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## INDIVIDUALITY IN FICTION AND THE CREATIVE ROLE OF THE READER

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# Individuality in Fiction and the Creative Role of the Reader

MATTHIEU FONTAINE AND SHAHID RAHMAN<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

*Noneism*, a form of modal Meinongianism initiated by Richard Routley and developed by Graham Priest<sup>2</sup>, contains a theory of the identity of non-existents based on a version of the so-called Characterization Principle CP. The idea of the CP, as we will discuss in detail in 2.1 below, is that we specify an object via a given set of properties, such as *is a horse, is ridden by Don Quijote*. Accordingly, objects have the properties they are characterized as having, whether or not they exist – ontological status is irrelevant. The main idea of Priest's Noneism in relation to CP is that the object characterized by a representation has the characterizing properties, not necessarily in the actual world, but in the worlds described by the relevant representation.

An alternative approach to identity is that of Amie Thomasson as developed in her *Artifactual theory*<sup>3</sup>, which stresses the ontological dependence that fictions have upon their creators and upon their spatio-temporal support (such as copies of the relevant book, films, etc.). Moreover, in order to deal with the notion of truth in fiction, the Artifactual theory makes use of a fictionality operator, a kind of prefix that might be read as *according to the story*. Thus, a fictional character can truly be said to have a given property if *according to the story* this fictional character has this property. Nevertheless, what can we say of Napoleon as described by Tolstoy in *War and Peace*? Is the Napoleon that according to *War and Peace* won the battle of Borodino the Napoleon of the actual world, who indeed won that battle on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 1812? If Tolstoy's Napoleon is a creation, an artifact, what relation does he have with the real one? Moreover,

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<sup>2</sup> Priest 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Thomasson 1999.

assume that all those properties that characterize Borges' planet *Tlön*, fortuitously, apply to a real planet. Is that real planet then *Tlön*?

As we shall discuss below, within the Artfactual theory the case of coincidence can be given a satisfactory answer – but the case of Tolstoy's Napoleon is less clear. Similar questions can be formulated for Noneism, but it is the case of coincidence that seems to be more problematic there. Priest himself considers two possible answers: (1) the planet of the actual world and the planet *Tlön* penned by Borges are both the same individual by sheer chance; (2) the real planet of the actual world and Borges' planet *Tlön* are different objects: when Borges wrote the story he deliberately excluded the actual world as one of the worlds that realize the *Tlön*-story.

The main aim of this paper is to offer a solution (seemingly) compatible with Graham Priest's Noneism and Amie Thomasson's Artfactual theory which stresses the epistemic features of individuality in fiction. More technically, this proposal can be seen as both extending the notion of individuality of the Artfactual theory and furnishing an epistemic twist to Priest's principle of freedom. This requires abandoning Kripke's semantics and casting the modal semantics in the framework of Hintikka's notion of world-line, where an individual is understood as a (partial) function that might pick up one object from the domain of a given world or scenario  $w$ , called the *manifestation* or *aspect* of the individual at  $w$  (e.g., the individual that "manifests" as a detective at  $w$ ) and another object from the domain of a different scenario  $w'$  (e.g., the individual that "manifests" as a violinist at  $w'$ ). Applying a function of this kind can be seen as drawing a line that links two objects of different scenarios. The interesting point is that in this setting we might admit that two different individuals might share a manifestation in some scenario but not in all, e.g., the upon Marquez dependent object (creation of Marquez) whose manifestation is called *Simon Bolivar* might be also a manifestation of the individual that manifests itself as the "real" Simon Bolivar at the actual world. However, these individuals are different since they do not share the same manifestations in all scenarios. In fact it is the creative activity of the reader (and his background knowledge) that might trigger a world-line that links the fictional character with the real one.

## 2. Noneism

### 2.1 Noneism and the *Characterization Principle*

Despite intense criticism, Alexius Meinong's theses have greatly influenced and still influence several prominent theses about fiction. Meinong 1904 was not specifically concerned with fictional objects, but more generally with objects of discourse and knowledge. In his system Meinong allows judgements about non-existents, and according to his phenomenological approach, such judgements involve non-existent objects. Indeed, in Meinong's view, in order to judge whether Holmes is a detective or not, an (intentional) relationship with such an object must be postulated. This assumes that non-existent objects are part of the domain of discourse. To uphold such a claim, we must also provide individuation principles that distinguish on the one hand between a fictional object and a non-fictional one and on the other hand between two fictional objects. In what follows, we will be concerned with the consequences of this view in the context of the formal reconstruction by neo-Meinongians called *Noneism*, mentioned above.<sup>4</sup>

Meinongians distinguish the *Sein* of objects – their ontological status – from their *Sosein*, their having – certain – features or properties. And modal Meinongians claim that an object can have a set of properties even if it does not exist. This is the so-called *Principle of Independence*: Pegasus, Ulysses, and Joseph Cartaphilus can be truly said to have properties though they do not exist.

One specificity of the formal reconstruction of this theory relies on the introduction of a new pair of ontologically neutral quantifiers, an existential ( $\nabla$ ) and a universal quantifier ( $\Delta$ ). They range both on existents and non-existents: to be read respectively as *Something, x, is such that Ax* ( $\nabla x Ax$ ), *All x are such that Ax* ( $\Delta x Ax$ ). Using an existence predicate  $E!$ , the domain of discourse can be split into an *inner domain*, which contains existent individuals, and an *outer domain*, which contains non-existents. Singular terms and predicates are interpreted with respect to both of them.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Noneism distinguishes itself from Meinong's own theory by the use of only two ontological classes: the class of existents and the class of non-existents. Meinong considered a third, separate, class for abstract objects: the class of subsistent objects.

<sup>5</sup> With the help of the existence predicate we can define a second pair of *ontologically loaded* quantifiers,  $\exists$  and  $\forall$ , that is, quantifiers whose interpretation ranges only over the domain of existents. The following shows how to define such quantifiers:

$$\Delta x (E!x \rightarrow \Phi) \Leftrightarrow \nabla x \Phi$$

$$\nabla x (E!x \wedge \Phi) \Leftrightarrow \exists x \Phi$$

As rightly stressed by Francesco Berto 2009, endorsement of Meinongianism pushes one towards the thesis that *any* singular term denotes an object, existent or not. This holds in particular for (definite and indefinite) descriptions, that is, noun phrases of the form “the/an object with such-and-such properties”. We therefore have what we may call, following Parsons 1980, and by analogy with naïve set theory, an *Unrestricted Comprehension Principle* (UCP) for objects. The idea of the UCP is that we specify an object via a given set of properties, such as (1) *is a horse*, *is ridden by Don Quijote*, (2) *has a philosophical discussion with Sancho Panza’s donkey*, ..., (n). Take the conjunction of the relevant predicates expressing all of the relevant properties (1), (2), ..., (n), then, according to the UCP, an object is described by precisely this conjunction, namely the one called *Rocinante* by Cervantes.<sup>6</sup>

As a consequence, the principle of particularization (infer *Something is a vampire* from *Dracula is a vampire*) and its dual (infer *Dracula is mortal* from *Every x (of the domain of discourse) is mortal*) of classical logic are invalidated.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, by UCP, an object has all the properties which characterize it, whether it exists or not.

Modal Meinongians, such as Priest 2005 and Zalta 1988, usually display their approach in a modal-*possibilist* framework. This amounts to creating a single, common domain for all possible worlds (known as the *constant domain* of the modal frame). From the point of view of anyone of these worlds, then, there are two kinds of entities: there are entities which really exist in that world (the so-called *inner domain* of that world), but there are also the things that do not exist in that world (the so-called *outer domain* of that world). Within this approach a predicate of existence is introduced in order to distinguish entities which really exist in a given world from those that do not. In this context it is very important to notice that UCP is the only way in which modal Meinongians

<sup>6</sup> (UCP) For any condition  $\alpha[x]$  with free variable  $x$ , some object satisfies  $\alpha[x]$ .  
 $\forall x \alpha[x]$ , for every  $\alpha[x]$ .

Actually, Russell’s (1905) famous criticisms of Meinong addressed the UCP as applied to definite descriptions. The reformulation is straightforward:

Any definite description  $\iota x \alpha[x]$  designates an object satisfying the description.

<sup>7</sup> That is:

Infer  $\exists x \phi$  from  $\phi[k]$

Infer  $\phi[k]$  from  $\forall x \phi$

The rejection of these principles sets the basis for *free logic*. See Bencivenga 1986, Leonard 1956, Lambert 1967, 1997, see also Rahman, Rückert and Fischmann 1997, Rahman 2001, Fontaine and Rahman 2010 and Fontaine, Redmond and Rahman (forthcoming), where ontological commitments are formulated in terms of choices.

(up to now)<sup>8</sup> tackle the issue of creation. Indeed, since Meinongians usually assume a constant domain, objects are always there, even though they do not exist, and they thus cannot be said to have been created. At the very end they are non-existents, and the creation of a fictional character will not bring it into existence (in the strong ontologically loaded sense).

Thus, the only available solution is to leave the ontology as it is and take the UCP as a kind of procedure by means of which the author, who picked up some given objects of the domain, describes them in such a way that they will constitute the content of a fictional text. Creation is thus to ascribe some properties to a given object of the domain. But why did we select this one and not the other one? Well, perhaps its original *Sosein* was more adequate for the application of the UCP the author had in mind. But there are objections and they mostly relate to the UCP. Let us mention the two most famous ones due to Russell:

- 1) Can we deploy the UCP to describe objects with contradictory properties? So far nothing prevents using UCP in this way.
- 2) Can we deploy the UCP to produce some kind of ontological argument for whatever? Indeed nothing prevents us from doing so if we combine it with the fact that existence is taken to be a property. Take the properties of *being a Cyclops*, *having one eye*, *being son of Poseidon* and *being existent*. If we apply the UCP, we have that an object called *Polyphem* has all the properties mentioned above including that of existence.

In order to answer the objections, Priest proposes that the objects granted by the UCP are not necessarily existent denizens of the actual world. If this is the case, then the UCP can be deployed in its original unrestricted form:

Now, I suggest the object characterized by a representation has the characterizing properties, not necessarily in the actual world, but in the worlds (partially) described by the relevant representation. Thus, Holmes has the characterizing properties not at this world, but at those worlds that realize the way I represent the world to be when I read the Holmes story. (Priest 2005, p. 101)

Now the problematic object with the properties

*being a Cyclops*, *having one eye*, *being son of Poseidon* and *being existent*,

<sup>8</sup> In a recent paper, Priest introduces increasing domains in order to allow creation in the framework of Noneism (Priest 2008).

has lost its teeth. For we need not assume that an object so characterized, that is, an existent Cyclops, Polyphem, has its characterizing properties at the actual world. Polyphem is existent at the worlds at which Homer's story is realized. Moreover, some of the worlds that realize the characterization might be impossible worlds. Impossible worlds can contain contradictory objects.<sup>9</sup>

According to this version of the principle of characterization, one can truly assert both that Holmes is a detective at those worlds realizing the appropriate representation, and that this is not true at the actual world. And this does not prevent us from referring to the non-existent object Holmes that inhabits the actual world.

From a semantic point of view, this way of applying the principle of characterization assumes rigidity not only of proper names, but also definite descriptions,<sup>10</sup> and this is needed for the case of contradictory objects. Instead of displaying all of Priest's formal machinery, let us mention that models for this semantics contain, in addition to possible worlds, impossible worlds where logic can be different and open worlds where logic is not closed under entailment. In such semantics the reference of the description "the round-square" is fixed with respect to impossible worlds that realize a representation of the round-square. In those worlds and only in those the round-square is necessarily round and square. At the actual world, we can refer to a round-square by means of the definite description "the round-square" even if this object is neither round nor square. In the same way, Watson can be referred to by means of "Holmes' friend" at the actual world even if this does not hold at the actual world.

The fictionality (representation) operator is closed under some appropriate notion of logical consequence. That is, what is true *according to the story* is not only what is explicitly told in the story but also what can be logically inferred from the explicit core of the story.<sup>11</sup>

Without defining precisely the notion of logical consequence involved in such inferences, Priest claims that it should be adapted to the literary style at stake. If we are reading Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* this notion will not be the same as the one involved when we are reading *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Whatever it is, a relevant feature of representations is that they must

<sup>9</sup> It is important to point out that, from Meinong's point of view, this reformulation of the UCP might be seen as too strong a weakening of the original notion of *Sosein*. According to Meinong, that an object has a certain property or not is not contextually dependent or parameter-bounded.

<sup>10</sup> Priest 2005, pp. 93-95.

<sup>11</sup> Those worlds that realize the story/representation at stake that are closed under logical consequence are called *closed worlds*.



have some kind of minimal logical coherence that enables us to infer implicit properties of fictions.

## 2.2 Identity and the *Principle of Freedom*

Let us turn now to the question of identity in the context of Noneism.

**Identity:** Two names refer to the same (non-)existent object iff for every *closed* world<sup>12</sup>  $w$  and predicate  $P$ , it is the case at  $w$  that the interpretation of the predicate applies to the bearer of the first name iff it applies to the bearer of the second name too.<sup>13</sup>

We know, by the UCP, that a fictional object has all the properties by means of which it is characterized (plus all those that follow from these according to an appropriate notion of logical consequence) in every world that realizes the appropriate representation. Does this object have other properties beside the characterizing properties and the inferred ones? It is a fact that readers and literary critics argue about possible interpretations and facts compatible with the fiction that are not explicitly described in nor inferable from the novels. Let us call *determined* those properties that are explicitly or by inference part of the fictional text or, more generally, of the relevant representation; otherwise the properties are said to be *indetermined*. According to Priest, even if novels are just partial descriptions of possible worlds, the worlds realizing the correspondent representation are nevertheless complete. Conan Doyle's novels do not tell us anything about Holmes' blood-type. The characterization is not complete and we do not know if he has blood-type  $O^+$  or another one. However, the worlds realizing the representation are complete. Indeed, if Holmes is a human being, then (under some appropriate notion of logical consequence) it can be claimed that at a given world Holmes has blood-type  $O^+$  or not, as the case may be. Therefore, there will be worlds realizing the fiction at stake where Holmes has blood-type  $O^+$ , and other worlds at which Holmes does not have this blood-type. At the worlds realizing the fiction, characterized objects are free to vary – subject to some constraints – with respect to indeterminate properties. It is what Priest calls the *Principle of Freedom*:

What the intuition in question is, in fact, tracking is not that characterized objects can vary arbitrarily outside their determined properties, but that they are free to vary subject only to the constraints imposed by existing

<sup>12</sup> See footnote 11. As usual *iff* abbreviates *if and only if*.

<sup>13</sup> More precisely:

$k_1 = k_2$  iff for every closed world  $w$ , and  $Px$ , where  $x$  is not in the scope of an intentional operator:  
 $w \models_{(x/k_1)} Px$  iff  $w \models_{(x/k_2)} Px$

objects (such as myself and Uranus). This is the degree of freedom that they have. Let us call this the **Principle of Freedom**: given a characterized object, for any property that is not determined, there will be closed worlds, realizing the representation in question, in which the object has the property and ones in which it does not, subject only to constraints imposed by facts about objects that actually exist. (Priest 2005, p. 89)

Take as an example the postulation of Uranus. As a matter of fact, the actual world did realize this representation, and Uranus corresponded to the characterization of the scientists. Thus the object in the actual world called Uranus is the same as the one referred to in the postulation of the scientists. Now, if Uranus, the planet of the actual world, has a property so does the object postulated by the scientists – though this property may not have been determined by the scientists.<sup>14</sup>

In the same way, those constraints must be applied to the case of literary fiction and what we will call *fictional statements about actual objects*. Following Priest, those statements can be analysed by distinguishing first *fictional objects* and *purely fictional objects*. The former are those we are talking about in fiction, whether they exist at the actual world or not. Among those fictional objects are those that only exist at the worlds realizing the representation and not at the actual world. Thus, while Sherlock Holmes is a purely fictional individual, Napoleon is an actually existing one who also appears in a fictional text.

If we follow this approach, it is pretty straightforward to explain why two names of fictional characters such as Joseph Cartaphilus and Don Quijote can refer to different objects. Take the worlds that realize Borges' story *The Immortal*. Among those worlds one can assume by the principle of freedom that there is at least one closed world where it is not the case that Joseph Cartaphilus and Don Quijote are both immortal. Thus, they are different.<sup>15</sup> The situation is more difficult if by pure coincidence at the actual world there is an object that satisfies all those properties that characterize a fictional character, such as Holmes. Priest considers two possible answers:

- the Holmes of the actual world and the Holmes penned by Conan Doyle are the same object.

<sup>14</sup> Notice also that for transworld-identity Priest assumes for closed worlds the Kripkean framework of rigidity.

<sup>15</sup> The criterion of identity based on the principle of freedom and Priest's version of the UCP have been conceived of to answer the question: when do two names of non-existent objects refer to the same object? – and not to answer the question whether two elements of the domain of two different worlds are or are not the same (Priest 2005, pp. 87, 90).

- They are different since, when Conan Doyle wrote the relevant story, he deliberately excluded the actual world as one of the worlds that realizes the Holmes-story.

The first answer is indeed plausible in a framework, such as the one of Noneism as presented in the book *Towards Non-Being*,<sup>16</sup> where a constant domain is assumed. If the domain of every world is the same, it may well happen that one of the objects of the actual world satisfies fortuitously some given characterizing properties intended to describe a fictional character (according to Priest's Noneism, the only objects that are necessarily not existent at the actual world are abstract objects). In fact, in such a framework there is, strictly speaking, no creation; the activity of the author is to name and denote by means of the UCP some object to which we refer by the use of the very name the author gave it:

Simply, Doyle was the first to imagine Holmes, and indeed, to give the character imagined that name, which we now use to refer to him. That is, he was the first to bear that particular intentional relation to him, in virtue of which we now imagine Holmes. (Priest 2005, p. 120)

The point is that creation cannot mean bring into existence: Holmes does not exist!

Solution 1, if we are talking about creations, is not that convincing. Let us consider the case where Graham Priest created a person with an infinite memory called *Funes*, and that Priest's description of the character coincides word by word – unbeknownst to him – with the fictional character created by Jorge Luis Borges. Most literary critics would claim that Priest's and Borges' *Funes* are different creations. Indeed, it looks sensible, at least to the authors of this paper, to consider the author relevant to the identity of the fictional character. Solution 2 can be accommodated to this position by attaching the corresponding representation operator to one author and not to the other. However, solution 2 does not entirely solve the problem. On the one hand, in the case of the "actual-fictional" characters, it looks as if the reader might establish some links between the fictional character and something real, though we might recognize that it is not "exactly" the real thing. On the other hand, in the case of two fictional characters created by different authors by sheer luck, once more, the reader establishes links between one and the other. In the following, we shall try to offer an alternative that captures the reader's activity mentioned above and that is, we think, compatible with Priest's theory. Except for the fact that it

<sup>16</sup> Priest 2005.

starts from the assumption that fictions are creations, thereby providing some other individuation possibilities based on the ontological dependence fictions have upon their authors. But let us first present the *Artifactual theory* of Amie Thomasson, since it provides the basis for our developments.

### 3. Fictions as Artifacts

Priest's approach to the semantics of non-existents combines a predicate of existence with quantifiers. The phenomenological tradition has another device to deal with non-existence, namely intentionality and more precisely Brentano and Husserl's notion of ontological dependence. Influenced by the work of Roman Ingarden (1893-1970), a student of Husserl, Amie Thomasson develops the concept of ontological dependence in order to explain how we can refer to non-existent objects, for example in the context of literary interpretation. Let us first present the general framework of intentionality as understood by Thomasson:

The intentional object theory of intentionality explains the phenomenon that the objects of our intentional acts "need not exist" in part by rewriting this claim. The objects of our intentional acts need not be physical, spatiotemporal, or ideal entities, and they need not exist independently of intentional acts. This is because one term (the object term) may depend in a variety of ways on the other term (the intentional act) and may even (in the case of creative acts of fictionalizing or hallucinating) be brought into existence by that very intentional act. (Thomasson 1999, p. 90)

The key of Thomasson's approach to fictions lies in acknowledging *ficta* a full ontological status. According to her view, fictional objects are inhabitants of domains of worlds just like non-fictional ones. On the one hand, they are creations or, more precisely, artifacts like chairs and buildings. On the other hand, they are abstract creations such as marriages, universities and theories. Fictional objects are bound to the everyday world by dependencies on books, readers and authors.

In her book *Fiction and Metaphysics*, Thomasson displays several types of ontological dependence. We shall take up only two main kinds, namely *historical* and *constant dependence*, both of which have their roots in Ingarden:

We can begin by distinguishing between constant dependence, a relation such that one entity requires that the other entity exists at every time at which it exists, from historical dependence, or dependence for coming into existence,

a relation such that one entity requires that the entity exists at some time prior to or coincident with every time at which exists. (Thomasson 1999, p. 31)

The point is that the fictional character Holmes is ontologically historically dependent on Conan Doyle and that Holmes as an artifact or creation can survive even after Conan Doyle's death (as a real person, i.e., as an independent object<sup>17</sup>). Moreover, the ontological dependence is in this example a *rigid* one: Holmes depends historically on a fixed object, namely Conan Doyle. Now, after Conan Doyle's death Holmes survives as an artifact because it is ontologically sustained by copies of the texts of Conan Doyle. In fact, while the historical dependence relates to the act of creation, the role of the constant ontological dependence is to ensure that the artifact Holmes, once created by Conan Doyle, is still here despite the fact that his creator is not. In other words, the constant ontological dependence ensures that artifacts are denizens of our world. Furthermore, if the object(s) on which Holmes constantly depends disappear too, Holmes will also disappear or at least be inaccessible. It is important for these kinds of examples that constant ontological dependence be *generic*, e.g., Holmes is not constantly dependent on one particular copy of the relevant text, but at each time he is constantly dependent on one of the copies (or memories). The historical dependence relation is transitive and asymmetric. Reflexive cases of the relation of constant dependence can be used to define independent objects.

Interestingly, ontological dependence is to be thought of as bi-dimensional, that is, in terms of frames involving both worlds and moments of time with their respective relations. Indeed, Thomasson writes:

Assuming that an author's creative acts and literary works about the character are also jointly sufficient for the fictional character, the character is present in all and only those worlds containing all of its requisite supporting entities. If any of these conditions is lacking, then the world does not contain the character, if Doyle does not exist in some world, then Holmes is similarly absent. If there is a world in which Doyle's work were never translated at all and all of the speakers of English were killed off, [...] then Sherlock Holmes also ceases to exist in that world [...]. (Thomasson 1999, p. 39)

<sup>17</sup> We have to be careful here. Notice that real concrete objects are not strictly speaking independent. Indeed, in Thomasson's ontology, only abstract ideal Platonist objects can be said to be independent of any concrete object or intentional state. In the restricted framework we use here, we will speak of independent objects as independent with respect to the generic constant dependency upon the existence of copies and the rigid historical one upon the author. But we do not commit ourselves to the idea that there could be absolutely independent objects.

If historical dependence allows the creations to survive the creator, then the situation described in the quote above is only possible if we are assuming a bi-dimensional framework of world and time. Conan Doyle must be present in the same world where Holmes is present, but not necessarily at the same time.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4. The Fictionality Operator

The systematic development of a link that articulates the approaches to fiction of logic, philosophy and literature had to wait until the work of John Woods, who in 1974 published the book *Logic of Fiction: A Philosophical Sounding of Deviant Logic*. In fact, one of the most exciting challenges of Woods' book relates to the link between the talk "inside the story" and the talk "outside the story". For that purpose Woods formulated a fictionality operator<sup>19</sup> to be read as "according to the story". Thomasson incorporates the use of this operator to account for the truth of sentences such as *According to the story, Holmes is a detective* (note that, in Thomasson's framework, it is false at the actual world that Holmes is a detective, since ontologically dependent objects cannot be detectives at the actual world). The truth-conditions for the fictional operator deployed by Thomasson are still lacking and the paper by Rahman and Tulenheimo mentioned above should fill that gap. Here we shall confine ourselves to a description of the general ideas of this semantics and how they could be understood. For the sake of simplicity we shall neglect the temporal component.

Rahman and Tulenheimo's proposal for the semantics of the fictionality operator relies in fact on distinguishing two of them, one operator with universal and the other with existential force:

**According to the story.** The construction *according to the fiction*,  $\varphi$  holds ( $[F]\varphi$ ) is taken to behave formally as a modality. What this means is that we take the story to specify (relative to the actual world – or, if that for some reason does not suffice, relative to a number of other worlds as well) the totality of all the worlds that are compatible *with all that the fiction says*. That holds according to the fiction then means that  $\varphi$  holds at *all* the worlds compatible with the fiction. That is, the content is given by the explicit sentences of the work plus their logical implications.<sup>20</sup> As in Lewis, in this first version of our approach

<sup>18</sup> Rahman and Tulenheimo (forthcoming) developed a formal semantics for a framework of this kind.

<sup>19</sup> Woods' fictionality operator was set in a modal framework by David Lewis 1978.

<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, Gérard Genette linked the need for an inferential moment to the traditional Aristotelian discussion on the requirement of likelihood (*vraisemblable*):

we shall leave out the complications coming from the contradictions and open worlds deployed by Graham Priest.<sup>21</sup>

**The interpretation and the reader's perspective.** We may also be interested in statements that are true only at *some* world compatible with the fiction. Here we introduce the reader's perspective. For example, presumably Conan Doyle's oeuvre leaves it perfectly open whether Watson's grandfather's cousin's dog was a German shepherd. However, there is presumably also nothing that precludes the possibility that Watson's grandfather had a cousin who furthermore had a dog, which might even have been a German shepherd. The latter is compatible with the story while surely not necessitated by it. While *according to the fiction*,  $\alpha$  holds ( $\langle \mathcal{F} \rangle \varphi$ ) expresses a universal modality, *is compatible with the fiction* ( $\langle \mathcal{F} \rangle \varphi$ ) is an existential statement. We may even read  $\langle \mathcal{F} \rangle \varphi$  as *The fiction admits an interpretation according to which  $\varphi$* .

- Notice that the interpretation operator  $\langle \mathcal{F} \rangle$  could be seen as introducing into the object-language Priest's principle of freedom mentioned above. For the sake of simplicity we shall not assume in the following the kind of restrictions Priest assumes for his principle.
- Notice too that the interpretation operator  $\langle \mathcal{F} \rangle$  provides a natural understanding of inter-fictional sentences such as "Don Quijote is taller than Madame Bovary". There is at least one world compatible with both stories such that Don Quijote is taller than Madame Bovary.<sup>22</sup>

Each of the worlds displaying the operators mentioned above will be conceived of with its own domain. A domain where one finds all that the fiction says there is (at that world) or more precisely all that can be quantified over in that world.

The actual world is the world where the evaluation is performed outside the fictionality operator. It contains all objects, including the fictional characters, the objects upon which the fictional characters ontologically depend and even other *ficta* and objects. It is here where the difference between dependent and independent objects (realities and unrealities) can be expressed. True statements in relation to a given fictional world  $w$  about objects that are elements of its domain  $D^w$  will be false at the actual world: *Holmes is a detective* is false

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Ce qui [...] définit le vraisemblable, c'est le principe formel de la norme, c'est-à-dire l'existence d'un rapport d'implication entre la conduite particulière attribuée à tel personnage, et telle maxime générale implicite et reçue (Genette 1969, p. 74).

<sup>21</sup> Priest 2005, pp. 20-24.

<sup>22</sup> To see how this can be combined with a semantics for quantifiers that seems to be compatible with Priest's approach, just replace ontologically dependent objects with non-existents, independent with existents.



at the actual world. Indeed, *Holmes is a detective* according to the story, not at the actual world: dependent objects cannot be detectives or smoke a pipe at the actual world.<sup>23</sup>

The world-semantics is otherwise defined in a standard way with *actualist* quantifiers. That is, each world gets its own domain such that the domain of one world might contain entities that are not elements of the domain of a different world, and quantifiers, predicates and constants range over the domains of the world at issue. Accordingly, for a given world  $w$ :

- Constants and predicates are interpreted on the set  $D^w$ .
- Quantifiers are provided a semantics by means of assignments over the set  $D^w$ .

One feature of this semantics is that it is assumed that all constants of the language refer. This assumption can be dropped, but we will not do so here.

Models are structures consisting of a set  $W$  of worlds of the kind just explicated and a relation  $R$  of accessibility among those worlds determined by the fiction being considered. Intuitively, the creator of the fiction (and whatever else we count as objects on which the fiction depends) is found at the actual world (the world at which the fiction was created). We do not preclude, as already mentioned, the possibility that in the domain of the fictional worlds there might also be some non-fictional objects, in some cases even the creator of the fiction. If we assume that Conan Doyle exists at some world, then it might be true at that world that, e.g., Watson kicks Conan Doyle.

We can now provide identity conditions that make use of ontological dependence:

**Identity Conditions.** Two names refer to the same (non-)existent object iff

1. The interpretations of both names at the actual world involve the same ontological historical and constant dependence.
2. For every *closed* world<sup>24</sup>  $w$  and predicate  $P$ , it is the case at  $w$  that the interpretation of the predicate applies to the bearer of the first name iff it applies to the bearer of the second name too.

Let us see what we think we have accomplished as regards the articulation of the fictionality operator and the mixed domains. “External points of view” are given at the actual world. It is there that “categorical” claims are asserted: *Samsa*

<sup>23</sup> This point should answer Sainsbury’s objections to Thomasson’s Artfactual theory, cf. Sainsbury 2009, chapter 5.

<sup>24</sup> See footnote 11.



is a fiction, Poe is the author of *The Golden Bug*, and so forth. “Internalist” points of view involve the worlds that interpret the fictionality operator. It is important to point out once more that the semantics deployed allows, so to speak, for ontologically dependent and ontologically independent objects inside the fictionality operator. The fictionality operator does not push us necessarily to consider that everything in the scope of a story is an ontologically dependent object.

Thomasson assumes rigid designation in a way similar to Priest: the fictional character Holmes is “transported” to the actual world where Holmes is Holmes though he has none of the properties given to him by Conan Doyle. According to Thomasson, this also accounts for *transfictionality*, i.e., an author referring in a story to a fictional character of a different story. In relation to identity, at the very end the act of creation and the ontological dependence a fictional character has upon his creator determine its identity.<sup>25</sup> According to the artifactual theory, if two authors by sheer coincidence happen to describe their fictional characters by the conjunction of exactly the same properties, these properties will nevertheless describe two different fictional characters, since these entities will be ontologically dependent upon different authors. But what about the coincidental existence of a real bearer of *Holmes*? Is it dependent or not? If we follow Thomasson’s criterion, since the fictional character Holmes has been created by Conan Doyle, he cannot be the ontologically independent object coincidentally existent at the actual world. But the reader might establish some link with it, in a way analogous to when he seems to recognize that Tolstoy’s Napoleon refers to the “real” Napoleon. A more convincing possible answer to these questions can, in our view, be developed within the framework of Hintikka’s notion of world-lines, where an individual is understood as a (partial) function. Let us discuss this possibility.

## 5. Individuals as Functions and the Reader’s Perspective

Jaakko Hintikka initiated in 1969 a semantics for first-order modal logic where an individual is understood as a (partial) function that might pick up one object of the domain of a given world  $w$  called the *manifestation* of the individual at  $w$  (e.g., the individual that “manifests” as a detective at  $w$ ) and a different object

<sup>25</sup> Redmond 2010, chapter 9, found some problematic cases for the application of this criterion within the Artifactual theory, though. In fact, he found a counterexample in Borges’ *Pierre Menard* where an artifact is created that is and is not identical to itself according to the very notion of identity of the Artifactual theory.

at a different scenario.<sup>26</sup> The formal semantics involved has been explicitly developed by Tero Tulenheimo in a special number of the *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* dedicated to the work of Hintikka.<sup>27</sup> In the following we will make use of Tulenheimo's presentation – although we will describe only the main notions of the formal semantics.

An interesting point is that individuals are not God-given entities but are constituted by man-made conceptions that link one manifestation to another. That is, conceptual assumptions might lead one to accept or to reject that two elements of the respective domains of two different worlds are values of the same function.

It is quite straightforward to introduce individuating functions into one's explicit semantics: *Models* for first-order modal logic will be triples  $(W, R, \mathfrak{S})$ .  $W$  is a set of worlds and  $R$  is an accessibility relation. Each world has a *domain* and is associated with an interpretation, on that domain, of all relevant non-logical symbols. Finally,  $\mathfrak{S}$  is a set of partial functions mapping worlds to their own domains. The individuating functions in  $\mathfrak{S}$  are the modal logician's individuals. The set  $\mathfrak{S}$  incorporates the *system of individuals*. Quantified variables are assigned individuals as their values. More specifically, relative to a scenario  $w$  quantifiers range over *those* individuals which have a manifestation belonging to the domain of  $w$ . They range over individuating functions defined on  $w$ . Not all individuals need be like that – an individual may fail to be manifested in a given world.<sup>28</sup> In such a setting proper names are not, strictly speaking, names of individuals, but names of elements of the respective domains. There is no guarantee whatever that the denotation  $X$  of “ $b$ ” in  $w1$  and the denotation  $Y$  of “ $b$ ” in  $w2$  are connected by a world-line – that there is an individual  $I$  such that  $I(w1) = X$  and  $I(w2) = Y$ . It may just as well happen that  $X$  is a manifestation of one individual and  $Y$  an embodiment of another, or even that both  $X$  and  $Y$  fall outside the images of all relevant individuating functions.<sup>29</sup>

It is important to point out that in this formulation there is no rigidity, or even better it makes no sense to speak of rigidity in Kripke's sense, since elements of different domains are incomparable in Hintikka's setting.<sup>30</sup> The upshot is that

<sup>26</sup> Priest 2005, pp. 43-45, makes use of a very similar semantics.

<sup>27</sup> Tulenheimo 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Tulenheimo 2009, p. 389.

<sup>29</sup> Tulenheimo 2009, p. 390.

<sup>30</sup> Priest 2005 (p. 44) implements rigidity in a setting where individuals are functions. The price to pay is that the interpretation of singular terms, which are linguistic entities, receive another interpretation than predicates, which are also linguistic entities. Indeed, in Priest's setting, singular terms refer to individuals, namely functions whose values in the different worlds are called the

not all identities are necessary identities. Only in particularly fortunate cases may a singular term “*b*” be indirectly associated with an individual *I*, namely if in each alternative world *w* its manifestation *I*(*w*) is the denotation of ‘*b*’ in *w*. Formally, this condition is expressed by  $\exists xK(x=b)$ .

The implementation of this framework in the semantics for the fictionality operator mentioned above is easily done: it is sufficient to see the elements of each domain of the worlds triggered by the fictionality operator(s) as values of functions. The philosophical question is now the following: what are creations? Well, creations are ontologically dependent individuals that manifest themselves in the worlds that realize the story fixed by the appropriate fictionality operator. The author creates, and the identity of the creations at the very end is based on their creator.

But how should we now approach our original puzzles on identity? The point is that while there is a creative role of the author creating the individuals, there is also a double creative role of the reader. The reader might add individuals compatible with the story (such as Holmes’ mother) and he might establish – because of his/her background knowledge – a link between the manifestation of a fictional character at a particular world and a real individual or another fictional character. The reader, with the appropriate background knowledge, might establish for example that there is a link between Umberto Eco’s fictional character called *Jorge de Burgos* at those worlds that realize the story *The Name of the Rose* and the individual that is called *Jorge Luis Borges* at the actual world. Are they the same? Not at all. One is a creation and the other is not (one is ontologically dependent on Eco and the other is not). Moreover, the corresponding individuals (functions) will not share the same manifestations at some worlds. However, the reader might, at some worlds compatible with the fiction, see the interpretations of the names (singular terms) *Jorge de Burgos* and *Jorge Luis Borges* as yielding the same element of the domain of some fictional world. The reader will in this case ignore the creation-marker that distinguishes both singular terms and assume identity between them. The framework explains once more, by means of this background knowledge, the authors’ and readers’ capacity to establish a link between all the manifestations called *Holmes* at alternative worlds even in the case of trans-fictionality (one

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manifestations of those individuals. On the other hand, predicates are interpreted not in relation to the individuals but in relation to the elements of the domain of the world at stake. Such a domain provides the set from which the values of the functions are picked up – i.e the domain of a world constitutes the co-domain of the functions in that world. By contrast, in Hintikka-Tulenheimo’s setting, both of these linguistic entities, individual constants and predicates, are interpreted in relation to the (co-) domain of the (functions in that) world at stake.

author referring to a fictional character of a different author), namely when the reader (author) possesses at a world  $w$  the knowledge needed, such that at each alternative world  $v$  the manifestation of the individual (fictional character) at that world is the denotation of *Holmes* in  $v$ .

## 6. Conclusion

In our view, the conceptual core of the Artifactual theory contains a fruitful approach to *identity*, despite the fact that the details of the semantics inside the scope of the fictionality operator have not been spelled out. The present paper should provide the first steps to fill this gap, by adding, by means of a second fictionality operator with existential force, a reader's perspective to the criterion of identity.

By stressing the dependence on the reader, we have defined the identity of the manifestations of the "real" Napoleon (i.e., the function whose value is called *Napoleon* at the actual world) and Tolstoy's Napoleon (i.e., the function whose value is called *Napoleon* at worlds triggered by *War and Peace*) in terms of the (reader's) capacity to complete the fictional worlds. Indeed, if for some literary or other reason we would really like to distinguish between the real and the fictional individual, without losing the possibility of establishing some links between them, the reader's activity must be assumed and explicitly introduced into the semantics – a semantics that invalidates the necessity of identity. By some explicit knowledge on the historical dependence upon the author, constant dependence upon the copies, and by some extra knowledge about relevant atomic properties it might be possible to draw a world-line that interprets *Napoleon* at all the worlds compatible with *War and Peace* as manifestations of the individual created by Tolstoy. With the epistemic dependence on the reader, we explain how the manifestations of Tolstoy's individual might also be seen by the reader in some but not (necessarily) in all worlds as manifestations of the individual that manifests itself as Napoleon at the actual world.

In fact, we face a problem which is in a sense the opposite of the Babylonian paradox of Frege and Kripke.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, according to Kripke's view, rigidity and

<sup>31</sup> Indeed, in the example of Tolstoy's Napoleon, difficulties seem related to the principle of necessity of identity between rigid designators. It is this very principle that led Kripke 1972 to support the idea of *necessities a posteriori* and to reject the logic of identity in epistemic contexts. More precisely, let "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus" be two rigid designators that stand for the same object at the actual world, namely the planet Venus. "Hesperus" rigidly denotes Venus at every world at which "Phosphorus" does. Thus, Hesperus is the same as Phosphorus at every world independently of any epistemic or doxastic consideration. Therefore, if there is identity between Hesperus and

identity at the actual world entails identity at every world, and this generates well-known paradoxes for epistemic contexts. According to our approach, in the case of Tolstoy's Napoleon, we should reject identity (notably at the actual world), despite the fact there might be identity in the worlds compatible with what the fiction says.

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Phosphorus, we can mutually substitute "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus" *salva veritate* in every context. Beyond ontological modality and within intentional contexts, this substitution generates well-known paradoxes:

Hesperus is Phosphorus.

Babylonians knew that Hesperus was Hesperus.

∴ Babylonians knew that Hesperus was Phosphorus.

Inevitably, Babylonians knew that Hesperus was Hesperus – it is *a priori* knowledge that everything is identical to itself. However, Babylonians did not know that in using "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus", they were denoting the same object. Therefore, contrary to the conclusion of this argument, they did not know. Indeed, in the example of Tolstoy's Napoleon, difficulties seem related to the principle of necessity of identity between rigid designators. It is this very principle that led Kripke 1972 to support the idea of *necessities a posteriori* and to reject the logic of identity in epistemic contexts. More precisely, let "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus" be two rigid designators that stand for the same object at the actual world, namely the planet Venus. "Hesperus" rigidly denotes Venus at every world at which "Phosphorus" does. Thus, Hesperus is the same as Phosphorus at every world independently of any epistemic or doxastic consideration. Therefore, if there is identity between Hesperus and Phosphorus, we can mutually substitute "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus" *salva veritate* in every context. Beyond ontological modality and within intentional contexts, this substitution generates well-known paradoxes:

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Inevitably, Babylonians knew that Hesperus was Hesperus – it is *a priori* knowledge that everything is identical to itself. However, Babylonians did not know that in using "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus", they were denoting the same object. Therefore, they did not know the identity drawn in the conclusion. But if proper names were to be rigidly interpreted, then this conclusion would not follow necessarily.

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