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**How indexed files help us in understanding fictions**

The starting point of my work is the assumption that in fictional stories we can find both empty and non-empty singular terms, i.e, in addition to names that are completely made up, fictions deploy names of individuals that exist in the actual world. Following Friend (2011, 2014), I assume that a) when real names are used in fictional contexts, they maintain their ordinary reference and b) we get fictional information about the referent of that (/?) names. By adopting the theory of mental files (Recanati 2012, 2103, 2018), I argue that we can provide a unitary cognitive account of how names work in fiction. However, unlike Recanati and Friend, I claim that the crucial notion we need is not the one of <u>regular file,</u> "a file whose function is to accumulate information that we take to be about a single object of the outside world" (Recanati 2012 : 33-34), but the notion of <u>vicarious file</u>, "a file that stands, in the subject's mind, for another subject's file about an object. A vicarious file consists of a file and an index, where the index refers to the other subject whose own file the indexed file stands for or simulates" (Recanati 2012: 184-185). When we read a novel displaying the name of a real person, as 'Napoleon' in Tolstoj's *War and Peace*, we acquire (fictional) information about that individual. We generate a vicarious file (indexed to the story) and we store information in it. The vicarious file is vertically linked with our regular file on Napoleon, but their content isn't jointed: <u>we keep separate fictional and real information about the referent and we can exploit both files,</u> depending on the situation. For example, we can import into the fiction our knowledge about the person or the place the novel is about, when the story allows or invites us to do so (Walton 1990, Friend 2017). Or we can make a comparison between fiction and reality (Bonomi 1994, 2008). What happens when we deal with names of purely fictional character? My claim is that files work in the same way: we open a vicarious file and we begin to store information. But in this case, it's a free-wheeling, or unloaded, use of the vicarious file, since we lack a regular, acquaintance-dependent files in our mind to be linked to. Thus, no reference to objects of the actual world is made and no comparison between fiction and reality is possible. We only have fictional information that we gain from the story and that we store in the vicarious file. We may have different portraits of the same fictional character, such as Ulysses so as presented in Homer's epic poems and in Dante's *Divina Commedia*. (Friend 2011, 2014; Salis 2013; Carpintero 2016). However, since it doesn't exist any real person that is the referent of the name, and thus of the mental files, we cannot make any comparison with the reality: it doesn't make sense to ask who is the real Ulysses, or whether Ulysses in Homer's poems resembles to an historical Ulysses more that Dante's one.

*Very simple point, of not much length. However it touches a point on the relation between information gained by fiction and by real history. It misses that we not only import our knowledge of reality into fiction, but we can provisionally import into our regular  file information taken from fiction (although with a certain amunt of doubt). Besides, we may still ask who is the real Uslysses, because he might have existed – we have maybe an empty regular file.*

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