

## Is Fictional Reference Rigid?<sup>1</sup>

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ABSTRACT: Are ordinary proper names *rigid* when they occur in fictional discourse? In previous work (García-Carpintero 2010a) I have argued that they are not, at least when we consider the core case of *textual* fictional discourse, and also the case, dependent on it, of *paratextual* fictional discourse. From a perspective on such discourse which—on my reading of Kořátko (2004) and (2013)—I understand to be not far away from mine, Petr Kořátko (2010) argues that they are not: “proper names remain *rigid designators* in Kripke’s sense ... even if transferred from ‘everyday’ communication to literary texts” (*op. cit.*, 94). After explaining how I understand the relevant concepts in the first section, I’ll critically take up Petr’s arguments in the second.

KEYWORDS: Fiction – fictional reference – reference – rigid designators.

### 1. Fictional reference and its varieties

We should distinguish three types of discourse related to fiction, which pose their own specific problems. Consider these sentences:

- (1) Mr. Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls.

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- (2) (According to *Ulysses*) Mr. Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls.
- (3) Leopold Bloom is a fictional character.

Take firstly an utterance of (1) by Joyce, as part of the longer utterance of the full discourse which, with a measure of idealization, we can think constitutes his creation of *Ulysses*. It is distinctive of such uses, which I will be calling *textual*,<sup>2</sup> that they are not intuitively truth-evaluable. The other two uses differ in that they appear to be truth-evaluable. There is, first, the use of sentences such as (1) that we make when we are stating the content of a fiction. I will call these uses *paratextual*; according to Lewis (1978) and other philosophers, they are simply elliptic for intuitively equivalent ascriptions of propositional content such as (2). Finally, I will call uses of sentences such as (3) *metatextual*; they are similarly intuitively truth-evaluable but not directly content-reporting, in that they are not (or at least not obviously) equivalent to propositional content ascriptions like (2).

Philosophers take very different views on the way singular terms in these utterances work. Kripke (1980) argued that a proper account of metatextual uses requires interpreting names such as 'Leopold Bloom' in them as referring to fictional entities. The most influential fully developed argument for such realism about fictional entities is van Inwagen's (1977) Quinean appeal to non-eliminable quantification over, and reference to, such entities in *prima facie* serious, truth-evaluable discourse, such as utterances of (3) and related metatextual uses in contexts of literary criticism. Such *ficta* could then be taken to be Meinongian non-existent entities, concrete non-actual *possibilia*, or (as both Kripke and van Inwagen prefer) abstract existent entities of various sorts, fully-fledged Platonic *abstrakta* or rather created artifacts, as in Salmon (1998), Thomasson (1999) and Schiffer (2003). Fictional entities of any of these sorts could also be invoked to account for either of the other uses, textual and paratextual, but this requires extra work; for neither of those entities can be straightforwardly taken to be the sort of thing capable of eating birds' inner organs.

The intuitive obviousness of negative existentials involving fictional names counts against non-Meinongian realist views, a point that Everett (2007; 2013, ch. 7) forcefully presses. Everett (2005; 2013, ch. 8) provides

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<sup>2</sup> I take this and the other two related labels from Bonomi (2008).

an interesting elaboration on equally well-known indeterminacy concerns about fictional realism, echoing Quine's (1948, 23) indictment:

the possible fat man in that doorway; and, again, the possible bald man in that doorway. Are they the same possible man, or two possible men? How do we decide? How many possible men are there in that doorway? Are there more possible thin ones than fat ones? How many of them are alike?

While focusing on metatextual uses leads naturally to think of the referential expressions in (1)-(3) as in fact referring to certain entities, and hence to some form of realism, focusing instead on textual uses leads to an altogether different, anti-realist picture. When the creator of a fiction uses declarative sentences such as (1) (as, indeed, when she uses sentences of other types, imperatives, etc), we do not feel tempted to think of her as really performing the speech acts one typically performs with them in default contexts. In such cases, the sentences are used in some form of *pretense*, the way we take the actions that actors perform on stage: they do not need to be drinking whisky, they are merely pretending to do so.

Now, if the apparent assertions are merely pretend, perhaps we could say the same of the apparent acts of reference; and in this way perhaps an avenue is opened to account for such uses without the need to posit actual referents for fictional singular terms. Walton (1990) has provided a very elaborate and deservedly influential account of textual uses along such lines, which he then extends to deal with both paratextual and metatextual uses; Everett (2013) provides a compelling elaboration of the program. As above with the realist picture, the extension is not so straightforward, for there does not appear to be any pretense in assertions of (3). A possible option would be to combine fictional realism for (3) with a pretense-theoretic account of authors' uses of sentences like (1), but, in addition to the profligacy involved, (2) occupies a problematic middle ground for this ecumenical rapprochement, and, as Everett (2013, 163-178) emphasizes, there are many mixed cases such as 'Anna admires Holmes'.

In previous work (García-Carpintero 2010b) I have defended a form of anti-realism for metatextual discourse, a version of Yablo's (2001) *figuralist* brand of fictionalism. Its classification as a sort of *anti-realism*, however, is a delicate matter. The proposal is, basically, that in metatextual uses the syntactic features that Quine calls a language's *referential apparatus* (a complex set including occurring in argument-position, openness to existential

generalization and substitutivity of identicals, etc) is used in a loose, hypostatizing figurative way. However, the metaphors in question are pretty much “dead”; they are, say, like the use of prepositions with a basic spatial sense (‘on’, ‘out’) for abstract relations. Thus, in contrast to the case in true pretense-theoretic fictionalist proposals, on this view utterances in metatextual discourse are straightforward assertions with straightforward truth-conditions.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, the figuralist proposal is fictionalist in spirit. We use ‘lion’ in a loose way to refer to lion-statues (‘I’ll meet you beside the lion’), etc. Now, even if the figures of speech we rely on in such uses are not at all creative, and should be counted as literal, deploying the lexical meaning of the expressions involved, it would be quite unwarranted to worry about the ontological status of the sort of property we literally mean by ‘being a lion’, its degree of naturalness, and so on and so forth. The facts of those uses, even if they should be counted as literal, “semantic”, not “pragmatic”, do not stand in the way of a view that, strictly speaking, ‘being a lion’ designates a natural (biological) kind, while in such uses it is applied to things that, in a variety of respects, *count as* such. It is with this dismissive attitude that the defender of the figurative view of metatextual discourse looks at debates between fictional realists whether characters are non-existent *concreta, possibilia*, or rather created or Platonic *abstracta*.<sup>4</sup>

Be this as it may, what matters for present purposes is that, even if it is a form of realism, the figuralist view of metatextual discourse does not offer by itself an account of referential expressions in textual and paratextual uses. In the terms of this proposal, an illuminating view should take the form of an account of the figurative content of utterances such as (2), ultimately of the nature of the discourse that (2) reports—of whatever utterances such as (1) express. As in general is the case with such contents, we

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<sup>3</sup> To circumvent the problems that this causes, in more recent work Yablo (2014) has developed an alternative framework to his earlier figurativism to present the fictionalism he favors. I like this work, and, given the role that presuppositions play on the view I present below, it would be straightforward to articulate the form of fictionalism about fictional characters I support by means of it; but I have stuck to the figurativist framework for reasons of familiarity and consequent ease of exposition.

<sup>4</sup> The dismissive Wittgensteinian attitude applies only to the *ontological* worries. There are very interesting difficult theoretical issues, in linguistics and in philosophy, in understanding the lexical processes involved in these cases. My previous work provides some references.

should not count on anything like a “translation recipe”, a general procedure for articulating it in any particular case; perhaps this can only be given on a case-by-case basis. What is clear is that we will not find reference to any posit of realist accounts in an acceptable characterization of figurative contents of this kind (and we had better not). Hence, we need an independent account both of the meaning of expressions such as those intuitively lacking a referent, like ‘Leopold Bloom’, and of those intuitively having a referent, like ‘Dublin’, as they occur in textual discourses of the sort illustrated by (1). I will briefly sketch the view of textual discourse I have defended elsewhere.

I support pretense-theoretic accounts of textual discourse of the kind advanced by Walton (1990) and developed by Everett (2013) and Friend (2011; 2014). My main difference with them lies in that I reject Millian accounts of singular terms, proper names in particular. To understand this, I need to outline first the account of singular thought I prefer. I take it that there are two sets of intuitive data to be accounted for by theories of singular contents. There is, firstly, the Quinean distinction between (general, “*de dicto*”) belief-states concerning particular spies with contents that would be uninteresting to intelligence agencies (such as believing that the shortest spy spies) vs. those (singular, “*de re*”) that do not. Secondly, there is the intuitive data that Kripke and others marshalled against traditional descriptivist accounts of the thoughts expressed by utterances including literally used proper names or indexicals, and referentially used descriptions; in particular, the “intuitions of rigidity,” that when we consider possible states of affairs compatible with the truth of a given utterance we keep fixed the denotation of the referential expression in the actual state of affairs, if any.<sup>5</sup>

The account I support for those intuitions has (appealing to Kaplan’s 1989 distinction, cf. García-Carpintero 2012) semantic and metasemantic aspects.<sup>6</sup> On the semantic side, we should distinguish the contribution of

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<sup>5</sup> “My main remark ... is that we have a direct intuition of the rigidity of names, exhibited in our understanding of the truth conditions of particular sentences” (Kripke 1980, 14; cf. 6, 62).

<sup>6</sup> The word ‘semantic’ is here understood in a wide sense. In this sense, referential uses of descriptions have a “semantics” according to which they are “directly referential”, and in fact rigid; but this is compatible with the view that these uses are non-semantic in a narrow sense (on which semantics aims at providing a compositional account of the meanings of natural language expressions), a generalized conversational implicature.

the referential expression to the content of the main speech act being made—the assertion or judgment, given that we are considering a default utterance of a declarative sentence for methodologically useful concreteness—from its contribution to an ancillary presupposition.<sup>7</sup> The contribution to the asserted content is the object itself, if any, as in Millian views; the contribution to the presupposition is an assumed “important predicate”, a *prima facie* identifying property that could be offered as an answer to questions as to who or what the referent is.<sup>8</sup> On the metasemantic side, I take reference to be an ancillary speech act. I will assume a normative account of speech acts,<sup>9</sup> along the lines of Williamson’s (1996) well-known account of assertion. According to Williamson, assertion is constituted by a simple knowledge rule, KR; I propose the ancillary reference rule RR, which is just an application of Russell’s Acquaintance Principle:

(KR) One must ((assert *p*) only if one knows *p*)

(NR) One must ((refer to *o*) only if one knows who or what *o* is)

The semantic side of the account has affinities with other suggestions in the literature, and thus for present purposes it can be further sketched in relation to them. Thus, consider *S*’s literal utterance of a declarative sentence such as ‘he is hungry’. In truth-conditional terms, the proposal delivers familiar hedged truth-conditions (Sainsbury 2005, 54–59): *on the assumption that *x* is the demonstrated male that *S*’s use of ‘he’ refers to, *S*’s utterance is true iff *x* is hungry*. The view differs from truth-conditional accounts such as Sainsbury’s in providing a more complex semantics, with two different contents: (focusing just on the contribution of a referential expression) the singular asserted truth-condition and the conventionally impli-

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<sup>7</sup> We are here considering the semantics (in the wide sense) of uses of sentences, not the semantics of sentence-types. I think that the account to be outlined can be transferred from linguistic to mental acts with small variations; a useful starting point is to consider the judgments made by default by “uttering” declarative sentences in *foro inter-no*, instead of assertions.

<sup>8</sup> I borrow the notion of “important predicate” from Boër and Lycan’s (1986) well-known account of knowing who, on which this is a matter of knowing identifying properties relevant for contextually specific purposes.

<sup>9</sup> This is one of the many fundamental agreements with Kot’átko’s views, even though he has advanced a different normative view of speech acts, taking the notion of normative *commitment* as primitive (cf. Kot’átko 1998).

cated descriptive presupposition. In that respect, it is closer to views such as Perry (2001), with the singular asserted proposition being Perry's *referential* or *official* content, and the conventionally implicated proposition close to Perry's *reflexive* content.

In the case of a use of a proper name  $N$ , the descriptive presupposition conventionally implicated is that the use of  $N$  refers to the object saliently being called  $N$  in that use. "Being called  $N$ " in a use leads us to a contextually identified *naming practice*. I mostly agree with what Sainsbury (2005, 106-124) has to say about naming practices and their identity, in particular with his view that a naming practice has at most one referent, but may lack one. These conventionally implicated descriptive contents are usually pragmatically enriched with further assumed properties of the referent derived from context, from perception, memory, or anaphoric relations to previous discourse: on the assumption that  $x$  is the demonstrated male that  $S$ 's use of 'he' refers to, *the one looking so-and-so from that perspective*,  $S$ 's utterance is true iff  $x$  is hungry.

The view has a further important affinity to Sainsbury's, in that it admits "reference without referents"; utterances of 'Vulcan is bigger than Mercury' are fully meaningful expressions signifying (with respect to every possible world) "gappy" untrue singular propositions (Braun 1993; 2005). Referring expressions purport to have referents, but they do not need to have them; on the present view, this is not just a teleological feature but a normative one: they should have them for their uses to meet their constitutive norms. The account thus requires a free logic—which in my view (unlike Sainsbury's 2005 or Braun's 2005) should be a supervaluationist non-bivalent one, but we do not need to go into that here. Sainsbury's is of course a *modest* truth-conditional proposal, but I think that the relative full-bloodedness that comes from acknowledging a further level of presupposed contents is required, both to properly account for the datum of rigidity and also to help us understand how utterances signifying necessarily untrue gappy contents can nonetheless be fully meaningful.

According to Sainsbury (2005, 76-81), the explanation for the datum of rigidity is given by the "essence of reference", which on his view is captured by Evans's principle (P):

- (P) If  $S$  is an atomic sentence combining the  $n$ -place concept-expression  $R$  with singular terms  $t_1 \dots t_n$ , then  $S$  is true iff  $\langle$ the referent of  $t_1 \dots$  the referent of  $t_n \rangle$  satisfies  $R$ .

However, I do not think this principle can adequately carry the explanatory burden. Sainsbury has to stipulate the restriction to atomic sentences so as to exclude sentences formed with definite descriptions; and he must interpret the metalinguistic descriptions used in the principle as themselves referring expression, or alternatively rigidify them by inserting ‘actual’, for the principle to deliver the intuitively correct rigid truth-conditions. Hence, in both respects, in order to obtain the intuitively desired results from the principle, we must already apply it in accordance with the distinction we are trying to account for. On the present view, the explanatory burden is rather carried by the metasemantic epistemic norm of reference. Some literal speech acts that language allows their users to make express singular thoughts: thoughts involving different objects (in the same “positions”) would be different thoughts; properly understanding these thoughts requires knowing those objects.

The norm of reference by means of which I try to capture Russell’s Acquaintance Principle requires much more elucidation than I can provide here. It requires first of all motivation, which (following Russell) I am assuming comes from general requirements on understanding. Its normative character should be further clarified, to emphasize that the norm is still in place in cases in which it is not fulfilled, the clearest among them being ‘Vulcan’-like cases involving failure of intended reference. The context-dependence that its application shares with all knowledge-ascriptions should also be addressed, in the framework of a general account of such apparent context-dependence: Is it really the case that ascriptions of knowing-which/who are interest-relative, as Böer and Lycan (1986) claimed? Last, but of course not least, the (absolute, or context-relative) epistemic requirement that it imposes should be explored and clarified. In particular, I (2008) have defended that Leverrier’s uses of ‘Neptune’, or similar uses of ‘Jack the Ripper’ or ‘Unabomber’ in worn-out examples, *meet* the requirement, in that there is a sufficiently substantial causal-evidential relation with the referent (a perceptual relation with other objects related to it, together with good evidence concerning the relevant relations). This should be further elaborated in a general epistemic framework, addressing among other matters the recent criticism of accounts like this by Hawthorne and Manley (2012, ch. 3).

A fuller exploration of these issues is out of the question here. Let us just keep in mind the two main features of the view I have outlined: an epistemic requirement on singular thought (as opposed to a merely psycho-

logical one in terms, say, of dependence on “cognitively significant mental files”); and a semantics with descriptivist features, even if they remain merely at a presuppositional level in the case of the assertoric utterances made by default when uttering declarative sentences that we have considered so far. What account does this provide for the use of names (and other *de iure* rigid expressions) in textual discourse?

As suggested above, our intuitions support *non-committal* accounts of the semantics of textual and paratextual uses of sentences such as (1), not committed to the existence of fictional entities. The most popular contemporary account in sync with those intuitions is Walton’s (1990) deservedly influential theory, or variations on it such as Currie’s (1990) or Lamarque and Olsen’s (1994). On the version that I myself (2007; 2013) have advanced, Joyce’s utterance is not an assertion, but a different speech act of pretending or make-believe, which should be understood in terms of norms stating contents that proper appreciators of Joyce’s tale ought to *imagine*. As Walton rightly emphasized, these are not just pretense views; for it is not enough to say that the fiction-maker pretends to assert—or to order, ask, etc.—to fully characterize what he does, among other things because there are cases of pretense which in no way constitute fiction-making. The fiction-maker is engaged in a fully contentful intentional behavior.

This poses a problem for Walton’s own proposal, or the related one by Evans (1982), which I articulated in previous work. Evans adopts Walton’s appeal to practices of make-believe, but Walton follows Evans in assuming a very strong non-descriptivist version of referentialism for (most uses of) singular terms, according to which sentences including empty singular terms lack content, whether or not they are embedded in intensional contexts. Singular thoughts are object-dependent not just in that a difference in objects is thereby a difference in thoughts, as I assume is required to account for rigidity, but in that the thought cannot exist unless the object does. Now, even if Joyce’s act is not an assertion but rather an invitation to his readers’ imagination, the purported imaginings should nonetheless have contents; and non-descriptivists must tell us what, on their view, the contribution of names such as ‘Mr. Leopold Bloom’ to such contents is. Their referentialism makes it difficult for these accounts to characterize the semantic content of the contents of the acts of make-believe that on these views fictions mandate.

Let us see in contrast how an account of singular thought with the two features I highlighted at the end of the preceding section can deal with these

problems; and let us begin with a case involving indexicals, such as the short story I imagined earlier including the sentence ‘he thought this just before dying’. The narrow semantics of utterances of sentences like this which I outlined above has it that they are assertions of singular contents about the most salient male when the token of ‘he’ is produced, if any, i.e., if the speaker meets the norm of reference relative to the purported referent. If this is not the case (say, in the most obvious case, because there is no such male), the utterance still semantically (in the narrow sense) constitutes the meaningful, though unsuccessful, assertion of a singular content.

Now, I do not think we can stop here if we want to provide an accurate account of what the fiction-maker is doing, i.e., of the semantics (in a wide sense) of textual uses. This is essentially because of a point that Walton makes in the text quoted above: “not all acts of pretence of *this* sort are of [the relevant] kind”. Both when Conan Doyle writes ‘Holmes is a clever detective’ and when Chandler writes ‘Marlowe is a clever detective’, the sentences they use express the very same gappy singular proposition; in both cases the utterer pretends *to assert de re of someone that he* is a clever detective. But I do not think we want to say that the contents of *their* speech acts (the contents we, as sensible appreciators, are supposed to imagine) are those “gappy” singular contents shared by the two utterances. Fiction-producers merely pretend to assert these gappy propositions; what they want fiction-consumers thereby to imagine are not those rather uninteresting contents, but other related descriptive ones instead.

My account of sentences like ‘he thought this just before dying’ or ‘Marlowe is a clever detective’ is “two-dimensional,” in that it gives us descriptive contents additional to the singular contents. These descriptive contents are still singular, in that they are about the tokens of the referential expressions or, in general, the contexts in which they are produced; in our cases, that the salient male when the token of ‘he’ was produced thought such and such before dying, and that the object called ‘Marlowe’ is a clever detective.<sup>10</sup> These are the contents I contend we are supposed to imagine. In textual uses, as Walton suggests, the fiction-makers are primar-

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<sup>10</sup> See my (2006) for elaboration. Two-dimensional contents like those I am envisaging were firstly introduced in Stalnaker (1978); Stalnaker provides at the end of the paper an application to ‘Sherlock Holmes does not exist’. A similar idea is contained in Perry’s (2001) multi-propositional proposal; Perry’s reflexive propositions are described in a framework of structured contents closer to the one I am assuming than Stalnaker’s possible worlds metatheory.

ily indicating by exemplification the kind of speech acts that should be imagined; we avoid Walton's and Evans' difficulties because the speech acts that the sentences they use signify by default—the ones intended to serve as illustration for those that the readers are supposed to imagine, even if unsuccessful if taken at face value—are fully meaningful.

On this view, the semantics of textual uses is descriptive, and hence singular terms *both empty and non-empty* in them are not rigid.<sup>11</sup> The same applies to paratextual uses, which I take to pragmatically implicate explicit ascriptions of content to fictions, along the lines of (2). To deal with the semantics of the latter, we would need to draw on neo-Fregean accounts of propositional attitudes, such as “hidden-indexical” or “interpreted logical form” views, taking advantage of the descriptive features already present in non-embedded uses.<sup>12</sup> Stacie Friend (2011; 2014) has objected that a descriptivist view concerning the content of imaginings cannot properly capture a certain “object-directness” intuition that we have regarding the content of fictions; her interesting points complement the arguments by Kot'átko I will discuss in the next section, some of which are similar to the ones she had given before (Friend 2000). They both support the main claim I want to discuss here, which Kroon (1994)—in a persuasive critical discussion of views of this kind, providing arguments complementary to mine—states thus:

- (R) Occurrences in fictional contexts of real proper names like ‘London’, ‘Baker Street’, ‘Napoleon’, and so on, are purely referential and take their usual reference.

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<sup>11</sup> In this respect, the proposal is close to Currie's (1990) and Lamarque and Olsen's (1994).

<sup>12</sup> See Crimmins and Perry (1989) for the former, and Pietroski (1996) for the latter. Of course, the proposal should not have it that a paratextual use of ‘he thought this just before dying’ ends up ascribing to the relevant fiction a content concerning the token of ‘he’ used by the ascriber, or (1) one concerning a ‘Bloom’ naming-practice leading to the token used in its context, in the latter case because the existence of no such practice needs be assumed, in the former because such token is irrelevant to the content of the fiction. The ascribed content concerns a token of ‘he’ used by the fictional narrator that my account presupposes, or a naming-practice fictionally depended upon in the context of that narrator's acts. On everybody's account, ascriptions of propositional attitudes are heavily context-dependent, independently of the issue of whether or not descriptive material ends up constituting the truth-conditions of the report, as I assume.

Let me outline the main considerations against (R) and for a descriptivist view of the sort I gave in earlier work (García-Carpintero 2010a), to be further developed in the next section. The suggested view adopts from referentialists such as Braun (1993; 2005) the idea that assertions of ‘Vulcan is smaller than Mars’ have gappy contents. Assertions of atomic sentences with these contents are untrue, false according to the free logics that Braun and Sainsbury opt for, neither true nor false according to the supervaluationist one I prefer. This captures the fact that these assertions are *wrong*, with respect to a dimension of evaluation (truth) essential for the nature of assertions; similar remarks could be made about questions or orders with these contents. However, there is absolutely nothing wrong about the acts of fiction-makers who use empty names; there is, for instance, no appearance of “imaginative resistance” on the part of appreciators of such fictions.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, by placing features accounting for differences in “cognitive significance” between ‘Hesperus is smaller than Mars’ and ‘Phosphorus is smaller than Mars’, or ‘today is Tuesday’ and ‘tomorrow was Tuesday’ (with the respective contexts of utterance coordinated so that indexicals and tenses have the same referents) at a different level than that of the asserted content—the “ways of believing” of referentialists such as Salmon and Braun, or my presuppositional level—we capture the intuitive commonalities in “what is said” among utterances made by people otherwise with very different perspectives on what they talk about, explain communicative success (cf. Perry 2001, 5, 19), and, importantly, account for our reflective intuitions about the objectivity of many subject-matters for our representational acts (Schroeter 2008). A good case can be made that these commonalities extend to straightforward assertions of ‘Marlowe is a clever detective’ and ‘Holmes is a clever detective’ by confused speakers who have taken fictional stories for factual ones; the manifest differences in cognitive significance between such utterances would be accounted for in the usual ways.

However, nothing of this sort can be said about the contents that fictions intend proper appreciators to imagine. While the mode of thinking through which we think of Venus when we assert ‘Hesperus is smaller than Mars’ is intuitively and theoretically irrelevant to what we assert, in that many other modes of thinking about it may do as well, the corresponding

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<sup>13</sup> Weatherson (2004) offers a good presentation of the puzzles of imaginative resistance.

modes of thinking “about” Marlowe and Holmes provided by the relevant fictions are essential to their contents: no proper appreciation can ignore them; no proper appreciation can do without building the corresponding files, starting with ‘object picked out by the relevant ‘Marlowe’ naming practice’, and stacking into it all the information about the character derived from the fiction. (We should not be misled here by the fact, which Walton 1990 emphasizes, that not all propositions constituting the content of fictions are on an equal rank with respect to a proper appreciation; many can be ignored, while still having a good notion of what the fiction is about.) All of this applies equally well to non-empty singular terms occurring in fictions, such as ‘Napoleon’ in *War and Peace* or ‘London’ in *1984*.

To sum up, I do not think that there are good reasons to support the claim that either ‘Bloom’ or ‘Dublin’ behaves like a rigid designator with respect to the content of utterances such as (1). In the first place, the descriptive content associated with those names (in particular, *person named ‘Bloom’/city named ‘Dublin’ in relation to tokens used in Ulysses*) is *not* intuitively irrelevant with respect to that content; in the second place, it is not intuitively the case that, when we consider counterfactual circumstances to establish whether or not they constitute the contents the fiction ask us to imagine, we just consider how things are with a single Bloom/Dublin.

## 2. Kořátko’s arguments

I now move on to critically examine Kořátko’s (2010) considerations for the claim quoted above, “proper names remain *rigid designators* in Kripke’s sense ... even if transferred from ‘everyday’ communication to literary texts” (*op. cit.*, 94); as mentioned, Friend (2000) argues for a similar claim along the lines of (R): “connected names [by which she means “real” names like ‘London’ and ‘Napoleon’ used in fictions] refer to their ordinary referents” (*op. cit.*, 186).

Kořátko starts his paper with a critical discussion of views on which “the world of the fiction” (and in fact all possible worlds) are “constructs of human productive abilities”. To counter such views, he provides a toy possible worlds model for a small part of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, involving Brutus, Caesar, and some relations between them. I agree that the content of fictions, as Walton (1990) has emphasized, is a sufficiently objective matter, and I of course agree with Petr that possible worlds are in

no way “constructs of imaginative abilities”, so I do not have any quarrel with this argument. However, the fact that the relevant possible worlds in his model have been specified by means of directly referring expressions, and that the worlds can be considered a toy model for a part of Shakespeare’s fiction, is later invoked (*op. cit.*, 94) in support of the claim I am taking issue with. This will not do. The fact that the worlds can be specified in terms of the relevant objects does not prove that *the fiction* actually specifies them in that way; hence, without further evidence, the argument is question-begging.

We should add that talk of worlds should be handled with care in this context. As is well known, in spite of the efforts by Stalnaker and others, there are very good reasons not to take possible worlds as primitive entities in our semantic endeavors; the particular case of fictions, of course, multiplies such concerns.<sup>14</sup> It is perfectly ok, in my view, to use them as a semantic tool, and not just for instrumental reasons; the presence of modal expressions in our languages, in addition to the need to account for semantically grounded modal notions like logical validity, sufficiently establish that. But possible worlds need not be primitive entities. They might be determined by structured propositions, for instance. In such terms, the present question is whether it is worlds determined by singular propositions, or rather worlds determined by general descriptive propositions, that we should take the textual discourse of fictions to portray.

The main argument that both Friend and Kořátko give for their related claims relies on the fact that a proper appreciation of a story including “connected” names (to use Friend’s term) requires invoking information that appreciators associate with the names in virtue of their beliefs about the names’ actual referents. Thus, Friend (2000) illustrates her argument with a story of her own about Anthony Everett and John Perry (both present at the conference where her paper was originally given, I gather), including witticisms to be appreciated by people familiar with those characters. She writes:

this story was designed for a certain audience who would appreciate the allusions. So if we deny that we are supposed to be imagining, of Perry, that he never tells a joke, or of Everett, that he is a secret agent, then it seems as if we lose the point of the story altogether (*op. cit.*, 193).

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<sup>14</sup> Sainsbury (2014) expresses a much more wide-ranging skepticism about possible worlds as a tool to understand fictional content.

In a similar vein, Kot'átko (*op. cit.*, 95-96) writes:

As a reader of *The Count of Monte Christo* or of *Lost Illusions* I am confronted with a series of terms like 'The Emperor', 'Napoleon', 'Bonaparte', 'The Corsican' or 'The Usurper': then the *literary* construction of the text invites me to activate my *historical* knowledge and on its basis interpret these terms, as used in given contexts, as coreferential ... The most natural way of doing justice to this observation is to admit the real Napoleon I as the referent of the utterances of the word 'Napoleon' (or 'Bonaparte', 'The Usurper' etc.) in the literary text.

In response, I will rely on an observation that "latitudinarians" with respect to *de re* attitudes from Sosa (1970) to Hawthorne and Manley (2012) have pointed out: to wit, that even Boër and Lycan's (1986, 125-132) lowest "grade of *de re* involvement" allows for a measure of aboutness. Boër and Lycan's grades range from grade 1 (the attitude deploys an "attributively used" non-rigid description) to grade 6 (Russellian unmediated acquaintance with *sense data* or the self), through representation by means of rigidified descriptions (grade 2), representations causally dependent on the referent (grade 3) and representation by means of *de iure* rigid (linguistic or mental) terms (grade 4).<sup>15</sup> Boër and Lycan provide the following example that even grade 1 allows for intuitive aboutness, adapted from Sosa (1970, 894-895):

Ludwig is a successful arsonist. The police know that an arsonist is at work in the community, but Ludwig is so discreet that they have no clue whatever as to his identity. Nevertheless, they speculate that whoever set the fires is from out of town ... and this conjecture is reported in the newspapers. Ludwig's wife reads her paper and says to him, *They think you are from out of town.* (*op. cit.*, 189)

Examples like this are easily reproduced; many others can be found in the literature. It does not matter how such reports should be understood; even if they are literally false, what matters for our purposes is that they show that we intuitively accept as felicitous *de re* ascriptions in cases in which the content of the representation in question only involves purely general descriptions.

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<sup>15</sup> Boër and Lycan (*op. cit.*, 131) suggest that the true dividing line between general and singular attitudes separates grades 3 and lower from grades 4 and higher. I agree with them, cf. García-Carpintero (2014).

Taking this into consideration, let me now go a bit further into the details of how the semantic proposal I have outlined in the previous section handles the use of singular terms, both empty and non-empty, in the production of a fiction. It should be clear that the view I have outlined in the previous section is not reductive. Far from purporting to reduce singular representational states/acts to descriptive general ones, it assumes that there are such primitively singular states. The view is only that general descriptive information helping to fix the individuals they are about is a constitutive feature of the states. This information figures in associated presuppositions. These presuppositions are themselves singular, and not just because they may mention singular token representational states; the intended referents, if there are any, also figure in their contents. Singularity is here understood as a constitutive feature of the representational devices, a “semantic requirement” (Fine 2007) on them—a fact to be embedded in a general theory of such representations, which must be grasped if they are to be fully comprehended. Finally, singular representations thus understood may fail to have an object.

Now, on the Stalnakerian (Stalnaker 1978) picture of presuppositions I partly assume, presupposition and assertion interrelate in dynamic ways. Presuppositions are checked against a “common ground”, a set of propositions that are common knowledge among conversational participants. Asserted contents, if accepted, become part of the common ground, and thus legitimize presuppositions later on in the discourse. Consider an utterance of (1) in its assumed context. This is a declarative sentence that would be used by default to make an assertion. The assertion, I have suggested, is merely pretend, which is why we would not complain that it cannot be true or impart knowledge by its including an empty name. However, it behaves with respect to the dynamic of discourse exactly like the corresponding assertion would have, legitimizing presuppositions; thus, the next sentence could have been “it was not just relish that he experienced, it was something closer to devotion”—a cleft construction presupposing that Bloom felt relish—and it would feel entirely felicitous (unlike “it was not just disgust ...”). It is in virtue of examples like this that the common ground is not taken to consist of propositions that are strictly speaking common *knowledge*, but merely commonly “accepted” (Stalnaker 2002). I suggest we take such an “acceptance” to be a matter of further pretense: an accepted pretend assertion becomes a pretend presupposition. Fully understanding fictional discourse involves additional pretend presuppositions to the ones created by pretend assertion:

the singular reference-fixing presuppositions that my proposal associates with empty names such as ‘Leopold Bloom’ are similarly merely pretend presuppositions. It is thus neither here nor there that they cannot be true, nor therefore matters of common knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

Not all presuppositions that a piece of textual discourse assumes are pretend, of course. As has frequently been pointed out, even the more fanciful tales assume facts that truly are (taken to be) common knowledge, in order to determine their contents. Special among them are presuppositions constitutive of the meaning of the terms the tale uses; these cannot be pretend. The singular presuppositions associated with connected names belong in this category of non-pretend presuppositions. They interact with pretend presuppositions to determine the content of the fiction, in ways that have been famously explored by Lewis (1978) in his second analysis of truth-in-fiction, by Walton (1990) for his “principles of generation” for make-believe and by many others under their influence. Does this imply that the content of fictions includes singular propositions conveyed by sentences including connected names, as Friend and Kot’átko want?

This does not follow; it does not follow even if—as I think we should—we understand the pretense we are talking about here along the lines that Walton (1990) suggests and many others, including Everett (2013), have developed, i.e., as proposals to imagine. The text constituting a fiction (perhaps derivatively from intentional acts by his actual or implied author, we do not need to go into this) proposes that its readers imaginatively presuppose some contents. But this does not entail that such contents are *eo ipso* contents of the fiction. The text constitutes an act of fiction-making;<sup>17</sup> but not everything that the reader should imagine in order to comprehend the text needs be part of the content made fictional by it. There are imaginative acts required to understand the text that are merely ancillary to the determination of the contents that the text invites proper appreciators to imagine. Let us suppose a story beginning thus: “this is the tale of a little dragon, Urkul, who lived at a time when there were no people around and things still did not have names”. The reader is to im-

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Sainsbury’s (2010, 143–148) related discussion of “truth under a presupposition”—which is not, however, put in the framework of a general theory of reference involving presuppositions.

<sup>17</sup> As I said, I have developed elsewhere my own understanding of this, inspired by that of Currie (1990) and Walton (1990); cf. García-Carpintero (2007; 2013).

agine that  $x$  is the dragon picked out by the naming-practice on which that token of ‘Urkul’ relies;<sup>18</sup> but this is clearly not intended to be part of the content of the fiction. What is to be part of the content of the fiction is determined by relevance-like factors, relative to the nature of the act of fiction-making, including the intentions of the author, related conventions, etc, of which at a sufficiently general level we have a poor grasp.<sup>19</sup> Still, I think that, whatever they are, the previous claim that *that the dragon is called ‘Urkul’* is not part of the fictional content is sufficiently safe.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, I agree with Petr that, as readers of the works he mentions, we are supposed to accept (imaginatively presuppose) singular propositions about Napoleon, stating his identity with The Emperor, Bonaparte, The Usurper or The Corsican. He might also be right that the most natural way of doing justice to this is to admit the real Napoleon I as the referent of the utterances of the word ‘Napoleon’ in the literary text. And yet this does not follow from the observation, as the theoretical proposal I have outlined shows: it is still compatible with the observation that the contribution of ‘Napoleon’ to the literary text is constituted by purely descriptive features entailed by the imaginatively presupposed singular contents: *the person called ‘Napoleon’, who is also called ‘The Usurper’, who is also called ‘Bonaparte’, ...* and so on and so forth, till we complete the full description that can be abstracted by ramsification (Currie 1990, 150-154) from a full presentation of the fictional content.

We have seen that what we might call the “importation” argument (the fact that we import to the content of fictions information we associate with the referents of the connected names occurring in it) does not establish (R). Searle (1974) has a related argument for what appears to be a version of the same claim, based on the reverse of importation—the other side of the coin: the fact that we tend to infer that the referents of connected

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<sup>18</sup> As I said, I assume our meta-theory will make use of a free logic.

<sup>19</sup> If the text has artistic ambitions (which, together with most writers on the topic, I am not assuming is essential for fiction-making), these factors will surely include the “literary aspirations” that Kot’átko (2004; 2013) has theorized about.

<sup>20</sup> Byrne (1993) accuses Lewis’ (1978) account of truth in fiction of “idealism”, in that in all the possible worlds constituting the content of the story its declarative utterances are asserted as known facts. The point I made in the main text would deal with that objection, but it is made from a perspective crucially different from Lewis’ on account of different objections I have raised; cf. García-Carpintero (2007; 2013).

names do actually have the features ascribed to them in “realist” fictions which decisively contribute to their realism, and criticize fictions betraying such dispositions. As Searle puts it, “if Sherlock Holmes and Watson go from Baker Street to Paddington Station by a route which is geographically impossible, we will know that Conan Doyle blundered” (*op. cit.*, 331). This is a practice we certainly follow, as Salman Rushdie’s polemic against the film *Slumdog Millionaire* (*Guardian*, 24/2/2009) witnesses. But, as before, (R) does not follow, for it is compatible with this that the content that proper appreciators are required to imagine is descriptive. In a text I quoted above, Friend says that audiences of her story who did not connect the names in her fiction to the real Perry and the real Everett will miss the fictions’ “allusions”. This is correct. It is just a particular case of the more general point that fictions can be in the service of truth (Lewis 1978, 178–179); for grasping the relevant allusions involves comparing contents that we can export from the fiction with contrasting beliefs we had about real people, thereby enjoying mild jokes about them. But this is just one more case of exportation, which poses no new problems.

The two considerations in support of (R) we have examined are deflated, in a nutshell, by the point made at the beginning of this section, that is, that even representations whose contents are entirely general-descriptive can be considered to be *about* the actual entities that fit the descriptions, and reported to be *de re* about them. The theoretical framework distinguishing ancillary imagined presuppositions from fictional contents helps to develop this crucial point.

These were defensive moves. The main positive reason in favor of the view is the one I have given at the end of the previous section. As many defenders of direct reference and anti-individualism have argued, those views have a very important intuitive appeal; as Schroeter (2008, 138) nicely puts it, developing points made before by Burge and others, “commitment to anti-individualism is integral to our own epistemic agency”. The assertions that we make with the help of singular terms have an objective content, in that they are essentially about their referents; the descriptive fixes we might have on them are just contingent convenient ways of having them in focus. This is reflected in the sort of intuitions of rigidity Kripke (1980) belabors, relative to an assertion of ‘Aristotle was fond of dogs’:

there is a single individual and a single property such that, with respect to every counterfactual situation, the truth conditions of the proposi-

tion are the possession of the property by that individual, in that situation. (*op. cit.*, 10)

When we gather together the worlds meeting the conditions for applying the fundamental property for the evaluation of the claim, truth, all that matters is how things stand with the referent of ‘Aristotle’; it is irrelevant how things stand with whoever was the last great philosopher of Antiquity, if that is the fix on the referent we are assuming.

Consider, however, what to say about the contribution of ‘Dublin’ when it comes to lining up the worlds of *Ulysses*—those that should be considered in order to meet the constitutive features of the act of fiction-making by its creator, say, to comply with his proposal to imagine and thereby appraise whether it is worth carrying out. I submit that exactly the opposite is now the case. We cannot disregard for that task the descriptive assumptions the text makes about the assumed referent; for how the city is presented in the text is essential to an adequate appreciation. And it is irrelevant how things might have counterfactually been with the actual city, to the extent that that is not something we are meant to infer from the text of the fiction. This is, at its core, what I take to be the main consideration for a descriptive understanding of the content of fictions, also when it comes to the contribution of connected names to them.

I will conclude with a concession. Kot’átko discusses an argument based on the fact that the content of fictions is indeterminate. The argument appeals to the well-known point that “the world of the fiction” appears to be ontologically indeterminate in ways that we do not take the actual world to be (at least, its past), even if we grant that it might be epistemically inscrutable in many ways. For instance, whether Mme d’Espard’s gall bladder (at the time she was spinning her plots against Lucien de Rubempré) was in good condition is a fairly typical example “of questions that, unless I have overlooked something, are never answered in the text of *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* and yet they do not mark any gaps that are required to be filled in, given the literary functions of the novel” (*op. cit.*, 97). The argument that Kot’átko discusses appears to conclude from this that the entities singular terms in fiction refer to cannot be objects in the actual world, but weird incomplete entities: “Mme d’Espard is ... a creature whose gall bladder is such that in principle it cannot be diagnosed (or as a creature without gall bladder, or as a creature such that it neither possesses nor lacks a gall bladder” (*ibid.*). In response, Kot’átko presents a familiar compelling

rejoinder: the relevant indeterminacy is not so much a matter of “the world of the fiction” being constituted by so weird entities that it cannot possibly overlap with the actual world, but rather a matter of several different worlds constituting it: worlds in which Mme d’Espard’s gall bladder is in good condition, and others in which it is not, etc. The reason, once more, has to do with the phenomenon of *importation*: “one can hardly deny that in the world of the *Splendeurs* the following conditional holds: If Mme d’Espard was ever thoroughly examined by the legendary Dr Bianchon (not to mention Dr Desplain!), ... he diagnosed the state of her gall bladder” (*ibid.*); as he rightly concludes, “the incomplete construction of a character is something very different from the construction of an incomplete character” (*op. cit.*, 99).

It should be clear that I have not argued for the view that Kot’átko rightly criticizes here. The singular terms in a fiction like the ones he discusses refer in my view (albeit by description) to perfectly ordinary entities; they might in fact be, and frequently are, fellow inhabitants of the actual world. I have only argued for the view that such reference is just definite descriptions’ denotation, belonging in Boër and Lycan’s first grade of *de re* involvement. However, I should say that Bonomi (2008), whose classification of fictional discourses I have borrowed, and who advances a similar descriptivist view of the semantics of singular terms in textual discourse, in fact presents an argument for a claim that appears to come very close to the one that Kot’átko rightly rejects. I do not think it is more successful than the sketchier ones Kot’átko discusses.

Bonomi assumes an event semantics, on which utterances including verbs such as ‘writing “Dublin”’ posit an event. Events have a temporal and spatial extension. Events have proper parts, which have smaller temporal and spatial extensions. Thus, an event of writing ‘Dublin’ will include as a proper part an event of writing the initial d, whose temporal and spatial extension will be included in those of the former event. Now, Bonomi argues that, when indicated in a fiction, the temporal and spatial extension of the parts will typically be indeterminate, even if that of the event is explicitly indicated, as a temporal interval and a location in the actual world. Because of this, he concludes, “no real extension, in this world, can be attributed” to such events, and “strictly speaking, one cannot say that [they] occur” in the explicitly indicated temporal and spatial locations in the actual world (Bonomi 2008, 3). But I cannot see how that follows, for the reasons that Kot’átko points out. As far as I can tell, it only follows that many worlds are

compatible with the fiction; but in any of them each part of the event has a unique location, and I cannot see how it can be excluded that the actual world is one of them. Bonomi acknowledges that the “downward indeterminacy” of temporal and spatial qualification on which his argument relies “is just an aspect of a more general phenomenon of indeterminacy” (*ibid.*), and in fact it is: there is no relevant difference between the indeterminacy of the location of parts of fictional events occurring in actual locations, and the indeterminacy in the state of Mme d’Espard’s gall bladder. By the same token, nothing follows from it regarding the possibility of fictions being about (in some, lower or higher, grade of *de re* involvement) actual entities. This is therefore one more point of agreement with Petr’s views. I have also learned from trying to articulate my objections to the ones regarding which I feel more critical.

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