

Preface

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

depend on evaluative perspectives and should be relativized to contexts.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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