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Fictional, metafictional, parafictional

François Recanati*

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Abstract. Fictional uses of fictional proper names are the uses one finds in the fiction in which the names in question are introduced. Such uses are not genuinely referential : they rest on pretence. Metafictional uses of proper names (‘Sherlock Holmes was created by Doyle in 1887’) are genuinely referential : they refer to a cultural artefact. In the paper I discuss a third type of use of fictional names : parafictional uses, illustrated by ‘In the story, Holmes is a clever detective’. I try to steer a middle course between two approaches, one that assimilates them to metafictional uses, and another one that assimilates them to fictional uses.

I. *Fictional and metafictional utterances.* It is common to distinguish several types of use for fictional names (names of fictional entities) such as ‘Sherlock Holmes’ (see for example Currie 1990). Following Voltolini (2006), but without sticking to his definitions, I will talk of *fictional*, *metafictional*, and *parafictional* uses of fictional names, and by extension of fictional, metafictional and parafictional utterances (namely, the utterances where the names, thus used, occur)¹. In this section I consider the simplest cases : fictional and metafictional uses. The tricky cases are the parafictional uses, as we shall see (§II).

Fictional uses are the uses of fictional proper names one finds in the fiction in which the names in question are introduced. Thus a sentence such as (1), extracted from a story by Conan Doyle,² is fictional :

(1) Sherlock Holmes shook his head and lit his pipe

According to the pretence theory, which I will assume in what follows, the author of a fiction does not make real assertions by means of fictional utterances such as (1). Rather, he or she pretends to assert a fact of which s/he has knowledge (Searle 1975 ; Lewis 1978). Or rather : the utterance is presented as made by someone (the fictional narrator) who has knowledge of the fact which the utterance states. Likewise, the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ on that basic type of use (the fictional use) is not genuinely referential : the speaker pretends to refer to an individual, namely Sherlock Holmes. There being no such individual, the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ does not refer. Still, the author pretends that it is a genuine name, referring to a particular individual.

Since the fictional name in (1) is empty, the sentence does not express a proposition ; so it is neither true nor false. Since no proposition is expressed, no proposition is asserted ;

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¹ I talk of utterances rather than sentences because one and the same sentence containing a fictional name can be used in different ways, just as the fictional name itself can be used in different ways. Thus the same sentence can be fictional in some uses, parafictional in others, metafictional in yet others.

² Actually, I made up the sentence, rather than extracting it from a Conan Doyle story. But we can pretend that it is real for the purposes of this paper.

but the author pretends that a singular proposition is expressed (about the pretended referent of the pretended name) and that it is asserted.

The situation changes radically when we turn to metafictional uses of fictional names, as in example (2) :

- (2) Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character created by Conan Doyle. He first appeared in print in 1887, in ‘A Study in Scarlet’.

In contrast to (1), such an utterance *is* true or false. It follows that the fictional name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ that occurs in it cannot be empty (otherwise, the utterance would be neither true nor false). Actually, (2) is *true*, and that strongly suggests that the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ as it occurs in that metafictional utterance refers to... a fictional character created by Conan Doyle. That is not the same thing as the pretended referent of the name in (1). In (1) the name user pretends to refer to a flesh and blood individual born from a mother and a father, not to a creature of fiction born from Doyle’s imagination. The flesh and blood individual does not exist (he is only a figment of Doyle’s imagination). In writing the stories, however, Doyle has created a fictional character which undoubtedly exists, though its ontological status is very different from that of a flesh and blood individual. Its ontological status is that of a cultural artefact, on a par with the story to which it belongs. Utterance (2) says something true of that artefact.

According to Schiffer, fictional entities are ‘abstract entities whose existence supervenes on the pretending use of words’ (2003, p. 52) ; ‘it is a conceptual truth that using the name ‘*n*’ in writing a fiction creates the fictional character *n*’ (Schiffer 2003, p. 53).³ Sainsbury objects that this fails to establish the existence of fictional characters in any robust sense:

No doubt it is a conceptual truth that alleging that Jack is a murderer makes it the case that Jack is an alleged murderer, and using the name ‘*n*’ in a work of fiction makes it the case that, according to the fiction, there is such a character as *n*. This takes us only to modest fictional characters. (Sainsbury 2005, p. 210)

Modestly understood, Sainsbury points out, the claim that there are fictional characters

is just another way of saying that there are works of fiction in which characters are portrayed, and although this entails that works of fiction really exist, it does not entail that characters really exist. (Sainsbury 2005, p. 209)

But the ‘characters’ Sainsbury talks about here are the flesh and blood individuals portrayed in the fiction. *They* do not really exist, indeed – they are merely portrayed. What exists as a

³ This is a common view : ‘It is the pretended reference which creates the fictional character’ (Searle 1975, p. 330) ; ‘A fictional character (...) is an abstract entity. It exists in virtue of more concrete activities of telling stories, writing plays, writing novels, and so on [all of which involve pretence]’ (Kripke 2013, p. 73) ; ‘On the one hand, fictional discourse is make-believe discourse ; in novels, as well as in plays, we make-believe that in the outer world there are persons, things, times and places that in fact do not actually exist. On the other hand, (...) such discourse leads to an ontological creation... [Through the make-believe] we generate individuals of a new kind, fictional characters, that genuinely belong to the domain of what exists’ (Voltolini 2006, p. xviii) ; and so on and so forth. See Kroon 2015 for a (critical) review of the ‘creationist’ literature.

result of fictional portrayal, according to Schiffer, is the *fictional character* understood as an abstract object of some sort – not a flesh and blood individual (not a ‘character’, in Sainsbury’s sense). Such an entity is brought into existence by the very act of fictionally portraying a character in Sainsbury’s sense.

Sainsbury ascribes to Schiffer what he calls the *robust* interpretation of the claim that there are fictional characters :

Robustly understood, to say that there are fictional characters is to say that there are characters in the real world which are created by creating works of fiction, and are referred to and portrayed in these works. (Sainsbury 2005, pp. 209-10)

But that is not what Schiffer says (I believe). Again, the fictional characters which are brought into existence by the fiction are not characters in the sense of flesh and blood individuals. They are abstract objects of some sort, and they are *not* referred to and portrayed in the works of fiction through which they come into existence. They are referred to in discourse about the fiction – not in the fiction itself (van Inwagen 1977, p. 302).

Is the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ ambiguous, then ? Are there *two* names ‘Sherlock Holmes’, one the fictitious name of a flesh and blood individual who does not really exist (so the name fails to refer), the other the name of a cultural artefact ? Well, yes and no. I take the correct description of the situation to be the following. The name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ is primarily the fictitious name of the flesh and blood individual described in the story. Since the individual does not exist, the name is empty. But, as Schiffer points out, Doyle’s description of that individual in the story gives life to the fictional character. The fictional character is the individual *qua* described in the story — it is a fictitious individual. That is not the same thing as the (non-existent) flesh and blood individual – there is as much difference between an individual and a fictitious individual as between a duck and a toy duck. In Brentano’s terms (1874/1971, II, 62n), ‘fictitious’ is a *modification* of the predicate it applies to (like ‘toy’ in ‘toy duck’). Since that is so, it is consistent to say both that the individual Sherlock Holmes does not exist, and that the individual-*qua*-fictionally-represented (the fictional character) exists. This is like saying that there is a toy duck in the pond, but no duck in the pond. At the same time, there is such a close and systematic relation between toy ducks and ducks that the noun ‘duck’ applies to toy ducks by extension. Similarly, the name of the nonexistent individual is used, by extension, to refer to the fictional character (which is nothing but that individual *qua* fictionally represented). This is polysemy rather than homonymy.

II. *Parafictional utterances : the dilemma.* An utterance containing a fictional name is explicitly *parafictional* when it starts with a phrase such as ‘in the fiction...’ or ‘according to the story...’ It is implicitly parafictional if it is understood as if there were such a prefix, that is, if it can be correctly paraphrased by adding one. Thus (3) and (4) below are both parafictional, explicitly (3) or implicitly (4) :

- (3) In Conan Doyle’s stories, Sherlock Holmes is a clever British detective who plays the violin and investigates cases for a variety of clients, including Scotland Yard
- (4) Sherlock Holmes is a clever British detective who plays the violin and investigates cases for a variety of clients, including Scotland Yard⁴

⁴ Of course, the parafictional interpretation of (4) is only one among several possible interpretations for that sentence. See footnote 1.

Parafictional uses of proper names share features with both fictional and metafictional uses. Like metafictional utterances, parafictional utterances such (3) and (4) are true or false ; by uttering them one makes serious assertions about the fiction. On the other hand, the properties which parafictional utterances ascribe to the putative referent of the fictional name are the same sort of property which fictional utterances ascribe. They are properties like *being a detective* or *playing the violin*. These are properties of individuals such as the flesh and blood Sherlock Holmes, not properties suitable for abstract artefacts (like the property of having been created in such and such a year). That explains why metafictional utterances, which involve the latter sort of property, cannot be introduced by ‘in the story’ or ‘according to the story’. It is not true in the story that Sherlock Holmes was created in 1887 ! Parafictional utterances talk about the story, like metafictional utterances, but they do so from a perspective internal to the story, by describing the world as it is in the story.

Given that parafictional utterances share features with both fictional and metafictional utterances, there are two leading approaches : the *metafictional approach* treats parafictional utterances as a special case of metafictional utterance, that is, as involving a metafictional use of the fictional name ; while the *fictional approach* treats them as involving a fictional use of the name.

According to the fictional approach, the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ as it occurs in (3) and (4) *is* the empty name purporting to refer to a flesh and blood individual. It is the same empty name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ as occurs in the fiction. No genuine reference can be achieved by using that name : one can only pretend to refer. That is what one does in fiction, but also, according to the approach, in parafiction. The use of the name in parafictional utterances, Evans says, is a ‘continuation of the pretence’ underlying the fictional uses (Evans 1982, p. 365). In describing the world from a standpoint internal to the story in order to characterize the story itself (and say true things about it), the parafictional speaker ‘plays along with’ the practitioners of the fiction (McDowell 1977 ; Kroon 2005) – he engages in the pretence that is constitutive of the fiction.

The fictional approach raises an obvious objection. If the parafictional speaker is not genuinely referring but only pretending to refer to a (nonexistent) flesh and blood individual like Sherlock Holmes, how can s/he manage to express a proposition that can be evaluated for truth and falsity ? What the parafictional speaker says ought to be neither true nor false, because an empty name carries no semantic value. But one of the characteristics of parafictional utterances, in contrast to fictional utterances, is that they are true or false descriptions of the fiction. This suggests that the fictional name itself must refer in such contexts, as it does in metafictional sentences.

According to the metafictional approach, indeed, the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ in a parafictional utterance such as (3) or (4) refers to the fictional character, as it does in (2). Unfortunately, this approach too raises an obvious objection. A fictional object is a cultural artefact or an abstract entity of some sort, and that is not the kind of thing that can investigate cases or play the violin. The claim that, in (3) and (4), the fictional name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ refers to the cultural such artefact rather than to the flesh and blood individual is therefore utterly implausible.

III. *Rescuing the fictional approach.* To overcome the objection which the fictional approach raises, its proponents typically appeal to the semantics/pragmatics distinction. Even though literally the sentence in the scope of the (implicit or explicit) ‘in the story’ operator expresses no proposition, still by uttering it in that context the speaker manages to convey something true or false about the story. As Evans says, ‘pretence can be exploited for serious purposes’ (Evans 1982, p. 364). That is, ‘statements (and more generally uses of sentences) that rely on make-believe can be used to express genuine claims, and can be candidates for genuine truth

and falsehood' (Crimmins 1998, p. 2). This is a point also made by Kendall Walton, whose work inspired both Evans and Crimmins :

It is not uncommon for one to pretend to say one thing by way of actually saying something else. A diner jokingly remarks that he could eat a rhinoceros, in order to indicate, seriously, that he is hungry. Smith declares in a sarcastic tone of voice, 'Jones is a superhero', thereby implying or suggesting or asserting that Jones thinks thus of himself. (Walton 1990, p. 394)

So pretence theorists appeal to the standard distinction between the literal and the non-literal : one may convey true things by 'making as if to say' things that, literally, are either blatantly false or not even truth-evaluable. In such a case, *there are no genuine truth-conditions at the literal level, only pretend truth-conditions*. But there are genuine truth-conditions at *another* level. That other level corresponds to the claim which the speaker intuitively makes by his utterance.

Grice (1989) has offered an influential picture of one of the mechanisms through which it is possible to communicate a piece of information without literally expressing that piece of information. That is the mechanism of *pragmatic implication*. Pragmatic implications are implications of a *speech act*. It is not what is said that implies something, but the saying of it (*modulo* certain auxiliary assumptions).

Gricean conversational implicatures are a type of pragmatic implication, but there are other types, as Grice himself acknowledges. Here, I am only interested in the *general* category of pragmatic implication. We are concerned with speech episodes in which (i) the *performance* of a given speech act implies that *p*, and (ii) the speaker exploits the pragmatic implication so as to communicate that *p* by his or her utterance. In such cases, the speaker overtly intends the hearer to derive the pragmatic implication of his or her speech act. A second layer of (implicit) meaning is thereby generated for the utterance : in addition to the literal content of the speech act, the utterance conveys the content of the pragmatic implication.

The idea applies to the special case in which the implication-carrying speech act is itself an act of pretence. According to Walton's version of the pretence approach to fiction (Walton 1990), there is a game of make believe in which consumers of the Conan Doyle fiction participate. Pretend reference to Sherlock Homes is a move in that game. When one 'refers' to Holmes by using the fictitious name 'Holmes', one engages in the pretence licensed by the fiction ; one participates in the relevant 'game of make believe'. It follows that sentence (4) does not express a proposition : the speaker merely pretends to express one, by engaging in the make believe activity which is constitutive of the fiction. Still, by uttering (4) the speaker manages to convey a true piece of information about the fiction. Walton derives that extra layer of meaning through the mechanism of pragmatic implication (though he does not use that terminology).

According to Walton, by pretend-referring to Holmes and pretend-predicating of him certain properties (being British, being a clever detective, playing the violin), the speaker pragmatically implies that these are appropriate moves in the game of make believe licensed by the Conan Doyle stories. Now these are appropriate moves (moves which 'make it fictional that one is speaking truly') only if, under the pretence that governs the fiction, there is a flesh and blood individual named 'Sherlock Holmes', and that individual possesses the relevant properties (being British, being a clever detective, playing the violin). The fictitious assertion in (4) thus pragmatically implies that that is the case, and this tells us something true *about* the fiction : that it portrays an individual named 'Sherlock Holmes' with the relevant properties.

This type of analysis also applies to other serious utterances involving fictional names, whose point is *not* to describe the fiction. Such utterances presuppose knowledge of the fiction and use it to convey a truth about the actual world (Walton 1993, Yablo 2014, chapters 10 and 12). Thus Crimmins (1998) offers a Walton-like analysis of examples like (5) :

(5) Ann is as clever as Holmes and more modest than Watson

The speaker's utterance of (5) is an appropriate move in the game of make believe licensed by the fiction only if, in the game, it 'makes it fictional that one is speaking truly' ; for that to be the case, however, it must be the case that Ann has a high degree of both cleverness and modesty in the actual world (otherwise the 'principles of generation' at work in the game of will not make it fictional that the speaker is speaking truly).⁵ That she does possess these properties is derived as a pragmatic implication, following the Gricean recipe : we assume that the speech act of pretence is felicitous (just as, in deriving Gricean implicatures, we assume that the speech act obeys the Conversational Principle), hence that it makes it fictional that the speaker is speaking truly. Given that assumption, the speech act pragmatically implies what is necessary to preserve that assumption (among other things, that Ann has a high degree of cleverness and modesty). The mechanism here is very similar to the mechanism underlying Gricean implicatures : implicatures too are generated by the need to preserve the assumption that the speech act is felicitous (in the sense of satisfying the Cooperative Principle).

There is by now a sizeable body of work in which something like these ideas, in one form or another, are used to shed light on diverse semantic phenomena.⁶ Pretence semanticists typically distinguish between two levels of interpretation, which Talmy (1996/2000) calls the 'fictive' and the 'factive' level. Semantic phenomenology⁷ and compositional semantics track the fictive layer of meaning — what is literally said or, rather, what the speaker 'makes as if to say'. The factive layer correspond to the truth-conditional intuitions – the claim the speaker intuitively makes by his or her utterance. No consensus has been reached yet on the details of the pragmatic mechanisms whereby the factive truth-conditions are generated, nor on the semantic analysis of the parafictional operator 'in the fiction' which occurs in explicit

⁵ Ann's actual degrees of cleverness and modesty corresponds to what Mark Richard (2000, p. 213) calls the *real world* truth-conditions of a fictitious utterance such as (2). On principles of generation, see Walton 1990, chapter 1, Evans 1982, chapter 10, and Everett 2013, chapter 2.

⁶ Besides Walton, Crimmins, Kroon, and Yablo, already cited, see Talmy 1996/2000, Clark 1996, chapter 12, Recanati 2000, 2010 and 2016b, Fauconnier & Turner 2002, Barker 2004, Everett 2013, Hoek forthcoming, among others.

⁷ A striking example of semantic phenomenology offered by Crimmins (1998, p. 2) is Russell's 'phenomenological confession' regarding the meaning of identity statements :

When you say 'Scott is the Author of Waverly', you are half-tempted to think there are two people, one of whom is Scott and the other the author of Waverly, and they happen to be the same. That is obviously absurd, but that is the sort of ways one is always tempted to deal with identity. (Russell 1985, p. 115)

To honour Russell's intuition, Crimmins suggests that at some basic level identity statements do rely on the 'shallow pretence' that the two individuals that are said to be the same are, indeed, two distinct individuals. This point was anticipated by Landman : 'When, in an introduction to semantics class, we talk about Hesperus and Phosphorus, we talk *as if there are two objects*. We use the plural *they*, even when we say that they are identical' (Landman 1990, p. 278).

parafictional utterances, but this is a lively research programme in semantics/pragmatics and there is no reason to be particularly skeptical of its prospects.

IV. *Rescuing the metafictional approach.* The objection to the metafictional approach can also be overcome. If, in parafictional utterances, the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ refers to the fictional character (a cultural artefact), how can we make sense of the ascription to that object of properties which only flesh and blood individuals can possess? The solution to that problem consists in distinguishing two modes of predication.

In fictional utterances such as (1), the properties predicated of the individual one pretends to refer to are properties which (in the pretence) that individual exemplifies. This is the normal (or ‘straight’) mode of predication: predicating property *F* of object *o* is correct only if *o* *exemplifies* *F*. In metafictional utterances such as (2) what is referred to by ‘Sherlock Holmes’ is the fictional character, not the flesh and blood individual, and the properties that are predicated of it are, again, properties which it exemplifies – e.g. the property of having been created in such and such a year. The metafictional approach maintains that parafictional utterances too involve reference to the fictional character; but the properties that are predicated of it, or that seem to be predicated of it, are *not* properties which the fictional character exemplifies, but properties which it ‘encodes’.

We have noted that a fictional character bears a very close relationship to the flesh and blood individual: it is nothing but that individual *qua* represented in the fiction. The fictional character ‘encodes’ all the properties which, in the fiction, the flesh and blood individual exemplifies. The fictional character does not exemplify those properties, since they are properties of flesh and blood individuals and it would be a category mistake to ascribe them to cultural artefacts; but the fictional character bears another relation than exemplification to these properties – the relation of encoding – and that is what is at stake when one ‘predicates’ these properties of the fictional character in parafictional utterances. In that oblique mode of predication, one does not present the fictional character as exemplifying the predicated properties, but as encoding them.

The distinction between exemplification and encoding originally comes from Mally 1912, pp. 64, 76 (see Findlay 1963, pp. 110-112 and 183-84, cited in Zalta 1983, p. 173);⁸ the terminology comes from Zalta 1983. Van Inwagen similarly distinguishes between the properties a fictional character *has* (e.g. being fictional) and the properties it *holds* (e.g. being a detective).⁹ Kripke 2013 appeals to that same distinction in dealing with parafictional utterances which, for him, involve a metafictional use of the name as referring to a fictional character:

The fictional people who live on Baker Street are not said to live on Baker Street in the same sense that real people are said to live on Baker Street. In the one case one is applying the predicate straight; in the other one is applying it according to a rule in which it would be true if the people are so described in the story. (Kripke 2013, p. 75)

In the case of fictional characters, predicates can be read in two ways, either as what is true of them according to the fictional work in which they appear, or in an ‘out-and-out’ sense. (Kripke 2013, p. 83)

⁸ Zalta also cites Rapaport 1978, where the distinction is ascribed to Meinong. The distinction is closely related to that between nuclear and extranuclear properties, to be found in the work of neo-Meinongians such as Parsons (see Parsons 1980, pp. 22-27 and 52-57).

⁹ See van Inwagen 2000, pp. 245-46 and the references therein. For a recent discussion, see von Solodkoff and Woodward 2017.

Kripke notes that the distinction also applies to talk about intentional states. In ‘John sees x’, ‘x’ maybe either a real object, or a purely intentional object ; and when it is a purely intentional object, the properties predicated of it (such as the properties of being a rat and being pink in ‘when drunk, John sees pink rats’) are properties which the object encodes : in this case too one has to make room for ‘a double application of predicates, either according to a visual description or out-and-out’ (Kripke 2013, p. 98). Indeed, interest for the issue of fictional names in early phenomenology stems in part from the light it sheds on intentionality in general. Just as fictional objects supervene on acts of fictional pretence, intentional objects are abstract objects that supervene on, or are projected by, mental acts or states ‘directed towards an object’, and are available even if there is no real object the mental act/state is directed toward (see Tulheneimo 2017, pp. 86-90); they encode the properties of the objects which the mental act presents as existing.

V. *The argument from anaphora.* Let us take stock. When metafictionally used, fictional terms refer to the abstract artefact brought into being by the practice of fictional reference. When fictionally used, they do not refer but pretend to refer. According to the metafictional analysis of parafictional utterances, there are two varieties of metafictional use. On one type of metafictional use, one ascribes to the abstract artefact a property which it exemplifies (such as the property of having been created in such and such a year). On another type of metafictional use, one ascribes to the abstract artefact a property which it encodes. That is the so-called parafictional use, illustrated by (3) and (4). According to the fictional analysis, however, parafictional utterances are *not* a variety of metafictional utterance. One does not refer to the abstract artefact in a parafictional utterance. Rather, one pretends to refer to the flesh and blood individual portrayed in the fiction, say Sherlock Holmes, and, by pretending to say true things about him, thereby conveys something true or false about the fiction : that the individual it portrays under the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ is portrayed as possessing such and such properties.

How can we adjudicate between the two approaches ? In this section, I discuss an argument that may be thought to support the metafictional analysis : the argument from anaphora. It purports to establish that *the fictional term ‘Sherlock Holmes’ refers to the same thing on both its parafictional and its metafictional uses.* Since we have assumed that, on the metafictional use as illustrated by (2), the name refers to the cultural artefact, it follows that it also refers to the cultural artefact on its parafictional use as illustrated by (3) and (4). But that is what the metafictional analysis says : it construes the parafictional use of the name in (3) and (4) as a metafictional use, referring to the fictional character, yet distinguished from straightforward metafictional uses by the fact that the ascribed properties are encoded rather than exemplified (by that fictional character).

The argument from anaphora exploits the felicity of the following type of discourse :

- (6) Sherlock Holmes_i is a fictional character created by Conan Doyle. He_i is a private detective who investigates cases for a variety of clients, including Scotland Yard.

The first part of (6) is a metafictional utterance, featuring a straightforward metafictional use of the name ‘Sherlock Holmes’. The second part is a parafictional utterance, which we could unproblematically paraphrase by adding the prefix ‘In Conan Doyle’s stories’. The pronoun ‘he’ in the second part of (6) is anaphoric on the fictional name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ in the first part. Instead of using the pronoun, the name could have been repeated, as it is in (7), where the parafictional prefix ‘in Conan Doyle’s stories’ is explicitly added :

- (7) Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character created by Conan Doyle. In Conan Doyle's stories, he/Holmes is a private detective who investigates cases for a variety of clients, including Scotland Yard.

Now the fact that the pronoun in the second part (6) is anaphoric on the name in the first part establishes that they co-refer (if they refer at all). That is what anaphora is all about. If that is so, then, given that the name in the first part is metafictional and refers to the fictional character, we must conclude that the pronoun in the second part also refers to the fictional character. But the second part of (6) is a parafictional utterance with roughly the same meaning as the second part of (7), namely (8) :

- (8) In Conan Doyle's stories, Holmes is a private detective who investigates cases for a variety of clients, including Scotland Yard

It follows that 'Holmes' in the parafictional utterance (8) is used metafictionally and refers to the fictional character (the cultural artefact), just as it does in (2) or the first part of either (6) or (7). QED.

The problem with that argument is that it relies on a controversial premiss. That premiss I call the Anaphora-Coreference Principle :

Anaphora-Coreference Principle (ACP)

If there is an anaphoric link between a pronoun and a name serving as antecedent, the name and the pronoun refer to the same entity (if they refer at all).

That principle equating anaphora and (conditional) coreference is controversial because there are apparent counterexamples, such as the following :

- (9) Lunch was delicious, but it took forever (Asher 2011, p. 11)

This example illustrates the phenomenon of *copredication* : we ascribe to what looks superficially like 'the same entity' (here, lunch) properties which, in fact, correspond to distinct bearers : what was delicious was the food served during lunch, but what took forever was lunch qua social event. These are distinct things, even though they can both be referred to by means of the word 'lunch'. The same word can be used, because there is a close enough link between the two things : lunch qua event essentially involves the serving of food, so we can use the polysemous 'lunch' to talk either about the food (as in 'your lunch is in your lunchbox') or about the event (as in 'you will have only one hour for lunch'). If that is right (9) should be understood as (10) :

- (10) Lunch₁ was delicious but lunch₂ took forever

where lunch₁ = the food, and lunch₂ = the social event. On this understanding (9) is a case of anaphora *without* coreference, and the principle equating them fails.

A similar counterexample to ACP provided by Asher is

- (11) John's Mom burned the book on magic before he could master it

As Asher puts it, 'the pronoun *it* refers back to an informational type object while the predication in the main clause forces *book* to be of type *physical object*' (Asher 2011, p. 86). Or consider the following example, due to Chomsky (2000, p. 37) :

- (12) London is so unhappy, ugly and polluted that it should be destroyed and rebuilt 100 miles away

Construed as a place individuated by its geographical location, London cannot be moved 100 miles away. But the buildings can be destroyed and rebuilt elsewhere. A city name like ‘London’ can be used to talk about the buildings, the inhabitants, the urban landscape, the geographical location, or whatever. In (12) it is the inhabitants that are said to be unhappy, the urban landscape that is said to be ugly, and so on and so forth. Use of the same name ‘London’ in all these predications does not show that it is the same thing, strictly speaking, that we are talking about. Similarly, we can say things like ‘Murdoch has just bought the newspaper you’re holding in your hands’. What you’re holding in your hand is a copy of the newspaper, while Murdoch bought the company that runs it. Like the name ‘London’, ‘the newspaper’ is polysemous and corresponds to different entities, but that does not prevent us from talking about several of them simultaneously by exploiting the polysemy.

If, because of such examples, we give up ACP, we can no longer conclude that in (6), the name in the metafictional utterance and the pronoun in the parafictional utterance that immediately follows refer to the same entity. For anaphora to be possible, it is enough if the referent of the name and that of the pronoun are so closely related that application of the same lexical item to both is acceptable. That is what happens in (9), or in (11): the close link between the entities talked about explains both the possibility of anaphora and the fact that the polysemous noun ‘lunch’ (or ‘book’) can apply to both. Likewise, in (6), the fictional character referred to by the name is closely related to the flesh and blood individual portrayed in Doyle’s stories – it is that individual *qua* fictionally portrayed — so, as we have seen (§II), the same name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ can be used for both. That is arguably also what explains the possibility of anaphora in (6), despite the difference between the fictional character targeted by the metafictional utterance and the flesh and blood individual targeted by its parafictional continuation.

VI. *Dot-objects*. The Anaphora-Coreference Principle can be tentatively rescued, by appealing to the notion of a ‘dot-object’ (Pustejovsky 1995, Asher 2011, Cooper 2011, Luo 2012), that is, a complex entity involving several ‘facets’. For example, a book is both a material entity with a certain weight, and a certain abstract content which may be interesting or not. The facets provide distinct modes of individuating and counting the entities at stake : two copies of the same book count as only one book in the content sense, but as two books in the material sense (Chomsky 2000, Asher 2011, Gotham 2017). Still, we can simultaneously predicate of a book properties pertaining to these distinct facets, as in

- (13) That book is heavy but interesting

The predicate ‘heavy’ and the predicate ‘interesting’ apply to different facets of the dot-object, but the fact that they are facets *of the same dot-object* makes co-predication possible. For the same reason anaphora is possible despite the fact that what is heavy (the book *qua* material object) is not what is interesting (the book *qua* informational content) :

- (14) The book_i is heavy but it_i is interesting

The same considerations apply to the ‘lunch’ example. We can think of a ‘lunch’ as a multi-faceted entity and say that in (9) it is the same entity (the same dot-object) which is referred to twice, even though the predicates apply to different facets of that object.

According to Pustejovsky (1995), when a polysemous word applies to two closely related entities, as in the ‘lunch’ example, the two senses which the word can take can also combine so as to yield a third sense, which encompasses the first two. In such cases, ‘the concept referred to by a lexical item... is the cluster of the two individual types along with the dotted type’ (Pustejovsky 1995, p. 94). For example a window can be either an aperture (entity of type 1) or a physical object (entity of type 2), as shown by (15) and (16) :

- (15) John crawled through the window (*type 1*)
 (16) Mary broke the window (*type 2*)

The ‘dotted type’ is a combination of these two types, a combination which explains the possibility of copredication as in (17) :

- (17) John crawled through the broken window (*dotted type 1•2*)¹⁰

Now when copredication is possible, anaphora across senses is also possible. Both phenomena are illustrated by the Chomsky example from §V. Copredication and anaphora are possible in (12) because the buildings, the inhabitants, the urban landscape, the geographical location, the atmosphere at that location etc. are all facets of the same dot-object – that complex entity we call a ‘city’.

If we rescue ACP by appealing to dot-objects or similar multi-faceted entities, we can save the appearances that the name and the pronoun in (6) refer to the same entity. The dot-object in (6) will be a complex involving *both* the flesh and blood individual targeted by the fictional pretence *and* the cultural artefact thereby brought into existence. Indeed, as Everett writes,

We talk about fictional characters simultaneously as if they were real people who did what they are portrayed as doing in the story, and as fictional things that are created by authors, play roles in plots, and reflect the cultural and social prejudices of the author or the society which gives rise to them. (Everett 2013, p. 165)

So fictional characters are a natural candidate for the status of dot-objects.¹¹ Does that mean that the argument from anaphora goes through and the metafictional view wins ? That is not obvious.

The argument does establish that the parafictional utterance which makes up the second part of (6) is about the ‘fictional character’, just like the metafictional utterance which makes up the first part. That seems to vindicate the metafictional analysis. Note, however, that the notion of fictional character has changed its meaning. Thus far we had taken a fictional

¹⁰ This example is not optimal because there is a possible interpretation on which only the physical object sense is involved (since it is possible to crawl through a physical object if it contains a hole, as a broken window does). A better example would be : ‘John crawled through the missing window’ (assuming that is acceptable in English). What is missing is the window *qua* physical object ; what John crawled through is the aperture (which is not missing, otherwise he would not have been able to crawl through it).

¹¹ Of course there is something peculiar about fictional characters construed as dot-objects : the flesh and blood individual Sherlock Holmes, who is supposed to be a facet of the fictional character Sherlock Holmes (the other facet being the cultural artefact), does not exist ! This may be a problem if we construe dot-objects as having the various facets as ‘parts’ and if we hold that for an object to exist all its parts must also exist.

character to be an abstract object, namely a cultural artefact brought into existence through the fictional practice. This was in contrast to the flesh and blood individual targeted by the fictional pretence. The debate between the fictional and the metafictional approaches concerned the issue : does the fictional name in parafictional utterances refer to the abstract artefact (metafictional analysis) or does it ‘refer’ (under the pretence) to the flesh and blood individual (fictional analysis) ? On the dot-object view we are now considering, and adopting the type-theoretic terminology of Pustejovsky, Asher and others, the type of a fictional character is the complex type *flesh and blood individual • abstract artefact*, involving two distinct facets : an ‘internal’ facet (the flesh and blood individual targeted by the pretence) and an ‘external’ facet (the cultural artefact brought into being by the pretence). Example (6) is a case of copredication involving both facets simultaneously. Now that view seems to me compatible with the fictional analysis, according to which parafictional utterances talk about the flesh and blood individual while metafictional utterances talk about the cultural artefact. In (6), the second part (the parafictional utterance) does talk about the flesh and blood individual, construed as the internal facet of the fictional character now understood as a dot-object.

Even when an utterance concerns distinct facets of the same dot-object simultaneously, the various predicates in the utterance may each select one facet or the other. That is what happens in (6) : the first part is metafictional and talks about the cultural object (ascribing it properties like having been created in such and such a year), while the second part is parafictional and talks about the flesh and blood individual (ascribing it properties like being a detective). To be sure, the flesh and blood individual in (6) is construed as the internal facet of the cultural object. When the speaker talks about that individual and ascribes him properties like being a detective she characterizes the fictional character that was introduced in the first part of the discourse (the metafictional part) : she specifies the properties which the fictional character encodes. That is what the metafictional approach emphasizes. But the fictional approach insists that in order to do *that* (talk about the flesh and blood individual and thereby specify the properties which the fictional character encodes), the speaker has to engage in the pretence or simulate it by going along with the practitioners of the fiction and speaking as they do (i.e. by pretend referring to the flesh and blood individual and pretend predicating properties of him). So it is not clear to me that the metafictional view wins —I would rather say there is a tie. In a sense, the parafictional utterance in the second part of (6) is about the cultural object introduced in the first part : it specifies the properties which the fictional character encodes. In another sense, however, that utterance is (primarily) about the flesh and blood individual. There is no contradiction in holding both views simultaneously : the parafictional utterance is about the cultural object *because* it is (primarily) about the flesh and blood individual which is the internal facet of the cultural object.

Introducing dot-objects, therefore, does not settle the issue. True, we’re talking about the fictional character (the dot-object) throughout the copredication discourse, and that is what makes anaphora possible. That supports the metafictional approach. Yet we’re talking about different *facets* of the fictional character in the initial metafictional utterance and in the subsequent parafictional utterance. That is sufficient to keep the fictional approach in the running. The fictional theorist can argue that parafictional talk, even when embedded within metafictional discourse as in (6), is a continuation of the pretence that is constitutive of fictional talk.

One last thing before moving on. There is controversy in the literature over the metaphysical status of dot-objects (see Asher 2011, Chapter 5 and Gotham 2017, section 4, for detailed overviews). Although a dot-object involves distinct facets — in the case of *lunch* : edible physical stuff (food) + event ; in the case of *book* : physical object + abstract informational content — that shouldn’t be construed as a conjunction of properties,

appearances notwithstanding. In many cases, the conjunctive/intersective interpretation of dot-objects gives unacceptable results (Asher 2011, pp. 138-40). For example, nothing can be both a physical object and an event, so if lunches were both food stuff and eating events, lunches wouldn't exist ! Another view is that dot-objects are the fusion, or mereological sum, of the entities that are its facets. Thus the meal and the eating event are both parts of the dot-object *lunch* (Cooper 2007 ; Gotham 2017). Another view of dot-objects is Asher's : if I understand him correctly (I am not sure I do), he construes them as bare particulars associated with several alternative guises (the various types which the dot-object combines), each pairing of the bare particular with a specific guise giving rise to a distinct thick particular. The lunch *qua* food is one thick particular ; the lunch *qua* event is another thick particular ; and the lunch tout court is the bare particular which can be conceptualized either way.

One may wonder whether the overall theoretical project — the metaphysics of dot-objects — is legitimate. The alternative is Chomsky's cognitive approach : dot-objects have no metaphysical reality ; it is the mind that puts distinct things together under a single heading for purposes that have nothing to do with metaphysics or science. From this standpoint the proper object of study should be dot-*concepts* (e.g. the concept of lunch, or the concept of city, or the concept of fictional character) rather than dot-objects ; and the study of dot-concepts should be carried out without presupposing that there is some one thing in the world these concepts are concepts of.¹² It is that line which I pursue in what follows.

VII. *The concept of 'fictional character' : a mental-file perspective.* Singular concepts in general, that is, concepts of particular objects, I take to be *mental files* (Recanati 2012, 2016a). The mental file framework analyses reference as involving the deployment of a mental file putatively based on some kind of acquaintance relation to an entity, and used to store information gained about that entity through the relation (as well as to stand for that entity in thought). For example, if I see an object in front of me, the relation to the object in front of me enables me to gain information about it in perception, and that information is fed into the file based upon the current perceptual relation (a demonstrative file deployable in thought : 'that object'). Files are typed by the type of acquaintance relation, or 'epistemically rewarding relation', they exploit. Testimony counts as an epistemically rewarding relation, so when someone tells me something about a person named 'Fred', I open a mental file for Fred and store the information I get through testimony in that file. The file is my concept of Fred, which I deploy in thinking about him.

In fiction reference is simulated. The fictional author speaks as if she (or, rather, the narrator) was providing testimony about a real individual, so a mental file is opened when we read about a character named 'Fred'. We know that this is pretence but what Evans calls the belief-independence of the informational system makes it easy to engage in the pretence merely by 'suspending disbelief' (or, as we should rather say : bracketing disbelief).

When, in talking about a story, we describe it from inside ('Sherlock Holmes solves cases for Scotland Yard'), we take the perspective of the practitioners of the fiction, who engage in the pretence and, under the pretence, 'refer' to the pretend flesh and blood individual ; we simulate the practitioner's act of pretend reference. Since, in fiction, reference is simulated, parafiction involves the simulation of the simulation of reference. The mental file we deploy is very similar to the fictional file of the practitioner, but differs from it in that

¹² Vicente argues against what he calls the 'ontologization' of dot-objects : 'it is possible to think about [them] not as things in the world, but as descriptions or representations of conceptual structures in our minds' (Vicente 2017, p. 147). This cognitive approach coheres with Asher's own meta-theoretical approach, since Asher takes his 'types' (included dotted types) to be concepts rather than things in the world (Asher 2011, pp. 36-40).

it is an ‘indexed file’ rather than a ‘regular file’ (Recanati 2012, pp. 183-205; 2016a, pp. 36-37).

Indexed files are mental files we use to capture another person’s point of view – her way of thinking of an object. They store the information which we take the other person to possess about the object. In Recanati 2012, I gave the following example (originally from Recanati 1987 : 63). The speaker ironically says ‘*your sister is coming over*’ and refers, by the description ‘your sister’ in quotes, to the person (Ann) whom a third party takes to be the addressee’s sister (but whom both the speaker and his addressee know not to be the addressee’s sister). The file that is deployed in this case is a file about Ann, containing the mistaken bit of information (that she is the addressee’s sister). That file is indexed to the person the speaker is ironically mocking. It is not a ‘regular file’ in the mind of the speaker or the hearer, but a vicarious file. Such files are used for essentially meta-representational purposes (to represent how other people represent things in the common environment).

In this example the indexed file is linked in the speaker’s mind with a regular file about Ann. Even though the speaker refers to the object vicariously, through some other subject’s file about it, he takes that object to exist since he himself has a regular file about it. In this way a singular thought (about Ann) is genuinely expressed. Often, however, the subject deploys an indexed file which is not linked in his mind to any regular file. The indexed file in such cases is said to be ‘free-wheeling’. For example, S_1 may not believe in witches, but may still ascribe to S_2 thoughts about *a certain witch* which S_2 thinks has blighted his mare (Geach 1967). In this case S_1 does not express a genuine singular thought about the (nonexistent) witch, but only a vicarious singular thought — a singular thought by proxy, as it were.

In parafiction, the situation is analogous : the speaker of a parafictional utterance deploys a free-wheeling file indexed to the practitioners of the fiction, and mimicking their fictional file.¹³ No genuine proposition is expressed by parafictional utterances, but uttering them may still convey a truth about the fiction, through the pragmatic mechanism briefly described in §III.

In metafictional discourse, illustrated by (2), actual reference takes place but the target is a cultural artefact, not a flesh and blood individual. That means that a mental file is deployed, referring to the abstract artefact. That metafictional file, as we may call it, is similar to the sort of file we deploy in thinking about other abstract artefacts such as the i-Phone or Bethoven’s 5th Symphony (Thomasson 1999). Of course, whenever reference to abstract objects is at stake, the following issue arises : how can reference be based on acquaintance relations in such cases, since we are not acquainted with abstract objects ? This is a general issue which I will put aside here – I assume that mental files can be based on epistemically rewarding relations even if the referent of the file is an abstract object, provided one is acquainted with something that bears an appropriate relation to the abstract object. In the case at hand, since fictional objects supervene on acts of fictional reference, acquaintance with the fictional practice will provide the relevant source of information, as will more indirect relations to the practice via the testimony of others. (For the i-Phone acquaintance with instances – tokens of the type i-Phone – will do, as well as, again, testimony.)

Let us now consider metafictional files in more detail. They contain two types of information, corresponding to the ‘internal’ and ‘external’ facets of the fictional character (§VI). External information is information about the artefact (when it was created, by whom etc.). Internal information is information about the properties it encodes (being a detective

¹³ In what follows I will use ‘fictional file’ broadly, so as to encompass both the files deployed by the practitioners of the fiction *and* the indexed files deployed in parafictional thought.

etc.). This information is already stored in the fictional file (the pretend file about the flesh and blood Holmes) and does not have to be duplicated : it is sufficient for the metafictional file to contain a pointer to the fictional file. On this analysis the concept of Sherlock Holmes is a metafictional file (about the abstract artefact) containing a pointer to the fictional file (about the flesh and blood individual portrayed in the fiction), and based upon epistemically rewarding relations to the fiction in which the individual is portrayed.

This view was anticipated by Enrico Terrone who put forward the ‘twofileness hypothesis’ :

Information concerning fictional characters is split between two files. On the one hand, the *fiction file* clusters “internal” (or “nuclear”) information concerning the character as a particular individual, which I call the *f-character*. On the other hand, the *source file* clusters “external” (or “extra-nuclear”) information concerning the character as a created abstract artifact, which I call the *s-character*. For example the fiction file stores the date of birth of the f-character, the name of her parents, her job, while the source file stores the date of creation of the s-character, the name of her author, her role in the narrative structure (e.g. protagonist, antagonist, mentor). (...) In the wake of Murray Smith (2011), who speaks of “twofoldness of a fictional character”, I will call ‘twofileness’ the hypothesis according to which a subject opens two files about a fictional character; a fiction file about the f-character as an individual in the fictional world, and a source file about the s-character as an abstract artifact in the real world. (Terrone forthcoming)

Terrone posits two files : one about the flesh and blood individual and one about the abstract character. But I think the duality should also be internal to the metafictional file, which contains both nuclear information (the properties encoded by the fictional character) and extranuclear information (the properties exemplified by the fictional character). That duality, corresponding to the two facets of the fictional character construed as dot-object, is captured by having the metafictional file itself contain a pointer to the fictional file.

VIII. *Back to the main issue.* We have seen that fictional characters are two-sided entities ; or rather, that the concept of a fictional character is a two-sided concept (corresponding to the metafictional file with its dual structure). We construe fictional characters as both flesh and blood individuals (viewed from inside the pretence) and abstract artefacts (viewed from outside).¹⁴ Owing to the two-sidedness of the concept, we don’t lose track of the flesh and blood individual when we refer to the artefact, as in metafictional discourse. Because the metafictional file contains a pointer to the fictional file, we can hardly think of the fictional character Sherlock Holmes without thinking of him as the pipe-smoking, cap-wearing, mystery-solving flesh and blood individual. The metafictional file stores both extranuclear information about the properties exemplified by the abstract artefact *and* (via the fictional file it links to) nuclear information about the properties it encodes. That is what explains the easiness of the shifts from talk about the artefact to talk about the individual, as in our copredication discourse (6). Talk about the flesh and blood individual is another way of talking about the artefact, for the flesh and blood individual is the internal facet of the artefact (its representational content).

What I have just said lends prima facie support to the metafictional approach. According to the metafictional approach, talk about the artefact and talk about the flesh and blood individual are two sides of the same coin (the metafictional coin) : when we talk about

¹⁴ On the ‘dual perspective on fictive content’ (internal/external) see Lamarque and Olsen 1994, pp. 143-48.

the flesh and blood individual portrayed in the fiction, as in the second part of (6), we characterize the fictional character that is an element of that fiction, by specifying the properties which it encodes. But the fictional approach is not disproved, far from it. The fictional approach insists that in order to talk about the flesh and blood individual, we have to engage in pretence ; we have to go along with the practitioners of the fiction and speak as they do. As Everett puts it, the parafictional speaker 'retell/s a small portion of the story in order to characterize its content' (Everett 2013, pp. 50-51). The audience too has to engage in pretence. The only way to access the internal content of a fiction is to actually imagine what the fiction prescribes its practitioners to imagine. That is what the audience of a parafictional utterance does : she imagines a fictional state of affairs while simultaneously tagging the imagined state of affairs as one that is depicted in the fiction.¹⁵

The mental file picture I have offered blends insights from the two competing approaches. The two-sided nature of the metafictional file, which stores both nuclear (internal) and extranuclear (external) information about the fictional character, captures the distinction, central to the metafictional approach, between having and holding or exemplifying and encoding. On the other hand, nuclear/internal information is made accessible only via the fictional file which the metafictional file links to. That means that to access that information one needs to deploy the fictional file, even if one is in a metafictional context as in (6). This supports the fictional approach, according to which parafictional discourse is a continuation of the pretence at work in fictional discourse.

We can take a step further in the direction of the fictional approach, by noting an asymmetry implicit in the picture I have presented. I have posited two files : a metafictional file with a dual aspect (external/internal), and a fictional file, together with a dependence relation in virtue of which the internal content of the metafictional file is only accessible via the fictional file it links to (so the metafictional file depends upon the fictional file). Importantly, the dependence goes only in one direction. The metafictional file contains a pointer to the fictional file : activating the former activates the latter. As a result, we can hardly think of the fictional character Sherlock Holmes without thinking of the flesh and blood individual Sherlock Holmes. But in the other direction, it *is* possible to think about the flesh and blood Sherlock Holmes and to imagine states of affairs involving 'him', without referring to or thinking about the abstract artefact. One can do so by deploying the fictional file, without deploying the metafictional file. That is arguably what we do when we are immersed in a fiction.

To be sure, there is no proper engagement with fiction, however immersive, without awareness of the fictional status of the fiction. But that awareness may come in the form of a specific mode of entertaining propositions (the pretence mode), which young children can distinguish from the serious mode, even if they have not yet developed the conceptual ability to think/talk about fictional stories, fictional characters etc.

In parafictional discourse, we do talk about the fiction, as much as we do in metafictional discourse. When we say 'In Conan Doyle's stories, Sherlock Holmes is a detective', we explicitly refer to the fiction, by means of the phrase 'Conan Doyle's stories' ; to that extent, we do take a 'metafictional' perspective. This is very different from being immersed in a fiction and not reflectively thinking about it. Still, when it comes to fictional characters, parafictional discourse behaves like fictional discourse. In parafictional discourse we retell a portion of the story in order to characterize its content. In so doing we take a metafictional stance towards the story implicitly or explicitly referred to, but the fictional characters themselves (for example the cultural artefact Sherlock Holmes) are not thereby

¹⁵ On 'tagging', see Cosmides and Tooby 2000. (See also the notion of a 'δ-structure' in Recanati 2000.)

referred to: the task of the audience is merely to imagine the flesh and blood individual Sherlock Holmes, in the course of imagining the state of affairs of which it is a constituent. The irreducible metafictional component involved in parafictional discourse is located in the reference to the fiction conveyed by the tag (when that tag is made explicit, as in our example); all the rest is a continuation of the pretence that is constitutive of fictional thought and talk. Thus parafictional discourse is like fictional discourse in not *requiring* the conceptual ability to talk/think about fictional characters construed as cultural objects. As Gareth Evans puts it,

An ontology of *abstract* objects – the kind of ontology we explicitly invoke when we say such things as ‘There are only three characters in the whole of English literature who kill their mothers’, or ‘The character of Falstaff has a long history in English drama’ (...) [–] is excessively sophisticated for the needs of [parafictional] discourse, in which a general conception of the identity conditions of these objects, *characters*, is not presupposed. Someone can engage in a conversation ‘about what went on in the novel’ perfectly competently, without in any way needing to know how one might count characters, whether two authors can use the same character, and the like. (Evans 1982, p. 367)

When I say that metafictional reference to fictional characters is not constitutive of parafictional discourse I do not mean to deny that *sometimes*, a parafictional statement is embedded within metafictional discourse about the fictional character. That is what happens in (6) : the speaker talks about the cultural object created by Conan Doyle, and characterizes it internally by means of the parafictional statement in the second part of the discourse. That statement talks about the flesh and blood individual in the pretence mode, but it occurs in a metafictional context and conveys metafictional information about the fictional character. In mental-file talk : the fictional file is deployed, but the deployment is triggered by the need to access the internal content of the (antecedently deployed) metafictional file. This is a special case, however. There are other instances of parafictional talk which involve deployments of the fictional file, *independent of any deployment of the metafictional file about the fictional character*. That is the point of Evans’s paragraph. It follows that the metafictional perspective with respect to fictional characters is *not* constitutive of parafictional talk — if it were, it wouldn’t be possible to engage in parafictional talk without deploying the metafictional file about the fictional character.

IX. *Conclusion*. Fictional uses and parafictional uses of names work the same way : they involve pretend reference to flesh and blood individuals, not metafictional reference to abstract objects. So parafictional uses are not a variety of metafictional use, contrary to what the metafictional approach says. Still the metafictional approach has a point. First, there is an irreducible metafictional component in parafictional discourse, which sets it apart from fictional discourse. Parafictional discourse talks about the fiction and says something true or false about it, even if, as I emphasized, it does not take a metafictional stance towards the fictional characters themselves. In other words : The files that are deployed in parafictional talk are fictional files, not metafictional files, but they are indexed to (the practitioners of) the fiction, which is represented implicitly or explicitly. Second, parafictional talk can be subordinated to metafictional talk about the fictional character, as in the central example of the paper, (6). In such cases the fictional file is deployed in order to access or display the nuclear content of the metafictional file. In *these* cases, it is true to say that parafictional talk serves metafictional purposes and provides information about the properties which the fictional character encodes.

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