

# Singular Terms in Fiction. Fictional and “Real” Names (III Blasco Disputatio)

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## **Abstract**

In this introduction, I consider different problems posed by the use of singular terms in fiction (section 1), paying especial attention to proper names and, in particular, to names of real people, places, etc. As we will see (section 2), descriptivist and Millian theories of reference face different kinds of problems in explaining the use of fictional names in fiction-related contexts. Moreover, the task of advancing a uniform account of names in these contexts—an account which deals not only with fictional names but also with “real” names—will prove to be very hard no matter whether we favour realist or antirealist intuitions about fictional discourse (section 3). Section 4 offers an overview of the content of this volume, with emphasis on the discussion between Manuel García-Carpintero and Stacie Friend about the meaning of “real” names in fiction-related contexts, the main topic of the Third Blasco Disputatio.

## **Keywords**

Singular terms, fiction, proper names, reference.

## 1 Singular terms in fiction, some problems

If in a history book we read: “When Napoleon took Moscow one week after the battle of Borodino, he could not imagine that his military campaign would end in disaster,” we assume that the name ‘Napoleon’ is being used to refer to a particular individual of whom different things are predicated and we manage to relate those things in our thoughts to the very same individual thanks to the anaphoric use of the pronoun ‘he’ and the use of the possessive adjective ‘his’.

Proper names and other singular terms such as pronouns and, in general, indexical expressions are instruments of reference. We lean on them in order to refer to objects we want to introduce in our discourse. Without them it would be very difficult indeed to talk about a particular object or keep track of it in our thoughts or through a conversation, as we easily did in the previous example. However, some meaningful uses of singular terms raise puzzling questions. When in the context of *The Metamorphosis* (*TM* from now on) we read: “As Gregor Samsa woke one morning from uneasy dreams, he found himself transformed into some kind of monstrous vermin,” we do not assume—as we did before—that someone called ‘Gregor Samsa’ was being referred to. Why is this so? Of course, we know that no human being could change into a “monstrous vermin” overnight and hence we know that Gregor Samsa cannot exist. But that is irrelevant for the present discussion. Someone who wrongly (and crazily) believed that such metamorphosis were possible would not have assumed that Gregor Samsa existed just by reading Kafka’s story. And, if Kafka had simply written: “One morning, Gregor Samsa woke up from uneasy dreams” (as we sometimes do), we would not have assumed that Kafka was referring to anyone called ‘Gregor Samsa’ either. The fact is that quite often proper names and other singular terms do not stand in fiction for real people or places, events, etc. We all know that. What is then the point of using them in a context where there appears to be nothing referred to?

Sometimes we acquire wrong beliefs or lie to people because we want them to acquire wrong beliefs. We may mistakenly take a random mark in the sand for a footprint and come to believe that someone—who we might even go on to name ‘Thomas’—left it. Or perhaps we may secretly leave our own footprints in the sand so as to delude a friend into thinking that someone else, “Thomas”, left them. In both cases, no one is referred to when we use the proper name ‘Thomas’ (or any other singular term), but *still* we thought we were referring to *someone* or wanted others to think so. Nothing like this, however, is going on in the case of *TM*. Kafka does not believe that Gregor Samsa exists and does not expect us to believe so. He does not mean to report a true story about a real individual or to deceive us in this respect. And we know these facts and assume, furthermore, that Kafka was aware that his readers would know

these facts. What is more, if we happened to discover—against all odds— not only that the kind of transformation described in *TM* was possible, but also that—without his knowing it—everything Kafka wrote there was actually true of a real person named ‘Gregor Samsa’, we would still think that Kafka did not refer to *that* person at all. That would certainly be an extraordinary coincidence, but it would be just that: a coincidence.<sup>1</sup> In the envisioned situation, Kafka does not intend to talk about that particular person and is not referring to him any more than someone who is imagining a golden retriever two hours before coming across a particular one by chance in the street is referring to (or thinking of) *that* particular dog. Rather than referring to someone, we are inclined to think that in *TM* Kafka is *inviting us to imagine something*: he wants us to consider how the life and family bonds of an imaginary individual called ‘Gregor Samsa’ are dramatically changed when, one morning, he wakes up transformed into some sort of hideous insect. If this is so, we could still think that (perhaps) there is something Kafka might be referring to when he used the proper name ‘Gregor Samsa’, namely, “the imaginary individual” or “fictional character” described in the story. This would show why we need proper names and other singular terms in fiction in spite of the fact that many times they are not used for referring to real individuals, or places, etc. Names and other singular terms stand here for *fictional entities* and that justifies—also in this context—our claim that they are instruments of reference (and helps us understand why we seem to use them in fiction pretty much as they are used elsewhere). We keep track of what a Sherlock Holmes novel says about its main character thanks to the presence in it of proper names and other singular terms. And although Sherlock Holmes and Hércules Poirot are fictional characters and they both are described as detectives in Conan Doyle’s and Agatha Christie’s novels respectively, we know that Holmes *is not* Poirot. They are different entities because the stories where they appear distinguish them by providing different descriptions of each one.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This point is forcefully made by Kripke (2011: 56–7, 66–7).

<sup>2</sup> Actually, had they been described in the very same way in Doyle’s and Christie’s stories, there would still be reasons for thinking that they are different entities if their existence depended somehow on the acts and intentions of their

This way of “rescuing” a referent for singular terms in fiction opens, nevertheless, a new range of intriguing puzzles. To begin with, we do not know what the nature of these fictional entities is or how we are supposed to know them and provide identity criteria for them. Can we really predicate existence of them, or they can only be said to “be” in some peculiar sense of “being” which does not involve existence? Are they eternal platonic entities, or are they abstract artefacts created by the authors of fictions and partly shaped, perhaps, by the way those fictions are interpreted by different audiences? And if this is so, if their existence depends on the acts and intentions of their authors, would two stories independently created by different people talk about the same fictional objects if their fictional characters were accidentally described in the very same way?<sup>3</sup> If we stick to the intuitions we invoked when we said that in writing *TM* Kafka did not refer to any real person even if coincidentally everything told there happened to be true of someone called ‘Gregor Samsa’, it seems that the answer to our question should be “no”. But here our intuitions falter and are perhaps less clear, for there are relevant differences.<sup>4</sup> And things, of course, get

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authors. See footnotes 3 and 4.

<sup>3</sup> These questions are raised in *Pierre Menard, author of the Quixote*. Borges (1956) imagines a man, Pierre Menard, who writes a story which happens to coincide word by word with Cervantes’s *Quixote* (written centuries earlier). Borges suggests that Pierre Menard’s *Quixote* and Cervantes’s *Quixote* are different works, for, uttered in entirely different circumstances for different audiences, the very same words may mean different things. Lewis (1978) endorses Borges’s intuitions.

<sup>4</sup> Our intuitions change, for instance, if contrary to what we are currently assuming, we embrace the view that fictional characters and stories are abstract platonic entities outside time and space. We should then believe that their existence has nothing to do with the thoughts and actions of the people (inaccurately) described as “their authors.” What reasons could we then have for thinking that Cervantes’s *Quixote* and Pierre Menard’s *Quixote* are different stories? From the new point of view, Cervantes and Pierre Menard could only be held responsible for independently bringing into existence two material copies or “tokens” of the kind of eternal “type-entity” we identify with the novel *Don Quixote*. Talking about two *Quixotes* would then be out of place unless we could justify that each copy tokens a different type. But how could this be so if the “two” types cannot be told apart? (Similar problems seem to arise if instead of focusing on the story, we focus on its fictional characters.)

more complicated if the content of a story and the identity of its fictional characters somehow depends on the interpreters too, or on the interplay between author and audience. Different audiences will likely construe and assess the same story and characters in different ways depending on their concerns, knowledge, historical context or worldview. Voltaire's *Candide* will not be read in the same way by those who grasp the satire behind the story and by those who are not in the know and miss the parodies and connections existing between some of its characters (*Candide*'s Pangloss, for instance) and real people (Leibniz) whose actual deeds or thoughts are being mocked or scorned. On the other hand, an author can reinterpret the fictional characters she has created, and also those created by other authors: what should we say about Ulysses, a fictional character appearing in different stories, some of them created by the same author (the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, if Homer really authored them), and some others by different authors (Sophocles's *Ajax*, Virgil's *Aeneid* or Dante's *Divine Comedy* among many others)? Are these characters different fictional entities or is there just *one* Ulysses? Our intuitions meet new challenges if instead of thinking of the identity of fictional characters in relation to the actions, intentions or thoughts of those who created the stories where they appear and of those who interpret them, we just focus on the *content* of those stories: on what the stories say about their characters. Here we often find ourselves traversing quicksand. Can we really determine of two different possible individuals who nevertheless satisfy the description of the main character of *TM* in the same counterfactual scenario which one is Gregor Samsa in that scenario?<sup>5</sup> And what about the things the story does not say? Does Gregor Samsa have cousins? How many limbs did he have and how many inches they measured? And, finally, how should we think of a fictional character if, as it sometimes happens, the story where it features is inconsistent and portrays it as having contradictory properties (or it is consistent, but contradicts what we can read about *that* very character in other stories)?<sup>6</sup> These pressing issues can be

<sup>5</sup> On this point, see for instance Kripke 2011: 59.

<sup>6</sup> It is often remarked that Conan Doyle's description of Watson, Sherlock Holmes's friend and personal "chronicler", presents him as having a war wound. But some novels place this wound in a shoulder and some others in a leg without

added to the former ones, but even setting aside problems involving the nature and identity of fictional objects, there seems to be a deeper source of concern with the suggestion that singular terms stand in fiction for some kind of abstract entity.

One way to put the worry is this: in *TM*, Kafka invites us to imagine a *person*, a *flesh and blood human being* whose life is turned upside down when he wakes up one day trapped in the body of an insect. He does not invite us to imagine *an abstract entity* which all of a sudden is transformed into an insect. Abstract entities do not have bodies, families or lives which can be turned upside down. When we respond in the appropriate manner to Kafka's story, when we imagine what the story invites us to imagine, we pity Gregor Samsa because we somehow come to see him as a human being—a peculiar one, for sure—and we grow anxious as the plot progresses and his situation becomes more and more desperate. In a relevant sense, we do not pity an abstract entity outside time and space, or an abstract artefact such as a novel or a fictional character. Abstract objects cannot suffer or lead human lives, we cannot place ourselves in their shoes. Reading *TM* prompts us to experience emotions which (at least) resemble those that we experience when we learn about the lives, thoughts and feelings of real people. How can the claim that singular terms in fiction stand for fictional objects account for this fact: for the kind of involvement we all experience when we imagine a story, when we feel, as it were, “carried away” by a fiction?

Another way to lay down this worry—or a closely related one—when we look at it from a different angle is this: If *TM* really talks about fictional characters, everything we are told therein is literally false. As we just pointed out, abstract entities do not work as commercial travellers, do not have sisters who play the violin, or parents with unpaid debts. Someone might say that this does not make things any worse than they were before positing fictional objects as referents of singular terms in fiction, for then we already had the intuition that the propositions one finds in *TM* are either false or untrue. If no one called ‘Thomas’ left any footprints on the sand, ‘*Thomas* left *these* footprints on the sand’ expresses—depending on our preferred semantic theory—either a false proposition or a gappy one with no

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ever describing him as having *two* war wounds.

truth-value. Likewise, if no one (or nothing) called ‘Gregor Samsa’ is referred to by that name, none of the things the story tells about “him” can be true. Although this seems right, the claim that singular terms in fiction stand for abstract entities generates perplexities of its own. In particular, it conflicts with our intuitions about a particular kind of sentences which do not appear in Kafka’s story, but talk about it. Consider, for instance: ‘In *TM*, Samsa has a sister who likes playing the violin’. We are inclined to think that whoever asserts this sentence makes a true statement, but we cannot explain the truth of the proposition asserted—not in an obvious way at least—by invoking an abstract entity as the referent of the singular term ‘Samsa’. If we did so, we would be saying something apparently false: we would be predicating of an abstract entity a property it cannot have, namely, *having a sister who likes playing the violin*. But no such claim can be justified from what one reads in *TM*, where Gregor Samsa is never described as an abstract entity with a sister. We are ready to argue about the truth or falsity of statements of the form: ‘In *TM*, *p*’ (*TM*[*p*], for short), and things are not different for literary critics. We all express agreement or disagreement with others about the content of works of fiction by uttering sentences of this sort. After reading Kafka’s story, we can all agree, for instance, that ‘*TM*[*Gregor Samsa is a fictional character*]’ expresses a false proposition because, *in the story*, Samsa is not presented as a fictional character but as a real person. Notice that nothing rules out the possibility of finding, in some fiction *F*, a character of which we can truly say that it is fictional *in F itself*. Talking about theatre plays such as Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (*H*) and Pirandello’s *Six characters in search of an author* (*6C*) respectively, the following claims express true propositions: ‘*H*[*Gonzago is a fictional character featuring in a theatre play called The Murder of Gonzago performed before Claudius, king of Denmark*]’, ‘*6C*[*Father is an unfinished fictional character*]’. We see then that some characters are themselves portrayed as fictional *in the fiction*. Gonzago and Claudius feature in *Hamlet*, but only Gonzago is fictional *in Hamlet*. Claudius is portrayed in Shakespeare’s play as a real human being who attains the throne of Denmark after murdering his brother: Hamlet’s father. Gonzago, however, is presented in *Hamlet* as a fictional character of a theatre play which only exists (and is performed) in Shakespeare’s own theatre play (Kripke 2013: 72–3). How can the claim that singular

terms in fiction stand for abstract entities accommodate our intuitions about sentences of the form ‘In fiction F, *p*’?

In view of these problems, one might wonder whether positing abstract entities as referents for singular terms in fiction is a good idea after all. Determining their nature and identity conditions is not an easy task. And, as we saw, if singular terms in fiction stand for abstract entities, our emotional engagement with characters such as Gregor Samsa becomes a mystery and we have no obvious way to account for the truth conditions of sentences of the form ‘In fiction F, *p*’. This being said, however, to dispense with abstract entities in fiction proves to be very difficult too. To begin with, we postulated them so as to explain why our thoughts are “about something” when we think about Gregor Samsa or about any other fictional character. And although our feelings and emotions do not seem to be addressed to abstract entities *qua* abstract entities because they cannot have the kind of human features we find moving in a story, there seems to be nothing else around towards which they can be addressed. Gregor Samsa does not exist as something different from a fictional character and if fictional characters are not human beings, what else can they be but abstract entities of some kind? We are too ready to yield to temptation and claim that our thoughts in this context are about fictional entities (if they are about anything) and, therefore, that they are about a particular kind of abstract entities. Moreover, these entities are part of our discourse *on* fiction anyway. We say that *there are* female characters in a story, we talk about *their number*, about how *they were created* by such and such author and *describe them* as being flat or rich in nuances, etc. And, of course, when we talk this way, we are not talking about human beings, but about things we are prone to describe as abstract entities and perhaps as artefacts of some kind. There seems to be two entirely different ways to approach fiction and two “modes” to set our minds accordingly. In one “mode,” we accept without reservations the invitation to imagine a story. Abstract entities disappear then from our sight and we become as emotionally and intellectually involved with the things we read or hear as we would be if they were really happening and we took part in them. When our minds are set in the second “mode”, however, we distance ourselves from the fiction and see, as it were, the theatre backstage, the author’s actions and intentions behind the curtains and the tricks she



played on us. Where we saw real people and events, we see now fictional characters and a manufactured plot. And this duality seems to extend as well to our assessment of existential claims: Gregor Samsa seems to exist in some sense and not to exist in some other. In the “engaged mode,” Gregor seems to exist as a human being, but not as an abstract entity; in the “distanced mode,” Gregor seems to exist as an abstract entity, but not as a human being.

## 2 Theories of reference for names and fiction

The problems we have outlined so far concern all sorts of singular terms, but may especially affect proper names, which will focus our attention from now on. Without works of fiction we would still find plenty of meaningful uses of words such as ‘she’, ‘this’ or ‘there’ for instance, but we might not find uses of proper names such as ‘Gregor Samsa’ if no one was or is ever called that way. Once the name is introduced in *TM*, we can, of course, use it outside that context—as we do in this introduction—but understanding any such uses would require from us to think of its meaning within the fiction that originated it. Things are entirely different with names such as ‘Napoleon’ or ‘Moscow’ whose origin can be placed outside fiction despite being widely used in fictional works such as Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*. Their situation could be partly compared to that of other singular terms: we use pronouns, for instance, as instruments of reference, and that would not have changed if fictions had never existed. A similar thing could be said of ‘Napoleon’. Yet, the coexistence in fiction of two kinds of names: fictional and, so to speak, “real” names—i.e., names of real people, places, etc.—raises issues that one could hardly motivate by reflecting on other kinds of singular terms.

If we want to offer a uniform semantic account of pronouns, we will have to bear in mind that words such as ‘you’ have fictional and non-fictional uses—i.e., uses in and outside fiction respectively—and our theory will have to encompass both of them. But if we want to give a similar account of proper names, we have to deal with a further problem. ‘Napoleon’ has fictional and non-fictional uses, but although this also holds of names such as ‘Samsa’ (as we just saw), all non-fictional uses of this name—assuming again that no one was or is ever called ‘Samsa’—are still “fiction-related” in some way. When

I say: “Samsa is one of Kafka’s most popular fictional characters” or “in *TM*, Samsa has a sister,” I am not using the name as it is used in *TM*, but I cannot explain what it means in my utterances without somehow referring to what it means in Kafka’s story. I may think that in one (or both) of the former utterances ‘Samsa’ stands for an abstract entity, or that (in one or both cases) I am merely pretending to refer to something, but I cannot come to believe any of these things without first developing some views about the meaning of the name *as it is used in TM*. However, when I say: “Napoleon proclaimed himself Emperor” outside a fictional context, I need not consider any fictional use of the name in order to make sense of my claim. I am just referring to a particular individual and talking about what he did. The task of advancing a uniform semantic account of pronouns would parallel that of advancing a uniform account of proper names if we had special pronouns: ‘she\*’, ‘he\*’, etc. with only fiction-related uses—i.e., uses we can only make sense of in relation to fictional uses—but no such pronouns exist. The fact that some names only have fiction-related uses and some others do not may prompt the question whether we can really offer a unified account of all of them, or whether we should pursue that aim.

To get a clearer view of the challenges posed by fiction to our understanding of names we can follow Frege’s advise and ask, not for the meaning of names in isolation, but for their meaning in the context of the sentences where they appear. By reasoning on the truth conditions of those sentences we may get some insight on the contribution that fictional and real names make to their meaning. And, as the very same sentences can receive different meaningful uses in different contexts, it will also be important to keep track of this fact whenever doing so is relevant. In this respect, the literature on the topic usually calls our attention to three different kinds of fiction-related contexts (FRCs henceforth) where we use sentences containing names. Consider these declarative sentences:

- (1) Gregor’s wound was serious and gave him pain for over a month.
- (2) *In TM*, Gregor’s wound was serious and gave him pain for over a month.

(3) Gregor Samsa is one of Kafka's most popular fictional characters.

(1) can be uttered in the context of a fiction (it opens indeed the third chapter of *TM*). Its utterance in that context does not constitute a genuine assertion and our use of the name 'Gregor' is not genuinely taken to refer to anyone. Declarative sentences like (2) might also be uttered in a fiction, but they are more commonly uttered in non-fictional contexts in order to report what a fiction says, or what counts as true within a fiction given what it says. Insofar as some utterances of (1) could also be used with that purpose, they could be treated (Lewis 1978) as elliptical utterances of (2). In these contexts, uttering (1) or (2) counts as an assertion and we care about their truth. We do not object Kafka for having said something untrue in uttering (1) in *TM*, but we would object someone for making false reports of what goes on in *TM*. Finally, declarative sentences like (3)—which could also appear in a fiction—are usually uttered outside fictional contexts in order to talk, not about what is true *in a fiction*, but about facts that the existence of a fiction (its creation, our interactions with it, etc.) brings about. In this case, our utterances also count as assertions and we should consequently care about their truth. Following García-Carpintero (this volume), we will respectively characterize as *textual*, *paratextual* and *metatextual* the three kinds of FRCs we have described in relation to sentences like (1), (2), and (3).<sup>7</sup> Bearing in mind these distinctions will be important in our assessment of different theories.

According to what we shall call *descriptivism*, a proper name and a definite description, or a collection (or indeterminate cluster) of them can have the same meaning. Frege, Russell, Quine or Searle endorsed different versions of descriptivism.<sup>8</sup> Descriptivist views have undeniable virtues. They explain how a proper name *N* can be linked to its bearer even in cases in which we cannot be acquainted with it. The referent of *N* is identified as the unique entity, if any, which satisfies the definite description(s) associated with *N*'s

<sup>7</sup> This way of characterizing the distinction has its origin in Bonomi 2008 and can be found (with some variations) in different authors. See for instance García-Carpintero 2015 or Recanati 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Russell 1905 provides a paradigmatic example.

meaning (or many of some core descriptions tied to it). If no unique entity satisfies these descriptions, *N* lacks a referent, but that does not prevent *N* or the sentences where it occurs from having meaning. *N*'s contribution to the truth-conditions of those sentences is its descriptive content. Consider:

- (4) The largest prime number is an odd number.
- (5) Prime is an odd number.
- (6) Zeus is an odd number.
- (7) John believes that Prime is an odd number.

(4) is meaningful even though the definite description 'the largest prime number' does not—and cannot—designate any number. If a definition stipulated that 'Prime' and 'the largest prime number' are synonymous, (5) would express the same proposition as (4) and would therefore be meaningful in spite of containing an empty name. The descriptive content of a name *N* could then count as its systematic contribution to the truth-conditions of sentences containing it. This is handy because if the meaning of *N* were "the object" designated by *N*, we would be in troubles to give a compositional account of the meaning of (5), (7) and other sentences containing 'Prime'. As 'Prime' is an empty name, we could not identify any proposition believed by John and expressed by (5). To avoid this, we might admit gappy propositions and represent the content of (5) and of John's belief by means of the ordered pair:  $\langle \_, x \text{ is-an-odd-number} \rangle$ , containing, on the one hand, something which we could assimilate to a property (or to a Russellian propositional function) and, on the other, a "gap" where we would expect to find an object. However, as 'Zeus' is also an empty name, (6) would then express the same gappy proposition as (5), and we should explain now why it is right to ascribe to John the belief that Prime is an odd number and not the belief that Zeus is an odd number. Descriptivist theories do not have this problem because 'Prime' and 'Zeus' have different descriptive contents and thus make different contributions to the meaning of (5) and (6). This already hints at a further virtue of descriptivism: its capacity to account for differences in cognitive significance

of co-referential names, a feature often invoked in solving “Frege’s puzzles” and explaining the failure of substitutivity *salva veritate* of co-referential expressions in some opaque contexts. ‘Phosphorus is Phosphorus’ and ‘Hesperus is Phosphorus’ seem to have different cognitive value though the contents they express are true in virtue of the same facts. We know a priori that Phosphorus is Phosphorus, but not that Hesperus is Phosphorus. Yet, both sentences should have the same meaning and express the same proposition if the meaning of ‘Hesperus’ and ‘Phosphorus’ were Venus (their shared referent). Once again, the descriptivist can claim that ‘Hesperus’ and ‘Phosphorus’ do not have the same meaning because they are synonymous to different definite descriptions: ‘the evening star’ and ‘the morning star’ respectively. And having different descriptive meanings, the result of substituting one name for the other in the context of a sentence alters the proposition expressed. This is why ‘Ann believes that Phosphorus is the morning star’ can express a true proposition even if the sentence resulting from substituting in this opaque context ‘Hesperus’ with ‘Phosphorus’ does not: the descriptive content of each name is part of the propositional content expressed by the sentences where the name occurs.

In the early seventies, Saul Kripke (1980) put forward a series of highly influential objections to descriptivism and defended the Millian view that names contribute nothing but their bearers to the propositions expressed by the sentences containing them. He pointed out that we can refer to people, objects, etc. by using proper names even when we are unable to identify them through any definite description. Many people only know of Cicero that he was a Roman senator and yet they successfully refer to him—and not to Catiline or to any other Roman senator—by using that name (1980: 81–3). Moreover, a name *N* designates *x* (its bearer) even if the descriptions we associate with *N* are true of nothing, or are true of some *y* different from *x*—see the Gödel/Schmidt example (1980: 83–4). There may be real individuals behind names such as ‘Moses’ or ‘Jonah’ even if the descriptions associated with them in popular myths are true of no one (1980: 66–7). And Phosphorus, initially identified as “the morning star”, has turned out to be a planet, but the name ‘Phosphorus’ still designates Venus, not the brightest *star* in the morning sky (1980: 80, fn. 34). According to Kripke, we use names in order to

refer to objects directly, not through some property they uniquely satisfy, and for that reason names cannot be synonymous to definite descriptions (or clusters of them). This also explains why they cannot always be substituted *salva veritate* by definite descriptions in opaque contexts involving modal operators. Phosphorus is necessarily *Phosphorus*, but it is not necessarily *the brightest heavenly body in the morning sky*. ‘Phosphorus’ rigidly refers to Venus in any counterfactual scenario or possible world where Venus exists because ‘Phosphorus’ is an instrument of direct reference. ‘The brightest heavenly body in the morning sky’ designates Venus through a property that Venus happens to have in the actual world, but it will designate some other entity *x* in possible worlds where *x* and not Venus is the brightest heavenly body in the morning sky. A definite description can rigidly designate an object only if it describes it through a property that that object (and only that object) has in all possible worlds where it exists. Proper names, however, are rigid designators “de jure”: they stick to their referents in all possible worlds where they exist regardless the properties they may have in them. Kripke also suggested that the link between a name and its bearer was secured by the existence of a communication chain connecting each use of the name with its first use. The reference of the name would be fixed in some sort of initial “baptism” or social ceremony with the aid of some ostension or description which later on does not become part of the name’s meaning. Eventually, the name is passed on from link to link in such a way that each speaker uses it with the intention to refer to whoever was referred to by the people from whom he learnt it (1980: 96–7).

Kripke’s arguments convinced many people that descriptivism was wrong. Although descriptivists might perhaps accommodate the failure of substitutivity of names and definite descriptions in modal contexts by fiddling with the scope of descriptions and modal operators (Kripke 1980: 10–2), they lack clear answers to the other objections. This being said, Kripke’s Millian conception of names also faces serious challenges. Something needs to be said about the apparent meaningfulness of sentences containing empty names (specially in fiction) and the apparent failure of substitutivity of co-referential names in contexts where we ascribe propositional attitudes. These problems are not so pressing for descriptivists, for, according to them, names (empty or not) have descriptive content and two

co-referential names may nevertheless differ in meaning. The second issue is discussed in Kripke 1979. The first one is addressed in Kripke 2011, 2013 paying special attention to FRCs and to existential claims such as:

- (8) Gregor Samsa does not exist.

Kripke claims that, in fiction, we engage in some sort of non-deceptive pretence where we imagine that the things we are told in a story are really happening. In particular, when Kafka utters (1) in *TM* (a textual context), he pretends to express a proposition and to refer to someone called ‘Gregor’, but, in fact, he does neither of these things. If a proposition had been expressed, we should be able to assess its truth-value not only in the actual world, but in different counterfactual scenarios or possible worlds, and this can only be done if we identify the referent of ‘Gregor’. But, as we already pointed out (see §1), in the context of *TM*: (i) ‘Gregor’ does not designate a real person (even if by chance *TM* happened to be true of someone); (ii) ‘Gregor’ is not meant to be the name of an abstract entity (but of a flesh and blood person); and (iii) two or more different individuals in the same counterfactual scenario would have equal right to be Gregor if they all satisfied the relevant descriptions advanced in *TM*. For all these reasons, no individual is referred to in textual uses of (1) and (assuming Millianism) no proposition is expressed either. That does not mean that (1) is meaningless in these contexts, however, for we understand *the pretence* and play along with it. Pretence is indeed a common phenomenon, present in children’s games as well as in fictional works, and any theory of reference should make room for it—i.e., for the possibility of pretending to follow norms governing how to refer to things with names without really doing so. Insofar as making room for this entails making room for empty names, Millian accounts should be unconcerned about the presence of such names in textual contexts (Kripke 2011: 80). Rather, the challenge for any semantic theory (Millian or not) is to explain how these pretences work in fiction.

Things are different when we consider metatextual uses of sentences such as (3). We genuinely assert propositions in these cases and Kripke acknowledges that this could not be so if ‘Gregor Samsa’ were an empty name. But it is not, he claims. Far from pretending

to refer to a flesh and blood person, we do refer in these context to a *fictional character*, “an abstract entity which exists in virtue of the activities of human beings” (Kripke 2011: 64). In writing *TM*, Kafka created different fictional characters, abstract entities whose nature has nothing to do with that of the human beings whose existence is part of the pretence enacted in *TM*. These abstract entities exist as a consequence of the acts which created that pretence, and they belong to the real world as much as do many other abstract entities. Indeed, we quantify over them, talk about them in ordinary language, and study them in different academic fields.<sup>9</sup> By treating textual and metatextual contexts differently, Kripke manages to uphold a Millian view of names in both of them. But paratextual contexts and mixed contexts such as those exemplified by ordinary uses of (9) and (10) raise serious problems.

(9) In *TM*, Gregor Samsa, one of Kafka’s most popular fictional characters, woke one morning transformed into a monstrous vermin.

(10) David Ogilvy worked as a travelling salesman, just like Gregor Samsa and Willy Loman, but I don’t pity him at all, I pity Loman, and especially Samsa.

Paratextual uses of (2) make true assertions and should therefore express propositions, but ‘Gregor’ cannot refer there to an abstract entity (as noticed in §1). So, what does it refer to? And a typical utterance of (9) also advances a true assertion, but one that combines paratextual and metatextual uses, thus suggesting that a uniform account of both contexts is required. Finally, an utterance of (10) may often sound as a true assertion despite its peculiarities. In (10) we report—as we do in paratextual contexts—truths about two fictions: *TM* and Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* (we report their main characters’ jobs). Moreover, a real person, the founder of Ogilvy & Mather, is compared with two fictional characters (also compared with each other) in relation to properties that, presumably, they all “share”, but that no abstract entity could have. And, in addition to this, we express emotions towards “Loman” and “Samsa” which we

<sup>9</sup> See Kripke 2011, 2013; and van Inwagen 1977.



cannot understand as addressed to fictional characters *qua* abstract entities. Kripke's claims about textual and metatextual contexts can hardly deal with cases like these.<sup>10</sup>

Although Kripke talks about paratextual uses, he does so mainly to dismiss an argument by Hintikka (1962), who questioned the unrestricted validity of inferences of the form: "Fa, therefore:  $\exists xFx$ " on the grounds that we cannot infer (12) from (11) because Gregor Samsa does not exist:

(11) Gregor Samsa had a wound.

(12) *There is an x such that x had a wound.*

Kripke (2013: 55 and ff.) complained that the argument trades on an ambiguity. In *TM*, (11) is true, but (8) is false, for Samsa *does* exist in the fiction: Hintikka's specious argument only works if, unlike (12), (11) receives a paratextual reading. These remarks, however, do not clarify how (11) can be true *about something* in paratextual contexts. Yet, they overtly show how tricky existential claims are, especially in FRCs (see §1). According to Kripke, paratextual and metatextual assertions of (8) are both false: in one case, because we cannot correctly report what goes on in *TM* by uttering (8); and, in the other, because Samsa exists as a fictional entity. Yet, (8) seems to express something true in contexts in which we neither mean to talk about *TM* nor about fictional entities. How could Kripke account for this? If a name stands for its bearer and—as Kripke holds—we can predicate existence of objects,<sup>11</sup> what referent does 'Samsa' have whenever we say something true by uttering (8)?

Lewis 1978 offers an influential account of paratextual contexts where 'in fiction *F*...' acts as an intensional operator ( $F[...]$ , for short). Intuitively, true propositions expressed by sentences of the form  $F[p]$  portray the "world(s)" of fiction *F*: the world(s) we would

<sup>10</sup> Yet, Kripke (2013: 61 and ff.) discusses cases where someone is said to pity (hate, etc.) some fictional character and cases where different fictional characters are compared, as we do in (10).

<sup>11</sup> He raises problems for Frege's and Russell's accounts of existential claims and suggests that the first order predicate ' $\exists y (y = x)$ ' would be a good paraphrase of 'x exists' (Kripke 2013: 37).

describe if we had told  $F$  in them as known fact rather than fiction. Our world,  $@$ , is not among them (even if  $F$  described by chance some facts of it), for  $F$  is told in  $@$  as part of a pretence, not as known fact. Lewis acknowledges thus the dependence of fictions on the acts of their authors, as well as the role played by pretence. He also accommodates the intuition that ‘true in  $F$ ’ is sensitive to how  $F$  is interpreted by different audiences: unless  $F$  clearly precludes so, we often import from  $@$  truths that are not stated in  $F$  and project onto  $F$  truths which bring the  $F$ -worlds closer to how  $@$  is believed to be. We are ready to assume, for instance, the truth of  $TM$ [cows give milk] and  $TM$ [Gregor Samsa has grandparents] even if  $TM$  says nothing about these things. On the other hand, and given the limitations of any world-view, no audience will read into  $F$  truths about  $@$  which they cannot grasp, nor will they refrain from finding true in  $F$  things that are widely (even if wrongly) believed to be true in  $@$ . Unlike us, ancient readers of the *Odyssey* would presumably endorse *Odyssey*[the Earth is flat], but not *Odyssey*[water is  $H_2O$ ]). In his final analysis of ‘true in  $F$ ,’ Lewis (1978: 273) tries to make room for these intuitions. He also tackles hard issues such as what inferences are valid within  $F$ , how to deal with indeterminacy, vagueness or inconsistency in fiction, etc. But Lewis (1978: 263) says nothing about metatextual uses of sentences like (3), and, as we saw, mixed contexts like (9) suggest that we should look for a unified account of paratextual and metatextual contexts. Could we find one?

### 3 Uniform accounts and “real” names

Attempts to provide a uniform account of names in FRCs usually fall under two dominant strategies. The first one, often described as “realism,” vindicates the intuition that fictional names stand for fictional entities.<sup>12</sup> The second one endorses an “anti-realist” view of fiction according to which the uses of names we have considered so far involve different kinds of pretence. Metatextual contexts seem to support realism, whereas anti-realist positions are more easily moti-

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, Friend 2007, Kroon and Voltolini 2011, García-Carpintero 2019. Like Kripke, one could hold realist views only for *some* FRCs, but we will mainly focus on uniform accounts.

vated by thinking of textual contexts (García-Carpintero 2015: 147). The challenge in both cases is to expand the analysis to less “friendly” contexts avoiding the clash between apparently conflicting intuitions and solving puzzles like those posed by P1–P4:

- (P1) In textual and paratextual contexts we can predicate of Samsa that he is a commercial traveller, in metatextual contexts we cannot.
- (P2) We cannot infer (inside or outside FRCs) that Holmes lived in a bank, although it is true that there was a bank at 221B Baker Street and (paratextually) true that Holmes lived at 221B Baker Street.
- (P3) It seems right to attribute in (10) the same properties to things with radically different natures, how can this be?
- (P4) It seems that (8) is true in some sense and false in another, why?

According to realists, sentences like (3) or ‘There are more characters in *War and Peace* than in *TM*’ express true propositions, and paraphrasing them without mentioning (or quantifying over) fictional characters would yield sentences with different truth-conditions. Prima facie, this constitutes evidence in favour of the existence of fictional characters. Their existence, as pointed in §1, would also explain why the thoughts we express in textual, paratextual or metatextual contexts are *about something*.<sup>13</sup> *TM* is about Gregor Samsa, not about Willy Loman; and when we imagine the *TM*-worlds, we imagine some particular characters, not others. The possibility of “anchoring” our thoughts to fictional entities allows us to distinguish the thoughts: *Samsa is a commercial traveller* and *Loman is a commercial traveller* without a descriptivist theory of names. (The realist strategy, however, does not impose a Millian view of names.)<sup>14</sup> As for the puzzles listed above, some realists (Zalta

<sup>13</sup> This point is stressed in Friend 2007, where we also find an excellent overview of weaknesses and strengths of realist and anti-realist positions.

<sup>14</sup> According to Lewis, the inhabitants of possible worlds are concrete non-

1983) address them by introducing a distinction between different modes of predicating a property of an object.<sup>15</sup> Samsa (or Holmes)—they say—cannot “exemplify” a property that only actual people can exemplify, such as *being a commercial traveller* (or *living at 221B Baker Street*), nevertheless, it can “encode” it and it can also exemplify properties such as *being a fictional character*. Because predicating properties hides this kind of ambiguities, P1 entails no contradictions; P2 displays a specious argument; and P3 involves attributing a property in different senses to different kinds of entities—yet, we need to explain how in (10) we manage to do so in one breath.<sup>16</sup> As regards P4, we could say that, in *TM*, Samsa encodes (but does not exemplify) the property of existing whereas, outside *TM*, it exemplifies (but does not encode) that property. Notice, however, that this answer to P4 avoids contradictions not by claiming that, although Samsa *cannot* exemplify ‘F(x)’, it encodes ‘F(x)’, but rather by postulating *further ambiguities*: Samsa exemplifies ‘*x exists*’ in *sense*<sub>1</sub> and does not exemplify it in *sense*<sub>2</sub>. In general, one might complain that this realist manoeuvre secures a uniform approach to names at the expense of losing a uniform approach to predicates. Moreover, the approach has little to say about the intuition that pretence plays a role in fiction and raises, as we saw in §1, thorny questions: what is the nature of fictional entities and how do we individuate them? With important exceptions—Lewis, for instance—most views will consider them abstract entities. Some theories will describe them as some sort of platonic eternal entities and some others as abstract artefacts created by us (Thomasson 1999). “Platonist” theories do no justice to our intuitions concerning the role of actions and

actual entities. Given a *TM*-world *w*, ‘Samsa’ denotes “whichever inhabitant of *w* it is who there plays the role of [Samsa]” (Lewis 1978: 267). Thus, as used in our world (where *TM* is told as fiction), ‘Samsa’ is not an instrument of direct reference: it designates different individuals in different worlds who can be seen as playing the same role in virtue of satisfying the descriptions *TM* provides of Samsa.

<sup>15</sup> Or, alternatively, between different kinds of properties expressed by the same predicate. See Kroon and Voltolini 2011 for a detailed map and assessment of realist strategies.

<sup>16</sup> And it will not be easy: Everett (2005, 2007) discusses different problems that mixed contexts and negative existential claims pose for different realist strategies.

interpretations in the creation of fictions and the determination of what is true in them, but might make room for the idea that some entities or beings lack existence. “Artefact” theories accommodate our intuitions about the role of actions and interpretations in fiction, but may have the usual problems that realists have with P4 and sentences like (8). Determining criteria of identity for these entities in the presence of vagueness, inconsistency, lack of determination, etc. is also (as remarked in §1) a big problem. We do not know, for instance, how many Kryptonians died in Superman stories when Krypton disappeared—or how to distinguish one from another—but, presumably, it is true in the stories that an exact number of them died with the planet. (And if Kryptonians are artefacts, how was each of them created and how many?)

Anti-realists hold that there are no fictional entities. Gregor Samsa does not exist in any sense. We could accommodate the meaningfulness of sentences containing empty names like ‘Samsa’ by adopting a descriptivist semantics, but such a move would not explain why Kafka wrote *TM* or why we enjoy reading it, knowing as we do from the start that ‘Samsa’ has no referent. Anti-realists appeal here to the important role that non-deceptive pretences such as those present in games play in our lives—a move also available to Millians like Kripke (see §2). Perhaps the most influential anti-realist theory of fiction can be found in Walton 1990. According to Walton, we engage in different kinds of pretence in textual and paratextual contexts. Fictions can be regarded as games of make-believe which prescribe or authorize some imaginings according to a (more or less open) set of implicit rules. Children use props in their games: a broomstick could tacitly be used in a game as proxy for a horse. Similarly, when we engage with *TM* we use the text as a prop and act as if Samsa really existed and *TM* contained true assertions about “him.” Given what *TM* says, feeling pity for Samsa seems appropriate, and we do pity “him” when we are absorbed in reading *TM*.<sup>17</sup> This strategy addresses P1–P3 by claiming that,

<sup>17</sup> Or rather we feel something phenomenologically similar to pity, but different from it, since it is not connected with our actions in the same way: after all, the idea of doing something to help Samsa does not even cross our mind, as it would if he existed. (See Walton 1978.)

besides the “official” game of make-believe authorized by *TM*, there are many other unofficial games of make-believe we engage in when we interact with the story and fill up gaps in the plot, or imagine what the characters look like or how they would act, etc. And these unofficial games may vary from reader to reader. Reporting what is true in “the world(s)” of *TM as if* they really existed—as we do in paratextual contexts—is also a game of make-believe. Therefore, we can only predicate certain things of Samsa in P1, P2, P3 or P4 as part of some make-believe game and when we do so, we are not making literally true assertions. However, if an utterance of (2) in paratextual contexts is merely treated *as if* it were true, why do we all agree that uttering (2) is a right move in this game and uttering its negation is not? What are the rules of the game and what does the utterance mean in it? Some complex story needs to be told at a semantic or at a pragmatic level. Perhaps the sentence is ambiguous and takes a different meaning (a true proposition) under the scope of the intensional operator ‘in *TM*,’ but which one? Or perhaps it means what it usually does—and it cannot, therefore, be true because it fails to advance a proposition, or because there is no one satisfying some relevant descriptions, etc.—but it pragmatically conveys something true about *TM*. Metatextual utterances of (3) pose even more serious problems for this approach as do the apparent truth of statements such as “There are more characters in *War and Peace* than in *TM*,” which seems to require the existence of fictional entities.<sup>18</sup> Although pretence theories do not have to deal with problems such as determining the nature of fictional entities and providing identity conditions for them, they need to tell us how to distinguish different pretences or games of make-believe without assuming the existence of fictional entities. We want to know what our thoughts are about when we imagine that Samsa is a commercial traveller and how imagining this differs from imagining that Loman is a commercial traveller. Realists will answer both questions by distinguishing the contents of our thoughts in terms of the different objects they

<sup>18</sup> Yet, Walton also considers these cases. For a brief review of his theory and the problems it faces, see Friend 2007 and García-Carpintero 2016. I follow Friend 2007 in stressing some problems which are relevant for her debate with García-Carpintero.

are about, but anti-realists need an alternative answer. They may distinguish the thoughts by referring them to the games of make-believe where they belong to, and by pointing to differences between these games. But then we need to know what a pretence (or a game of make-believe) is and how to individuate it.

The realist and anti-realist strategies just sketched purport to give a uniform answer in any FRC (textual, paratextual or metatextual) to the question *do fictional names stand for anything?* Their respective answers meet serious problems, as we saw. But problems grow in both cases when we consider the presence in fiction of names of real people, places, etc. A toy example may help us see why. Consider two theories of opposite sign: TR combines a Millian theory of names with the realist claim that fictional names stand for abstract entities, whereas TA combines a descriptivist theory of names with the anti-realist claim that fictional names are only used in make-believe games (being thus empty). At some level of abstraction, TR and TA provide uniform accounts of names. Each of them explains the meaning of *any* name N in *any* context in the same way: TR always associates with N an object; and TA, some description(s). The dilemma any theory of names would face with respect to “real” names is this: are “real” names used in FRCs as we use them outside FRCs, or are they used as we use fictional names? Both answers have either unpalatable consequences or implications which are hard to accommodate for TR and TA.

If TR holds that real names lack descriptive content and behave in FRCs as fictional names do, then Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* does not talk about Napoleon at all, what seems wrong, but about some abstract fictional entity named ‘Napoleon.’ However, if TR holds that the meaning of ‘Napoleon’ is *just* Napoleon in any fiction where the name is overtly used in connection with Napoleon, then we might easily misrepresent the paratextual truths of some fictions. Think of parodies of Napoleon involving animals, or fictions where Napoleon—having done what history attributes to him—happens to be an alien, or ends up being transformed into an insect, or killing one of his ancestors after travelling in time, etc. These fictions clearly refer to Napoleon, but we are not allowed in them to import crucial facts that are necessarily true of him, and this is hard to understand if ‘Napoleon,’ as used there, does not include some unusual descriptive

content or is part of some pretence preventing us from doing so. (Fantasies occurring outside fictions might pose similar problems to TR.) Perhaps we should abandon TR, endorse TA and claim that “real” and fictional names in FRCs are part of a make-believe game where we pretend that someone satisfying some set of descriptions exists. But then, why do we have the strong intuition that far from pretending to refer to Napoleon, Tolstoy refers to him in *War and Peace* when he writes ‘Napoleon’? TA could claim that ‘Napoleon’ genuinely refers to Napoleon in fictions such as *War and Peace*, where the descriptions associated to that name are overwhelmingly true of him. But then how many “core” truths about Napoleon should we find in a fiction in order to claim that its author genuinely refers to Napoleon, that no pretence in that respect is going on?<sup>19</sup>

We might look for intricate ways to deal with these issues within TR or TA; or we might explore better and more sophisticated uniform theories. Alternatively, we might abandon altogether the prospect of finding any such theories and look—as Kripke did—for hybrid ones: theories which provide (at best) uniform views for *one* kind of names in *some* kind of contexts. No matter what path we eventually follow, we face a genuine problem: accommodating “real” names in FRCs will always be demanding, for we feel the force of two intuitions pushing often in different directions. We tend to think that “real” names and fictional names mean in different ways; but we are also inclined to think that names (in general) work differently in and outside fictions.

#### 4 Volume overview

The first two contributions to this volume contain the opening discussion of the Third Blasco Disputatio. Reflecting on how we use names of real people, places, etc. in FRCs—a central topic of this special issue on singular terms in fiction—may enhance our understanding of fiction and names in general. Stacie Friend and Manuel García-Carpintero consider whether these names are used

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<sup>19</sup> García-Carpintero (this volume, footnote 35) gives an interesting example of a fiction, *The Curfew tolls*, where it is unclear whether or not ‘Napoleon’ refers to the French Emperor.



in the same way in and outside FRCs. Friend sees no reasons to deny that they can rigidly refer to their bearers in any context. García-Carpintero disagrees. According to him, “real” names only act as rigid designators outside FRCs. Following Walton 1990, he holds that fictions prescribe imaginings (García-Carpintero 2013). A story invites us to engage in a pretence where we imagine its content *as if* it were true. In particular, if we uttered (\*): ‘Napoleon was Corsican’ in a FRC, we would not really be referring to Napoleon or making an assertion, but pretending to do so. Outside FRCs ‘Napoleon’ contributes Napoleon to the content asserted in uttering (\*). In FRCs, however, “real” names do not rigidly refer to their ordinary bearers. This does not mean that they are meaningless, for all names are associated to some reference-fixing descriptive meaning (García-Carpintero 2015, 2016, 2018): ‘Napoleon’, for instance, is semantically linked to (though not synonymous with) ‘the entity picked out by NAPOLEON according to the contextually salient naming-practice to which NAPOLEON belongs.’ This description fixes the reference of ‘Napoleon’ in a context C as follows: the speaker uses (and usually produces) in C a token of the name-type ‘Napoleon’. ‘NAPOLEON’ stands for *this particular use* of ‘Napoleon’. As different entities may be named ‘Napoleon’—the French Emperor, his nephew, someone’s pet, etc.—we need to identify in C the salient conventional naming-practice which NAPOLEON—i.e., the particular use of ‘Napoleon’ in C—belongs to. If NAPOLEON belongs in C to practice N1, where ‘Napoleon’ was introduced as *the French Emperor in 1804*, then NAPOLEON refers to the Corsican general; if it belongs to practice N2, where ‘Napoleon’ was introduced as *that dog over there*, then NAPOLEON refers to that dog.<sup>20</sup> García-Carpintero draws a distinction between

<sup>20</sup> To fully grasp the theory and avoid circularity or a regress, something should be said perhaps about the fact that the metalinguistic characterization of the descriptive meaning of ‘Napoleon’ seems to contain another name: ‘NAPOLEON’. Notice that these names are meaningful in different ways: ‘Napoleon’ is a polysemous name-type linked to different naming-practices, whereas ‘NAPOLEON’ is meant to designate a singular entity: a particular use of (a token of) ‘Napoleon’. But how does ‘NAPOLEON’ manage to designate its bearer? Does it have some associated descriptive meaning? If so, do we need another kind of “name” in order to characterize such meaning? And if it has no

*what is asserted* in uttering a sentence and *what is*—in Stalnaker’s (1978) sense—*presupposed*. When we utter (\*), we assert something about Napoleon, but we also pragmatically convey some information tacitly presupposed by everyone in the conversation and captured by the descriptive meaning of the name, namely, *that Napoleon is the person referred to by the speaker’s use of ‘Napoleon’ in relation to the naming-practice salient in the context*. The descriptive meaning of names is *not* part of the content expressed by the sentences where they appear, but it is pragmatically communicated in using those sentences and explains why “empty names” like ‘Samsa’ are meaningful and why co-referential names cannot always be exchanged in opaque contexts involving attitude ascriptions. Whether empty or not, a name always retains its descriptive meaning and names with different descriptive meaning have different cognitive significance. García-Carpintero holds (in his words) an “excepcionalist” view of real names according to which they act like rigid designators *except in FRCs*.<sup>21</sup> A uniform aspect of the meaning of names, however, is their descriptive meaning. García-Carpintero argues that his view respects Kripke’s insights and deals better with Frege’s puzzles (inside and outside FRCs) than traditional Millian theories. He asks us to imagine a fiction, *The Ferrante Affair (TFA)*, whose author included among its characters two Italian writers: Ferrante (a pseudonym of the anonymous author of *L’amore molesto*) and Starnone (the author of *Denti*). Suppose now that Starnone happens to be Ferrante. Defenders of a direct reference theory of real names in FRCs should hold that by inviting us to imagine (1) the fiction invites us to imagine (1\*), for they would express the same proposition. But, unlike (1), (1\*) is paratextually false (and (2)/(2\*) pose similar problems).

(1) Starnone wrote *Denti* / (1\*) Ferrante wrote *Denti*.

(2) Starnone is not Ferrante / (2\*) Starnone is not Starnone.

descriptive meaning, how does it fix its referent? How should we understand or grasp its meaning and explain it to others? (To be accurate, rather than a name ‘NAPOLEON’ seems a schematic expression to be replaced in a context C with the name of the particular use of ‘Napoleon’ made in C. The question just raised would then affect instances of ‘NAPOLEON’.)

<sup>21</sup> This applies at least to textual and paratextual contexts.

Like García-Carpintero, Stacie Friend supports an anti-realist view of fictional names. She agrees with him that fictions prescribe or invite us to engage in a pretence where we are meant to imagine certain things. But to distinguish fiction from non-fiction by claiming that fiction “prescribes imagining” whereas non-fiction “prescribes believing” would be—she argues—a mistake, for we find invitations to imagine and believe in both fields. Fiction and non-fiction should rather be distinguished as different *genres* (Friend 2012). Indeed, nothing prevents works of fiction such as Shakespeare’s *Richard The Third* from talking *about* Richard III. Shakespeare’s play invites its readers to entertain singular thoughts about *him* as much as do works of non-fiction such as Weir’s *The Princes in the Tower*. Both works invite us, for instance, to imagine and believe *of Richard III* that *he* had his nephews killed. Friend (2014) distinguishes two criteria for fixing the reference of a proper name *N*. According to the first “name-centric” criterion, in using *N* we defer to others: we intend to refer to the same object referred to by those from whom we learnt the name. The referent of our use of *N* (if any) is then the object placed in the origin of this linguistic network of co-referential intentions. According to the second “info-centric” criterion, the referent of *N* is the dominant source of information associated with the name. That information is stored by people in “mental files” they link to *N* and plays a central role in determining *the way* a speaker thinks of *N*’s referent (her “notion” of it). With some exceptions—such as Evans’s (1973) ‘Madagascar’ case—both criteria usually pick out the same object, which we can then identify as *N*’s referent. If, considering historical facts, Weir or anyone else utters (#): ‘Richard III had his nephews killed,’ she refers to Richard III according to both criteria and expresses a singular proposition: <Richard III<sub>[W-notion]</sub>, *having-had-his-nephew-murdered*> whose constituents are Richard III and a complex property. Although Weir thinks of Richard III under some “notion” (indicated by the subscript ‘[W-notion]’ and dependent on the information she associates with him), her Richard-notion is *not* part of the propositional content she thinks. It only affects *the way* she thinks it. Friend claims that an utterance of (#) in textual or paratextual contexts can express the same singular proposition. In using ‘Richard’ (or ‘Gloucester’), Shakespeare meant to use the name in the same way as anyone else, he gathered information from historical

sources about Richard III and sought to disseminate an image of him favourable to the interests of the Tudors: He thus *referred to* Richard III. These intuitions are lost, according to Friend, in views where names of real people are *never* allowed to rigidly refer to their ordinary bearers in FRCs. This blurs the distinction between imagining about real people and imagining about fictional characters. (Notions play indeed a crucial role in understanding invitations to imagine involving fictional names. See Friend 2011.)

In reply to García-Carpintero's *TFA* objection, Friend claims that substitutivity of co-referential names in (1) and (1\*) only fails when these sentences are read *de dicto*. Substitution is possible in *de re* readings. Moreover, *TFA* (as any other fiction) not only invites us to imagine something (a content), it invites us to do so *in some ways*—i.e., under some notions—and not in some others. (*War and Peace*, for instance, does not invite us to imagine Saint Petersburg as Leningrad.) Hence, although (1) and (1\*) do express the same content in the envisioned scenario, *TFA* does not invite us to imagine it by means of (1\*). In his turn, García-Carpintero sees in Friend's appeal to "notions" a move not so distant as it might seem from his descriptivism. He also claims that his view can make sense of the idea that *Richard The Third* is about Richard III because aboutness is "intuitive and malleable" whereas singular reference is "theoretical and constrained". In asserting: 'The president of the USA lives in the White House,' we neither refer to Trump nor express a singular proposition. Yet, as he is in fact the president of the USA, our assertion is about him. Similarly, works of fiction can be about real people (given the descriptive meaning of some names in them) even though no singular reference is made to them. In using 'Napoleon' in *War and Peace* and include information which is true of him, Tolstoy seems to authorize importing into the fiction facts about the French Emperor, even if he is not being referred to. This is not so in the case of fictional names, and for this reason García-Carpintero also refuses that his view conflates imagining about fictional characters with imagining about real people.

In addition to the central discussion of the Third Blasco Disputatio, this special issue contains several contributions reflecting on the role of singular terms in fiction. Matthieu Fontaine endorses artefactual theories of fiction. These realist theories hold that fictional characters

exist as abstract artefacts created by their authors. In Fontains's theory, however, fictional characters are *double aspect entities*: abstract entities in worlds compatible with their creation as part of a fiction, and concrete entities in worlds compatible with the fiction's content. Fictional names are interpreted within a modal semantic framework which makes use of Hintikka's world lines semantics: a fictional entity  $x$  is identified with a (partial) function that selects in a possible world  $w$  an object of  $w$  (the "manifestation" of  $x$  in  $w$ ). Fontaine gives reasons for the failure in his semantics of rules such as substitution of identicals and existential generalization and favours a view of fictional names according to which they are not rigid designators. Raphael Morris also endorses a realist conception of fiction, but instead of identifying fictional characters with artefacts or abstract entities of some sort, he offers a Lewisian account of them where a fictional character such as Chewbacca—his favourite example—is identified with the collection of individuals that play the Chewbacca role in the worlds of the relevant fiction. Morris is particularly concerned with offering an interpretation of fictional names that prevents contradictions from arising, a tall order if we take into account the intuition that the same character seems to appear in fictions (*Star Wars* and *Legends*) which provide mutually incompatible descriptions of it. Another source of concern about the Lewisian framework used by Morris is to what extent we are talking about the same entity in talking about Chewbacca. Elisa Paganini addresses one of the hardest challenges posed by fiction: in what sense can we be said to gain knowledge through fiction if knowing that  $p$  requires  $p$  to be true? One way to tackle the problem is to offer a semantic theory describing the truth-conditions of sentences containing fictional names, etc. But Paganini endorses an anti-realist view of fiction. According to her, "fictional sentences" lack truth-values and truth-conditions. She explores the possibility of characterizing their objective content and the idea of knowledge in fiction in terms of the dispositions of people who use those sentences. In her view, if  $S$  fictionally knows that  $p$ , then there is a common fictional content  $p$  attributed by a group of people including  $S$  to a certain fiction. Finally, Enrico Grosso tries to offer a uniform cognitive account of how names and other singular terms work in fiction by means of a theory of mental files where, following Recanati, he distinguishes

“regular files” (which accrue information about an object assumed to belong to the external world) from “indexed files” (which stand in a subject’s mind for another subject’s mental file about an object). The second kind of files plays an important role in storing information we associate with a particular fiction, especially when we think of fictional characters in the “engaged” mode characteristic of textual and paratextual contexts. Regular files, however, are also relevant in order to understand our thoughts about fictional characters in the typically “distanced” mode adopted in metatextual contexts. Moreover, the interplay between both kinds of files may help explain why fictional characters modelled after real people—Napoleon in *War and Peace* for instance—allow us to import into a fiction information about the real world, whereas characters such as Gregor Samsa do not. Dealing with “mixed” cases like (9) or (10) (see §2) may be more challenging for this proposal however.<sup>22</sup>

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