Afterword

Richard Walsh

The essays in this volume do a great job of exploring the relation between fictionality and factuality from multiple perspectives, engaging (explicitly and implicitly) in a stimulating dialogue between those two terms, between theory and example, and between different approaches to the issues and concepts involved. I value especially the range of the particular cases studied: the variety of discourses encompassed in the volume includes political speeches, generic fiction, biography and autobiography, historiography, advertising, journalism, and the municipal design vision statement; the media embraced, beyond language in various print media, include oral discourse, blogs, comics, television, and photography. This is an abundance of riches, and the detail of the individual case studies rewards close engagement. Every example is of interest not only for the sake of the argument in hand, but as an opportunity to test, clarify and refine the conceptual framework that informs the volume as a whole. I found myself caught up in the detail of every essay, but it is clearly not feasible for me to engage with each one on that level here; nor would doing so be the most likely route to a coherent retrospect upon the volume. Yet the examples here are of primary importance, precisely because the theoretical and methodological orientation that informs the essays is currently underspecified, and raises some fundamental questions.

The enabling premise for this volume is a broad approach to the relation between fictionality and factuality that foregrounds communicative pragmatics. Simply put, it is the idea that fictionality is a rhetorical resource available within communicative contexts of all sorts, meaning that the distinction between fictionality and factuality is detached from, and

cuts across, any generic distinction between fiction and non-fiction. This idea implies that we can find local uses of fictionality even where the global communicative act is manifestly non-fictional, and indeed local instances of factuality within discourses with a manifestly fictional global status. It also provides straightforwardly for the possibility of a range of borderline cases – texts with a dubious or hybrid generic status – without compromising the idea of a simple binary distinction between fictionality and factuality as communicative modes.

So, the generic ambiguity of Neu's examples in this volume, *Timira* and *Point Lenana*, expresses an authorial impatience with the categorical constraints of the distinction between fiction and non-fiction; but the hybridity of these works is not the emergence of some third way so much as a foregrounded deployment of the rhetorics of both factuality and fictionality. Generic classification always amounts to a judgement as to which of these two modes is rhetorically dominant in the global communicative act; and such judgement is always contingent, sometimes vexed and on occasion pointedly frustrated. The notion of a rhetorical dominant is directly invoked by Gammelgaard (this volume, p. # [4]), but all the essays are negotiating with it to the extent that their examples foreground questions of classification. While the dissociation of fictionality from categorical fiction is a key theoretical move, however, in itself it says very little about exactly what a fictive rhetoric is and does. These case studies press upon that issue in a number of ways that I propose to draw out here.

Most of the contributors, in the course of setting the parameters of their arguments, invoke the 2015 article, "Ten Theses about Fictionality" (Nielsen et al.), of which I am one of the co-authors, hoping to extrapolate a workable definition. Several of them (Nielsen and Zetterberg Gjerlevsen, Gammelgaard, Maagaard and Wolff Lundholdt) cite parts of the following passage:

> Fictionality in the form of the intentional use of invented stories and scenarios (not just spoofs like Obama's, but also what-if projections, if-only regrets, thought experiments, and hypotheses of all kinds) is ubiquitous in our culture. (p. 62)

I give the whole sentence to make it clear that it is by no means doing the work of definition, for the good reason that the article as a whole does not concern the definition of fictionality, but its scope, and proceeds instead by way of illustrative cases. This sentence instances a range of examples that are associated with (not equivalent to) fictionality, and makes it clear that this range is not exhaustive, and indeed that the list is circumstantial to the forms of discourse prevalent in our (read modern, Western) culture. Other formulations in the article are similarly indicative; they gesture towards familiar kinds of discourse in which we might expect to find fictive rhetoric, but they do not specify exactly what that rhetoric consists in. Nor is such slipperiness a shortcoming specific to this article. If we refer back to one of the major sources for the theoretical approach it adopts – my own book, *The Rhetoric of Fictionality* – there too, we will search in vain for a clear defining statement. As Gammelgaard (this volume, p. # [3]) rightly observes, that book is largely concerned with what fictionality is not, working polemically to disentangle it from adjacent concepts and from other approaches to fiction, as well as critiquing much of the theoretical consensus about narrative in general for its dependence upon unsatisfactory notions of fiction. The book does provide a foundational model, via relevance theory, of the way fictive rhetoric can be understood to fit within the pragmatics of communication, but it stops short of specifying the necessary and sufficient conditions delimiting such a concept of fictionality (though for legitimate reasons, as will become clear).

In this volume, Nielsen and Zetterberg Gjerlevsen seek to clarify the situation by offering a simple and direct definition: "We define fictionality as intentionally signaled, communicated invention" (this volume, p. # [5]). I think there are serious problems with this

definition, but it is a valuable initiative and an effective way of crystalizing the issues at stake between several candidate ways of conceptualizing fictionality. I share, of course, the orientation towards a theoretical grasp upon the concept manifested by this effort of definition, but in order to explain why the concept eludes the effort I want to proceed in dialogue with the cases explored throughout the volume. My reason is that I think there is an irreducible empirical dimension to the question, and one of the basic challenges facing any definition of fictionality is to avoid arbitrarily circumscribing the concept by fiat. Or (since every concept circumscribes) the challenge is to ensure that the concept remains as productive and interesting, in response to examples, as is consistent with its own theoretical integrity.

If we accept the argument that fictionality is best approached as a communicative rhetoric, a number of variables open up. It is not just that, as this volume testifies, instances of that rhetoric may be identified within a wide range of discourses, whether or not the discursive act as a whole is fictive in orientation. It also means that fictionality relates to the use of discourse, and is not fundamentally a matter of the ontological status of some referent of that discourse. This is readily apparent if we consider the other side of the binary that defines this volume's scope, since factuality, understood as a rhetoric, also has communicative purposes irreducible to the bare assertion of facts. Iversen and Pers-Højholt, discussing the rhetoric of factuality in this volume, make it abundantly clear that while its effects are contingent upon the assumption that the discourse offers factual information, the rhetorical point is never simply that the information is factual. Moreover, the communicative effects of such rhetoric are achieved even if the assumption of factuality is ontologically unjustified. The rhetorical force of Senator Warren's blog post, for example, depends in part upon the assumption that she is presenting Aunt Bee's rescue mission as a memory, something that actually occurred (pp. # [16-17]); it does not depend upon whether or not we

verify that it did. The rhetoric requires us only to make the assumption, and respond on that premise. Indeed, should our assumption subsequently turn out to be ill-founded, we are not indignant merely that we have been misinformed, but at the rhetorical manipulation to which we have been subjected.

Now, the binary distinction between the rhetoric of factuality and the rhetoric of fictionality requires that they are mutually exclusive and mutually exhaustive. If factuality is "that rhetoric contingent upon the assumption that the discourse offers factual information," the correct formula for fictionality is not "that rhetoric contingent upon the assumption that the discourse offers fictional information"; it is not even "that rhetoric contingent upon the assumption that the discourse does not offer factual information." Rather, it is "that rhetoric *not* contingent upon the assumption that the discourse offers factual information." This formula will need some glossing, but my point at this stage is simply that such a rhetoric, clearly, may encompass a range of purposes, forms and effects. The problem of definition arises in part because we are dealing, in principle, with an open set.

I'll return to the problem of the scope of fictionality later, but to persevere with my effort to clarify the nature of the beast, one further consequence of a rhetorical approach to fictionality needs to be acknowledged. It is not only that any specific fictive act may use fictionality to serve a range of communicative functions, but also that the range of functions available is itself a variable. The possible communicative effects of fictionality are subject to historical and cultural variation, because fictive acts depend upon what forms of discourse, and ways of meaning, are accessible to communicators in the time and place of their utterance. This consideration, which concerns historical variation in fictive purposes, not just fictive techniques, opens up a vast research agenda of diachronic and comparative studies of fictionality, but since that is beyond the scope of this volume I can do no more than note the fact here. Even within the compass of a more or less homogeneous historical and cultural

frame, though, it remains important to keep in mind that the functions of fictive discourse are not absolute, but relative to that frame. This is just one of the larger and more pervasive senses in which fictionality has to be understood in relation to its communicative contexts, rather than its referents.

Two other kinds of context are worth specific consideration in the light of the essays in this volume, I think. One is the intermediate pragmatic context of fictive utterance that is best captured, to the extent that the utterance is textual (in narrow or broad terms), by the concept of paratext. The other, which I'll take up subsequently, is the concept of cognitive context that informs the relevance theory approach to communication (and my own conceptualization of fictionality in relevance theory terms).[1] They are by no means detached from each other, any more than either is independent of the historical and cultural parameters of communicative context, but it aids thought to consider them separately.

Neu's discussion of *Timira* in this volume pays careful attention to that part of its paratext that Genette calls the peritext – the peripheral or framing matter of the text itself. *Timira* is a striking example of contradictory peritextual orientation, establishing its generic status, in the subtitle, as a "mixed-race novel," only to undermine that in its prefatory declaration, "This is a true story, including the parts that are not" (quoted in Neu, this volume, pp. # [8-9]). It is notable that both statements highlight the text's combination of factuality and fictionality, the convolutions of which are laid out by Neu, but they lead to opposite conclusions about its global status. On the face of it, the text's designation as a novel makes fictionality the dominant rhetoric, whereas its designation as a true story makes factuality dominant. When Neu returns to this issue, though, she presses the word "true" a

[1] "Cognitive context" is a central concept in relevance theory, and refers to the assumptions cognitively adopted by an individual in the act of comprehension. It is a subset of the individual's "cognitive environment," which is all the assumptions available, or "manifest" to that individual at a given time. See Sperber and Wilson, pp. 15, 39.

little harder, suggesting that it invites interpretation here as a quality distinct from that of factual information (p. # [27]), and this seems very much in tune with the artistic and political agenda of the Wu Ming author collective she is discussing. The quality of truth, in this broad sense, is at a remove from the truth of the narrative particulars, and is an effect equally available to fictionality and factuality, though in importantly different ways (I'll pick up this point about particularity later).

These rhetorically complex examples also demonstrate the instability of the distinction between text and paratext. Gérard Genette characterized paratext as less a textual border than a threshold, an undefined zone that may be interior or exterior to the text, a zone of uncertain transition as well as pragmatic communicative transaction (1-2). With respect to fictionality, a peritextual statement like "This is a true story" can always potentially be understood as itself functioning fictively. The significant point is that in doing so we necessarily situate it within some larger paratext, because if fictionality is a function of communicative pragmatics it is always an appeal to some contextually intelligible relevance. Paratext, or the penumbra of more or less proximate discursive contexts that surround and bear upon a given communicative instance, is an integral part of how it means. As a way of meaning, fictionality is only ever realised in the relation between the fictive act and its discursive context.

Here I am dissenting from Nielsen and Zetterberg Gjerlevsen's minimization of the role of paratext (this volume, pp. #ff [6ff]). When they say "it is possible to look for, and find, textual signs that point to the fictional status of an utterance independent of contextual knowledge and paratextual markers" (p. # [7]), they treat paratext as if it were merely a source of signals that the text is fictional, rather than the context in which its fictive rhetoric is intelligible. The statement is a product of their wish to treat fictionality as signalled invention, of course, and it is symptomatic of the way this approach overplays the role of

textual signs. Textual features may "point to" fictionality in the loose sense that they may be broadly associated with it in a given cultural and historical context (already an important contextual qualification), but the idea that it is possible for such features to make available a fictive understanding of the text or utterance *independent* of paratext or context is unintelligible, unless the concept of fictionality has lapsed here from a communicative rhetoric back into an ontological modality or a repertoire of devices and techniques.

The language of text and paratext, of course, is associated with the text as a generic whole, though even in this sense the threshold between them is a contingent one, and can be ambiguously located (as Neu's examples demonstrate). If we are thinking about fictionality as a rhetorical resource that may operate on other scales, both within and beyond the generic textual unit, then the applicable sense of "text" needs to be closer to "utterance" than to "work." Such a conceptual reorientation brings to the fore the most basic sense of context applicable to fictive utterance, which is the cognitive context of communication as understood in relevance theory. This context is the set of assumptions cognitively adopted by an individual, at a given time, from the larger set available (manifest) in that individual's cognitive environment; an utterance achieves a communicative effect to the extent that it prompts the individual to modify that cognitive context in order to realize the utterance's relevance (See Sperber and Wilson). I will avoid protracted exposition of the relevance theory model of communication, but given that I think it is the best way to ground a rhetorical concept of fictionality there are certain points worth bringing out.

Introducing the task of defining fictionality, Nielsen and Zetterberg Gjerlevsen express dissatisfaction with an account grounded in relevance theory because it does not explain (or has not yet explained) two things: "*which* circumstances might prompt the assumption of fictionality"; and "*in what ways* such an assumption, once made, changes the reader's interpretation" (p. # [4]). As far as the first of these objections is concerned, a

rhetorical concept of fictionality implies that the specific ways in which an assumption of fictionality becomes manifest are part of the pragmatics of communication, and necessarily contextually contingent. The fact that relevance theory accommodates this is one of its strengths, not a weakness. Nor can this question of circumstances be captured by any definition of fictionality, especially given the contingency of "*might* prompt." Indeed, to define fictionality as "intentionally signaled communicated invention" is no help at all in this regard, unless you are willing to give an exhaustive list of the forms such signalling takes (and the various indicative lists in the essay are clearly not intended in this way).

The second issue comes nearer to the heart of the question. A definition ought indeed to help clarify the ways in which the assumption of fictionality affects interpretation. The odd thing is that the definition offered by Nielsen and Zetterberg Gjerlevsen themselves is almost entirely caught up with the problem of identifying fictionality, and contributes rather little to our understanding of the difference it makes. The section headed "Interpreting Fictionality" (pp. # [10-14]) is actually a discussion of two examples, and the rather specific points these examples produce have an uncertain and highly contestable relation to the effects of fictionality per se (the reliance upon indicative examples throughout the essay is symptomatic of the fact that a logical definition, intensional or extensional, is not really on offer here). The essay's concluding remarks on the effects of fictionality amount to this: "We argue that the *effect* of fictionality lies in the ways in which a receiver tries to interpret how the fictional discourse could affect his or her perception and understanding of non-fictional states of affairs" (p. # [15]). It's a statement I can readily agree with, because it simply reiterates the rhetorical, communicative model of fictionality upon which the volume is predicated, but it says nothing about how such a communicative process works or how it differs from non-fictive communication.

The relevance theory account of fictionality, even as originally formulated, has considerably more to say about the distinctive way that fictive rhetoric works:

> [I]n the comprehension of a fictive utterance, the assumption that it *is* fictive is itself manifest. The main contextual effect of this assumption is to subordinate implicatures that depend upon literal truthfulness to those that achieve relevance in more diffuse and cumulative ways. Fiction does not achieve relevance globally, at one remove, through some form of analogical thinking, but incrementally, through the implication of various cognitive interests or values that are not contingent upon accepting the propositional truth of the utterance itself and upon the deployment, investment, and working through of those interests in narrative form. (Walsh 2007, p. 30)

Granted that this proceeds to a certain extent by negation, as I have already acknowledged, it still goes a long way towards defining the distinct way in which fictive utterance is understood. It is over-burdened, perhaps, with the technical terms of relevance theory (assumption, manifest, contextual effect, implicatures), though these make an important contribution to the precision of the formula and should be referred to Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson's original exposition; while the final sentence, which clearly has generic fiction in mind, needs to be extricated from that context in order to serve the broader brief of this volume.

Here's a more idiomatic general formulation: by assuming the fictive intent of an utterance, we look to understand it in terms that are independent of its directly informative relevance. The exact nature of that independence is something I want to reflect upon further when I come to discuss the scope of fictionality, but as an answer to the theoretical question in hand – in what ways does the assumption of fictionality affect interpretation? – this is a succinct and specific answer.

Inferences about intention are central to a rhetorical model of fictionality because it is part of the pragmatics of communication, not a matter of referential relations. The definition offered by Nielsen and Zetterberg Gjerlevsen does indeed incorporate intentionality, even to the point of redundancy. Both signalling and communication are definitionally intentional, and signalling and communication themselves are synonymous.[2] Part of the reason for this redundancy is that these concepts serve in their definition as cumulative modifiers for "invention," which is, for them, "the central notion" (p. # [5]). A model grounded upon invention, however, is no longer a rhetorical model, as we shall see; but one of its immediate consequences is apparent in their approach to lies:

> The word *intentionally* is added to emphasize that the communicator who uses fictionality has to *deliberately* signal that he or she is employing a fictional discourse, and thereby distinguishing fictionality from lies. (p. # [5])

This need to distinguish fictionality from lying arises, they say, because "Like the lie, fictionality does not describe reality as it is" (p. # [5]). The question of correspondence with reality, however, is not the issue. Lies have the same kind of communicative intent as non-fictive utterance, and are in fact part of the rhetoric of factuality – that is, they offer to make a point based upon their status as informative assertions. The successful lie is one that has this factual communicative intent accepted; the unsuccessful lie is one in which it is not accepted, because of the recognition, behind it, of an intent to deceive. That deceptive intent, of course, is no part of the lie's communicative intent. A lie, whether or not it is exposed as such, participates in the communicative rhetoric of factuality. Fictive rhetoric then, is a kind of

[2] While there are loose uses of the concept "communication" that allow for unintentional communication, the applicable concept here is what Sperber and Wilson specify as "ostensive-inferential communication," in which "the communicator produces a stimulus which makes it mutually manifest to communicator and audience that the communicator intends, by means of this stimulus, to make manifest or more manifest to the audience a set of assumptions {I}" (p. 63). Note that this definition does not restrict communication to assumptions that are explicitly formulated, neither by the communicator nor by the audience; the concept of the "manifest," which means only "available to perception or inference," makes this important provision (p. 39).

communicative intent (and like any communicative intent, deliberately signalled as such) that distinguishes itself from the rhetoric of factuality, not lies.

Nor does fictionality provide any guarantee against deceptive intentions, since the rhetoric of fictionality, like the rhetoric of factuality, may be used to dishonest ends. This is part of what is being explored in Schäbler's example (this volume) of Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, which reveals itself, eventually, as a novel within a novel, and therefore a fiction which takes the question of fictionality as one of its thematic concerns. Schäbler rightly emphasizes the seriousness and moral jeopardy with which McEwan imbues fictionality. Briony presents the story she has told as a novel, and is therefore not accountable for the informative status of the narrative particulars, though it avowedly has (for her) a partially factual basis. This does not exempt her from moral evaluation, however, but merely shifts the ground of that evaluation to her fictive rhetoric. What communicative effect does she intend? Is it to reassure her readers' faith in the endurance and eventual triumph of love? To secure their consent to a retrospective, symbolic atonement for the blighted lives of Rob and Cecilia? To win their forgiveness of her guilt and to salve her own conscience? More fundamentally, can we (or she) understand her communicative intention in a way that is *not* morally disingenuous?

The importance of communicative intent to the concept of fictionality is well reflected by the emphasis, among the essays in this volume, upon matters of authorial ethics (Schäbler, Gammelgaard), ethos and accountability (Neu, Grumsen & Jacobsen) and indeed vision and "organizational identity" (Wolff Lundholdt & Maagaard). This last example is particularly interesting because it concerns a case in which an organization (the "We design for life" committee of the municipality of Kolding, and by extension the municipality itself) occupies the authorial role. "Vision," in the sense invoked here, is a good organizational equivalent for "ethos"; it need not depend upon fictive rhetoric, of course, but this example shows there are

good reasons why fictionality might have a contribution to make. A vision is an expression, at the top level of organizational identity, of values. The focus of the essay is upon a set of "12 everyday narratives" that contribute to this vision, and the key to their contribution is their fictionality, precisely because the emphasis of fictive rhetoric is inherently upon the articulation of values. The authors draw attention to this effect, noting how the narratives convey key values for the users of the care centre and the municipality at large. They say that the narratives do this "in addition," identifying their main task as to "include ideas for new technology and architectural design and address ethical and social concerns" (p. # [11]). I would say, though, that the articulation of values is the core of what they achieve *through their fictionality*. A detail from one of the quoted narratives, "Captain of his own life," captures this nicely: "But he still needs a little help cleaning the shelves where his porcelain figures are. That irritates Børge, because if new employees come, they always set the figures in the wrong places" (quoted p. # [12]). This detail clearly has nothing to do, in any direct way, with issues of design and technology; nor do I think it works primarily to imply an ethical imperative that new cleaners should be trained in the correct placement of residents' ornaments. Rather, its presence in the narrative articulates a value: that residents matter as individuals, with all their quirks and sensibilities.

Wolff Lundholdt and Maagaard also recognize something important about *how* fictionality articulates values. They invoke Jerome Bruner's emphasis upon the particularity of narrative, and note how effectively these narratives deal in specific details rather than generalities (p. # [17]). Insofar as they function fictively, of course, the narrative particulars do not achieve relevance as particulars, because they are not literally informative. All narratives deal in the relation between the particular and the general – this is a condition of their narrative intelligibility – but a distinctive quality of fictionality is that it presents the particulars *as a way of thinking* the general. The point is very nicely underlined, by way of

contrast, in the immediately following discussion of factuality offered by Iversen and Pers-Højholt. Their discussion, focussed upon political rhetoric, identifies a recurrent strategy in which two different kinds of narrative are paired as "interlocking narratives" (p. # [1]). Their examples illustrate a pattern in which an autobiographical narrative is yoked to a masterplot of national cultural and political identity. Both narratives are offered as factual, but the first is highly specific, whereas the second is very general in scope. The political point is made by drawing out the reciprocity between the two, showing how the political values enshrined in the masterplot are instantiated and affirmed by the example of the personal narrative. But if narrative always deals in the relation between the particular and the general, why is this strategy necessary? The personal narrative is intelligible because it makes sense in relation to available general narrative paradigms, including the salient one picked out by the political masterplot, and the political masterplot has general force to the extent that it can be instantiated in such particular terms as the personal narrative provides. The rhetorical imperative is, of course, to underline the relation; to make sure that readers or listeners make the right connection between the particular and the general, and that they are satisfied that the politically expedient masterplot is indeed instantiated in the specific personal narrative.

Behind this consideration, though, lies the fact that neither narrative alone can be relied upon to have the desired persuasive effect precisely because they are offered as factual. The general masterplot is unpersuasive alone because the informative relevance it offers is itself highly general and abstract, and the audience may or may not recognize its applicability to the everyday realities of their lives. More significantly, the personal narrative is also unpersuasive alone, although the audience necessarily invoke general paradigms in order to make sense of it (and may well draw upon the very masterplot that the politician intends). It is unpersuasive because the rhetoric of factuality makes such general ideas subordinate to the informative relevance of the narrative particulars. That is, the audience may make sense of

the particular case and find its particularity sufficiently relevant without grasping its illustrative function. The personal narrative invokes general paradigms, and so in the mere process of interpretation it inherently does ideological work, but it achieves relevance primarily as a directly informative utterance, and need not involve any conscious formulation of the general political point. It works as propaganda, but it doesn't work as part of the political rhetoric of deliberative democracy.

The rhetoric of factuality makes sense of the particular by appeal to the general; the rhetoric of fictionality uses the particular as a way of articulating the general. The difference amounts to a contrast between foregrounded matters of fact and foregrounded matters of value. Note that this rhetorical distinction involves no necessary relation between fictive discourse and invention; indeed, it is fundamental to this approach to fictionality that in interpretation the informative status of fictive particulars, as factual or invented, is of little relevance. I want to address invention more directly, however, since it is the central concept of the definition offered by Nielsen and Zetterberg Gjerlevsen, and this definition is invoked by several other contributors. Let's acknowledge that there are plausible reasons to think of fictionality in terms of invention, and that most accounts of fictionality have assumed that it is indeed a defining quality. There is certainly a strong association between fictionality and invention, as evidenced by the circumstantial fact that most fictions, and indeed most fictive utterances, are invented. And there is good reason behind this circumstance from a rhetorical point of view, since one of the immediate implications of a rhetoric that offers communicative relevance independent of the informative status of its narrative particulars is that you are not constrained by the assumed factuality of those particulars. If fictive communication gives you the freedom to invent, why not invent? A huge expansion of creative possibilities follows. None of this means that fictionality is best defined as a form of invention.

There is an ambiguity in the definition offered by Nielsen and Zetterberg Gjerlevsen that is worth bringing out. As "intentionally signaled, communicated invention," fictive utterance could be understood to be communicated *as* invention, or the communication *of* invention. Some of the other statements in the essay are consistent with the first interpretation, as for example when the authors note, "Assuming that a discourse is fictional amounts to awareness that the author intended the discourse to be read as invented and that the events depicted (probably) never existed in real life" (p. # [15]). The "probably" indicates that what matters is not that the represented events are invented, but that they are intended to be read as invented. Most of the time, however, Nielsen and Zetterberg Gjerlevsen seem to intend the second interpretation, the communication *of* invention, as in passages I have already quoted and in their immediate gloss upon the definition itself, where they say, "human beings have a general ability to invent, but by employing the word *communicated* we assert that only when manifested in communication will this ability result in a use of fictionality" (p. # [5]). The second interpretation is also the one assumed by the other contributors who take up the definition, but before discussing it I'll give some attention to the first interpretation, since only this one makes for a properly rhetorical definition.

An utterance communicated as invention is a rhetorical kind because its intended effect depends upon a quality of the communicative act itself. As a definition of fictive utterance, it effectively translates the assumption of fictionality into an assumption that the utterance is intended to be taken as invented. On the one hand, though, such a translation does little in itself to explain what fictionality is, or what its effects are, since all the same questions remain to be answered. On the other hand, the assumption that an utterance is communicated as invention is too specific to be a necessary part of the understanding of fictive utterance. What is crucial about the assumption of fictionality is that it directs interpretative attention away from the informative relevance of the utterance towards indirect

kinds of relevance. It is an unwarranted interpretative move to make a positive assumption about the intention for a fictive utterance to be taken as invented, because that assumption is not a necessary inference from the key assumption that the informative relevance of the utterance is not the point. It is also a superfluous move, because making such a positive assumption adds nothing to the basic negative function of the assumption of fictionality, which is simply to suspend assumptions dependent upon the utterance's informative relevance.

In any case, the more prevalent interpretation of "communicated invention," throughout the volume, is "the communication of invention." This interpretation, though, means that the definition lapses back from a rhetorical conception of fictionality to a fundamentally ontological conception: in Nielsen and Zetterberg Gjerlevsen's words, "what is communicated is not referentially true" (p. # [5]). Yet there is plenty of evidence that such an assumption is not intrinsically part of what it is to understand an utterance fictively. It is a commonplace that novelists write (or even, should write) from what they know, which is already good reason for agnosticism about the truth status of much of what novels present to us as fictive. If novelists write from experience, and readers know this, and novelists know that readers know this, fictive communicative intent cannot plausibly consist in an achieved understanding that what is communicated is not referentially true. Or, consider the peritextual disclaimer, "any resemblance to actual persons living or dead is purely coincidental." From a legal perspective this is most crucially a declaration of authorial intentions (if any of this turns out to be libellously referential, that's an accident). More substantially, the disclaimer has a performative function. It decrees that any referential correspondence between the narrative and real lives is irrelevant, because this is fiction.

There is also ample evidence of the irrelevance of referential criteria of truth and invention to be found among the examples discussed in this volume. It is a running theme of

Neu's discussion: "Whether the journey really took place or not, is, I would suggest, of minor importance" (p. # [16]); "whether such a dialogue has taken place or is invented cannot be said for sure, and, in the end, does not matter either." (p. # [22]). Is this just because it doesn't matter whether her examples, or these parts of them, are classified as factual or fictive? Perhaps, but as we've already seen, this is itself because they are concerned with a kind of truth that is compatible with factuality *and* fictionality.

A similar preoccupation is apparent in Grumsen and Jacobsen's discussion of "vitafictional" advertising, in which celebrities play fictionalized versions of themselves. The "obtrusive surplus of biographical details" in these adverts coincides with equally strong manifestations (generic, stylistic, tonal and representational) of a fictive rhetoric, resulting in "hesitation in the form of *biographical undecidability*" (pp. #, # [2, 3]). One example features George Clooney negotiating with John Malkovich in the afterlife, seeking to keep his coffee machine by offering instead "his convertible black speedster Porsche and his house at lake Como complete with swimming pool and servants. In real life Clooney owns such a Porsche as well as a house at lake Como." (p. # [3]). Clearly the viewer who is aware of these biographical details experiences a different comic effect from one who is not; but equally clearly, the biographical reference in no way impedes the fictive rhetoric of the scene, any more than the physical presence of the actual George Clooney playing the fictional George Clooney.

Perhaps the nicest illustration of the irrelevance of referential truth status to fictionality comes from the discussion of Alison Bechdel's *Are You My Mother?* in Gammelgaard's essay. He notes Bechdel's emphasis, regarding her representation of some photographs showing her mother holding her as an infant, upon the fact that she does not have the negatives and so does not know the chronological sequence of the photos. By stressing that she has "Arranged them according to my own narrative" (quoted, p. # [12]),

Bechdel offers a fiction within her memoir. It is indeterminate whether or not the sequence as presented corresponds to the actual sequence of events, but it is also a matter of indifference. Bechdel's sequence is not presented as a speculation about what actually happened, but as the articulation of a story with much broader connotations. As her accompanying captions make explicit, this is a narrative of a joyful relationship with her mother shattered by the intrusion of "the man with the camera" (quoted p. # [12]). Both the man and the camera are significant: the man, her father, casts his shadow over the whole dynamic of the family, not just this intimate moment; and the infant Bechdel's look at camera is also a self-conscious moment, inaugurating the multiple layers of self-representation between the baby and the adult author (the photographs, their arrangement, their graphic representation as arranged on Bechdel's desk, the incorporation of this image within the multiple tracks of the graphic page, within the layered text of the graphic memoir as a whole, itself intertextually embroiled with her previous memoir *Fun Home* and its public and family reception). Gammelgaard notes Bechdel's comment two pages later in the memoir: "The picture of me looking at the camera feels like a picture of the end of my childhood" (quoted p. # [12]). This is a highly developed fictive use of the photographs themselves. It does not depend upon the informative status of the sequence of events they are made to depict (Bechdel explicitly disavows this); and whether or not the presented sequence is invented or factual has no bearing upon the way it functions. Its status as invention or referential truth is indeterminate and irrelevant.

As a final word on this topic, it is worth singling out one of the general statements in the volume about fictionality and invention, as symptomatic of the definitional inadequacy of the relation between them: "If the receiver detects the signposts of fictionality she or he may ascribe fictionality to the message and interpret the message or part of the message as invention" (Grumsen and Jacobsen, p. # [2]). Here a striking reversal has occurred: it is no longer signs of invention that cue interpretation of the utterance as fictive, but signs of

fictionality that cue the interpretation of the utterance as invented. The fact that the two terms can seem interchangeable in this way is a telling indication of the absence of an explanatory connection between them. Even if we accept the premise that fictionality correlates with invention (and I have given reasons why we shouldn't), such a correlation does not shed any light upon the rhetorical function of fictionality.

What the notion of invention does, as I've said, is return the concept of fictionality to the domain of ontological modality. At the same time, the claim that fictionality may be sufficiently signalled by textual signs, "independent of contextual knowledge and paratextual markers" (Nielsen and Zetterberg Gjerlevsen, p. # [7]), takes the concept of fictionality in a contrary direction, towards the idea that it is immanent in certain textual features and narrative techniques. By dividing their approach to fictionality between properties and manifestations, or characteristics and signs (pp. #, # [8, 9]), Nielsen and Zetterberg Gjerlevsen distribute it between an ontological conception and a stylistic conception. What drops out, between the two, is the idea of fictionality as a rhetoric, a distinct mode of communication.

The idea of signposts of fictionality doesn't just hark back to views on fiction previously espoused by such figures as Dorrit Cohn and Michael Riffaterre, it also drifts towards a rival contemporary approach to fictionality beyond fiction, one that is actually antithetical to a rhetorical concept of fictionality. This approach, exemplified by Mari Hatavara and Jarmila Mildorf's essay, "Hybrid Fictionality and Vicarious Narrative Experience," disregards invention and equates fictionality purely with certain characteristic narrative techniques. The use of such techniques is then treated as the exercise of fictionality regardless of whether or not the narrative is invented and, more fundamentally, regardless of whether or not the narrative's communicative intent is fictive. Here, then, is an approach to fictionality beyond fiction that is indifferent to the defining criterion of a rhetorical approach

– fictive intent – and instead exclusively concerned with the presence of certain stylistic features – narrative techniques – to which a properly rhetorical approach is indifferent.

These two mutually exclusive approaches are clearly not talking about the same concept. Curiously, though, they share an assumption about narrative techniques, or stylistic features more generally, that disallows the defining role accorded to such textual signs by Nielsen and Zetterberg Gjerlevsen; that is, the "many-to-many correspondences between linguistic form and representational function" that Meir Sternberg dubbed the "Proteus Principle" (p. 112). This stylistic principle, that "the same form may fulfill different functions and different forms the same function" (p. 148), means that associations between textual features and fictive intent are merely contingent, and cannot contribute to a rhetorical definition of fictionality. Or, after Hatavara and Mildorf, it means that a stylistic approach to fictionality has nothing to do with a distinct rhetorical function (and as a consequence, I would add, no meaningful relation to any distinct and coherent concept of fictionality at all).

I want to turn finally to the question of the scope of fictionality. Once the concept moves beyond the borders of generic fictions, it becomes uncertain what its boundaries actually are, and this volume tests those boundaries in a number of interesting ways. If, as I have argued, the range of purposes that constitute fictive intent is an open set, then the scope of fictionality can only be examined empirically, case by case. However, we do have some basis for judgement. If the assumption of fictive intent entails that we make communicative sense of an utterance independently of its direct informative relevance, then we can rule out any case in which the relevance of an utterance does depend in some way upon its relevance as an informative assertion. This principle will only take us so far, and I think there is inherently room for differences of interpretation built into it, but it provides a framework for discussion.

One prominent kind of ambiguity with respect to fictionality arises in relation to scenarios of various kinds: counterfactuals, prospective narratives, hypotheses, thought experiments (Gammelgaard, Lundholdt and Maagaard). To what extent are such scenarios instances of fictionality? The strength of the claim varies in Lundholdt and Maagaard's discussion. Its most modest form is simply that the scenarios they discuss "utilize fictionality" (p. # [5]); they also make the more forceful claim that fictionality is "an integral part of scenario-making" (p. # [1]); and their most emphatic proposition is that we should "view the scenario as a form of fictionality" (p. # [9]). We can evaluate the merit of these different positions, for scenarios in general and for the specific examples in this volume, by testing them against functional criteria. Fictionality, as a mode of communication, is distinguished by the way its rhetoric works, so the key question is, what uses do the various kinds of scenario make of their informative content?

The scenarios with the weakest claim to fictionality, I think, are hypothetical ones of the sort Gammelgaard identifies in Bechdel's *Fun Home*. The details of her father's death are uncertain, and the graphic memoir presents multiple speculative versions of what happened. Gammelgaard suggests that this is an example of fictionality "employed to hypothesize" (p. # [9]), and the different versions do certainly serve indirect rhetorical functions as part of Bechdel's effort to "explain, understand, and ultimately repair the tragedy" (p. # [9]). However, they don't do this independently of the informative relevance of their representations of events. In fact, the assumption that these are ways it might have happened is central to their hypothetical purpose, and the indirect connotations are premised upon that possibility. These hypotheticals are not a deviation from the dominant rhetoric of factuality in the memoir, and scenarios of this kind have no intrinsic relation to fictionality.

What about cases where the scenario is explicitly not what happened? Counterfactuals are ways of considering alternatives to what happened, and the point of doing so is of course

a matter of the implications of that alternative, not its status as information, which is disavowed by the mode of counterfactuality itself. Is counterfactuality therefore a kind of fictionality? I think that, purely by virtue of being counterfactual, it isn't. The basic communicative function of a counterfactual is contrast with the factual: would this course of events have been better or worse? How would different choices have affected the outcome? The relevance of a counterfactual, as such, is therefore always to be sought in the relation of its informative content to what it negates, which is itself communicated as a constitutive part of its counterfactuality.

A third kind of scenario, prospective narrative, is the one with which Lundholdt and Maagaard are primarily concerned. Such narratives have a wider range of possible communicative functions, so their relation to fictionality is more ambiguous. It is possible to draw some distinctions, however, by considering which functions may be consistent with fictionality, and which may indeed be instances of fictionality. One function of prospective narrative that seems clearly at odds with fictionality is straightforward extrapolation from current facts. Such extrapolation may be predictive or aspirational; its modality, Lundholdt and Maagaard note, may be "hypothetical, for example, or optative (what is wished for) or deontic (what is projected out of a sense of duty or obligation)" (pp. # [8-9]). To the extent that such extrapolation, of whatever kind, concerns the narrative particulars, its communicative relevance is directly related to the (prospective) status of those particulars as information, and this is a rhetoric of factuality. However, the scenarios considered by Lundholdt and Maagaard are more broadly concerned to express an organizational vision, and at least some of the ways in which they do so function fictively.

These scenarios function as part of a brief, in a broadly imperative mode (including both what should be aimed for and what needs to be done to those ends). To the extent that the "12 everyday narratives" are specifically instructional in this way they are not functioning

fictively, and that seems to be the case where they offer ideas for incorporation into the design. Granted, they do this in the context of the hypothetical wishes and needs of imagined individuals – "When they enter the garden, there are many scents. There is also a little vegetable garden and a 'nature path' all the way around Vonsildhave" (quoted p. # [16]) – but in such moments these narratives are functioning illustratively. The particular case is not offered as information, but as representative of an experience for which the design should make specific provision, and so as directly informative in an exemplary sense. Still, there is much else being articulated by the particulars of these narratives that is not contingent upon their informative relevance at all, but rather works through general and indirect kinds of relevance. Among these functions are the way the narratives "define and communicate our values" (quoted p. # [18]); the quasi-ideological way in which they express a "common object" constitutive of the organizational vision, "and thereby align future actions" (p. # [19]); and the way "depictions of qualia in fictive characters enable organizations and their members to grasp the emotional consequences of policy for human beings" (p. # [20]). In all these respects, it seems to me, a rhetoric of fictionality is unambiguously in force.

The other recurrent issue these essays raise about the scope of fictionality is its relation to various forms of figurative or indirect language use. Grumsen and Jacobsen argue that fictionality subsumes irony (p. #, n. 5 [4 n. 5]), whereas Nielsen and Zetterberg Gjerlevsen discriminate between the two (pp. # [5-6]). The latter include metaphorical statements, however (p. # [9]), while Gammelgaard allows fictionality to encompass extended and epic simile (pp. #, # n. 6 [13, 22 n. 6]). My sense is that part of the ambiguity surrounding these borderline cases can be resolved with an effort of conceptual clarification, but part of it submits only to pragmatic considerations about the most appropriate or most productive focus for fictionality studies.

Fictionality may of course be ironic, and so ironic statements may be fictive, but Grumsen and Jacobsen's claim that irony is always tied to fictionality seems too strong. Irony is an indirect mode of utterance, certainly, and to that extent has some affinity with fictionality, but it is hardly the case that the direct informative content of ironic utterance is always irrelevant. Quite apart from the fact that the simple negation of literal meaning characteristic of much irony is such an immediately accessible contextual inference that it barely exceeds the bounds of explicature,[3] it is also the case that irony is often evaluative rather than factual, and therefore not only may the ironic disjunction between intent and literal assertion be relative to different degrees, but also – more importantly – the factual information under (ironic) evaluation in the utterance clearly remains centrally relevant.

Metaphorical statements are a slightly different case. If fictionality is an utterance-level phenomenon, then there is no basis for any confusion between fictionality and the various shades of metaphoricity that can appear within an essentially factual utterance. Even where metaphors figure prominently within such an utterance, its informative relevance remains straightforwardly central to the communicative intent. What about utterances that actually are metaphorical assertions, though? Nielsen and Zetterberg Gjerlevsen give some examples: "Today we are all Norwegians"; "Je suis Charlie Hebdo" (p. # [9]). Such statements, they suggest, are indeed fictive, and they do appear to fit the criterion I have been applying. The relevant assumptions, that these are expressions of empathy, sympathy and solidarity in the wake of tragic events, are independent of the speakers' assertions about their identities. My reservation here has to do with the appropriate scope of fictionality studies. It seems to me implicit in the approach to fictionality throughout the rest of this volume, and throughout the broader scholarly arguments about fictionality, that what we are concerned

[3] An explicature is a communicated assumption based on the explicit content of an utterance; however the distinction between explicature and implicature is not absolute, since an explicature always requires some degree of inference. See Sperber and Wilson, p. 182.

with is a narrative phenomenon. Such a focus is narrower than the whole potential scope of fictionality, perhaps, in the same way that our conventional treatment of fiction as a narrative phenomenon is a restriction of the logical scope of that concept. However, given the magnitude of the topic of metaphor, and the fact that (as I have suggested above) it is often not used fictively, I think it is a misdirection of attention to treat metaphorical assertions, per se, under the rubric of fictionality studies. The narrative status of an utterance, of course, is itself open to some dispute and interpretative differences. I think these examples do not attain narrative status, whereas I think there is a quite similar example in "Ten Theses on Fictionality" which minimally does; I'm thinking of Obama's "Romnesia" routine (Nielsen et al., pp. 65-66).

The status of similes is in most respects more straightforward, but there is one circumstance in which this additional pragmatic restriction of fictionality to narrative form again becomes important, and perhaps receives a degree of legitimation. Simile in its simple form presents no problems for the scope of fictionality, since the analogy it offers between two different domains of meaning is offered explicitly as analogy. The focus of the utterance in such cases is directly informative. Gammelgaard is interested in a more complex situation, though, in which the juxtaposition of images, or of image and text, in graphic narrative is interpreted as simile. I think this is a good characterization of how it works, but I also think that it remains unproblematically within the domain of a rhetoric of factuality. None of the informative relevance of these images and words is side-lined by the implication of an analogous relation between them, which offers additional significance rather than an alternative mode of significance. In this respect the possibility that the simile may be extended over several panels or pages does not materially change its function. In passing, however, Gammelgaard mentions one form of extended simile that I think does impinge upon the domain of fictionality, which is epic simile. The defining feature of epic simile is not just

that the analogy is extended, but that it acquires narrative momentum and takes on a life of its own. When, for example, Milton describes Satan's reaction upon first seeing Eve in Eden, the initial gesture of explicit comparison mediates the move into analogy: "As one who long in populous city pent …" (bk. 9, l. 445), and the simile establishes extended points of comparison as it progresses. But the emerging narrative of a city dweller's country excursion has its own logic and acquires its own particularity, the connotations of which are then indeed effects of a fictive rhetoric, which achieve relevance to the extent that the reader takes them back to the context of the more sinister expedition upon which Satan is engaged. Here, I am suggesting, it is not just that the fictionality of epic simile is associated with its narrative form, but that narrative form is actually what generates its fictive rhetoric.

There is a great deal more to be said on the topic of fictionality, theoretically and empirically, and by putting the concept into dialogue with factuality this volume does a great deal to open up the possibilities for fictionality studies. The exploration of fictionality beyond generic fiction throws into relief the narrow confines of that generic constraint, but also raises issues of unrecognized importance even there. Fictive rhetoric, as a communicative function of the utterance rather than the global textual discourse, allows for subtle and illuminating analyses of the fluid interaction between fictionality and factuality on a local scale. Such an imbrication of rhetorics too often kept conceptually at arm's length reveals important and often surprising continuities of communicative practice across discourses and media. These essays contribute a wealth of material and ideas to the ongoing debate, and embody the promise of a continuing and vigorous field of inquiry.

Works Cited

Genette, Gérard. 1997. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hatavara, Mari and Jarmila Mildorf. Forthcoming. "Hybrid Fictionality and Vicarious Narrative Experience." *Narrative*.

Milton, John. 2000 [1667]. *Paradise Lost*. Ed. John Leonard. London: Penguin.

Nielsen, Henrik Skov, James Phelan and Richard Walsh. 2015. "Ten Theses about Fictionality." *Narrative* 23.1: 61-73.

Sperber, Dan and Deirdre Wilson. 1995. *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell.

Sternberg, Meir. 1982. "Proteus in Quotation-Land: Mimesis and the Forms of Reported Discourse." Poetics Today 3.2: 107-56.

Walsh, Richard. 2007. *The Rhetoric of Fictionality: Narrative Theory and the Idea of Fiction*. Columbus, OH.: Ohio State University Press.