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The universal claims of narrative fiction. A reassessment of Aristotle's Poetics, 9.

According to Aristotle the poet speaks about events that could have occurred (by “probability or necessity”), not of events that have occurred; the poet speaks “universals”, not of particulars. I take it that something close to this Aristotelian view is a very common idea on understanding narrative fiction. Ordinary readers as well as literary scholars and literary critics express opinions akin to Aristotle’s. Further, in Aristotle’s *Poetics* (chapter 9) it is quite clear that such a “universal” account may be true, and, also, that fiction so to speak aims at truth, it might even be so that fiction is true (in the universalist sense). I think this idea too is consonant with much modern thinking about fiction. In my paper I will try to clarify the idea what a “universal proposition” with respect to narrative fiction is, how we arrive at it, and why we are inclined to read these proposition as true. Finally, since these questions arise in the context of fictional narrative, I want to present my view on how the Aristotelian universality cooperates with certain general features of narratives.