

STUDI

The Phantasmatic “I”. On Imagination-based Uses of the First-person Pronoun across Fiction and Non-fiction

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Abstract Traditional accounts regard the first-person pronoun as a special token-reflexive indexical whose referent, the utterer, is identified by the linguistic rule expressed by the term plus the context of utterance. This view falls short in accounting for all the I-uses in narrative practices, a domain broader than fiction including storytelling, pretense, direct speech reports, delayed communication, the historical present, and any other linguistic act in which the referent of the indexical is not perceptually accessible to the receiver. I propose a model for the reference of “I” based on the distinction between three functions carried out by indexicals in communication, namely, the anaphoric, perceptual, and phantasmatic functions. The referential mechanism of the phantasmatic “I”, that is, the “I” used in phantasmatic function, is understood as an instance of imagination-oriented pointing exploiting the *phantasmatic context*, and not the *perceptual context* relevant in perceptual uses of indexicals. The rule for “I” is revised in light of the perceptual *vs.* phantasmatic deixis distinction; the resulting rule governing the reference of the phantasmatic “I” allows for a homogeneous treatment of ‘I’-tokens in narrative practices spanning the spectrum from fiction to non-fiction.

KEYWORDS: First-person Pronoun; Context; Imagination; Fiction; Indexicals; Narration

Riassunto *L’io fantasmatico. Sull’uso immaginativo del pronome di prima persona tra finzione e realtà* – Tradizionalmente “io” viene trattato come un indicale token-riflessivo speciale il cui referente, il produttore dell’occorrenza, è identificato attraverso la sola regola linguistica e il contesto di proferimento. Questo approccio, tuttavia, non riesce a rendere conto di quei casi in cui “io” appare all’interno di pratiche di narrazione, un dominio più ampio della finzione e che include lo *storytelling*, i racconti in discorso diretto e indiretto, la comunicazione differita, il presente storico e ogni altro atto linguistico in cui il referente indicale non è percettivamente accessibile al ricevente. Il modello per il riferimento di “io” qui proposto si basa sulla distinzione tra tre funzioni svolte dagli indicali nella comunicazione: la funzione anaforica, la funzione percettiva, e la funzione fantasmatica. Il meccanismo referenziale dell’io fantasmatico, ovvero del pronome di prima persona usato in funzione fantasmatica, è inteso come una istanza di deissi (o *pointing*) orientata dall’immaginazione che sfrutta il contesto fantasmatico, piuttosto che il contesto percettivo rilevante negli usi percettivi degli indicali. La regola per “io” è riformulata alla luce della distinzione tra deissi fantasmatica e deissi percettiva; la risultante regola per il riferimento indicale dell’io fantasmatico permette un trattamento omogeneo delle occorrenze di “io” nelle pratiche di narrazione che pertengono indistintamente alla finzione e alla realtà.

PAROLE CHIAVE: Pronome di prima persona; Contesto; Immaginazione; Finzione; Indicali; Narrazione

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The chameleon and the octopus

THE FIRST-PERSON PRONOUN HAS attracted special attention, and because of its potential relation to the notions of self, personal identity, mind, and consciousness, interest in the “I” extends well beyond philosophy to, in particular, psychology. The term “I” is one of numerous linguistic tools that belong to the wide category of *indexicals*, which includes other personal pronouns (“you”, “we”, “she”...), demonstrative pronouns (“this”, “that”...), possessive adjectives (“my”, “your”...), adverbs (“tomorrow”, “here”, “now”...), and adjectives (“past”, “present”...).¹ The special status of indexicals consists in their capacity to select items in discourse, in the actual context in which the communication occurs, and even items of thought. Indeed, indexicals are *context-sensitive* expressions, as their referent may shift from context to context. Along with definite descriptions (“the 45th President of the United States”), and proper names (“Donald Trump”), indexicals are *singular terms* that hook on to a unique referent – usually, yet not exclusively, an individual or a ‘thing’ in the world – by exploiting the context of use. Yet, unlike definite descriptions and proper names, indexical expressions (e.g., “*he* has dyed-blonde comb-over hair”) essentially require a context to disambiguate their reference.

Since its very onset, analytic philosophy has laid special emphasis on the analysis of indexicals, and this philosophical attraction to indexicals is widely motivated by semantic concerns, as well as issues of a metaphysical kind. Incidentally, semantic and metaphysical concerns cannot easily be disentangled from one another, in as much as semantic analysis might also be understood as a tool for revealing something essential about the metaphysical status of the entities referred to by language, while metaphysical assumptions can be tested by means of linguistic analysis. Philosophers have long been puzzled by the resistance to formalization exhibited by indexicals, as they cannot be easily accommodated by a semantic theory of linguistic ref-

erence.² The numerous attempts to account for indexical reference mainly entail either the enhancement of formal languages via creation of *specialized* formal languages able to capture some of its characteristics, or by establishing ways to implement pragmatic elements, such as pointing gestures,³ or the speaker’s intention⁴ in semantic models.

The Latin term “*index*” (from which “indexical” derives) means “clue”, “sign”, or “index finger”, thus revealing one shared feature of the whole linguistic category: indexicals primarily function as linguistic indexes, or *linguistic pointers*. By analogy to pointing gestures,⁵ indexical terms are quite effective in drawing the interlocutors’ attention towards a specific object or event within the context in which the indexical is uttered. For example, anytime the expression “It is raining *here*” is uttered, the indexical “here” refers to the place in which that particular token of “here” is uttered. Thus, “here” may refer to Macau if I am the speaker and it is the case that I am in Macau at the time of the utterance, or it may refer to any other place where the speaker of the “here”-token happens to be. As a result, the success of indexical communication greatly depends on the degree to which the context of utterance is shared with the interlocutors, whose capacity to successfully identify the reference of “here” follows from what they know about the speaker’s location at the time of the indexical utterance.

Apparently, the referential mechanism of indexicals depends on the surrounding context in which they occur, and for this reason they have also been labeled “*chameleonic*” expressions, seeing that «like a chameleon whose colors depends on the surroundings, these words change their denotation from context to context».⁶ Typically, the relevant surroundings are characterized in terms of *context of utterance*, that is, the concrete and actual context in which the communication event takes place. Features constituting the context of utterance might include, among others, spatio-temporal coordinates, interlocutors, speaker’s intentions, and pointing ges-

tures accompanying the indexical utterance.

In addition to this, it is widely assumed that the indexical token is an essential constituent of linguistic meaning expressed by the indexical. For example, “here” means the place in which the “here”-token occurs, and this rule captures the common intuition that “here” has different referents in different contexts. The idea that the rules for determining an indexical reference are *token-reflexive*, that is, they include the indexical-token itself, traces back to Reichenbach: “I” is defined as the person who utters this token of “I”, “now” as the time at which this token of “now” is uttered, and so on. The analogy between chameleons and indexicals is based on their behavior with respect to the context; the context of utterance is to the indexical token what the surroundings are to the chameleon, and as the surroundings of the chameleon determine its colors, in the same way the context of utterance determines the reference of the indexical token.

Along these lines, “I” is a *chameleonic term* in the sense that its context-sensitivity allows it to be used by each speaker to refer to herself, that is, to the *utterer of the “I” token*. Note that the utterer is not only designated as the speaker, but more generally as the “agent”, since the I-token can be produced without the involvement of spoken language as in the case of a written indexical statement. It is commonly assumed that in typical uses, given the token-reflexive linguistic rule and the context of utterance, the first person pronoun cannot possibly be a vacuous name, because it never lacks a referent. This result stems from the view that the semantic evaluation of indexical expressions strictly depends upon features and parameters of the context, where the context can generally be defined as follows:

In the semantically relevant sense, a context is the repository of the sort of information required by the conventional meaning of indexicals in the language. So, for instance, if we agree that “I” is an in-

dexical expression that refers to different individuals depending on (negotiable) who is speaking, then a context appropriate for the interpretation of a fragment containing (the formal counterpart of) “I” must supply what is commonly called an “agent” or a “speaker”. Similarly, any context appropriate for the interpretation of a language that also includes expressions corresponding to “now” and “here” must be able to identify, together with an agent, also a time and a place. Contexts may be then represented by n-tuples containing required parameters, as in the usual format $c = [c_t, c_b \dots]$.⁷

Agent, time and place are expected to be necessary features of any context of utterance, and unlike “this” or “that”, which in typical uses need the recourse to pragmatic features of the context (speakers’ intentions or pointing gestures), “I” seems to be non-ambiguous, given that the context of utterance plus the linguistic rule is enough for fixing the reference. Indeed, while there might be many referent candidates for an occurrence of “this” or “there”, it makes sense to assume that there can be only just one individual who is the utterer of a specific token of “I”. In other words, the first-person pronoun is *non-ambiguous*.⁸

The traditional view of the first-person pronoun’s referential mechanism has been challenged mainly for the reason that, apparently, it cannot accommodate atypical cases in which the referent of “I” seems to differ from the utterer of the I-token,⁹ therefore leaving the question of how the reference of “I” is determined open. Scenarios in which the “I” fails to refer to the utterer, or agent, include post-it written notes, recorded messages, figurative I-uses, and I-sentences referring to a group of people. The criticism ranges from a firm rejection of the whole standard definition of indexicals as context-dependent and governed by token-reflexive rules, to various proposals of revised versions of the standard kaplanian model.¹⁰ Also, the-

ories of indexical reference have sometimes been tested on data from fictional discourse, and therefore confronted with the ontological and metaphysical issues that pertain to fictional objects, or alternatively the notion of fiction and the imaginary have been employed to characterize the relevant context in fictional uses of indexicals.¹¹ In this work I will discuss a set of data, which is not limited to fictional discourse, but also includes all the other non-fictional I-uses occurring in narrative practices. The analysis will reveal some of the limits of the context of utterance as traditionally intended. In particular, the discussion of I-uses in narrative practices will point out why such contexts cannot account for the first-person pronoun referential mechanism, nor for indexical reference *tout court*.

The idea that traditional approaches to indexical reference seem to fail to capture the entire range of functions executed by indexicals in communication is not new, yet my proposal introduces some original features to the debate, such as the distinction between different *functions* performed by indexicals in communication. Also, the employed taxonomy of indexical discourse, with its distinction between narrative uses *vs.* non narrative uses of indexicals, overcomes the boundaries of the traditional categories usually employed in the literature on indexicals, such as, among others, fictional indexicals, and present tenses.¹² Indeed, I consider the domain of narrative practices to be broader than the domain of fiction, as it also includes storytelling, pretense, direct speech reports, plays, delayed communication, the historical present, and any other linguistic act in which the referent of the indexical is not perceptually accessible to the receiver.

The common feature in narrative practices is that communication is not about what is actually present in the context of utterance, but is rather about *what is not* there. In such circumstances, I will argue, the employed indexicals appear to behave more like *mimic octopuses* than chameleons: when the first-person pronoun is employed in a piece of fiction, in storytelling, in pretense-play, or in an

actor performance, the term displays a *functional plasticity* that resembles the amazing behavior of the mimic octopus,¹³ a creature capable of strategically impersonating other species commonly found in its environment. The mimic octopus changes its skin color and texture in order to blend in with the environment, and it also adds to such chameleonic skills the capacity to copy and reproduce the behavior and shape of a wide variety of animals such as, among others, crabs, jellyfishes, and flatfishes. Thus, the first-person pronoun, thanks to its octopusian talents, quite naturally refers to either the utterer or some other individual other than the utterer.

In fact, within the domain of narrative practices the referent of the first-person pronoun cannot be determined by its concrete surroundings, given that such surroundings are only there by means of imagination: the context is just *imagined*, not actually perceived. Because of the irrelevance of the surroundings in the case of “I” uses in narrative practices, the analogy with the chameleon becomes obsolete, yet the *octopusian* indexical changes its reference depending on its mimic strategy, which is tailored to the imagination-based context in which it appears.

In the next section, I make a distinction originally proposed by Karl Bühler, between three different ways in which indexicals can be used in communication. The three modes of deixis, namely, the anaphoric mode, the perceptual mode, and the phantasmatic mode, relate to different contexts. I briefly discuss the nature of the relevant contexts for fixing the referent of indexicals used in the three different modes, and I introduce the notions of *perceptual context* and *phantasmatic context*, which are accessible *via* perception and *via* imagination, respectively. Further I provide a discussion of the traditional approach to indexicals, in particular, the first-person pronoun. In such approaches, token-reflexivity grounds the indexicals’ context-sensitivity, and the context of utterance is regarded as a key ingredient in their referential mechanism; yet, I argue, the con-

text of utterance as traditionally understood is insensitive to the different modes of deixis and to the functions operated by “I” in communication. I therefore propose two rules, which easily accommodate the different needs of perceptual deixis and phantasmatic deixis. The rules, while compatible with the traditional account of indexical reference, avoid any appeal to notions such as intentionality, conventionality, and pretense, while providing a framework for the various uses of indexicals, and their employment in narrative practices, in particular. Finally, I consider three different sorts of linguistic I-data from narrative practices of both the non-fictional and fictional kind. The analysis of these three cases suggests that the mechanism underlying the understanding of the I-token is insensitive to the fictional *vs.* non-fiction distinction. The token-reflexive rule for the phantasmatic “I” exploits the *phantasmatic context*, and accounts for indexical communication in all those cases in which imagination, but not perception, is at work. The provided analysis unveils some of the mechanisms governing the use of the first-person pronoun in narrations, while highlighting the elements of continuity with its use in fiction as well as non-fiction.

Three modes of deixis

In fictional works and other narrative practices, we make a massive recourse to indexicals much as we do outside fiction and narration. However, essential differences between the mechanism underlying indexicals in the two distinct communicative modalities are in place. Very generally, one can think of such a difference in terms of the presence *vs.* absence of the indexical’s referent in the context in which the communicative event occurs. To offer a clearer explanation of the various functions achieved by indexicals in communication, it is useful to appeal to the core aspects of the pragmatic view of indexical expressions provided by Karl Bühler. In his *Sprachtheorie* (Bühler 1934),¹⁴ he offers an

original study of indexical uses within the framework of the so-called “two-field theory”, in which he combines the results from linguistics, mainly from the contributions of Wegener¹⁵ and Brugmann,¹⁶ with those from psychology. In particular, Bühler appeals to Brentano’s tradition of descriptive psychology, and its applications to the study of language along the lines of Anton Marty’s philosophy of language.

It is unfortunate that the two-field theory has been given little recognition over the last century in the philosophy of language;¹⁷ in fact, among its numerous merits, the two-field theory outlines a compelling distinction between three modes of deixis:¹⁸ the anaphoric mode, or “text deixis” in Bühler’s terminology, the ocular demonstration mode also called “real deixis”, or “*demonstratio ad oculos et ad aures*”, and the imagination-oriented mode or “*deixis am phantasma*”. With these distinctions, Bühler intends to identify the three ways in which indexicals absolve their primary function of orienting the interlocutors’ attention – in their respective different roles of producer/receiver¹⁹ – to something, that is, to the indexical’s referent.

In the anaphoric mode of pointing, the indexical term orients the interlocutors’ attention to a single antecedent or postcedent grammatical or lexical item, such as a noun or a phrase in the discourse or text under consideration. For example, given the statement “John loves ice-cream; strawberry is *his* favorite flavor”, the term “his” points to the proper name “John”, where the referent of the pronoun depends on the referent of the noun.²⁰ Whereas the anaphoric pointing directs the interlocutors’ attention within the space of the discourse (or text), the domains of demonstrative and imagination-oriented pointing are the *space of perception* and the *space of imagination*, respectively. Bühler’s three modes of deixis have not been given equal attention by contemporary philosophers, with the imagination-oriented deixis being by far the least discussed. Taking Bühler’s distinction as the starting point, I

will offer a more fine-grained description of the space of perception and the space of imagination; the two notions, I will argue, provide the basis for defining the relevant contexts for using indexicals in their demonstrative and imagination-oriented functions.

The demonstrative mode (*demonstratio ad oculos*) is also called by Bühler “factual pointing”, and it occurs any time a speaker refers, by means of indexical terms, to an object or event, or to its properties or relations, which belong to the actual and concrete context of communication. This mode is in place whenever we speak about *perceived* things, which are perceptually accessible to the interlocutors as well. Here “perception” is broadly understood as the faculty of perceiving or apprehending by means of the senses, and it also includes other sensory phenomena such as time perception. Therefore, I regard the demonstrative mode as a *perceptual deixis*, and I call “*perceptual indexical*” any indexical term employed in a perceptual mode. Note that, for an effective use of perceptual indexicals, it is not enough for the indexical referent to be physically present in the actual context of the utterance, it must also be perceived by the subjects engaged in the communicative event, or at least it must be in principle perceivable for the indexical communication act to be felicitous. For example, let’s consider the case of someone who utters “*This* chair needs to be fixed” addressing her nearby interlocutor, while another person overhearing the utterance from behind a closed door is located in a different room. Given the speaker’s use of “*this*” in perceptual mode, the person beyond the door is prevented from perceptually accessing the broken chair, and as a result she is prevented from successfully identifying the indexical referent: the broken chair is indeed an item “physically” constituting the context, yet it is nevertheless out of the space of perception, which is the relevant context when it comes to perceptual deixis.

In perceptual deixis, the interlocutors share the *field of perception*,²¹ roughly corre-

sponding to the sum of all the areas made accessible to the subject via different sensory modalities (visual, auditory, tactile, etc.). The field of perception is peculiar to each individual, and therefore necessarily different and distinct for every interlocutor engaged in the communicative event. Felicitous employments of perceptual deixis occur when speakers expect the indexical’s referent to fall within the field of perception of their interlocutors. Let’s imagine a couple are listening to Donald Trump giving a speech on TV, and one of them says “We should both dye our hair like *his*”: the success of the communicative event depends on the interlocutors’ perceptual access to the indexical referent (the image of Donald Trump on the TV screen) and therefore to the shared portion of their perceptual fields in which is located, among other things, the indexical referent.

Thus, the relevant context for perceptual indexicals is not the individual perceptual field, but rather the *locus* of intersection of the perceptual fields of the interlocutors engaged in the communication event. I call *perceptual context* the locus of intersection of individual perceptual fields.²² In the perceptual mode of pointing, indexicals function as a linguistic means for directing the interlocutors’ attention towards an element comprised in the space of perception, which I have better defined as the perceptual context.

The third mode of pointing is the imagination-oriented deixis, also called *deixis am phantasma*, and I will address the indexicals used under this mode as *phantasmatic indexicals*, which are employed when speakers refer to “absent” things. In striking contrast with the perceptual mode, phantasmatic indexicals refer to objects or events not perceptually accessible in the circumstances in which the utterance takes place, or not perceptually accessible in principle and *per se*. It is not surprising that in fictional works, pretense-play, and narrations, among other cases, most indexicals are used in imagination-oriented mode, and in fact indexicals employed in narrative practices do not refer to

anything directly perceivable by the interlocutors – either in the role of sender or receiver – nor are the phantasmatic indexicals’ referents to be found anywhere in the perceptual context. Here is Bühler’s sketch of imagination-oriented deixis:

The matter changes with one blow, it seems, when the narrator leads the hearer into the realm of what is absent and can be remembered or into the realm of constructive imagination and treats him to the same deictic words as before so that he may see and hear what can be seen and heard there [...] Not with the external eye, ear, and so on, but with what is usually called the mind’s eye or ear in everyday language.²³

According to Bühler, imagination-oriented deixis is better understood in the light of the “theory of visualization or mental imagery” (*Vorstellungslehre*), an out of fashion expression that nevertheless contains a valuable idea: the analysis of indexicals and their referential mechanism would benefit from the study of human imagination, memory, and constructive phantasy. Whereas perceptual indexicals point to things within the perceptual context, the orientation and pointing of phantasmatic indexicals happen within an *imagined space*, which Bühler views as «the realm of the somewhere or other pure phantasy, the realm of the here and there of memory».²⁴

Although two entirely different types of contexts are activated in the process of identifying the referent of an indexical term used in either perceptual or phantasmatic mode, phantasmatic indexicals still share their natural cues with perceptual indexicals, as Bühler illustrates with the actor on stage example:

the speaker and the hearer of a visual description of something absent possess the same talent and resources that permit the *actor* on the stage to make something that is absent present and which permit the *audience* to interpret what is presented on the stage as a mimesis of something ab-

sent. The language used for “perceptual” things is completely adapted to his fictional play, and language should only be called perceptual to the extent that it uses its resources.²⁵

The common referential mechanism of perceptual indexicals and phantasmatic indexicals, as well as the features shared by perceptual context and imagination-based context, suggest that the two modes are on a *continuum*.

Imagination-oriented pointing takes place within the space of imagination, which I will call *phantasmatic context*,²⁶ and the referent of the phantasmatic indexical is to be found within this space. Note that the distinction between perceptual indexicals (demonstrative pointing) and phantasmatic indexicals (imagination-oriented pointing) is fully independent of fictional *vs.* non-fictional, existent *vs.* non-existent, or fictional *vs.* actual distinctions. In fact, whether the imagined object is a mental representation totally dependent on phantasy, or the memory of a concrete, existent and actual object, it is still accessible only via imagination,²⁷ and not accessible via actual perception. In fact, the modality (perception *vs.* imagination) by which subjects access the indexical’s referent – at the time of the utterance – constitutes the criterion for distinguishing between “perceived object” and “imagined object”.

The distinction between indexical uses with *perceptual*, *phantasmatic*, and *anaphoric* functions can be taken as one of the cues for clarifying the nature of the relation between “language” and “reference”.²⁸ Perceptual indexicals and phantasmatic indexicals both seem to reveal whether the communication is about *what is presently perceived* by the interlocutors, or *what is not presently perceived*, but rather (just) *imagined*. In the first case, the indexical referent is an object or event perceptually accessible to the interlocutors, whereas in the latter the indexical referent is *not* accessible via perception, but is “imagined” and/or “recalled” from memory. In a conversation, typically, indexicals are used in

both of these modes depending on whether their referent belongs to the perceptual context or to the phantasmatic context. Most of the philosophical literature about indexicals revolves around the ways in which non-perceptual uses can be addressed by means of context shifts, dual contexts, or by intentionality-based accounts in which the speakers' referential intentions determine the reference of the indexical.

In contrast to these tentative solutions, my proposal takes a different path by assuming Bühler's pragmatic functional distinction as the starting point for an analysis of indexical communication. Such an approach has the main advantage of reframing a wide class of traditionally distinguished cases (pretense, storytelling, fictional uses, the historical present, etc.) under the homogeneous category of the phantasmatic use of indexicals. As a result, we find that phantasmatic indexicals are pervasive in both fictional as well as non-fictional discourse; we use them when touring a city for the first time and asking for directions, or when we speak about people and events which are not actually "there" (that is, not features of the context of utterance), and in many other occasions where *what* we are talking about is not accessible via perception. The use of phantasmatic indexicals stems from and depends upon the human imaginative capacity to mentally represent what is not there yet or anymore, what does not exist, what is created or imagined by phantasy, as well as what we pretend. Given that both fictional and non-fictional narrations typically occur when the narrator's discourse is about *what is not present* to the audience's²⁹ actual perception, narrative practices constitute the natural locus for phantasmatic indexicals: characters, places, and events portrayed in narrations are only accessible via imagination.

■ "I" and context

The first-person pronoun, along with "now" and "here", is typically considered a special indexical as the linguistic rule plus the context of

utterance is enough to fix the reference. In contrast, the context of utterance does not seem to resolve the intrinsic semantic ambiguity of demonstratives such as "this" or "that", and other indexicals, for which recourse to contextual pragmatic features, such as accompanying demonstrations, or speakers' intentions may be needed. For this reason, it is commonly accepted that the category of indexicals lacks semantic homogeneity, and that we should distinguish between *pure indexicals*, such as "I", "here", and "now", and *demonstratives*. It is also suggested by Perry, among others, that in addition to its non-ambiguity, the pure indexical "I" is "automatic" as well, in the sense that the linguistic rule for the first-person pronoun (roughly, "I" refers to the I-token utterer) determines its referent automatically. Elsewhere,³⁰ I have endorsed a more radical view according to which the automaticity of the first person pronoun suggests its semantic heterogeneity *vis-à-vis* the entire indexical category.³¹ Such a perspective on the "I" is well expressed by Hector-Neri Castañeda's claim that «a correct use of I cannot fail to refer to the entity to which it purports to refer; moreover, a correct use of I cannot fail to pick up the category of the entity to which it refers».³² These reflections about the "I" and its special place in communication directly stem from the view, first adduced by Reichenbach, that indexicals are *token-reflexive words*. "Token-reflexivity" is about the specific referential mechanism guiding indexical communication: indexicals «refer to corresponding tokens³³ used in individual acts of speech or writing».³⁴ So, the meaning of a token *i* of the indexical "I" (I_m) is a descriptive content,³⁵ which can be expressed as follows:

I_m : the utterer of this *I*-token.

When "I" is uttered in an act of speech, because of its token-reflexivity it invariably refers to the *utterer* of that particular I-token. Equally, in the case of a written token of "I", it refers to the writer (producer) of that particular I-token. Token-reflexivity exactly captures the idea that indexical statements

cannot be truth-conditionally evaluated at the level of sentence-type, but rather they must be evaluated as tokens.³⁶ In this respect, indexicals differ significantly from co-referential singular terms whose referential mechanism is independent from the context of utterance, such as definite descriptions (“the 45th President of the United States”), and proper names (“Donald Trump”).

Moreover, indexical token-reflexivity evokes the Peircean idea that sign-indexes signify in virtue of *existential relations*, also understood as causal or spatio-temporal relations, thus anchoring their meaning to exact features of the surroundings – *alias* the context of utterance – in which the token occurs. Token-reflexivity boosts context-sensitivity, and these two features are what essentially make indexicals *chameleonic* terms. However, these features also dissipate any ambiguity when it comes to the first-person pronoun: given the meaning of an I-token plus the context of utterance, the referential mechanism of the I-token does not require supplementary demonstration, as the referent of the I-token, that is, the utterer of the I-token, is itself a feature of the context of utterance.

Context-sensitivity, token-reflexivity, automaticity, and the non-ambiguity of the first-person pronoun is captured in the formula (RI) offered below, where “*I*” is the I-token, “ C_U ” is the context of utterance, and “ t_I ” is the time at which “*I*” is uttered:

(RI) Rule for “*I*”: Every occurrence of *I* refers to the individual that is the utterer in C_U at t_I .

Due to its general tone, RI is insensitive to the distinction previously provided between the three modes of *deixis*. Yet, the employment of the context of utterance makes RI more compatible with perceptual uses of indexicals than with phantasmatic uses. When “I” is used in a perceptual function, the interlocutors have perceptual access to its referent, which is an element of the context of utterance (the utterer). However, C_U is still not the

same notion as the perceptual context. In order to tailor RI to perceptual indexicals and phantasmatic indexicals, the notion of the context of utterance requires further revision.

More importantly, RI is not applicable to phantasmatic uses of the “I”, so that it falls short in accounting for the indexicality of narrative practices. For example, let’s consider the actor on the stage uttering “How should *I* your true love know” while playing Ophelia: given the specific C_U in this case, RI will pick up as referent of the I-token the actor herself (the utterer of the I-token), rather than Ophelia. Such a result is obviously and intuitively defective, yet it’s the red flag that the notion of C_U , as well as pragmatic aspects of indexical uses, must be reconsidered.

Let’s then revise RI in light of the distinction, previously discussed, between perceptual and phantasmatic deixis, and their respective relevant contexts, that is, *perceptual context* (C_{PER}) and *phantasmatic context* (C_{PHA}). If “ I_{PER} ” is the I-token used in the perceptual mode, and “ I_{PHA} ” is the I-token used in phantasmatic mode, RI can be adapted as follows:

(RI_{PER}) Rule for “ I_{PER} ”: Every occurrence of I_{PER} refers to the individual that is the utterer in C_{PER} at $t_{I_{PER}}$.

(RI_{PHA}) Rule for “ I_{PHA} ”: Every occurrence of I_{PHA} refers to the individual that is the utterer in C_{PHA} at $t_{I_{PHA}}$.

The two revised rules are tailored to the different uses of the first-person pronoun in communication, yet they have a common structure indicative of the relevant features at work in both perceptual deixis and phantasmatic deixis.

In particular, RI_{PHA} perfectly adapts to the phantasmatic “I” employed in narrative practices, and its application does not produce defective results like that noted above with respect to the case of the actor: the actor’s use of the first-person pronoun in “How should *I* your true love know” is phantasmatic, therefore the relevant context is C_{PHA} , ra-

ther than C_U . By applying $R_{I_{PHA}}$, and given the specific C_{PHA} , the referent of the I-token used in phantasmatic mode (I_{PHA}) is the fictional character Ophelia.

■ The phantasmatic “I” through fiction and non-fiction

Narrations are crowded with indexicals. Yet, the context of utterance is fully irrelevant for almost all the indexicals used in narrative practices, as they are employed for talking about people, objects, and events spatio-temporally out of, or far from our current experience. Phantasy and imagination play a central role in the process of creating a story, as well as in the production and interpretation of phantasmatic indexicals providing the spatio-temporal architectonic structure of narrations, thus allowing us to move through the story.

A pragmatic look at indexical communication in narrative practices may reveal that phantasmatic deixis is fully disentangled from fictionality: the phantasmatic “I” invariably maintains its function and mechanism whether it occurs in fictional or in non-fictional discourses. In other words, fictionality is not essential to phantasmatic deixis. Authors of fictional narrations create non-actual scenarios, which the audience re-creates by means of imagination. Similarly, in non-fictional narrations the narrator describes and reports on events, facts, and people, which despite being absent to her current perception, are currently actual, or have been actual in the past. Independently of the current actuality or non-actuality of what the narration is about, the audience still relies on imagination for (re-)creating and mentally representing the content of narration, to which there is no perceptual access.

When “I” occurs in non-fictional narrations, the audience usually takes it to refer to the producer of the I-token, which might be a fictional character from the story, or a real individual, depending on the situation. However, people’s common attitude towards the phantasmatic “I” reflects a quite natural and

pre-reflective tendency to relate the first-person pronoun to a “self” of some sort. This tendency is part of the more general anti-solipsistic urge of attributing a self to others, as we *per default* perceive ourselves as surrounded by creatures reasonably akin to ourselves, who might possibly, yet not necessarily, turn into dialogical interlocutors. The phantasmatic “I” in fictional as well as non-fictional narrations, with the compliance of our natural psychological tendencies, triggers the intuition that a *self* is speaking, or that the narration is about a *self*. Sometimes narrations of facts and events from one’s own life come in the form of confessions and autobiographies delivered from the first-person perspective,³⁷ as in the case of Augustine’s *Confessions*. Often, narrations are a mixture of veridical narration and pure phantasy, yet the veridical *vs.* phantasmatic distinction is inessential to the reader’s understanding of language, and when perception cannot be exploited, she is still able to navigate the narration thanks to imagination.

Indeed, imagination is the essential feature of narrative practices: it is activated when the narrator engages in her creative activity of conveying a story, and it is massively at work in the audience as well. As shown in $R_{I_{PHA}}$, the phantasmatic context is the relevant domain for the phantasmatic “I”, whether the narrative practice is fictional or not. This is not to say that readers do not take the actual world into consideration while reading a work of fiction, or that they don’t distinguish between the real and the imaginary: many, and sometimes all of the scenarios and events in the fictional narration, echo and mirror aspects of the actual world. Landscapes, cities, and ideally any element from the actual world might appear in a work of fiction.

However, $R_{I_{PHA}}$ highlights the following phenomenon: phantasmatic indexicals enable us to comprehend and navigate through fictional and non-fictional scenarios by activating the very same imagination-based mechanism. By overcoming the difficulties

posed by the traditional token-reflexive rule for “I”, the revised rule largely fits the needs of narrative practices, and aims at offering an explanatory model for phantasmatic deixis.

In the following, I analyze three different cases of the phantasmatic “I” from both fictional and non-fictional narrations. The first case is from a fictional work, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, where the phantasmatic “I” refers to a speaking wooden puppet. In the second case, the analysis focuses on an excerpt from a novel, *The Late Mattia Pascal*, in which Mattia features as the main fictional character. Finally, the third case is an example of non-fictional narration from Charles Darwin’s diaries.

Case 1: *Pinocchio*

Right at the end of Carlo Collodi’s *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, and after the wooden puppet Pinocchio has been turned into a real boy, he reflects on his identity in a dialogue with his father:

“I wonder where the old Pinocchio of wood has hidden himself?” “There he is” answered Geppetto. And he pointed to a large Marionette leaning against a chair, head turned to one side, arms hanging limp, and legs twisted under him. After a long, long look, Pinocchio said to himself with great content: “How ridiculous *I* was as a Marionette! And how happy *I* am, now that *I* have become a real boy!”³⁸

The story is narrated from the third-person perspective, and direct speech is employed. Obviously, any reader would take those I-occurrences to refer to Pinocchio. In fact, in the fictional story the narrator (Collodi) makes his narratee, Pinocchio, the utterer of these I-tokens. Such triviality is underrepresented by RI , which strictly interpreted says that every occurrence of “*I*” refers to the individual that is the utterer in C_U at t_I , that is, the producer of the I-tokens, Carlo Collodi. Once agreed that in narrative practices the first-person pronoun is used in phantasmatic

mode, RI_{PHA} offers a satisfactory explanation of the referential mechanism at work with each of the phantasmatic “I”s at issue.

Case 2: *Mattia Pascal*

These are the first two lines of *The Late Mattia Pascal*, a novel by Luigi Pirandello in which the main fictional character Mattia narrates his adventures from the first person perspective:

One of the few things, in fact about the only thing *I* was sure of was my name: Mattia Pascal. Of this *I* took full advantage also.³⁹

Also in this case, RI is not up to the job of identifying Mattia as the referent of the I-tokens. Yet, the I-tokens are further instances of the phantasmatic “I”, and by applying RI_{PHA} Mattia is picked up as the referent for all of the occurrences of “I” in the text. Given that the story is narrated from the first-person perspective, unlike Case 1, one might doubt – if not otherwise notified – that *The Late Mattia Pascal* is an autobiography, indicating that the story is written by Mattia Pascal, who is both the author and the protagonist of the story.

This would trigger one of the traditional puzzles discussed by philosophers about fictional discourse and reference. The endorsement of the pragmatic distinction between anaphoric, perceptual, and phantasmatic deixis, might help avoid this issue without the need to distinguish between fiction and non-fiction. In fact, the exploitation of the phantasmatic context makes the referential mechanism of the phantasmatic “I” insensitive to the distinction between fiction and non-fiction.

Case 3: *Charles Darwin*

The third example is offered by *The Voyage of the Beagle*, in which Charles Darwin narrates his observations in natural history and geology. On his second survey expedi-

tion on the Beagle he writes:

I may mention one very trifling anecdote, which at that time struck me more forcibly than any story of cruelty. I was crossing a ferry with a Negro, who was uncommonly stupid. In endeavoring to make him understand, I talked loud and made signs, in doing which I passed my hand near his face. He, I suppose, thought I was in a passion, and was going to strike him; for instantly, with a frightened look and half-shut eyes, he dropped his hands. I shall never forget my feelings of surprise, disgust, and shame at seeing a great, powerful man afraid even to ward off a blow, directed, as he thought, at his face. This man had been trained to a degradation lower than the slavery of the most helpless animal.⁴⁰

Darwin narrates his memories and reflections in the form of a travel memoir from the first-person perspective. In non-fictional works of that sort, as well as in autobiographies, narrator and narratee are one and the same: the writer refers to himself with the use of “I”.

In this third case, *RI* identifies Darwin as the referent of the I-token, however this rule cannot discriminate between Case 2 and Case 3. Yet, *RI_{PHA}* still works in this case (as well as in the case of autobiographies or self-reports) by picking up the correct referent. One of the advantages of *RI_{PHA}*, is that it homogeneously applies to all cases in which the referent of an I-token is not perceptually accessible (as here exemplified by the scenarios in Case 1, Case 2, and Case 3).

The most common criticism of the traditional view of indexical reference is that it does not work well with fictional discourse, or that it does not homogeneously account for indexical data across fiction and non-fiction. In fiction, narrator and narratee seem to dwell in two separate and distinct worlds, the *real world* and the *fictional world*, which do not meddle with each other. Notwithstanding this, the reader (or receiver) cognitively behaves in no different way when read-

ing the stories from the three cases above, and *RI_{PHA}* essentially aims at capturing such behavior and its intrinsic uniformity across fiction and non-fiction. Narrative practices activate the imagination-based phantasmatic context, which lacks actuality and concreteness as essential properties; indeed, the metaphysical status of the elements inscribed within the phantasmatic context may range from actuality to impossibility, and this is what we can talk about by means of phantasmatic uses of indexicals.

■ A short note against irreducibility

First-person reference is regarded as *irreducible*,⁴¹ that is, the “I” cannot be replaced by means of co-referring expressions, such as names, definite descriptions, and demonstratives *salva veritate*. Moreover, the same problem applies in the context of propositional attitudes: considering the statements “*I exist*”, and “*Nevia Dolcini exists*” as assertable by me, the latter cannot replace the former, as an amnesiac me might know that “*I exist*”, while not knowing that “*Nevia Dolcini exists*”. The problem is not solved via replacement of the first-person pronoun with the demonstrative expression “this person”. As Castañeda puts it, «third-person reference to oneself [...] is not identical with first-person reference to oneself *qua* oneself».⁴² This reflection applies in all the cases in which the “I” achieves its reference through a complex semantic-pragmatic operation requiring the activation of both the general meaning fixed by rules in a language, and the information provided by the context of utterance.

Apparently, it is granted that *a self only refers to itself in the first-person way*. Let’s address this as the principle of *Individual Self-Reference* (ISR). According to ISR, only the subject in the role of the utterer can refer to herself by means of an I-token. Although proper names and definite descriptions effectively identify one unique individual, and can be used by anyone other than the individual they refer to, the first-person pronoun is a lin-

guistic tool doomed to exclusive individual use for self-referential purposes. Yet, ISR does not exclude *a priori* that self-referential mechanisms might possibly fail; rather, ISR states the positive characteristic of any I-use, namely, that self-reference by means of “I” is exclusively done by a self-referring individual.

ISR, while trivial at first glance, triggers a variety of philosophically relevant questions, as it seems to suggest that the first-person pronoun enjoys some kind of “ontological priority” over other names and expressions, given that the occurrence of an I-token indicates, at least, a category of selves. Or even, echoing Peirce’s existential relation, I-tokens may ontologically depend on an individual - the utterer or producer - without whom no I-token would ever occur. Such reflections widely contribute to the idea that the *self* is what is referred to by means of the first-person pronoun, even if it is fully unclear what a self actually is (or if there is one in the first place).

However, the phantasmatic “I” suspends the validity of ISR. Such suspension bears some relations to the ideas discussed by Daniel Dennett in *The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity*.⁴³ While presenting his view of the self as an abstract object, a fictional construction of theoretical self-interpretation as well as other-interpretation, Dennett considers that it is an illusion to think of a fictional self (e.g., the fictional self the reader attributes to a fictional character such as Mattia Pascal, or Pinocchio) as dependent for its very creation on the existence of real selves. The thesis that fictional selves are ontologically dependent on real selves is challenged by means of a mental experiment involving a novel-writing machine. As the machine starts to function, it produces the first sentence “Call me Gilbert”, followed by what appears to be an autobiography of the fictional character called Gilbert. A self is created, and yet its creator is no self. Dennett’s novelist-robot constitutes a counterexample to ISR, and it exemplifies the resistance of the phantasmatic “I” to the principle. Dennett’s view of the self as something belonging to the sphere of the fictional evokes

the idea that the selves of fictional characters and “our” own selves might be regarded as placed along a *continuum*, from which the referent of the phantasmatic uses of the “I” (whatever it is) is selected.

While imagination is usually considered to be a fundamental ingredient in fictional practices, phantasmatic deixis and the analysis of the phantasmatic “I” extends its relevance far beyond the terrain of fictional discourse. The imagination-oriented deixis and its widespread employment in communication suggest that imagination should be regarded as a necessary wheel in the mechanism underlying language *tout court*.

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Notes

¹ This standard list of indexical expressions after David Kaplan’s work on the logic of demonstratives can be expanded to include words (or aspects of words) that indicate tense, and even plurality. See D. KAPLAN, *Afterthoughts*, in: J. ALMOG, J. PERRY, D. WETTSTEIN (eds.), *Themes From Kaplan*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989, pp. 575-614.

² Because indexicals resist formalization, some authors (e.g., Rudolf Carnap) have proposed to solve the problem by excluding indexicals from the language-object of the analysis, which is then limited to indexical-free statements (see R. CARNAP, *Philosophy and Logical Syntax*, Kegan, London 1935). However, indexical-free languages do not exist; were they to exist, they would be ideal languages spoken by disembodied creatures, or angels (see R. DE MONTICELLI, *Sulla lingua degli angeli*, in: «Teoria», vol. I, n. 1, 1989, pp. 69-137).

³ See D. KAPLAN, *Demonstratives* (1977), in: J. ALMOG, J. PERRY, D. WETTSTEIN (eds.), *Themes From Kaplan*, cit., pp. 481-563.

⁴ See J. PERRY, *Reference and Reflexivity*, CSLI

Publications, Stanford 2001.

⁵ Some authors view ostensive gestures as the phylogenetic precursors of indexicals (see M.C. CORBALLIS, *From Hand to Mouth, the Origins of Language*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2002; M.A. ARBIB, K. LIEBAL, S. PIKA, *Primate Vocalization, Gesture, and the Evolution of Human Language*, in: «Current Anthropology», vol. XLIX, n. 6, 2008, pp. 1053-1076). From the ontogenetic perspective, it is noted that pre-linguistic children make massive recourse to *declarative pointing* – pointing gestures with a referential function – when the goal is to share someone’s attention towards an object or event in the surrounding context (see E. BATES, L. CAMAIONI, V. VOLTERRA, *The Acquisition of Performatives Prior to Speech*», in: «Merrill-Palmer Quarterly», 21, 1975, pp. 205-226). The analogy between indexicals and declarative pointing is particularly obvious in the case of demonstratives; more on the functional analogy between linguistic indexicals and pointing gestures can be found in N. DOLCINI, *Indicali linguistici e gesti indicali*, in: D. GAMBARARA, A. GIVIGLIANO (a cura di), *Origine e Sviluppo del Linguaggio tra Teoria e Storia*, Aracne, Roma 2009, pp. 303-309.

⁶ R. SMULLYAN, *Chameleonic Languages*, in: «Synthese», vol. LX, n. 2, 1984, pp. 201-224, here p. 201.

⁷ S. PREDELLI, *Indexicality, Intensionality, and Relativist Post-semantics*, in: «Synthese», vol. CLXXXIV, n. 2, 2012, pp. 121-136, here 127.

⁸ Some authors consider the non-ambiguity of the “I”, along with “now” and “here”, as well as the fact that they can’t be vacuous, to be a reason for concluding that the category of indexicals is semantically non-homogeneous. Kaplan (see D. KAPLAN, *Demonstratives*, cit.) notably distinguishes between *pure indexicals* (“I”, “here”, “now”) and *demonstratives* (“this”, “that”...), where the latter yet not the former need some other contextual features – pointing gestures or directing intentions (see D. KAPLAN, *Afterthoughts*, cit.) – to disambiguate their reference. Perry reviews Kaplan’s distinction in the light of the notions of “automaticity” and “intentionality”, so that pure indexicals and demonstratives are renamed “automatic indexicals” and “intentional indexicals”, respectively (see J. PERRY, *Indexicals and Demonstratives*, in: R. HALE, C. WRIGHT (eds.), *Companion to the Philosophy of Language*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers Inc., Oxford 1997, pp. 1-31).

⁹ The target of the criticism extends beyond the

first person pronoun to include, in particular, the (pure) indexicals “now” and “here”. The *Answering Machine Paradox* presented by Allan Sidelle is a good example of a problematic case challenging the traditional account: if “now” refers to the time in which the “now”-token is uttered, then what if the “now”-token occurs in “I am not here now” when played on an answering machine? (See A. SIDELLE, *The Answering Machine Paradox*, in: «Canadian Journal of Philosophy», vol. LXXXI, n. 4, 1991, pp. 525-539). Other non-standard uses of indexicals include the case of a machine which automatically prints a token “I am hot” when it gets hot, two individuals who write a letter together using the first-person pronoun, etc. (See F. ORILIA, *Singular Reference: A Descriptivist Perspective*, Springer, Dordrecht 2010, in particular pp. 169-191).

¹⁰ Quentin Smith’s thesis that the reference-fixing rule of an indexical is variable (see Q. SMITH, *The Multiple Uses of Indexicals*, in: «Synthese», vol. LXXVIII, n. 2, 1989, pp. 167-191), offers a paradigmatic instance of radical disagreement with the Kaplanian accounts of indexical reference. Authors endorsing a view compatible with the standard model of indexicals, usually attempt to review it so as to accommodate cases in which the so-called pure indexicals “I”, “now”, and “here” fail to refer to the utterer, time, and space of the indexical-token. For example, Stefano Predelli (see S. PREDELLI, *I am not here now*, in: «Analysis», vol. LVIII, n. 2, 1998, pp. 107-115) integrates the model with an intentionally specified context, which might differ from the context of utterance, whereas Corazza, Fish, and Gorravett provide an alternative account in which the contextual parameter is conventionally given (see E. CORAZZA, W. FISH, J. GORVETT, *Who is I?*, in: «Philosophical Studies», vol. CVII, 2002, pp. 1-21).

¹¹ The literature on fictional names is extremely rich, as documented by the numerous debates in analytic aesthetics. Sometimes, the discussion is more directly concerned with the referential issues triggered by indexicals in fiction. For example, Corazza and Whitsey as well as Voltolini identify the relevant context for indexical reference by taking a fictionalist perspective, and propose an account of indexical reference, which allows for pretense-governed shifts in interpretation contexts (see E. CORAZZA, M. WHITSEY, *Indexicals, Fictions, and Ficta*, in: «Dialectica», vol. LVII, n. 2, 2003, pp. 121-136; A. VOLTOLINI, *Fiction as a Base of Interpretation Contexts*, in: «Syn-

these», vol. CLIII, n. 1, 2006, pp. 23-47).

¹² For example, Schlenker ramifies the notion of context of speech into a *Context of Thought* and a *Context of Utterance* so as to accommodate data from free indirect discourse and the historical present, as well as to account for the different contexts relevant to tense, person, and other indexicals (See P. SCHLENKER, *Context of Thought and Context of Utterance: A Note on Free Indirect Discourse and the Historical Present*, in: «Mind and Language», vol. XIX, n. 3, 2004, pp. 279-304).

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8oQBYw6xxc>.

¹⁴ See K. BÜHLER, *Sprachtheorie: die Darstellungsfunktion der Sprache*, Fischer, Jena 1934 (Eng. trans., *Theory of Language. The Representational Function of Language*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam 2011)

¹⁵ See P. WEGENER, *Untersuchungen über die Grundfragen des Sprachlebens*, Max Niemeyer, Halle 1885.

¹⁶ K. BRUGMANN, *Die Demonstrativpronomina der indogermanischen Sprachen. Eine bedeutungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Teubner, Leipzig.

¹⁷ One of the main reasons why Bühler’s contribution has not been given enough attention is likely due to his explicit legacy to Anton Marty, whose views were set back by the emerging anti-psychologist trends characterizing 20th-century philosophy.

¹⁸ Contemporary philosophers favor the expressions “indexical” and “indexicality”, first introduced by Peirce, over “deictic” and “deixis”, which are nonetheless traditionally employed in linguistics. In this paragraph, I temporarily maintain Bühler’s use of “deixis” (intending “indexical” or “indexicality”) to facilitate the presentation of his account.

¹⁹ Bühler’s pragmatic view of the linguistic uses of indexicals rests on the idea that «the concrete speech event differs from the wooden arm standing there motionless» (K. BÜHLER, *Theory of Language*, cit., p. 93), as it is indeed an *event*, besides being a complex human act. Communicative events and indexical utterances are regarded as occurring in a dynamic context with at least two participants, in their roles of sender and receiver: «It not only takes two to tango, two are needed for every social undertaking, and the concrete speech event must first be described in terms of the full model of verbal communication» (*ibidem*).

²⁰ For a discussion of the anaphoric uses of index-

icals, see, among others, the landmark works of D. KAPLAN, *Afterthoughts*, cit.; G. CHERCHIA, *Anaphora and Dynamic Binding*, in: «Linguistics and Philosophy», vol. XV, 1992, pp. 111-183; and S. NEALE, *Pragmatics and Binding*, in: Z.G. SZABO (ed.), *Semantics and Pragmatics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2005, pp. 165-285.

²¹ The notion of “perceptual field” is my re-elaborated version of the “deictic field” postulated by Bühler (see K. BÜHLER, *Theory of Language*, cit., pp. 117-136) as «a coordinate system of “subjective orientation”, in which all partners in communication are and remain caught up. Each, conducting himself in his own system, is well oriented there» (*ivi*, p. 118).

²² For a detailed formulation of the perceptual context and its role in the referential mechanism of indexicals, see N. DOLCINI, *Indexicals and Perception*, in: «Rivista Italiana di Filosofia del Linguaggio», vol. II, n. 1, 2010, pp. 19-41, in particular pp. 26-27. I have already presented a salience-based pragmatic account of indexical reference for perceptual indexicals, in which salience-based indexical rules *plus* the perceptual context determine the indexical referent without ambiguity (see N. DOLCINI, *Le parole e i sensi. Una teoria degli indicicali basata sulla percezione*, EUM, Macerata 2009).

²³ K. BÜHLER, *Theory of Language*, cit., pp. 141.

²⁴ *Ivi*, p. 142.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ One might question the metaphysical status of both the phantasmatic context and the elements constituting it. Given that the referent of a phantasmatic indexical is contained in the phantasmatic context, the metaphysical issue of the latter extends to the former as well. In this work, I will not directly address the problem at the metaphysical and ontological levels. However, the present approach to the study of indexicals is compatible with some versions of realism about mental entities, at least as far as first-person phenomenal data are at issue. A good example of this kind of realism is offered in Gustav Bergmann’s *Realism* (see G. BERGMANN, *Realism. A Critique of Brentano and Meinong*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 1967).

²⁷ By “imagination”, I here broadly intend the human ability to mentally represent something, as distinct from the capacity of actually perceiving something. I am aware that such a definition is far too general and unsatisfactory in several respects, yet the discussion about imagination and its taxonomy has become central to so many areas (such

as, epistemology, aesthetics, ethics, and philosophy of mind) that the topic cannot be properly addressed within the limited scope of the present work. For an updated overview of the relevant debates on imagination, see A. KIND (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Imagination*, Routledge, London/New York 2016.

²⁸ Here “reference” stands for *what* language is about. Indexicals, as well as other singular terms, refer to individuals whose metaphysical nature might be problematic. However, in the context of this work, I won’t focus on the discussion of the metaphysical nature of the indexicals’ referent, which turns out to be particularly problematic especially in the case of fictional discourse.

²⁹ By “audience” I mean any interlocutor of the narrator (producer). Since narrations come in many forms – speech, theater performance, written works, etc. – interlocutors are broadly intended as subjects in the role of receivers. Depending on the kind of communicative act, the spatio-temporal coordinates of producer and receiver might be the same (e.g., face-to-face communication), differ only in time (e.g., graffiti) or only in space (e.g., communication on the phone), or in both time and space (as in the typical case of written works, such as novels and autobiographies).

³⁰ See N. DOLCINI, *Indexicals and Perception*, cit.; N. DOLCINI, *Le parole e i sensi*, cit.

³¹ The hypothesis that “I” is the only indexical possessing the characteristics of automaticity, referentiality, and non-ambiguity, has also been seriously challenged. The debate about this issue finds its roots in some popular passages from Wittgenstein’s *The Blue Book*, and in current terms revolves around the so-called *Immunity to Error Through Misidentification*, an expression first introduced by Sydney Schoemaker (see S. SCHOEMAKER, *Self-Knowledge and “Inner Sense”*, in: «Philosophy and Phenomenological Research», vol. LIV, n. 2, 1994, pp. 249-314).

³² H.-N. CASTAÑEDA, *The Phenomeno-Logic of the I: Essays on Self-Consciousness*, edited by J.G. HART, T. KAPITAN, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1999, pp. 89-90.

³³ Although Reichenbach does not offer a clear definition for “token”, I hereby follow Carpintero’s interpretation of the token as a token-event, which stretches through time; therefore, a token-event is distinct from a token-object, which endures through time. Such a clarification helps to avoid the problem of indeterminacy: «our linguistic intuitions falsify the predictions of indeterminacy

that would follow from the token-reflexive account if tokens were token-objects instead of token-events» (M. GARCÍA-CARPINTERO, *Indexicals as Token-Reflexives*, in: «Mind», vol. CVII, n. 427, 1998, pp. 529-563, here p. 535).

³⁴ H. REICHENBACH, *Elements of Symbolic Logic*, Free Press, New York 1947, p. 284.

³⁵ Note that, while Reichenbach endorses a descriptivist account of indexicals, token-reflexivity is not inconsistent with referentialist approaches, and it may actually be associated with them, as exemplified by Kaplan’s account of indexicals.

³⁶ Kaplan revises Reichenbach’s original proposal about indexical token-reflexivity by arguing that occurrences are better fit than tokens to meet the needs of the linguistic analysis of indexicals (see D. KAPLAN, *Demonstratives*, cit.); however, his use of the term “occurrence” is technical, indicating the combination of an expression and a context.

³⁷ Some autobiographies are written from the third-person perspective, and this stylistic possibility prevents the reader from distinguishing a biography from an autobiography by relying solely on the criterion of the personal pronoun used.

³⁸ Translation of the following excerpt from C. COLLODI, *Le Avventure di Pinocchio. Storia di un burattino* (1881), Fondazione Nazionale Carlo Collodi, Pescia 1983, p. 127-128: «E il vecchio Pinocchio di legno dove si sarà nascosto?» “Eccolo là” rispose Geppetto: e gli accennò un grosso burattino appoggiato a una seggiola, col capo girato su una parte, con le braccia ciondoloni e con le gambe incrociate e ripiegate a mezzo, da parere un miracolo se stava ritto. Pinocchio si voltò a guardarlo; e dopo che l’ebbe guardato un poco, disse dentro di sé con grandissima compiacenza: “Com’ero buffo, quand’ero un burattino! e come ora son contento di esser diventato un ragazzino perbene!...”».

³⁹ «Una delle poche cose, anzi forse la sola, ch’io sapessi di certo era questa: che mi chiamavo Mattia Pascal. E me ne approfittavo» (L. PIRANDELLO, *Il fu Mattia Pascal* (1904), Einaudi, Torino 1993, p. 1).

⁴⁰ C. DARWIN, *The Voyage of the Beagle, Excerpts from Charles Darwin, Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited During the Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle Round the World: Under the Command of Capt. Fitz Roy* (1845), White Star Publishers, Vercelli 2006, p. 45.

⁴¹ On the irreducibility of the “I”, see also H.-N., CASTAÑEDA, *The Phenomeno-Logic of the I*, cit., p. 89 and pp. 180-182.

⁴² *Ivi*, p. 187.

⁴³ See D.C. DENNETT, *The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity*, in: F. KESSEL, P. COLE, D. JOHNSON

(eds.), *Self and Consciousness: Multiple Perspectives*, Erlbaum, Hillsdale (NJ) 1992, pp. 103-115.