, it will be fictional in the extended pretence that Emma Woodhouse is happier than Emma Bovary. Therefore, (3) is fictional in the extended pretence. This is why (3) seems to be true simpliciter: because it is true in the relevant extended pretence.²¹

The anti-realist then needs to explain why appearances are deceiving. There are different ways of explaining this.²² A straightforward response consists in remarking that fictional statements are also deceiving. Indeed, metafictional statements should also be deceiving if they are, in fact, sophisticated fictional statements. For instance, (2) seems to be true when compared to:

- (5) Emma Woodhouse is an ugly thief who digs her own grave.

²⁰ It is generally acknowledged that fictions come with so-called “principles of generation” from which one can derive the correct inferences we do in fact derive while enjoying a work of fiction. These warranted inferences define what is “true in the fiction”, or simply fictional. See (Lewis 1978) for a seminal, influential discussion of these. The “reality principle” roughly says that a reader should imagine a fictional world as similar as the real world, unless explicit mention to the contrary. There are many debates about the scope and precise definition of this principle, but virtually everyone agrees that there is always something like a principle of reality when there is a fiction. See (Woodward 2011) for a critical review of the different positions and (Friend 2017) for an influential in-depth analysis of the phenomenon.

²¹ Note that many realists convinced by Kripke’s argument are ready to accept this. See for instance (Walters 2020, 8) who says that “we can think of [(3)] as being true only within a pretence jointly licensed by the two series of fictions”.

²² These lead to different versions of anti-realism. See for instance the distinction between “radical” and “moderate” anti-realists made in (Récanati forthcoming).

But truth *in the fiction* is not truth *simpliciter*. In the same manner, truth *in the metafiction* is not truth *simpliciter*. Honor is safe.

At this point, anti-realists have claimed that this strategy can be generalised to all kinds of metafictional statements, provided we can construct a relevant extended pretence. When it comes to external statements like (1) the kind of extended pretence is thus described in (Everett 2013, 65–66):

I suggest that we see the deployment of such expressions as “fictional” as taking place within the scope of an extended pretence. [...] There is the distinction between things that really exist and those which only exist within the scope of the make-believe or fiction. [...] In the simplest cases when we want to articulate [this] distinction, we will engage in an extended pretence in which we pretend that our domain of discourse contains all those entities which occur within some fiction and that those entities are as they are characterised by that fiction. [...] Within this extended pretence, those entities which genuinely exist will count as having the property of being real and those which do not will count as having the property of being fictional.

1.2.2 Why are the anti-realist digging their own grave?

Let us consider a fictional negative existential like:

- (6) Emma Woodhouse does not exist.

Fictional negative existentials are negative existentials involving a fictional name. They are good candidates for being external metafictional statements. Indeed, they are clearly not fictional and they closely resemble statements like (1) when it comes to truth-value.

Some may want to doubt that fictional negative existentials are external statements, on the ground that negative existential statements have a controversial logical form anyway. So they would simply dismiss negative existentials from external statements until their logical structure is agreed upon. Indeed, if it turns out that negative existentials are existentially quantified statements involving no name at all, then they fall outside the metafictional data.²³

²³ In keeping with classic arguments to be found in (Russell 1919) and (Quine 1948).

But this dismissal is, I think, not available to the anti-realist. Indeed, the basic tenet of anti-realism is that fictional characters do not exist (equivalently that fictional names do not refer). So they are, to the bone, committed to the truth of this claim. Therefore, the anti-realist should say that (6) is true. So the anti-realist has compelling reasons to hold that (6) is a good candidate for being an external statement.

On the other hand, the anti-realist cannot deliver truth-conditions for any external statements. This is what has been shown in the previous subsection. The best they can do is to deliver mock-truth-conditions, using extended pretences. Consequently, they are committed to the view that (6) is not, strictly speaking, truth-evaluable.

Fictional negative existentials are thus putting the anti-realist on the verge of inconsistency. The anti-realist is forced to say that (i) fictional characters do not exist and that, strictly speaking, (ii) it is not true that “Emma Woodhouse does not exist”. It should be noted that there is no formal contradiction here because it remains to be shown that general negative existentials formally entail singular ones, which can be resisted.²⁴ This is why I said “on the verge of inconsistency”. However, I think it is fair to say that the anti-realist are forced into a form of theoretical schizophrenia which they should like to avoid if possible.

I should say here that one can find a similar argument against (Everett 2013)’s anti-realism in (Walters 2020, 18). However, it is not quite the same for it relies on a more general argument about Russellian accounts of negative existentials. My argument should thus be thought of as an internal problem for the anti-realist who want to use the notion of extended pretence to deal with fictional negative existentials, hence a somewhat local argument.

1.2.3 Taking stock

Having myself anti-realist intuitions, I can feel an urge to restore a consistent version of anti-realism, regardless of whether this version should be preferable to realism or not at the end of the day. My intuition is that the realist threatening guns made anti-realist dig in the wrong direction. I will therefore advocate digging in another direction.

²⁴ Thanks to Lee Walters for pointing this to me.

The problem here is that the notion of extended pretence is too strong, and should be handled with care. I see no problem analysing away intensional and cross-over statements using extended pretences. However, I think external statements deserve a more careful treatment, as fictional negative existentials show.

My proposal is a kind of divide-and-conquer strategy: first, the anti-realist should divide up the metafictional data into two categories. The intensional and cross-over statements are analysed away using the notion of extended pretence. As for the external statements, the anti-realist should find a way to derive their truth-conditions with the explicit requirement that the fictional name in these contexts does not refer. In order to do this, I use a version of positive free logic. Free logic is not pulled out of a hat and will sound like the obvious response for those who already know about it. Indeed, free logics have been designed to handle both referring and non-referring terms in a single formal apparatus. The difficult part consists in choosing the right free logic and articulating the semantics of external statements with that of the fictional statements and the other metafictional statements in a natural manner: this is the digging part. On this point, my proposal crucially differs from the other available free logic accounts of fictional names, as I will show in due course. Reflecting on my proposal, I will show that it can perhaps be interpreted as a subtle denial of (ii) in the realist argument; I will briefly comment on this in closing this paper.

2. Freedom for anti-realism

2.1 A counter-proposal

The dynamic description underlying the polysemy view of fictional names sounds like magic to me (in Calvino's sense, from the epigraph of this paper). I think there is an alternative story to tell, which does not rely on any coming into existence of an individual of paper nor on any metamorphoses of names.

What happens is that a new empty name is introduced into serious language. First, a fictional name like "Emma Woodhouse" is introduced within the pretence and everyone using it in such context pretends it refers to the

flesh-and-blood individual in the fiction. Consequently, “Emma Woodhouse” is an empty name because it originates in a fiction and does not purport to name any real individual. Second, one introduces the name “Emma Woodhouse” in the serious language, acknowledging the fact that it is an empty name, alongside with other empty terms like “Vulcan” or “Newman-1”.²⁵ The name “Emma Woodhouse” is crucially different from both “Vulcan” and “Newman-1” because it originates in a fiction, i.e. the first occurrence of the name is within a pretence, whereas the other two have a non-fictional origin. But it is also crucially similar to them in that it is empty. In this counter-proposal, “Emma Woodhouse” is empty all along.

This story is thus in keeping with anti-realism about fictional names. What is true about the polysemy view is that there are two uses of fictional names and that there is dynamic. The metafictional use “comes after” the fictional use. But what is false about the polysemy view is that the dynamic is a metamorphosis of an empty name into a non-empty one. This counter-proposal can be seen as a way of taking the good insights from the polysemy view so as to revitalise anti-realism.

What the counter-proposal needs is a theory which says how one can use an empty name like “Emma Woodhouse” in a subject-predicate statement so as to get an external metafictional statement expressing a true proposition. This is what I will provide now.

2.2 A positive free logic for external metaphysical statements

2.2.1 On the different versions of free logic

Free logic has been designed to handle both referring and non-referring singular terms. The inspiration of free logic was the advent of predicate calculus which was designed to handle both referring and non-referring gen-

²⁵ “Vulcan” was famously introduced by the astronomer Urbain Leverrier to refer to an intramercurial planet which was shown not to exist by Albert Einstein later on. “Newman-1” was introduced by Kaplan in *Quantifying in* as follows: “I hereby dub the first child to be born in the 22nd century ‘Newman-1’”.

eral terms, as opposed to Aristotle's theory of syllogism which cannot handle non-referring general terms. (Lambert 1963) thus presents free logic as an improvement on classical predicate calculus similar to the improvement predicate calculus was on Aristotle's syllogistic.²⁶

Such a requirement to handle both referring and non-referring terms²⁷ on a par, in a compositional, extensional setting (comparable to predicate calculus), however, entails many difficulties. Following a line of thinking originating in Frege's work, many even argue that this is impossible. They say: Non-referring terms, by definition, do not refer; So they do not have an extension; Therefore, they cannot compose like referring terms. This much is true: the semantic contribution of a non-referring term cannot be of the same nature as that of a referring term. To conclude from this trivial fact that non-referring terms make no semantic contribution is simply incorrect, as free logicians have shown.

Free logicians should now answer the following question: What is the semantic contribution of a non-referring term? The intuitive response is: its lack of referent. Free logic (FL) consists in formalising this idea, so as to integrate it within a compositional, extensional semantic framework delivering truth-conditions.

This idea is challenging because it goes against a core element of extensional semantics, namely that of assigning extensions to both general and singular terms of the language. Indeed, in a classical extensional setting, one uses an interpretation function I to define extensions for predicates and terms such that $I(P^n) \subseteq D$; for every term t , $I(t) \in D$. Using this extensional interpretation of the language, one can then recursively define truth-conditions for all formulae in the following manner:²⁸

$$(\text{atom}) \ v(P^n(t_1, \dots, t_n)) = 1 \text{ iff } \langle I(t_1), \dots, I(t_n) \rangle \in I(P^n)$$

²⁶ See also (Lejewski 1954) and (Leonard 1956) for previous ideas going in the same direction. However, the term "logic free of existence assumption for singular terms" comes from Karel Lambert, as well as its interpretation as an improvement on classical predicate calculus.

²⁷ From now on, I will use the term "term" to denote singular terms only.

²⁸ For simplicity, I will consider a language without identity. Identity is not necessary to handle the linguistic data of this paper.

- b) $v(\neg A) = 1$ iff $v(A) \neq 1$
- c) $v(A \wedge B) = 1$ iff $\min(v(A), v(B)) = 1$
- d) $v(A \vee B) = 1$ iff $\max(v(A), v(B)) = 1$
- e) $v(A \rightarrow B) = 1$ iff $v(A) \neq 1$ or $v(B) = 1$
- f) $v(\forall xAx) = 1$ iff for every individual constant t , if $I(t)$ is defined, then $v(A[t/x]) = 1$

The problematic clause for a FL is (atom). Indeed, in FL, it is not the case that *every* singular term t denotes a member of the domain of quantification. In other words, in FL, I is a partial function which is undefined for the empty terms of the language. (atom) should thus give way to something more complicated in FL:

$$(FL) v(P^n(t_1, \dots, t_n)) \begin{cases} (\text{atom}) \text{ iff } I(t_i) \text{ is defined (for } 1 \leq i \leq n) \\ \text{Something else otherwise} \end{cases}$$

The next question is: How should we define truth-conditions for atomic formulae when I is undefined, i.e. when t is an empty term? (Note that the answer to this question, moreover, needs to be able to feed into the usual inductive truth-conditions for complex formulae expressed in b)-f): this can be seen as a formal constraint.) For instance, take (1) which naturally gets translated in FL as $F(ew)$. Given that ew is, *ex hypothesis*, an empty term, how should we define the truth-conditions for (1)? Intuitively, (1) is true. In defining truth-conditions in general, some philosophical choices have to be made and several apparatuses have been designed to implement these choices. The logical space of possible answers defines the different available versions of free semantics.²⁹

About atomic formulae containing empty terms, there are three positions available. First, *negative* FL has it that such formulae are *always false*:

²⁹ There are many places where one can find a presentation of the different versions of free semantics and a comparison between them. For a seminal account, see (Ben-civenga 1986); for a more recent, very systematic presentation see also (Morscher and Simons 2001).

$$(\text{FL-}) \ v(P^n(t_1, \dots, t_n)) \left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1 \text{ iff } I(t_i) \text{ is defined (for } 1 \leq i \leq n) \text{ and} \\ \quad \langle I(t_1), \dots, I(t_n) \rangle \in I(P^n) \\ 0 \text{ iff } I(t_i) \text{ is defined (for } 1 \leq i \leq n) \text{ and} \\ \quad \langle I(t_1), \dots, I(t_n) \rangle \notin I(P^n) \\ 0 \text{ iff there is a } i \text{ such that } I(t_i) \text{ is undefined} \end{array} \right.$$

This choice is appealing to some because it takes at face value the metalinguistic biconditional (atom): an atomic formula is true whenever the extensional condition is satisfied (hence when I is defined) and false otherwise. As such, it is perfectly in keeping with the usual inductive definition of truth-conditions.³⁰ According to (FL-), however, a statement like (1) is false. So it does not fit our purposes.

Second, neutral FL has it that such formulae have no truth-conditions:

$$(\text{FL}\#) \ v(P^n(t_1, \dots, t_n)) \left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1 \text{ iff } I(t_i) \text{ is defined (for } 1 \leq i \leq n) \text{ and} \\ \quad \langle I(t_1), \dots, I(t_n) \rangle \in I(P^n) \\ 0 \text{ iff } I(t_i) \text{ is defined (for } 1 \leq i \leq n) \text{ and} \\ \quad \langle I(t_1), \dots, I(t_n) \rangle \notin I(P^n) \\ \# \text{ iff there is a } i \text{ such that } I(t_i) \text{ is undefined} \end{array} \right.$$

The idea of this position consists in making explicit that empty terms are defective in some sense. The natural way of squaring this position with the usual inductive definition of truth-conditions consists in completing the interpretation function I in all possible ways and then define a supervaluation function over the set of possible completions of I .³¹ According to (FL#),

³⁰ This idea goes back (at least) to the work of the medieval philosopher Buridan (see his *Sophismata* – §1.6.5). The modern motivation comes from the treatment of definite descriptions in (Whitehead and Russell 1912). Negative FL was formalised for the first time in (Schock 1968). Some other influential philosophical motivations for a negative treatment of atomic formulae containing an empty term are given in (Burge 1974).

³¹ This strategy was first given in (Van Fraassen 1966a) and (Van Fraassen 1966b). See also (Bencivenga 1986) for a now standard version of the supervaluation free semantics which departs substantially from that of Van Fraassen, fixing problems about identity statements involving empty terms.

however, a statement like (1) is truth-valueless. So it does not fit our purposes.

Third, *positive* FL has it that such formulae are either true or false, for some set of conditions C to be specified:

$$(\text{FL}+) \ v(P^n(t_1, \dots, t_n)) = 1 \text{ iff } \begin{cases} I(t_i) \text{ is defined (for } 1 \leq i \leq n) \text{ and} \\ \langle I(t_1), \dots, I(t_n) \rangle \in I(P^n) \\ C, \text{ otherwise} \end{cases}$$

In other words, when an atomic formula contains an empty term, whether it is true or false depends on some explicit condition. It can be seen as designing a semantic module taking care of all and only the problematic formulae, and feeding truth-conditions into the general semantic framework. This position is not a popular choice, for one needs to define explicitly what C is and make sure that these conditions can fit into the usual inductive truth-conditions for complex formulae. My proposal consists in explaining what C stands for here using the counter-proposal I gave above. In order to do this, I will use Antonelli's formal framework, for I think it is usable as it is.

2.2.2 Proto-semantics and fictional terms

In (Antonelli 2000), one can find a bivalent, extensional positive free semantics which is proved to be complete and consistent with the usual inductive definition of truth-conditions. Antonelli's idea is to introduce a linguistic parameter so as to relativise truth-conditions. The parameter is attached to empty terms, "so that one can speak, in analogy to modal logic, of *truth at a term t* " (Antonelli 2000, 279). Antonelli then formalises this idea using what he calls a *proto-interpretation* of the language in (Antonelli 2000, 282). The general idea is along the lines given above: one first runs a proto-interpretation which treats empty terms and non-empty terms separately. Then, one feeds the result of this proto-interpretation into the interpretation function so as to finally get truth-conditions.

I will now explain how to define a proto-interpretation using the counter-proposal about fictional terms. Recall, a fictional name like "Emma Woodhouse" first appears in pretence. Within the pretence, the name is a real name referring to the flesh-and-blood individual. It is later introduced in

the serious language as a new empty term. Consequently, the name “Emma Woodhouse” is introduced in the serious language with some information about, at least, its origin. This is the only way we can distinguish between a real name, a non-fictional empty name and a fictional empty name, as discussed above. The set of information accompanying the fictional name should at least contain a mention to the original fiction so as to differentiate a fictional name from a non-fictional empty name like “Vulcan”. This is merely to say that if you did not know the fictional origin of “Emma Woodhouse”, you would mistakenly believe that the name was real and thus treat any sentence containing it as if it were a statement about a real individual. This, I assume, is uncontroversial.

Note that in the picture I am now presenting, one thus needs to have a story about how one *extracts* the relevant information from a pretence so as to introduce a new fictional name in the serious language. I cannot tell the whole story, though, for it largely exceeds the scope of this paper. However, I think the reader can find such a story in (Evans 1982, 358) when Evans introduces the notion of an “existentially creative pretence”.

Taking Antonelli’s analogy with modal logic at face value, we should think of an empty term as we think of a possible world. We would thus say that a predicate P is true at t iff the predicate P is contained in the informational content of t , i.e. the information provided with the introduction of t in the serious language. We would thus write something like: $t \vDash P$. However, I think this notation is misleading, because one usually writes a *proposition* in the right-hand-side of a \vDash and in our context, we talk about predicates. The notation I prefer would rather be something like: $P \in t$. But this notation is also misleading, for it is not true, strictly speaking, that terms are sets containing predicates as elements. Building a set out of a term is the proto-interpretation’s job. A proto-interpretation π is a function from terms of the language into sets of predicate such that:

- $\pi(t) = \emptyset$ if t is not an empty term
- $\pi(t) \neq \emptyset$ if t is an empty term

As should be clear by now, when t is an empty term, one should at least find in $\pi(t)$ information about t ’s origin, in the form of a list of predicates.

We can now explain away condition C and express the truth-conditions for atomic formulae in full generality:

$$(\text{proto-FL}) \ v(P^n(t_1, \dots, t_n)) = 1 \text{ iff } \begin{cases} I(t_i) \text{ is defined (for } 1 \leq i \leq n) \text{ and} \\ \langle I(t_1), \dots, I(t_n) \rangle \in I(P^n) \\ P \in \pi(t_1), \dots, P \in \pi(t_n) \text{ otherwise} \end{cases}$$

One can then define truth-conditions for complex formulae as usual.

The application of these truth-conditions is quite straightforward. Let us see how one can derive (1)'s truth-conditions using (proto-FL). ew is introduced into the serious language with some information about its fiction of origin, i.e. Jane Austen's *Emma*. Running a proto-interpretation on ew , we should at least have something like: $\pi(ew) = \{\text{empty, origin: } Emma, Emma \text{ was written by Jane Austen as a fiction, name for a character in that novel, ...}\}$ As for the predicate "being a fictional character", I am not sure how it should be analysed precisely.

Let us suppose, for simplicity, that the expression is something like the conjunction of "being a name for a character" (N) and "originating in a fiction" (F). It seems quite clear that $N \in \pi(ew)$ and $F \in \pi(ew)$. Therefore, given (proto-FL), it follows that $v(N(ew) \wedge F(ew)) = 1$.

Similarly, (proto-FL) predicts that statements like:

(7) François Récanati is a fictional philosopher.

are false. Indeed, "François Récanati" is a real name. Hence, in order to evaluate (7), one should look into the extension of "being a fictional philosopher". Whatever the precise analysis of that natural language predicate, I think one would not find the real individual *François Récanati* as part of the extension of that predicate. Therefore, (7) is predicted to be false. Consequently, the denial of (7) is true:

(8) François Récanati is not a fictional philosopher.

I think this squares well with the intuitive truth-conditions of these statements.

To finish with (proto-FL), I think one should remark that $I(F) = \emptyset$. In other words, in (proto-FL), the extension of the predicate "being fictional"

is the empty set. This means that, properly speaking, nothing is fictional. This is, of course, the central tenet of anti-realism.

2.3 Comparison with other free logic accounts of fictional terms

2.3.1 Negative free logic

The idea of using free logic to model the linguistic data involving fictional names is not new. For instance, one can find an argument in (Evans 1982, 344–9) which establishes very clearly that one is forced to adopt a kind of free logic to deal with (negative) existential statements if one recognises that the word “exist” in these sentences is not merely mentioned but really used. However, Evans did not apply his idea in the subsequent paragraphs, though he indicates that he would go for a negative free logic. I think that something like Evans’s program was taken up and developed by Mark Sainsbury, in a series of publications. Sainsbury’s proposal to use a negative free logic to theorise about fictional discourse is especially developed in (Sainsbury 2007, §6).

My account shares many features with Sainsbury’s account, but it crucially differs in that I use a positive free logic. In particular, I am completely on board with Sainsbury’s departure from the debate about whether one should have a Fregean or a Russellian account of fictional names. What is rightly said about Sainsbury’s proposal in (Orlando 2008, 115) would apply as it is to my proposal:³²

[Sainsbury’s] view is, on the one hand, unFregean since it strongly rejects the ascription of descriptive sense to names: names do not have senses which may be construed as ways of thinking about objects, or something along these Fregean lines. On the other hand, it is unRussellian since it does not subscribe to the claim that any genuine name must have a bearer. From Sainsbury’s teleological point of view, the Russellian *dictum* “Names name” is a generic truth but not a universal one: *typically* or *normally* names name but sometimes they might fail to achieve what can be taken to be their proper function.

³² Thanks to an anonymous referee for pointing this to me.

I think, this is typically a view inspired by the reading of Evans which I share. I thus think the debate between neo-Fregeans and neo-Russellians is quite orthogonal to the issue discussed in this paper, namely a theory of metafictional statements, and would use the same arguments which can be found, among other places, in (Sainsbury 2007).

As for the differences, I think there are two points worth commenting upon. First, contrary to Sainsbury, the theory I propose here is a theory of fictional terms and not of empty terms in general. Perhaps my treating fictional names as being introduced in the serious language with some bits of information about their origin can be extended so as to account for non-fictional empty terms like Le Verrier's "Vulcan". However, such an extension is not trivial and has not been done here. Consequently, my proposal should be seen as much more modest than Sainsbury's and somewhat local from a philosophy of language perspective.

Second, I disagree with Sainsbury's treatment of external statements like (1). According to Sainsbury, (1), when interpreted as a genuine assertion, is false. The reason is simple: according (FL-) atomic formulae containing a empty terms are always false. Sainsbury seems to be attracted to the anti-realist position according to which (1) can be true in some relevant extended pretence, but his position is not so clear from what I could understand. If that is the case, I would say that he is digging his own grave like the other anti-realists.

Here is another way of putting this difference. A good result of Sainsbury's, however, is that he predicts that statements like (6) are true external metafictional statements. Indeed a statement like:

(9) Emma Woodhouse exists.

is false according to (FL-). Consequently, (6) is true according to (FL-). What I fail to understand in (Sainsbury 2007) is whether there is a logical connection there is between (1) and (6). In my view, it is the truth of (1) which explains the truth of (6). I think this is a good feature of my theory. Such an explanation is not available to Sainsbury, though, for he holds that (1) is false while (6) is true, when both interpreted as genuine assertions.

2.3.2 Positive free logic

Interestingly, there are also positive free logic accounts of statements containing fictional terms in the literature for a long time. The first one I could find is in (Lambert and Van Fraassen 1972, 180–1). Lambert and Van Fraassen’s idea is called “story semantics” and consists in saying that the condition C discussed above is an enrichment of a classical model with a story S :

To get all the true sentences in the language we need as part of the model \mathcal{M} also a *story*. This story has to be consistent with the facts in \mathcal{M} , of course; if \mathcal{M} is the real world, the story may say that Pegasus flies, but not that Pegasus exists, nor that Pegasus is identical with some real horse.

Using the contemporary vocabulary introduced, Lambert and Van Fraassen are thus trying to model *fictional* statements using positive free logic. As I made explicit above, I think this is wrong-headed: fictional statements should not be thought of as *genuine* assertions but as assertions made within the scope of a pretence. Lambert and Van Fraassen say nothing about metafictional statements.

There is a more recent positive free logic account to be found in (Dumitru 2015) which is, I think, very interesting.³³ The main difference between this proposal and my proposal is that it is taken for granted in (Dumitru 2015, 152) that “fictional terms seem to have a major irreducible descriptive content”. As discussed above with Sainsbury, I am precisely denying this. Dumitru’s account and mine are thus coming from distinct research areas, though they interestingly end up sharing some theoretical commitments.

Moreover, it is possible that another difference between my account and Dumitru’s be roughly the same as the one given above with Lambert and Van Fraassen. Indeed, it seems that Dumitru is not concerned with the distinction between fictional and metafictional statements in his paper. It is true that he calls himself an “anti-realist”, but I am not so sure it

³³ Thanks to an anonymous referee for telling me this.

corresponds exactly to what I called anti-realism above. Anti-realism, in (Dumitru 2015, 151), is a position in which:

features of fictional objects are ultimately to be explained in terms of features of their marks.

I think this sentence is ambiguous, since “fictional objects” can either mean the flesh-and-blood individuals or the individuals of paper, to use the terminology I introduced earlier. I am not sure how to resolve this ambiguity because Dumitru does not make explicit the precise linguistic data he aims at modelling. If he was to give truth-conditions to fictional sentences using the positive free description theory which he advocates, I would disagree with him on the ground that fictional statements, in my view, do not have truth-conditions for they are not genuine assertions.

3. Anti-realism at works

In this last section, I would like to comment on the status of my proposal to rescue the anti-realist from digging their own grave and finally indicate further research about metafictional statements for the anti-realist.

3.1 Some peaceful reflections about the realist guns

I already said above that the anti-realist strategy I propose is something like a divide-and-conquer strategy against the realist guns. Metafictional statements are indeed problematic if you are an anti-realist. But you should distinguish between the external ones and the others, for the external ones are the more threatening. Then you should deal with intensional and cross-over statements using extended pretences and you should deal with the external statements using the positive free semantics I adapted from Antonelli’s proto-semantics.

Now, endorsing free logic, if we reflect on the realist argument once again, can be seen as a way of denying the second premise, namely:

- (ii) The principle of compositionality requires that a name in the subject place of a truth-conditional statement refers.

To be more accurate, FL says that this premise is ambiguous, for it really depends on what one means by “a name” here. If it means a *referring term*, then of course the premise is trivially valid, for it goes like this:

The principle of compositionality requires that a referring term in the subject place of a truth-conditional statement refers.

But if it means *either a referring or a non-referring term*, the premise is false, and the argument does not go through. For FL is precisely a compositional apparatus which delivers truth-conditions for statements which contain non-referring terms. I think this points to a subtle interpretation of the notion of compositionality, which is a fundamental notion in the philosophy of language.³⁴

I think it is fair to say that it is a notion of compositionality which does the job in the realist argument. This notion is a complex one, albeit essential to philosophy of language. One part of compositionality, that everyone likes, is the fact that truth-conditions are defined inductively. It is the part which says that the meaning of a sentence is a function of the meaning of its parts as well as the way they are arranged. The second part of compositionality, which is more controversial, concerns how one should give truth-conditions to atomic formulae, those having the form “*S* is *P*”. Compositionality tells us that such statements are true when the meaning of *S* and the meaning of *P* compose in some sense, i.e. relate to each other; the term of art for this basic relation is *predication*.

Frege, who introduced the notion, argued that it is a functional notion: this was a major breakthrough that I think nobody can seriously deny. According to this view, at the core of compositionality, one can find the notion of extensionality. Roughly, what we compose are the extensions which are the domains and co-domains of functions. So the basic blocks of a compositional language should have extensions. Names are one of the basic blocks of language, therefore names have extensions. In the wake of Frege, we thus find this idea that names without extensions are utterly useless, i.e. a dreadful anomaly. Of course, the anomaly is very pervasive in

³⁴ This is not a coincidence, for free logicians are philosophers of language and logicians who have actively taken part in these debates from the fifties on.

natural language, fictional names are but one thorn on the side of Frege's notion of extensionality.

I think, the subtleness of (proto-FL) as defined above³⁵ is to show that the problem with empty terms is not with extensionality. Indeed, the proto-semantics defined above is an extensional semantics, handling both referring and non-referring terms. The problem is existence. When a purported referent does not exist, it is not possible to treat it extensionally.³⁶ The idea is thus to make room for the "anomaly" (like fictional names) while keeping a general extensional framework. Extensionality should thus be restricted hypothetically: the meaning of a sentence can be defined extensionally *provided* each term has an extension *and* one should have a back-up plan compatible with extensionality when a term crashes. The anomaly has now joined the rule into big extensional, compositional system. Naturally, the staunch realist will deny this and say that the proto-semantics given above is *not* extensional, for it has an intentional black box which was obvious in the condition *C* given above.³⁷ I tried to open this black box and show that it is compatible with extensionality. Though I think compatibility is more than enough, some see this as a big let down.

You can now see that I gave what I promised: some new reasons to dig but no riffle to shoot at the realist. I guess I am a pacifist at heart.

3.2 *Further issues about metafictional statements*

Unfortunately, the anti-realist cannot put away the shovel and relax, for there are many open problems in the area which require some more work.³⁸ I will only mention two big problems ahead. One concerns the delicate problem of so-called co-predication statements like:

³⁵ Probably also of other free logic accounts.

³⁶ See (Lambert 1981) for a detailed discussion of this.

³⁷ See (Bencivenga 2006) for an insightful discussion on the distinction between extensional vs intentional systems and their underlying philosophical commitments.

³⁸ Just like for the realist, by the way, who have a lot of problem solving to do when they stop playing with their guns.

- (10) Emma Woodhouse is the 21-year-old protagonist of Jane Austen's novel *Emma*.³⁹

Such sentences share both features of fictional and metafictional statements. Emma Woodhouse here is *both* a flesh-and-blood individual (she is 21) and an individual of paper (she is the protagonist of a novel). The difficulty is that one should refrain from applying (proto-FL) too quickly. Imagine I accept that some information about the flesh-and-blood individual be stored in $\pi(ew)$ alongside with the information about the origin of the name. Then, where am I to stop? It seems that all the fictional information we have about the fictional Emma can smuggle into the serious language in this manner. Consequently, we will have enough in $\pi(ew)$ to make any fictional statement true *simpliciter*: this really ruins the whole point of anti-realism. The problem is thus a delineation problem (which is, by the way, shared by the realist): what counts as fictional information and metafictional information? How should one draw the line? In this paper, I have limited myself to the least controversial bit of metafictional information, i.e. statements like (1). But I have said nothing about *how much* I am prepared to store in $\pi(ew)$. I am still digging.

The other is the very difficult problem of quantified negative existentials like:

- (11) Most of the characters in War and Peace do not exist, though quite a few are historical figures.⁴⁰

Quantified negative existentials can clearly claim the right to be external metafictional statements, especially if one considers that fictional negative existentials are (as the anti-realist should). After all, the truth of (11) is typically inferred from the truth of relevant (negative) existential statements ("Pierre Bezukhov does not exist", "Napoléon Bonaparte exists", etc.). But, the positive free logic I developed is helpless with these statements. Indeed, the semantics of quantifiers was untouched, which means

³⁹ This sentence comes from the Wikipedia entry "Emma Woodhouse".

⁴⁰ See (Kroon 2003) for an analysis of such statement in an anti-realist frame of mind. Kroon considers this problem the "hardest by far" for anti-realist. See also (Van Inwagen 1977) for an argument against anti-realism using quantified metafictional statements, and (Walton 1990) for a response.

that quantifiers, in free logic in general (thus in (proto-FL)), ranges over all and only the existing individuals (this is clause f) above). So it is impossible to quantify over non-existent individuals in FL. Consequently, quantified negative existentials cannot be given truth-conditions. This is a difficult problem which calls for an extension of positive free semantics so as to account for quantified expressions. Of course, such an extension should not give way to realism, which is a challenge. I am still digging.

Acknowledgments

First I would like to thank Piotr Stalmaszczyk for having organised PHILANG2019 in Łódź where I first presented the ideas one can find in this paper, in a friendly atmosphere. Later on, I developed these ideas in my dissertation which I wrote in the Fall 2019. This paper owes a lot to the heated discussions I had with François Récanati who was my PhD supervisor at the Institut Jean Nicod. I now think that what is presented here is not as incompatible as it first appears with his theory of metafictional statements. Finally, I would also like to thank an anonymous referee for very important comments which made this paper much, much better.

References

- Antonelli, G Aldo. 2000. "Proto-Semantics for Positive Free Logic." *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 29 (3): 277–294. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1004748615483>
- Bencivenga, Ermanno. 1986. "Free Logics." In *Handbook of Philosophical Logic*, 373–426. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-0458-8_3
- Bencivenga, Ermanno. 2006. "Putting Language First: The 'Liberation' of Logic from Ontology." In *A Companion to Philosophical Logic*, 293–304. Blackwell Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470996751.ch20>
- Braun, David. 2005. "Empty Names, Fictional Names, Mythical Names." *Noûs* 39 (4): 596–631. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0029-4624.2005.00541.x>
- Burge, Tyler. 1974. "Truth and Singular Terms." *Noûs* 8: 309–25. <https://www.doi.org/10.2307/2214437>
- Calvino, Italo. 1988. *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*. transl. Creagh, P. Charles Eliot Norton lectures. Harvard University Press.
- Crimmins, Mark. 1998. "Hesperus and Phosphorus: Sense, Pretense, and Reference." *The Philosophical Review* 107 (1): 1–47. <https://www.doi.org/10.2307/2998314>

- Currie, Gregory. 1990. *The Nature of Fiction*. Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511897498>.
- Dumitru, Mircea. 2015. "A Free Logic for Fictionalism." In *Romanian Studies in Philosophy of Science*, edited by Ilie Pârnu, Gabriel Sandu, and Iulian D. Toader, 149–63. Springer International Publishing.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-16655-1_10
- Dummett, Michael. 1973. *Frege: Philosophy of Language*. 1st ed. Harper & Row.
- Evans, Gareth. 1982. *The Varieties of Reference*. ed. J. McDowell. Clarendon Paperbacks.
- Everett, Anthony. 2013. *The Nonexistent*. Oxford University Press.
- Fine, Kit. 1982. "The Problem of Non-Existents. I. Internalism." *Topoi* 1: 97–140.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00157548>
- Friend, Stacie. 2017. "The Real Foundation of Fictional Worlds." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 95 (1): 29–42.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00048402.2016.1149736>
- García-Carpintero, Manuel. 2019. "Semantics of Fictional Terms." *Teorema: Revista Internacional de Filosofía* 38 (2): 73–100.
- Kripke, Saul. 1972. *Naming and Necessity*. 1st ed. Harvard University Press.
- Kripke, Saul. 1973/2013. *Reference and Existence: The John Locke Lectures*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Kroon, Frederick. 2003. "Quantified Negative Existentials." *Dialectica* 57 (2): 149–64. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-8361.2003.tb00262.x>
- Lambert, Karel. 1963. "Existential Import Revisited." *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic* 4 (4): 288–92. <https://projecteuclid.org/euclid.ndjfl/1093957655>
- Lambert, Karel. 1981. "On the Philosophical Foundations of Free Logic." *Inquiry* 24 (2): 147–203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00201748108601931>
- Lambert, Karel and Bas Van Fraassen. 1972. *Derivation and Counterexample; an Introduction to Philosophical Logic*. Encino, Calif, Dickenson Pub. Co.
<https://archive.org/details/derivationcounte0000lamb>
- Lejewski, Czesław. 1954. "Logic and Existence." *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 5 (18): 104–19. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjps/V.18.104>
- Leonard, Henry. 1956. "The Logic of Existence." *Philosophical Studies* 7 (4): 49–64. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02221764>
- Lewis, David. 1975. "Reply to Dana Scott, 'Is There Life on Possible Worlds?'" In *A Companion to David Lewis*, edited by Barry Loewer and Johnathan Schaffer, 18–21. Wiley Blackwell.
- Lewis, David. 1978. "Truth in Fiction." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1): 37–46.
- Lewis, David. 1983. "Truth in Fiction with Postscripts." *Philosophical Papers, vol. 1*, 261–80. New York: Oxford University Press.

- https://andrewmbailey.com/dkl/Truth_in_Fiction.pdf
- Lycan, William. 2015. "A Reconsidered Defence of Haecceitism Regarding Fictional Individuals." In: *Fictional Objects*, edited by Stuart Brock and Anthony Everett, 24–40. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
DOI: [10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198735595.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198735595.001.0001)
- Maier, Emar. 2017. "Fictional Names in Psychologicistic Semantics." *Theoretical Linguistics* 43 (1-2): 1–45. <https://doi.org/10.1515/tl-2017-0001>
- Meinong, Alexius. 1904. "Über Gegenstandstheorie". In: *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie* (edit. A. Meinong), Barth, Leipzig.
- Morscher, Edgar and Peter Simons. 2001. "Free Logic: A Fifty-year Past and an Open Future." In *New Essays in Free Logic*, 1–34. Springer.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-9761-6_1
- Orlando, Eleonora. 2008. "Fictional Names without Fictional Objects." *Crítica: Revista Hispanoamericana de Filosofía* 40 (120): 111–12.
- Parsons, Terence. 1980. *Nonexistent Objects*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Pustejovsky, James. 1998. *The Generative Lexicon*. Revised edition. Bradford Books. MIT Press.
- Quine, Willard Van Orman. 1948. "On What There Is." *The Review of Metaphysics* 2 (1): 21–38.
- Récanati, François. 2012. *Mental Files*. Oxford University Press.
<https://www.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199659982.001.0001>
- Récanati, François. 2018. "II—Fictional, Metafictional, Parafictional." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 118 (1): 25–54.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/arisoc/aoy001>
- Récanati, François. Forthcoming. "Fictional Reference as Simulation." In *The Language of Fiction*, edited by Emar Maier and Andreas Stokke. Oxford University Press.
- Russell, Bertrand. 1919. *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Sainsbury, Mark. 2007. *Reference without Referents*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Salmon, Nathan. 1998. "Nonexistence." *Noûs* 32 (3): 277–319.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/0029-4624.00101>
- Schiffer, Stephen. 2003. *The Things We Mean*. Oxford University Press.
<https://www.doi.org/10.1093/0199257760.001.0001>
- Schock, Rolf. 1968. *Logics without Existence Assumptions*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell. <https://www.doi.org/10.2307/2273023>
- Searle, John. 1975. "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse." *New Literary History* 6 (2): 319–32.

- Terrone, Enrico. 2017. "On Fictional Characters as Types." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 57 (2): 161–76. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayw091>
- Thomasson, Amie. 1999. *Fiction and Metaphysics*. Cambridge Studies in Philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thomasson, Amie. 2003. "Fictional Characters and Literary Practices." *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 43 (2): 138–57. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjaesthetics/43.2.138>
- Van Fraassen, Bas 1966a. "Singular Terms, Truth-value Gaps, and Free Logic." *The Journal of Philosophy* 63 (17): 481–95. <https://www.doi.org/10.2307/2024549>
- Van Fraassen, Bas. 1966b. "The Completeness of Free Logic." *Zeitschrift für mathematische Logik und Grundlagen der Mathematik* 12: 219–34. <https://www.doi.org/10.1002/malq.19660120117>
- Van Inwagen, Peter. 1977. "Creatures of Fiction." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14 (4): 299–308.
- Voltoini, Alberto. 2020. "How to Vindicate (Fictional) Creationism." In *Abstract Objects*, 277–94. Springer. https://www.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38242-1_14
- Walters, Lee. 2020. "Fictional Names." Unpublished manuscript.
- Walton, Kendall. 1990. *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*. Harvard University Press.
- Whitehead, Alfred North and Bertrand Russell (1912). *Principia Mathematica*. Vol. 2. Cambridge University Press.
- Williamson, Timothy. 2013. *Modal Logic as Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://www.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199552078.001.0001>
- Woods, John. 2018. *Truth in Fiction: Rethinking its Logic*. 1st ed. Synthese Library 391. Springer International Publishing.
- Woodward, Richard. 2011. "Truth in Fiction." *Philosophy Compass* 6 (3): 158–67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-9991.2010.00367.x>
- Zalta, Edward. 1983. *Abstract Objects: An Introduction to Axiomatic Metaphysics*. 1st ed. Synthese Library 160. Springer Netherlands. <https://www.doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-6980-3>

On Anaphors Linked to Names Used Metaphorically

Eros Corazza* – Christopher Genovesi**

Received: 3 September 2020 / Accepted: 5 December 2020

Abstract. In their 2018 paper “On the Metaphoric Use of (Fictional) Proper Names”, Corazza & Genovesi explored what speakers do when they utter a fictional name in a metaphorical way to refer to actual individuals. The example given was “Odysseus returned home” referring to their friend Bill, who had returned after a long and hectic journey. With such an example in mind, Corazza & Genovesi claimed that speakers produce a metaphorical utterance where properties of Odysseus are mapped onto the referent that the speaker intends so that they refer to that person. That is to say, the name “Odysseus” somewhat ceases to be a proper name, and instead becomes something akin to a Donnellan’s referential use of descriptions, i.e. a description that successfully picks out an object of discourse even if the latter does not satisfy the descriptive content conveyed by the description. In our example Bill does not satisfy the property of being called “Odysseus”. In this paper, we connect the previous work by Corazza & Genovesi’s with anaphora, in particular with the use of anaphoric definite descriptions linked to a metaphorical use of a proper name. With fictional proper names in mind, we are interested

* University of the Basque Country and Carleton University

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8074-7777>

 The University of the Basque Country UPV-EHU, Donostia, Spain.

 eros.corazza@carleton.ca

** University of the Basque Country

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8890-8336>

 The University of the Basque Country UPV-EHU, Donostia, Spain.

 genovesi.c@gmail.com

© The Author. Journal compilation © The Editorial Board, *Organon F*.



This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International Public License (CC BY-NC 4.0).

in cases where speakers anaphorically refer to the actual referent. For example, we are interested in utterances of the sort “Odysseus returned home, he1 is hungry” or “Odysseus1 returned home, the/that brave soldier1 is hungry”, where “Odysseus” is metaphorically used to refer to the actual person, Bill, the individual the speaker has in mind. Such sentences leave us wondering how the anaphoric pronoun or description simultaneously carries the content from the fictional subject, and refers to Bill. On a cursory analysis, anaphora forces the properties attributed to the actual referent (e.g., Bill) into the background, like pragmatic presupposition. In the cases of anaphoric complex demonstratives and definite descriptions, the speaker emphasizes, or makes salient the further implications shared between the fictional character (e.g., Odysseus) and the actual referent (e.g., Bill; and that Bill, like Odysseus, had a harrowing journey).

Keywords: Proper names, metaphors, descriptions; anaphors, anti-logophoric pronouns.

1. Introduction

Proper names and metaphors have been discussed independently at great length in philosophy and linguistics, and much more recently in cognitively oriented disciplines such as psychology. However, there isn't much discussion about the use of proper names in metaphorical utterances.¹ In fact, many discussions concerning metaphor are limited to decontextualized noun-noun predicative types, conventionally captured by the formula: *A is (a) B* (e.g., “Man is a wolf”). Because metaphors can occur in a variety of linguistic expressions, it is important that theorists of metaphor, and theorists of language more broadly, examine the variety of types of metaphor to generate a tractable theory. The reason is that theories focused on decontextualized utterances of the *A is (a) B* type may lack the generalizability to accommodate metaphors in a wider linguistic context (e.g., embedded metaphors, anaphora, and extended metaphors such as literary conceits). By way of a general analysis, this paper raises some issues concerning

¹ For some discussion, see Cacciari & Glucksberg (1994), Glucksberg & Keysar (1990), Leezenberg (2001), and Ritchie (2013).

metaphorical proper names (MPNs) in combination with anaphoric descriptions that can serve as the topic for further investigations concerning the behaviour of metaphors in general, and MPNs in particular.

First, in connection with previous work on the topic (e.g., Corazza & Genovesi, 2018) we claim that the function of a MPN somewhat ceases to be a proper name, and instead becomes something akin to the referential use of descriptions à la Donnellan, i.e. a description that successfully picks out an object of discourse even if the latter does not fully satisfy the descriptive content of the description (details below). Secondly, we build on these previous observations by connecting them to anaphoric descriptions. For example, we are interested in utterances of the sort “Odysseus₁ returned home, he₁ is hungry” and “Odysseus₁ returned home, the/*that* brave soldier₁ is hungry”, where “Odysseus” is metaphorically used to pick out Bill—the individual the speaker has in mind—and the anaphoric clause is linked to the intended referent. Note that in our paradigm case “Odysseus returned home”, the fictional name “Odysseus” does not function like a Fregean case (i.e., like “Tully” and “Cicero” referring to one and the same orator) where the auditor is simply unaware that Odysseus is Bill’s alias. Rather, the intended referent, Bill, is determined in part by the auditor recognizing what the speaker intends by the metaphorical use of the (fictional) proper name, and the intended referent updates the shared beliefs of the speakers so that the anaphoric clause is felicitous.

The use of MPNs leave us wondering how anaphoric pronouns and descriptions simultaneously carry the content from the (fictional) subject, and refer to the actual referent. The essay is broken down as follows: In section 1, we define what we mean by MPN. In section 2, we offer a cursory analysis on anti-logophoricity which we maintain can help us understanding MPNs and anaphoric clauses. This leads us to consider how the properties attributed to the actual referent of an MPN (e.g., Bill) are forced into the background, like pragmatic presupposition (section 4). In the cases of anaphoric complex demonstratives and definite descriptions, the speaker can insist on, or make salient, further features shared between the fictional character (e.g., Odysseus) and the actual referent (e.g., Bill; and that Bill, like the mythical Odysseus, should want to eat a full meal after such a long journey, etc.). Section 5 concludes by briefly discussing avenues for further research.

2. What is an MPN?

In defining what metaphor is, theorists often speak of the relationship between conceptually distinct entities, where the conceptual entity described as the “topic” or “target” is understood by some other conceptually distinct entity described as the “base”, “target” or “source” (see Wee, 2006). We take MPNs to be utterances where the referent of the proper name functions as the source. In this paper, we follow Genovesi (2018), in speaking of “source” and “target” characterizations. So, for example, an utterance such as “John is a rock”, although metaphorical, does not qualify as an MPN. Crudely, it describes the individual John as being physically strong, and perhaps capable of taking some relevant high degree of physical punishment. Here, John is the target, and the source is rock. By contrast, MPNs exploit the value of proper names as the source in characterizing some target.

In our paradigm case “Odysseus returned home”, “Odysseus” is an MPN expression because the name is used to characterize the intended source, Bill. Another example of an MPN expression is the following said of Matthew Stafford (Quarter back for the Detroit Lions American football club): “Shakespeare has made yet another wonderful play!”² One thing to note is

² We believe that both examples differ from metonymic expressions. Theoretically, metonymy involves drawing a contiguity between two entities, whereas metaphor involves drawing a resemblance between two distinct conceptual entities. In both examples above, we have a resemblance established between classes of people who have been away, and mythic heroes who have been fighting for their homecoming. In the second example, we have the resemblance between classes of people who play football exceptionally well, and those who write exceptionally well. Metonymy, on the other hand, involves the use of establishing a relationship within the same conceptual domain (e.g., “There was no comment from the White House” where the underlined term stands for or provides access to the sub-domain: the American government. Similarly, in “He is reading Shakespeare” the source domain SHAKESPEARE stands for the subdomain SHAKESPEARE’S WRITINGS). Standard types of metonymic mappings are, part for whole, producer for product, place for institution, object used for user. Empirically, recent work on metaphor and metonymy suggests a difference in processing strategies where metonymy is more closely related to literal speech than metaphor (see, e.g., Bambini et al. 2013).

that an MPN is intended to invoke some property or subset of properties that will only make sense if the auditor or audience has some (basic) appreciation of the legend of Odysseus and his travails. In this way, the meaning must be inferred locally. That is to say, it is important that the audience have some knowledge that Odysseus was the hero of Homer's epic, the *Odyssey*, most famous for his homecoming which lasted ten eventful years. So too, perhaps, is knowledge of the fact that Odysseus was not recognized by anyone except his dog Argos, that he is the husband of Penelope, and that he is the legendary king of Ithaca. In this case, it is not simply the conventional meanings of the terms and their mode of combination, but the "substantive and wide-ranging presuppositions (both real and mutually pretended) about the referents of the relevant expressions" (Camp, 2009, p. 265) that aid in shaping the metaphorical interpretation of the MPN expression (we turn to this in Section 4).³

In what follows, we investigate how MPNs can set up discourse referents and contribute to a larger conversational context. Specifically, we focus on the way anaphoric pronouns are linked to names used metaphorically. Consider the following two paradigm cases of our investigation below:

- (1) Odysseus₁ returned home, he₁ is hungry
- (2) Odysseus₁ returned home, [the brave soldier]₁ is hungry⁴

If we understand (1) literally, it comes to mean that the anaphoric "he", if co-indexed with "Odysseus", is co-referential with it. It picks up Odysseus as its referent, and the anaphoric clause inherits the semantic value of the name that it is linked to and co-indexed with. However, if we treat the use of "Odysseus" in (1) or (2) to be metaphorical—the motivation for so doing

³ Note that our example MPNs are used referentially (that is as a label for an entity). MPNs can also be used predicatively (as a description that an entity may satisfy to some degree, or not satisfy at all). This is not a problem for our view, since we understand that in both cases, the auditor must narrow the search for referable things or properties expressed by an utterance. For discussion, see Wee (2006, 357–58). In general, the use of MPNs is motivated by some pragmatically intended salient property or properties.

⁴ Though we will concentrate on descriptions used anaphorically, we think the same story could be used to analyze complex demonstratives used anaphorically, like e.g.: "Odysseus₁ returned home, [that brave soldier]₁ is hungry".

arising from one or a combination of the following: Bill’s long absence; his arduous journey abroad; that we (like the faithful Argos) were the only members of the friend group able to recognize Bill after his long absence, etc.—with the use of the name to refer to our friend Bill, then the semantic value of the anaphoric “he” cannot be Odysseus; it must be Bill. How is this possible?

3. Anti-logophoricity

In order to understand this phenomenon, we think it might be instructive to look at how descriptions can be linked, and co-referential, with their antecedent. Consider so-called anti-logophoric pronouns⁵ like “the dumb racist” in (3):

(3) Donald Trump₁ returned home, [the dumb racist]₁ is hungry⁶

In (3) the speaker picks up Donald Trump as the object of discourse and says that he returned home and he is hungry. On top of that, the speaker further attributes to him the property of being a dumb racist. For sure, Donald Trump does not consider himself to be dumb (quite the contrary, as his tweets allege), let alone a racist. In (3) it is the narrator that characterizes

⁵ Logophoricity is a term first introduced by Hagège (1974) in studies of African languages. A logophoric pronoun always appears in an attitude ascription or oratio obliqua construal. It is an anaphoric pronoun that, on top of being co-referential with the term it is co-indexed with, it attributes to the referent of the antecedent a thought s/he would express. For instance, “she (herself)” in “Mary thinks that she (herself) is bright” can be considered as a logophoric pronoun insofar as it attributes to Mary a thought she would express by using the pronoun “I”. On the contrary, an anti-logophoric pronoun is an anaphoric pronoun that attributes to the referent of the term it is co-indexed with a property the latter would not attribute to him/herself, let alone accept it as a correct characterization of him/herself (see Corazza 2005; Dubinsky & Hamilton 1998).

⁶ In no way do the authors intend to insult or undermine the former president of the USA. We use “Donald Trump” merely as an example to illustrate the phenomenon we are trying to highlight. The example was taken from a personal conversation, and we have since let that friend go.

Donald Trump as a dumb racist. This epithet is something that transcends the main purpose of the utterance, i.e. to claim that Donald Trump returned home and he is hungry.

To highlight this, consider that this sentence is voiced by one of Trump's butler who, needless to say, does not hold his boss in high esteem. Our butler's main communicative intention is to inform his collaborators that Trump arrived and he is hungry, and perhaps to communicate the conversational implicature that they should go fetch his favourite cheeseburger. Yet, the speaker, on top of saying that Donald Trump returned home and that he is hungry, *also* characterizes Donald Trump to be a dumb racist. One way to understand (3) is to argue that the speaker expresses three propositions to which he is committed:

- (3) a. That Donald Trump returned home
- (3) b. That Donald Trump is hungry
- (3) c. That Donald Trump is a dumb racist

All three propositions could be true, all false, some true and others false. Donald Trump may have returned home, but he may not be hungry. He may not have returned and be hungry. He may have returned home and be hungry, but not be a dumb racist. He may be a dumb racist who is not home yet, etc.

Whether (3) is false/true if all the propositions are true/false is not a matter we will be concerned with here. Our aim is much more mundane. We want to figure out how descriptions (or complex demonstratives) work when anaphorically linked to names used metaphorically. In due course, we explain how this analysis can be applied to give us understanding of MPN expressions like (1) and (2) with the proper name "Odysseus" used metaphorically to select Bill as the object of discourse in connection with the anaphoric clause.

4. Attributive anaphors

Following Corazza (2005), we want to treat anaphors found in utterances such as (1) and (2) as attributive anaphors. However, although there are some similarities between these two cases, we would like to highlight

their differences. One of the major differences between (1) and (2) is the following: In the first example, we know that in our discourse situation the anaphoric pronoun “he” refers to Bill, the subject raised to salience by the metaphorical use of “Odysseus”, and not to Odysseus, the fictional character. The anaphoric pronoun marks the gender of the referent of the utterance. According to our introspective judgements, we believe this to be obligatory. We offer examples where there is gender disagreement between the MPN, and the gender of the person the speaker is referring to. For example, assume that Bill has a very close friend, John, who has been eagerly anticipating Bill’s return. Later at the pub, in speaking about John, Mary utters:

(4) Penelope₁⁷ is at the bar, and he₁’s waiting for Odysseus/Bill

An auditor in the know would understand that in this situation “Penelope” is used to refer to John, as stressed by the anaphoric pronoun “he” motivated by John’s anticipating and longing to have his friend back. However, consider the same utterance where the speaker uses an alternate pronoun, and within a speech report. In such a communicative situation it seems strange, if not infelicitous, to utter the following:

(5) ? Penelope₁ is at the bar, and she₁’s waiting for Odysseus/Bill⁸

(5) ? a. Chris said that Penelope is at the bar, and she’s waiting for Odysseus/Bill

when referring to our mutual friend, John. Unless, of course, the speaker uses “she” in a figurative (i.e., sarcastic) way to, for instance, deride John as being too feminine.⁹

If we were uttering (4) literally, then we are constrained by the common practice to preserve gender agreement between the name and the anaphoric

⁷ According to the Homeric Epic, Penelope is Odysseus’ wife. After ten years spent fighting the Trojan War, Odysseus spent another ten years finding his way back to his wife and his kingdom of Ithaca. All the while, Penelope had eagerly anticipated his return.

⁸ It may be permissible to use the third person plural “they” which has more recently been used as a gender-neutral pronoun in the same way as the second-person singular.

⁹ It seems possible to use the anaphoric pronoun “she” with “Penelope” in referring to John. However, we believe that it connotes a critical attitude of the intended referent.

pronoun.¹⁰ However, as mentioned, we do not think that the same thing holds true for metaphorical tokens of the same sentence. In order to preserve the felicity of the metaphor it seems that one must use the pronoun that agrees with the gender of the actual referent. For, it would be infelicitous to misgender the referent (but see footnote 9). In Gricean terminology, the speaker flouts the maxim of quality (truthfulness: do not say what you think to be false), not to mention the sort of disrespect that comes with misgendering.

We think the same thing holds true for utterances where the name is not fictional, but refers to an actual person. Consider the case where your friend, Jane, a renowned physicist has had yet another significant breakthrough in her research. It seems permissible to say:

- (6) Einstein₁ just had another breakthrough; she₁ is well on her way to a Nobel prize

In the case of anaphoric descriptions, we seem to have a bit more license. For example, we may extend the metaphor, and say things that apply to Odysseus, and predicate them of Bill. Alternatively, we may also use descriptions that does not fit properties of the metaphorical referent. Consider the following:

- (7) Odysseus₁ returned home, [the lazy bastard]₁ is hungry¹¹

where the epithet picks out Bill, and not the mythical Odysseus. In this case the description works like an anti-logophoric pronoun.

So, given our analysis so far, we can identify two ways descriptions can be linked to the metaphorical use of a proper name: (i) the description can convey non-metaphorical information about the referent (which is selected by the metaphorical use of the name), such as (1); or (ii) the description can convey further metaphorical information about the latter, such as (2).

¹⁰ We are here assuming that the name “Penelope” marks the gender of the referent and that it is not used like “Sue” in Cash’s famous song “A Boy Named Sue”.

¹¹ Although we will concentrate on descriptions used anaphorically, we think the same story could be used to analyze complex demonstratives used anaphorically, such as: “Odysseus₁ returned home, [that brave soldier]₁ is hungry” or “Odysseus₁ returned home [that lazy bastard]₁ is hungry”.

Consider (7), an utterance used to refer to Bill who has just returned home from a week-long vacation in the Bahamas, where he did nothing but eat, sleep, and drink. Here “Odysseus” is used to refer to Bill, along with the description “the lazy bastard”. Although co-referential with the metaphorical use of “Odysseus” the description’s primary communicative goal is not to convey a metaphorical interpretation. Rather, the metaphor interpretation serves as a springboard to generate the sarcasm expressed by the speaker.¹² In Gricean terms, we offer a rational reconstruction of the inferential strategy used by the auditor¹³: An audience familiar with the Homeric epic would recognize (7) as being odd, given that Odysseus was anything but lazy, let alone a bastard. Rather, (7) communicates the information that “Odysseus”, referring to Bill, is uttered sarcastically to set up a contrast between Bill and the fictional Odysseus. In that case, the description works like an anti-logophoric pronoun. We may illustrate a case of (ii) by an utterance such as (2), that we repeat here:

(2) Odysseus₁ returned home, [the brave soldier]₁ is hungry

uttered to highlight, for instance, the fact that Bill has been on a long tour in Afghanistan. In that case the metaphorical description “the brave soldier” is used to explicate some feature of Odysseus that gets transferred to and aligned with properties that are true of Bill. The description in (2) pragmatically forces the anaphoric interpretation insofar as it raises to salience some features commonly attributed to the mythical Odysseus that are further aligned with Bill in the mapping process from source to target.

5. Presuppositions

When we use proper names, we generally presuppose the existence of the referent to which it refers. However, we have seen that there are

¹² Following Stern (2000), and (Popa-Wyatt 2017; Popa-Wyatt 2010) for the logical, and psychological priority of metaphor interpretation in compound figurative utterances (e.g., metaphorical/ironic expression).

¹³ See Genovesi (2019, 2020) for a detailed analysis on the differences between rational interpretation and actual inferential processing.

exceptions to this generality. In referring to Bill by using the name “Odysseus”, one doesn’t interpret this as referring to the fictional character, but rather exploits the name to pick out a property or properties to link it to the intended referent (i.e., Bill). Corazza & Genovesi (2018) explored how this was possible. In relation to anaphora, the notion of presupposition can help us capture the mechanism by which the anaphora is bound to the intended discourse referent. We follow Stalnaker (1999) in understanding presuppositions to be a pragmatic phenomenon. For the expressions (1) and (2) to be considered appropriate in context, the speaker and auditor mutually know or assume some information. He writes:

Presupposition, as ordinarily understood, is a propositional attitude, and not a semantic relation. It is speakers who make presuppositions; what they presuppose are the things they take for granted when they speak – things they take to go without saying. If this is what presupposition is, then the falsity of something one presupposes will not necessarily be incompatible with the truth or falsity of what one says when making those presuppositions. (Stalnaker 1999, 7)

Furthermore, we know that presuppositions are heritable. They are usually maintained by negatives, interrogatives, and conditional antecedents:

- (1) a. Odysseus₁ has returned home, he₁ is hungry
- b. Odysseus₁ has returned home, he₁ is not hungry
- c. Odysseus₁ has returned home, is he₁ hungry?
- d. If Odysseus₁ has returned home, then he₁ must be hungry¹⁴

Thus, the metaphorical use of “Odysseus” to refer to Bill, like a presupposition, can be preserved in negative, interrogative and conditional antecedents as shown above. In other words, when analyzing our target sentences (1) and (2), we must consider the speaker’s use of “Odysseus” as intended to refer to Bill as a presumption that the hearer will keep in mind to resolve the anaphoric complement.

The content expressed by metaphorically using “Odysseus” to refer to Bill in (1) is that Bill returned home and that, Bill is hungry. This is,

¹⁴ Here the presupposition is filtered, but it is not blocked by the conditional.

roughly, how the metaphorical use of a proper name works together with its anaphoric complement. If this is right, then we know that the function of the MPN is motivated by establishing a connection from Odysseus to Bill. As such, disagreement about whether Bill embodies some or many properties of the mythic hero does not affect the truth-value of the utterance. Rather, what is relevant for the truth-value is whether or not Bill did in fact return home, and whether or not Bill is hungry.¹⁵

The propositional attitude carried by the anaphoric use of a description like “the brave soldier” in (2) picks up Bill (who is referred to *via* the use of the fictional name “Odysseus”). In that case the speaker exploits stereotypical information about Odysseus (i.e., that he is a brave soldier) to anaphorically refer back to Bill. By doing so, the speaker makes explicit some descriptive content that is associated with the mythical Odysseus. Typically, in uttering a metaphor, the stereotypical information is not explicit. For example, if one utters “That politician is a snake” one may intend an auditor to come to understand that one means some stereotypical information such as being deceitful or treacherous. However, one could also mean that the politician in question is cunning or that he swallowed a big case, and so on. In order to come to the intended message an auditor has to make explicit for oneself what the speaker means and intends to communicate.

Like with presuppositions, once it is established that Bill is the intended referent the hearer keeps the link between Odysseus and Bill in the background of the discourse situation. This should help us to explain cases such as (2), where the speaker extends the metaphorical link between Bill and Odysseus by using further descriptions concerning Odysseus (in our example “the brave soldier”) to anaphorically refer to Bill, while still

¹⁵ On this aspect one can subscribe to either the Fregean view that utterances of sentences containing an empty term (like, e.g., a fictional name) lack a truth value or that this utterance is false, as Russell would argue. We remain neutral. Nevertheless, we are sympathetic with the direct reference view (see, e.g., Donnellan 1974) that the tokening of a sentence like “Peter Pan never grows old” does not express a (singular) proposition for the simple reason that there is no object entering the proposition expressed. In our paradigm case the speaker, in exploiting “Odysseus” to refer to Bill, expresses a singular proposition having Bill as a constituent and the latter is true if Bill instantiates the property of having returned home, false otherwise.

conveying the main message (i.e., that Bill₁ has returned home and that he₁ is hungry). In that case the description used anaphorically brings to salience some stereotypical properties commonly associated with the mythical Odysseus.

An upshot of this account is that it meshes well with the understanding of epithets (cf. Corazza, 2005). Like epithets, the proposition expressed by the attributive anaphora can be cancelled without affecting the truth-value of the utterance. Consider first an epithet from Corazza (2005), then our example (2):

- (8) A: Sue told Jon₁ that [the idiot]₁ should run for president.
 B: Actually he's not an idiot. He has a Ph.D. in Political Science.

Now consider:

- (9) A: Odysseus₁ has returned home, [the brave soldier]₁ is hungry.
 B: Actually, he hasn't been brave at all, although he was gone for quite a long time.

One question is whether an anti-logophoric pronoun and a metaphorical description used anaphorically behaves similarly when embedded in attitude ascriptions. Consider:

- (10) John said that Odysseus₁ returned home and that [the brave soldier]₁ is hungry
 (11) John said that Trump₁ returned home and that [the dumb racist]₁ is hungry

Whether the anaphoric epithets “the dumb racist” and the anaphoric description “the brave soldier” attribute to John the use of these words, or these words merely characterize the narrator's attitude and, as such, scope out of the attitude ascription is, no doubt, an open question. We will not deal with it here but wish to mention it if only to bracket it for later analysis. Nonetheless, we think that whatever the answer one gives one ought to consider (10) and (11) on par, insofar as they seem to behave similarly. On our estimation, a name used metaphorically seems to play two roles. First, it allows discourse participants to pick out the referent the speaker has in mind. Second, it allows the audience to apply some properties normally attributed to the character evoked by the metaphorical term, to

the referent the speaker has in mind. When an anaphoric pronoun is linked to a name used metaphorically it seems to respect and preserve this dual role. The link in this case is not syntactic (we often face cases of so-called trans-sentential anaphora like “she” in “Mary₁ won the lottery. She₁ is now rich”). One way to deal with such cases would be to follow Lasnik (1976) and Kripke (1977), in arguing that the anaphoric pronoun can be understood to work as a demonstrative picking out the object previously raised to salience in the discourse situation. In this case, the co-referential link is pragmatically driven and guided by some considerations of the discourse context.

6. Conclusion

This paper dealt with a specific type of metaphor where a proper name is used metaphorically to determine the referent of the expression. In tandem with previous work on MPNs, this paper serves to generate discussion on how MPN expressions behave in wider linguistic contexts, specifically with anaphoric pronouns, and descriptions. Our aim was modest. We raised issues about MPNs and anaphoric clauses precisely because proper names and metaphors have independently raised interest in a wide variety of academic disciplines. We have provided some cursory observations on the usefulness of various other linguistic phenomena such as anti-logophoricity and presupposition. We hope such observations to aid in further analysis of MPNs and their anaphoric clauses in future works. In general, we hope to have brought forward how various uses of language in everyday linguistic interactions allow us to convey information that is not directly encapsulated in the semantic and syntactic profile of the sentence uttered. From a formal viewpoint, it remains an open question to spell out how our discussion and insights therein can be represented. One promising area of exploration is to consider the sort of model that is used in the retrieval of metaphorical meaning of the proper name. Currently, there is a debate concerning categorization models and property-transfer models. Briefly, the former argues that metaphors construct an *ad hoc* category, which assigns the topic to a category specified by the vehicle. In our paradigm case, Bill belongs to a

category of something like HOMECOMING MEN, specified by the source, Odysseus. The latter specify the transfer of attributes from the source, Odysseus, such as *homecoming*, *brave*, *arduous journey*, to the target, Bill.¹⁶ We are positive that adjudicating between these models can fruitfully inform a theory of MPNs in wider linguistic contexts. Be it as it may be, the authors think that the phenomenon of MPNs and anaphora discussed in this paper ought to be considered when thinking about a comprehensive theory of proper names and metaphor.

Funding

Eros Corazza: The research is sponsored by the Spanish ministry of economics and competitiveness (FFI2015-63719-P (MINECO/FEDER, UE); The Ministry of Science and Innovation of the Spanish Government (PID2019-106078GB-I00/AEI/10.13039/501100011033); the Basque Government (IT1032-16).

Chris Genovesi: The research is supported in part by The Ministry of Science and Innovation of the Spanish Government (PID2019-106078GB-I00/AEI/10.13039/501100011033); and funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (756-2019-0813).

References

- Bambini, Valentina; Ghio, Martha; Moro, Andrea, & Schumacher, Petra B. 2013. "Differentiating Among pragmatic Uses of words Through Timed Sensicality Judgments." *Frontiers in Psychology* 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00938>
- Cacciari, Cristina & Glucksberg, Sam. 1994. "Understanding Figurative Language." In *Handbook of Psycholinguistics*, edited by Morton Grensbacher, 447–77. New York Academic Press.
- Camp, Elisabeth. 2009. "Metaphor." In *The Pragmatics Encyclopedia*, edited by Louise Cummings, 264–66. Routledge.
- Corazza, Eros. 2005. "On Epithets qua Attributive Anaphors." *Journal of Linguistics* 41 (1): 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022226704003044>

¹⁶ See Ritchie (2013) for a good introduction to this debate. See Wee (2006) for a view that defends MPNs as involving categorization.

- Corazza, Eros & Genovesi, Christopher. 2018. "On the Metaphoric Use of (Fictional) Proper Names." In *Objects of Inquiry in Philosophy of Language and Linguistics*, edited by Piotr Stalmaszczyk, 41–58. Peter Lang.
- Donnellan, Keith. 1974. "Speaking of Nothing." *The Philosophical Review* 83: 3–31. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2183871>
- Dubinsky, Stanley & Hamilton, Robert. 1998. "Epithets as Anti-Logophoric Pronouns." *Linguistic Inquiry* 29: 685–93.
- Genovesi, Christopher. 2018. "What Is Not Said: Metaphor and the Deflationary Account." *Studies in Applied Philosophy, Epistemology and Rational Ethics* (Vol. 42). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91277-6_3
- Genovesi, Christopher. 2019. *Food for Thought: Metaphor in Communication and Cognition*. Carleton University.
- Genovesi, Christopher. 2020. "Metaphor and What is Meant: Metaphorical Content, What Is Said, and Contextualism." *Journal of Pragmatics* 157: 17–38.
- Glucksberg, Sam & Keysar, Boaz. 1990. "Understanding Metaphorical Comparisons: Beyond Similarity." *Psychological Review* 97 (1): 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.97.1.3>
- Hagège, Claude. 1974. "Les Pronoms Logophoriques." *Bulletin de La Société de Linguistique de Paris* 69: 287–310.
- Kripke, Saul. 1977. "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 1: 255–76.
- Lasnik, Howard. 2001. "Remarks on Coreference." *Linguistic Analysis* 2, 1–22.
- Leezenberg, Michiel. 2001. *Contexts of Metaphor*. Elsevier.
- Popa-Wyatt, Mihaela. 2017. "Compound Figures: Priority and Speech-Act Structure." *Philosophical Studies* 174 (1): 141–61. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-016-0629-z>
- Popa, Mihaela. 2010. "Ironic Metaphor Interpretation." *Toronto Working Papers in Linguistics* 33: 1–17.
- Ritchie, L. David. 2013. *Metaphor*. Cambridge University Press.
- Stalnaker, Robert C. 1999. *Context and Content*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Stern, Josef. 2000. *Metaphor in Context*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Wee, Lionel. 2006. "Proper Names and the Theory of Metaphor." *Journal of Linguistics* 42 (2): 355–71.