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Zoltán Vecsey

FICTION AND REPRESENTATION

MEINONG STUDIES

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Fiction and Representation

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Ulf Höfer und Jutta Valent

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Abbreviations

ASC	Artefactual Status of Characters
CNRR	Characters as Non-Relational Representations
DRS	Discourse Representation Structure
DRT	Discourse Representation Theory
ECP	Encoding Comprehension Principle
MCP	Modal Comprehension Principle
MSC	Minimal Status of Characters
NCP	Nuclear Comprehension Principle
NRLR	Non-Relational Linguistic Representation
UCP	Unrestricted Comprehension Principle

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1 Introduction

Competent users of English are normally fully aware of what kind of everyday experiences they have when they are reading a detective mystery novel like *A Study in Scarlet*. They know that they are engaged in the prosaic activity of text reading, they know that the novel before their eyes has been written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a famous author of detective mysteries, and perhaps most of them also know fairly well that the main protagonists portrayed in the novel – Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson – are not real people. From the point of view of everyday experience there is nothing at all mysterious about detective mystery novels. Indeed, it would be remarkably difficult for anyone brought up in our Western cultural traditions to cast doubt on the fact that *A Study in Scarlet* is a piece of well-written fictional prose. And given that fictional prose works are products of artistic imagination, no one thinks seriously that Conan Doyle's crime story has to be interpreted as a faithful representation of reality. The common core of our cultural knowledge concerning detective mystery novels consists of such truisms, but this is rather an advantage, not a drawback: without accepting these simple truisms we would hardly be able to share our private reading experiences with each other.

The situation alters dramatically, however, when someone makes an attempt to organize our common pre-theoretical reading experiences into a systematic theory of detective novels. Any such attempt will face a number of fundamental questions immediately. Is there a self-evident experiential difference between reading fictional detective stories and non-fictional detective stories? Can one safely say that the proper names 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'Dr. Watson' as they occur in the text of the novel refer to nothing? Is there any acceptable truism concerning the metaphysical status of such novels? Is there a consensus that authorial imagination has to be regarded as an ontologically noncommittal activity? A quick survey of the current debates on the metaphysics and semantics of literary fiction reveals that the uniform answer to these questions is "no".

The case of detective mystery novels generalizes to all genres of fictional prose. Systematic theories of literary fiction are based today on a very thin common ground. Perhaps the only widely accepted theoretical truism is that novels and short stories necessarily and essentially involve words, sentences and other kinds of linguistic expression. As a basic theoretical claim, this cannot mean more than an agreement about the proper characterization of the object of investigation: if formulated in general enough terms, fictional prose works can be identified with a certain kind of linguistic construct. But it is one thing to say that at a suitably general level of systematic reasoning fictional prose works

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may be conceived as being linguistic constructs and quite another to specify the nature of these constructs. The disagreement between rival theories of literary fiction starts precisely at this pivotal point.

With respect to the question of the "real" nature of fictional prose works, the theoretical terrain is dominated by two competing families of views. On one side of the divide are views which endorse a *realist* metaphysical viewpoint and thus accept the existence of fictional entities. Realists, whether they are concrete or abstract realists, typically combine their metaphysical stance with a classical framework of truth-conditional semantics. They hold that fictional entities – characters, properties and events mentioned in novels and short stories – belong to the overall inventory of what there is and at least certain sorts of statements about these entities can be evaluated with respect to truth and falsity.

On the other side of the divide are views which adopt an *antirealist* stance in metaphysics and therefore deny the reality of fictional entities. In thinking about the nature of fictional prose works, antirealists may embrace either a pretense theoretic or a fictionalist framework. Both frameworks are devised to treat the semantics of fictional works in a non-truth-conditional fashion. Since antirealists are deeply convinced that our actual world does not contain any fictional entities, they maintain that statements occurring in fictional works and statements about the putative entities mentioned in these works have no real truth value.

It is occasionally said that both the realist and the antirealist approaches to fictionality are in a position to save some features of the phenomenology of our ordinary literary experiences, but neither view adequately explains the phenomenology in its entirety. It is thought that both views must come into conflict with our stock of common knowledge somewhere. This diagnosis seems to me exactly right. Most adherents of realism make a sharp conceptual distinction between two interpretative perspectives. On the one hand, they hold that statements of internal fictional discourse ought to be interpreted as pretend-statements. This is so, because writing down or entering into a computer a fictional sentence requires to perform a distinctive speech act: authors of literary works do not want to convey anything factual, they merely pretend to make statements. On the other hand, realists acknowledge that external fictional discourse involves factually interpretable statements about existing fictional entities. In talking about the aesthetic qualities of particular works or about the properties authors attribute to their characters, readers and critics may perform locutionary speech acts. The problem is that the ordinary phenomenology of literary appreciation does not seem to reflect such internal/external dividedness. As mixed statements nicely illustrate – 'Sherlock Holmes and Pinkerton are detectives' –, readers and critics attribute quite routinely the *same kind of properties* to fictional and real entities without feeling any pressure to change their epistemic or ontological perspective.

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Antirealist views also have their own counterintuitive consequences. Pretense theorists and fictionalists both deny the existence of fictional characters, properties and events. Adherents of these views are seemingly in a better position with respect to the overall interpretation of fictional discourse for they reject from the start the distinction between internal and external perspectives. According to antirealists, what others think of as an autonomous form of external discourse is nothing else than an incidental expansion of internal discourse. When readers and critics say, for example, that 'Sherlock Holmes has been created in 1887' they extend in some manner the original pretense mandated by the novel *A Study in Scarlet* and this make it seem as if it would be intelligible to claim that fictional characters like Holmes can be created. But this should be regarded as an appearance, since fictional characters do not really exist. Although the idea of extended pretense may help to resolve the main difficulties generated by incompatible interpretive perspectives, it has the troubling consequence of excluding the possibility of making direct factual statements about fictional matters.

It is sometimes suggested that extended pretense should be conceived of as a form of semantic "piggybacking" where readers and critics make claims within an ongoing pretense in order to convey information about the real world.[1] On this proposal, one might ascribe a certain real-world property to a fictional character (e. g. that it is famous or well portrayed) by pretending that the character in question exists. This does not much help, however, because one will still not be in a position to know *directly* anything about the nature of literary phenomena that play a central role in our appreciative and critical practices. Yet this cannot be the case. When we assertively utter, for example, that the character of Sherlock Holmes was induced into literary history by Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887, then we assert a proposition that is knowable in the ordinary manner. Neither the utterance nor the expressed proposition manifests signs of indirectness. In the light of this observation, the antirealist's thesis that we merely *pretend* to assert that fictional characters, places and events have certain properties sounds very strange indeed.

In claiming that realist views and antirealist views alike are in conflict with some of our pre-theoretical reading experiences, I do not want to suggest that the preservation of the common sense conception of fictionality is to be taken as the primary aim of a systematic inquiry. We have to be cautious in this regard. In a certain sense, what we pre-theoretically know *is* what we should be reflecting on as we identify the aim of our inquiry. The common sense conception can be con-

1 For more on this, see Chapter 4.

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sidered as a prominent data source from which we may gather relevant information concerning the nature of fictional entities.

It does not follow from this, of course, that every single part of the folk's conception of fictionality should be automatically preserved and incorporated into our theoretical models. Some cautiousness is justified, because it may turn out, on a closer look, that the surface phenomenology of our widely shared view conceals discrepancies, oddities or even inconsistencies. As in other domains of everyday practice, we may be committed to an inconsistent set of statements without realizing the troubling presence of the inconsistency. It would then be preposterous to reject a theory just because it departures from common sense. Perhaps *moderate revisionarism* is the best methodological stance we may adopt in such a situation since it accepts the validity of both desiderata: it prescribes that our theories be sensitive to the information collected from pre-theoretical data sources and, at the same time, it prescribes that we revise, if necessary, the initial reliability of these data sources.

This book develops a novel argument which purports to show that realist approaches to the nature of fictional entities satisfy these desiderata more easily and more fully than their antirealist rivals. While supporters of the antirealist view do not seem to have any reason to doubt the metaphysical truism according to which fictional prose works are composed of linguistic expressions, they must deny the associated ontological thesis that the existence of these linguistic constructs entails the existence of fictional entities.

Realists may see this entailment as being an inseparable component of the common sense view. Competent users of English would presumably agree that novels and short stories are sequences of expressions written on sheets of paper. Although this is a simplified and rather naïve characterization of their perceivable properties, it clearly shows that in contexts of everyday experience prose works are usually subsumed under the category of ordinary objects. And since a fundamental precondition for being able to think about fictional entities is that there must exist particular sequences of written expressions and the expressions of these sequences must be antecendently recognized and understood by their readers, it is natural to conceive *fictionalia* as existentially dependent on ordinary concrete objects. It would be an overstatement to claim that all contemporary branches of realism can easily be reconciled with the thesis that there is an ontological dependence relation between fictional entities and concrete objects. Platonist realists and followers of certain versions of neo-Meinongianism may adopt a skeptical attitude to such dependence relations. It can be argued, still within the realist paradigm, that fictionalia exist eternally and as such they cannot be involved in relations which have contingently existing concrete

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objects as one of their relata. This is, of course, a reasonable worry arising from the possible bad consequences of a promiscuous ontology.

There is an alternative trend in abstract realism which evades this worry by offering a different view about the metaphysical status of fictionalia. Advocates of the *artefactualist* position are of the opinion that characters, properties and events mentioned in fictional prose works are similar in one important respect to other cultural entities, namely, that they exist only contingently. The broad picture is the following: fictionalia are abstract entities, but in contrast to paradigmatic abstracta – like numbers or pure sets – they exist in virtue of the existence of ordinary concrete objects – like written expressions on a sheet of paper or dots on a computer screen. I shall try to point out that the common sense view and the artefactualist position are on a par: both are aware and accept, either implicitly or explicitly, the wide-ranging implications of this contingency.

On the other hand, the systematic analysis of fictional prose works raises some complicated issues where the common sense view and the artefactualist's theory must sooner or later come apart. This is what happens, just to mention one example, in the case of the natural language predicate 'exists'. Presumably, those who are not trained in semantic analysis would regard the sentence 'Sherlock Holmes does not exist' as predicating a property – the property of being non-existent – of Holmes. Artefactualists find such negative existential sentences rather puzzling. It seems to be a brute fact that there is no such person as Sherlock Holmes so the sentence is to be interpreted as expressing a true proposition. But this would mean that 'Sherlock Holmes' is an empty name and such names cannot be used to express propositions. In addition, artefactualists are convinced that Holmes does actually exist, albeit not as a person but as an abstractum. It would then be surprising if a semanticist or a philosopher of language wanted to adopt the layman's attitude to negative existential sentences uncritically. There arises a need for a principled revision of our customary way of thinking. All other examples suggest the same plain message: the initial reliability of the information arising from pre-theoretical data sources should be revised if they cannot be taken at face value at some stage of theory construction.

If it is already established that in identifying the aim of our systematic inquiry we cannot but utilize a certain body of common sense knowledge, it would be obviously self-defeating to endorse a global error theory about ordinary fictional discourse. Rather than attributing extensive ignorance or confusion to everyday appreciators of prose works, it may be more favorable to seek an optimal balance between knowledge preservation and knowledge revision.

I think the artefactualist framework I present below is capable to perform this task quite successfully. But I also think that the standard version of the artefactualist framework suffers from an inherent weakness which is rarely, if ever,

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recognized. The weakness comes to light when we reflect on the way artefactualists put forward their preferred account of abstract entities. Of course, I have no quarrel with the claim that fictional entities can be ontologically classified as contingently existing abstracta. The important question is what sort of abstract entities are we talking about. The most popular account to be found in the literature is that the abstracta in question find their ontological home somewhere beyond or disconnected from the textual level of prose works. Some hold that fictional entities are ideas shared by the members of a cultural community at a certain period of time, while others regard them as initiated types or as multiply manifestable generic objects. This looks like an unnecessary reduplication of the object of inquiry. If it is taken into consideration that novels and short stories are constructed from linguistic expressions, a more austere account becomes available: we can argue, plausibly enough, that fictional entities are generated by specific linguistic mechanisms which are operative at the textual level. More concretely, we can maintain that fictionalia as dependent abstracta may be defined in terms of units of linguistic representation. The most significant feature of these representational units is that they represent what they do in a *non-relational* manner. As we will see later, there are good *prima facie* reasons to assume that proper names, descriptions and pronouns can, in fictional texts, become endowed with the semantic feature of non-relationality. This may encourage us to think of fictional entities as purely linguistic representations which lack any relation to extra-linguistic objects.

Before explaining in detail how the notion of non-relational representation can be defined and how such a notion can be introduced into the standard framework of artefactualism, it is important to survey the broader theoretical context in which the present work is embedded.

As already mentioned above, there are presently two main realist stances concerning the metaphysical and ontological problems of fictional entities. In Chapter 2, I will first evaluate the explanatory potential of neo-Meinongian theories which attribute a prominent role to the analysis of properties. Advocates of neo-Meinongianism contend generally that fictionalia necessarily possess all the properties in terms of which they are described in the relevant prose works. A fictional entity is therefore conceived to be either a concrete nonexistent object or a pure set which is constituted by a particular collection of properties. In my view, these ideas would be acceptable only if properties were conceived as building blocks of (non-relational) linguistic representations.

In the second and third part of Chapter 2, I will examine the key tenets of the artefactualist theory. This second variant of realism borrows more elements from the common sense conception of fictionality than neo-Meinongianism. Artefactualists agree, for example, with the intuitively attractive assumption that fiction-

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al entities come into being at a certain point of time. They are also in agreement with common sense as to the possibility of making true statements about the contents of prose works without pretending anything. The artefactualist's realism seems to be closely connected to our everyday experiences at a number of other points, but this is only a partial virtue which does not, in itself, guarantee that the view is free from conceptual ambiguities or shortcomings.

The next chapter, Chapter 3, is devoted to a principled critique of the naïve conception about the abstract nature of fictional entities. I will try to demonstrate that in identifying fictionalia even the upholders of the artefactualist theory are inclined to make a significant mistake. The root of the problem is that nearly all of the definitional attempts are relying on the wrong sorts of abstract entities. At the end of the chapter I will argue for the need of a representationalist turn which helps to get a clearer picture of what we are really after in our ontological quest.

The following part of the book, Chapter 4, contains a series of analyses demonstrating that the reformed version of the artefactualist theory provides clear and coherent solutions to the most recalcitrant problems of fictionalia. These are the following: the problem of character creation, the problem of our emotional responses to literary texts, and the paradox of negative existential statements. It will also be shown that the core assumption involved in the proposed representationalist solutions has been already proved beneficial in other domains of research.

Chapter 5 offers a metatheoretical epilogue. The purpose of this chapter will be to assess the results of the preceding first-level analyses from a metatheoretical perspective.

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2 Realism about fictional entities

In order to deserve the title 'fictional realism', one should devise a theoretical framework which accepts that the objects described in the stories of literary prose works are in some sense existent entities. One way to accept that characters like Sherlock Holmes and Fyodor Karamazov or places like Middlemarch and Lilliput exist is to say that these objects exist in those metaphysically possible worlds where the appropriate stories are told as known facts. This view is often treated under the heading *fictional possibilism* or simply *possibilism*. Such nomenclature is misleading on two counts. First, it would be evidently incorrect to think of possibilism as a genuine theoretical movement in the field of fictionalism. The basic idea has been elaborated by David Lewis who offered a counterfactual analysis of fictional truth in his (1978). Lewis's arguments were defended later by Richard Hanley (2004); but so far as I can tell, there are no other official supporters of their view.[1] Second, Lewis's original paper has not provided any advice on how to develop an ontology of fictional entities. His primary aim was to demonstrate that a possible world analysis may be capable to state the right truth conditions for the statements of fictional texts. Although the modal account defined truth in fiction in terms of possibilities, neither Lewis nor Hanley claimed explicitly that fictional entities are possibilia.

In spite of the fact that possibilism was never intended to be a genuine doctrine of fictional realism, it is worth summarizing the key elements of the idea. According to Lewis, storytelling is pretense. Authors of prose works pretend that they tell stories with respect to which they have full epistemic authority: stories are told as if they were known to be true. The question is what can one say about the fiction-internal conditions of pretend-truth from a fiction-external point of view. A particular statement p is true inside a story S, Lewis and Hanley contend, iff there is a possible world which is similar to the actual world in many relevant respects, but in which S is told as known fact and p is true. There is more than one possible world that satisfies these criteria because there are more ways to be relevantly similar to the actual world. The multiply ambiguous modal term 'possible world' used in this account in a realist spirit. Possible worlds are supposed to be concrete spatiotemporal wholes like the world we actually live in. So if a possible world w realizes the story S and @ is our actual world, then w and @ would possess exactly the same properties if S would have been told in @

1 At first sight, Kroon (1994) seems to agree with the main points of the Lewisian picture of modality, too. But because his main target in this paper is the referential potential of fictional names, he is far away from defending a possibilist theory of fictional entities.

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as known fact. This counterfactual illustrates quite well the "as-if" character of authorial pretense: most entities and events, even the bizarre ones, are typically described in stories as if they were parts of a known world.

Lewis's modal realist account of fictional truth has provoked intense critical reactions, and with good reasons. Perhaps the most easily recognizable problem with this account is that it fails to ascribe determinate truth conditions to fictional sentences. Let us assume that there are two metaphysically possible worlds, w_1 and w_2, which realize everything that has been explicitly told in *A Study in Scarlet*. Both worlds will then contain a counterpart of the character Sherlock Holmes. Necessarily, these counterparts will possess a large set of common properties.[2] They will share the property of being a pipe-smoker and the property of living at 221B Baker Street and all the other properties with the help of which Holmes is portrayed in the text of the novel. But it should not be forgotten that Holmes's counterpart will be a concrete individual both in w_1 and w_2 and as such he must also necessarily possess certain properties in these worlds that are not mentioned explicitly in the novel. This is so because in writing his work Conan Doyle remained involuntarily silent about many traits of his protagonist. Assume that this is indeed the case, and that the counterparts in w_1 and w_2 differ from each other in some qualitative respect.

However, when our modal theory allows for more than one counterpart for a character, we can reasonably ask which of the distinct counterparts is Holmes. There seems to be no principled answer to this question. As Kripke (1980), Voltolini (2006), and others observed, Lewis's theory implies a kind of indeterminacy that has an effect on the truth conditions of fictional sentences. For if we want to know why and how Doyle's statements about Holmes can turn out to be true in *A Study in Scarlet*, we will be unable to give a determinate answer.

Another challenge for the Lewisian possibilist is to find a comfortable solution to the problem generated by impossible fictional entities. Authors of sci-fi stories describe with special relish alien universes which are populated with inconsistent characters and events. A time travel story might describe a character, Elderly, for example, as being 50 years old and as being 75 years old simultaneously. So it would be true in the story that Elderly is 50 years old and 75 years old simultaneously. But how can such an inconsistent situation be explained from a fiction-external point of view? The possibilist needs to show that there is a metaphysically possible world where the story of Elderly is told

2 Lewis (1986) thinks that a property is a set of possible objects. Here and below, I intend to use the term in a theory-neutral sense according to which a property is *something* that can be ascribed to an entity in asserting ordinary subject-predicate statements.

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as known fact and the counterpart of Elderly has inconsistent temporal properties in that world. The problem is, again, that Elderly's counterpart is supposed to be a concrete individual, a flesh-and-blood person like every one of us, and persons cannot literally be born at different times.

Lewis thinks we can escape from this impasse by applying the methods of fragmentation and union. According to the method of fragmentation, the text of an inconsistent story has to be divided into maximally consistent fragments, so that we can restore consistency without changing radically what has been told by the author. In order to eliminate the apparent inconsistency, we should separate a salient part of the time travel story in which Elderly is described to be 50 years old; and then we should separate another part of the story where Elderly is said to be 75 years old. The resulting story fragments are distinct fictions, yet satisfy the consistency requirement. The separated story fragments will then be linked by the method of union. Every statement which is true in a fragment will be true, too, in the union of the fragments. And because neither fragment contains inconsistent statements about Elderly, the unified story will be free from inconsistency.

One might be inclined to say that this strategy solves the initial problem. This, however, would be a hasty conclusion for two reasons. On the one hand, the method of fragmentation cannot be applied successfully to every kind of impossible fictional entity. Imagine a story which includes a description of an internally inconsistent object like a square circle. Could a would-be follower of Lewis say that the square circle story should be fragmented into two fictions, one in which the object is a square and one in which it is a circle? Obviously not, for in this case we would split the square circle story into two consistent, though non-unifiable fictions. The claim is not that a consistent story about a round object cannot be unified with a consistent story about a square object. This can be done, but given that being round and being square are incompatible intrinsic properties, the resulting fiction would have to be interpreted as a true story about a particular pair of objects, not as a true story about a single object.

On the other hand, even if we are prepared to think that the Lewisian strategy can be adjusted to produce correct results in all problematic cases of storytelling, there is still the question of whether we have got closer to our goal. Let us suppose that the Lewisian possibilist can treat all kinds of impossibilia consistently. In this case the objects described in our toy examples – Elderly and the square circle – would have to be analyzed in the same way as the character of Sherlock Holmes. This would be a positive result with respect to the uniformity and general applicability of the proposed analysis. But, and this is the decisive point, the possibilist would be faced once again with the problem of indeterminate truth conditions. She must argue that fiction-internal statements about Eld-

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erly and the square circle are true because there is a wide range of nearby possible worlds where the respective stories are told as known fact. She must, consequently, defend the metaphysical claim that these objects are correlated with sets of concrete counterparts. It is not easy to understand, however, how the possibilist could thereby avoid the perils of positing an indeterminate identity relation between fictional entities and their multiple counterparts.[3] Or, to put the problem another way, it is not entirely clear why a fictional statement is supposed to be made true by sets of concrete entities residing somewhere in the modal space.

According to many, the realist framework Lewis proposed for analyzing the notions of possibility and necessity is still today the most effective reductive theory of modality in non-modal terms. Well, that may be so. The counterpart relation is flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of counterfactual scenarios. We can conceive easily a possible world where a counterpart of Arthur Conan Doyle is a plumber without having any inclination to write detective novels. In spite of this difference, Conan Doyle and his counterpart could have a life quite similar in any other respect. Perhaps there is another world where Conan Doyle is a robot, not a human being. This is much harder to conceive, but a Lewisian might stipulate for this scenario a particular counterpart relation which renders the thesis of the necessity of origin invalid.

What I would like to stress here is that the flexibility of the counterpart relation may help us understand better the space of possibilities only in such cases where we are thinking about concrete individuals which actually exist or existed in our world. We are in a position to know, on the basis of empirical information, that Conan Doyle was a person who had the property of living at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the property of being a writer and so forth. On this ground we can coherently entertain the thought that he has concrete counterparts who possess qualitatively different property sets. But even if a Lewisian theory adopted a maximally flexible counterpart relation, it would re-

3 One possible way out of this difficulty might be to construe a supervaluationist model for the semantics of fictional names. On a supervaluationist account, 'Elderly' is a vague name which has different reference candidates in different accessible worlds. A statement about Elderly is to be evaluated as true (or, better, as supertrue), iff it is true in all accessible worlds. Thus a supervaluationist might contend that the identity conditions for Elderly are unambiguously specified by the supertrue statements of her model. The problem with this proposal is that there is no reason to suppose that 'Elderly' is used as a vague name in our example, and so the starting point of the supervaluationist account seems to be highly controversial. I think that the non-classical models designed for vague predicates are, in general, not the most suitable means for the analysis of fictional names. For further problems, see Liebesman (2014).

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main unexplained how the entities that are fictional in our actual world could be concrete spatiotemporal objects in other possible worlds.

The main result of the observations made in the preceding paragraphs is that it is better not to regard possibilism as a *bona fide* theory of fictional entities. Other candidate realist theories appear to provide more comprehensive and more direct explanations concerning the ontological status and identity conditions of fictional characters.

One family of these theories attempts to bridge the explanatory gap between the realm of fictionalia and the realm of concrete objects by making a metaphysical distinction between what there is and what exists. This is a well-known distinction which stems from Meinong's theory of objects. Although the issue of fictional object representation was mentioned only incidentally in Meinong (1904), there are many theories of fictionality today that construe their basic ontological and metaphysical premises in a Meinongian spirit. A common feature of these so-called neo-Meinongian theories is that they conceive fictional entities as having all of the properties in terms of which they are characterized. Thus, if Sherlock Holmes is described in *A Study in Scarlet* as smoking a pipe, then Holmes possesses the property of being a pipe-smoker. And if a sci-fi novel tells us a story about a time traveler who is 50 years old and 75 years old simultaneously, then there is a fictional person – a time traveler – who has the property of being 50 years old and the property of being 75 years old simultaneously. It follows that in order to provide proper identity conditions for a fictional entity, neo-Meinongians do not have to search through the entire modal space. In comparison with the possibilist's commitment to a modal analysis which involves a plurality of concrete worlds, this may be regarded as a theoretical virtue. Another apparent virtue of the neo-Meinongian theory is that it can deal directly with inconsistent stories without separating them into consistently interpretable fragments. Presumably, the common sense view would also be on the side of those who say that we should take inconsistent representations as they are and treat them accordingly. It is a further issue, however, whether the neo-Meinongian theory is capable to assess the significance of the linguistic anchoredness of property representations. I shall address this issue in the next section.

2.1 Varieties of neo-Meinongianism

In developing his non-psychologistic theory of objects, Meinong (1902, 1904) has introduced a couple of new technical terms into the scientific vocabulary of that time. The most central of these was the term 'Objectiv' which was coined for des-

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ignating the specific subject matter of negative judgments.[4] Negative judgments concern primarily existing objects to which one has typically a direct perceptual access. The judgment *that there is no snow on the street* is both about snow and the street, about two perceptible objects, but it says evidently something more in that it expresses also the absence of a relationship between these objects. Meinong regarded such judgments as paradigmatic examples of object-talk where we are thinking about something that does not exist in the traditional sense of the word. In talking about an absence, our thoughts are directed to an Objectiv that is part of the ontological structure of the world but that is not an existing object (in the traditional sense of the word).

This might have been the basic insight underlying Meinong's famous ontological conception. He contended that there are two modes of being: existence and subsistence. Objects that exist are real, while objects that subsist are ideal. Real objects possess causally effective properties. They have a certain mass, a certain color, a certain shape and so forth. These are the perceivable objects of the spatiotemporal world to which mass nouns like 'snow' or count nouns like 'street' can be applied. In contrast to real objects, ideal objects like numbers or concepts do not inhere in regions of space-time and are therefore non-physical and unperceivable.

Up to this point, the Meinongian distinction between existence and subsistence is quite similar to the traditional ontological distinction between concrete and abstract objects. But Meinong recognized that an object may possess a particular property set independently from its existential status. This is what the *Independence Principle* states: the *so-being* of an object is not affected by its *non-being*.[5] If objects can be composed from any arbitrary collection of properties, then one may arrive at the paradoxically sounding conclusion that "there are objects of which it is true that there are no such objects".[6]

As an illustration, consider again the case of the square circle. According to Meinong, the square circle belongs to the Objectives of so-being. This means, for him, at least two things. First and trivially, there are no linguistic obstacles to form an understandable conception of such a thing as the square circle. The def-

4 Meinong used also the derived complex terms 'Seinsobjectiv' and 'Soseinsobjectiv' in his technical jargon. The first term means that one can judge that something *is*, so that the "is" of the judgment differs from the "is" of the existence predicate. The second term means that one can judge that something is *so-and-so*, where the "so-and-so" does not designate an existing property set.

5 The principle has been first formulated by one of Meinong's students, Ernst Mally. For this, see Meinong (1904: 8).

6 Meinong (1904: 9).

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inite description 'the square circle' has exactly the same syntactic structure and compositional semantics as its innocent cognate 'the paper circle' and so, embedded in sentences, both can function as denoting expressions. Second, from a purely psychological point of view, the square circle is as real as any other circle, because it can be the target of our intentional activity. We are capable of having beliefs or other mental states whose contents contain it as a constituent. The Objectives of so-being are nevertheless not linguistic or psychological in nature. Although they cannot be regarded to be *beings*, they enjoy a heavyweight ontological status. To deny that the square circle is an Objective in its own right on the ground that it cannot be instantiated in our world, would be "a prejudice in favour of the actual".[7] Meinong was of the opinion that a systematic theory of objects has to ensure a place for the Objectives of so-being regardless of their actual instantiability. So Meinong's view is not that there *is* actually an ontologically serious object which corresponds somehow to the sentence 'I am a big fan of the square circle'. The view is rather that the definite description 'the square circle' as it occurs in that sentence denotes a *nonexistent* object. The statement 'there are objects of which it is true that there are no such objects' looks now much less paradoxical than before. Meinong's square circle is a case in point: it is an object, albeit a nonexistent one.

In the second half of the twentieth century, Meinongian object theories have been highly influential in the areas of ontology and metaphysics. The insight that objects can be characterized by arbitrary property sets proved to be especially useful in the analysis of logical and mathematical languages. The set-based approach was seen by many as providing an *a priori* route to knowledge of intensional entities. Sets are formally defined in naïve set theory in terms of comprehension: $\forall x_1 ... \forall x_n \exists y \forall z ((z \in y) \Leftrightarrow F)$, where F represents an arbitrary condition. In order to provide a solution to the ontological difficulties posed by non-real entities, neo-Meinongians like Parsons (1980) and Zalta (1988) offered an object theoretical analogue of the definition of sets:

> *Unrestricted Comprehension Principle* (UCP): For any condition $F(x)$ with free variable x, some object, o, satisfies $F(x)$.[8]

The (UCP) states in a general form what the Meinongian Independence Principle already anticipated, namely, that the nonexistence of o does not exclude that o

7 Meinong (1904: 3).

8 The Unrestricted Comprehension Principle may also be stated in a more formal manner: $A(\iota x A(x))$, where 'ι' stands for a description operator. Cf. Berto (2011, 2012) and Berto & Priest (2014).

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has a particular set of properties. Hence, the actually uninstantiated and thus nonexistent square circle can be thought of as having the mutually exclusive properties of being square and of being a circle. According to the (UCP), the square circle has these properties literally. And, again according to the (UCP), we know that this is so in an *a priori* way.

It is well-known that the Comprehension Axiom of the naïve set theory permits constructing sets of sets which might lead to a paradoxical result. The Comprehension Axiom permits to construe a set that does not belong to itself. There are infinitively many such sets. The set of the letters of the word 'scarlet' is one of them; it does not belong to itself because it is not a letter. But it also permits to construe a set that does belong to itself. The set of all sets is such a set. But where the set S is defined by the condition $F \coloneqq (\mathrm{x}|\mathrm{x} \notin \mathrm{x})$ we get a result that is intolerable: if $S \notin S$ then $S \in S$; and if $S \in S$ then $S \notin S$.

Unfortunately, the (UCP) seems to suffer from a similar kind of deficiency.[9] Consider the condition $F \coloneqq (x|x \notin O)$, where O is the union set of existent and nonexistent objects. Now, if some o satisfies $F(x)$, then that o is neither an existent nor a nonexistent object. On the other hand, if there is no such o that could satisfy $F(x)$, then $F(x)$ is neither a condition for existent objects nor a condition for nonexistent objects. This might be called the antinomy of object comprehension.

Another problem inherent in the (UCP) is that it has instances which cannot be satisfied by unique objects. According to the (UCP), the condition of having one and only one property is satisfiable by objects which are characterized by a singleton property set. Let us assume, then, that there is a unique object, o, which is characterized by a single property, say, the property of being scarlet. But is it really appropriate to say that o satisfies the condition of having one and only one property? No, because in addition to being scarlet, which is a first-order property, o has also the second-order property of having only one property.[10] These are distinct properties, and, as a consequence, o has at least two properties. Let us call this the property proliferation problem.

9 See also Russell's objections to the Meinongian view in his (1905). Russell claimed that nonexistent objects like the square circle might violate the law of non-contradiction. Meinong agreed with this claim, but added that the laws of logic are valid only in the realm of existent objects.

10 Cf. Berto (2012: 108) and Salis (2013: 5). Berto mentions a further difficulty for the (UCP). Let us say that $F(x)$ and $G(x)$ states identical conditions. Then o_1 satisfies $F(x)$ and o_2 satisfies $G(x)$. But it is not clear, says Berto, whether o_1 and o_2 are identical objects or not. This sounds a bit confusing. If we are talking about a single condition, then I do not see what is the point in using for it a pair of notations like $F(x)$ and $G(x)$.

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The antinomy of object comprehension and the property proliferation problem strongly suggest that the (UCP) is untenable in the form it is stated. This is a significant observation. Neo-Meinongians are compelled to say that the (UCP) is the most plausible explanation at hand concerning the ontological status of fictional entities. They should argue in something like the following way. First, literary works are collections of (interrelated) property sets. For example, the novel *A Study in Scarlet* collects a large set of properties including the property of being a detective and the property of living at 221B Baker Street. Second, it is *a priori* knowable, via the (UCP), that there is an object that has these properties literally. Third, the text of the novel contains several sentences which convey explicitly that the object in question is Sherlock Holmes. And, fourth, since it is an established empirical fact that the relevant property set is uninstantiated in our world, we should think of Sherlock Holmes as belonging to the ontological category of nonexistent objects.

But, if the (UCP) is untenable because of the above-mentioned reasons, then the second step of the argument is based on an unsupported claim. The emerging dialectical situation may be familiar to us from the history of set theory. The Comprehension Axiom played an important structural role in the initial framework of the naïve set theory. It has been proved, however, that the conception of mathematical objects on which the axiom rests is liable to generate paradoxes. In an effort to get rid of this potential difficulty, the reaction of mathematicians and logicians was to propose some suitable restrictions on the applied concepts. The Unrestricted Comprehension Principle poses a similar challenge to neo-Meinongians. As we have seen, it is a structurally important principle, for it gives a plausible solution of the otherwise inexplicable phenomenon of nonexistence. But we have also seen that is suffers from certain inherent weaknesses. Nonetheless, neo-Meinongians might hope that all of these weaknesses can be avoided by posing restrictions on the concepts occurring in the (UCP).

There are at least three different ways in which the (UCP) may be subjected to certain conceptual restrictions. According to Routley (1980) and Jacquette (2015), the weaknesses of the (UCP) might be remedied by making a distinction between *nuclear* and *extranuclear* properties. The basis on which this distinction is made is relatively clear. In the case of fictional entities, nuclear properties are those properties in terms of which characters like Sherlock Holmes and Anna Karenina are portrayed in their relevant novels. The property of being a detective is in this sense a nuclear property of Holmes. Likewise, the property of being married is a nuclear property of Anna Karenina. In general, nuclear properties are expressed and made publicly available by fiction-internal property attributions.

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On the other hand, extranuclear properties are those properties to which we have epistemic access only from a fiction-external point of view. When the text of a novel is interpreted from an external viewpoint like that of the literary theorist, characters begin to live a new life. Stated less metaphorically: in external contexts of reference fictional characters appear to acquire quite new sorts of properties. In the novel *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes is described as being a detective. Seen from a fiction-external point of view, Holmes acquires the extranuclear property of being a fictional character. And analogously, Anna Karenina is described as being a woman in Tolstoy's novel. But in a fiction-external context, Anna acquires the extranuclear property of being a literary symbol of passionate love.

Routley and Jacquette's nuclear/extranuclear distinction saves much of the spirit of the Meinongian doctrine: it allows us to see fictional characters as concrete but nonexistent objects. The essence of their proposal can be summed up by a minor alteration of the original wording of the (UCP):

> *Nuclear Comprehension Principle* (NCP): For any *nuclear* condition $F(x)$ with free variable x, some object, o, satisfies $F(x)$.

The (NCP) tells us that for any arbitrary collection of nuclear properties there is a concrete but nonexistent object which has precisely those very properties. The comprehension principle endowed with such a restriction seems to offer a promising solution to the antinomy of object comprehension and the property proliferation problem. Routley and Jacquette classify existence as an extranuclear property. It follows, then, that the (NCP) is incompatible with such a condition as $F \coloneqq (x|x \notin O)$, where O is understood as the union set of existent and nonexistent objects. Given that existence is treated now as an extranuclear property, the (NCP) blocks the application of O in its instances. The problem posed by singleton property sets can also be resolved. If an object o has the nuclear property of being scarlet and nothing else, then o cannot have also the second-order *nuclear* property of having only one property.

Fictional entities seem to obey the (NCP), too. Authors of prose works may portray their protagonists in whatever way they wish or feel desiderable. In this regard, artistic imagination is not submitted to the physical and logical laws of the actual world. If a literary text describes a nuclear condition of existence, readers may take it granted that there is a corresponding fictional character. And this is independent from the arbitrariness of the condition chosen. Even the oddest and most improbable conditions are in principle satisfiable. Just recall our earlier example of the time traveler Elderly who was introduced into

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our discussion in order to illustrate a fictional individual with contradictory properties.

Two important issues remain to be answered, however. The motive for making a distinction between kinds of properties was to separate the *so-being* of an object from its *being*. Describing a fictional object as if it were so-and-so means, after all, nothing else than attributing nuclear properties to it in a certain story. But there are intricate cases in which it is not easy to tell apart the nuclear properties from the extranuclear ones. As a paradigmatic example for this situation, Voltolini (2006) mentions Pirandello's metatheatrical play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.[11] Pirandello's play features a character, The Father, who has the nuclear property of being fictional. This can cause discomfort for the defenders of the (NCP), since they would have to say that The Father could not qualify as a fictional character in the internal context of the play. Surely, if there are any extranuclear properties, the property of being a fictional character is one of them.

Some think that the idea of watered-down properties can resolve this conflict.[12] Parsons (2011) maintains, for example, that genuine extranuclear properties may have watered-down nuclear counterparts in literary works. Thus, The Father can be said to be a fictional character in a twofold sense: he qualifies as a fictional character both in the external and the internal context of the play. In the first type of context he has the genuine extranuclear property of being a fictional character, in the second type of context he has the watered-down version of that property. A perhaps even more illustrative example is the property of existing. A literary text might describe a golden mountain as an actually existing object. In this case, the (NCP) would require that the property of existing should qualify as a nuclear property of that object. But given that real existence falls out of the scope of the (NCP), the golden mountain can have only watered-down existence. I think this idea is of not much help to settle the debate. If there is not a clear-cut distinction between extranuclear and nuclear properties, why would we expect there to be a sharp distinction between extranuclear and watered-down extranuclear properties?

A second issue concerns the explanatory relation between fiction-internal and fiction-external property attributions. Adherents of the (NCP) would agree, I suppose, that fiction-internal attributions enjoy an explanatory priority in the (neo-)Meinongian theory of objects. Fans of detective stories know that Sher-

11 Cf. Voltolini (2006: 26 – 27, 214 – 215).

12 For more on this issue, see Meinong (1915) and Parsons (1980).

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lock Holmes is a detective on the basis of their reading experiences. This means, in the technical language of the (NCP), that there is a nonexistent object which satisfies a particular set of nuclear conditions, F_{SS}, where F_{SS} comprises all of the properties Conan Doyle attributed to Holmes in the novel *A Study in Scarlet*.[13] The satisfaction of F_{SS} is ontologically and epistemically prior to any other property attributions. And because, according to F_{SS}, Holmes is a detective, the property attribution statement 'Holmes is a fictional character' is to be taken as explanatorily secondary. Now, a question arises. F_{SS} delivers first a nonexistent object which acquires later the property of being a fictional character. Like everyday readers, adherents of the (NCP) may say, without introducing conceptual confusions, that Holmes is an existing fictional character. How can something like this actually happen? How can a *nonexistent* object turn out to be endowed with a property that is *existence-entailing?* Since artefactualist theories are faced with a quite similar explanatory challenge, I postpone the treatment of this issue to the next chapter.

In order to remedy the weaknesses of the (UCP), Rapaport (1978) and Zalta (1983, 2000) elaborated and defended an alternative proposal. According to their view, nonexistent Meinongian objects possess the same kind of properties as actually existing objects. Hence they reject the distinction between nuclear and extranuclear properties. Instead, they suggest that we need to distinguish two modes of predication. The distinction in question is that of between *exemplification* and *encoding*.[14] Objects and events of the spatiotemporal world exemplify properties. For instance, Arnold Schwarzenegger exemplifies the property of being a pipe-smoker and Tilda Swinton exemplifies the property of being a woman. In everyday discourse, exemplification can be expressed most easily by using simple predicative statements like 'Arnold is a pipe-smoker' or 'Tilda is a woman'. But actually existing individuals cannot be said to encode properties. Encoding is a privileged feature of nonexistent objects. On this interpretation, Sherlock Holmes encodes the property of being a pipe-smoker and Anna Karenina encodes the property of being a woman. To repeat, Rapaport and Zalta's contention is that the individual pairs Arnold/Sherlock and Tilda/Anna have the same respective properties but in a different mode. The proposed restriction to the (UCP) alludes, accordingly, to the encoding mode of property possession:

13 I am assuming here that there is a one-to-one correspondence between fictional characters and the prose works in which they are described. This is a controversial assumption, but I shall offer an argument for it later.

14 The terms 'exemplification' and 'encoding' have been introduced into the discussion by Zalta (1983). In talking about the same distinction, Castañeda (1989) uses the terms 'internal mode of predication' and 'external mode of predication'.

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> *Encoding Comprehension Principle* (ECP): For any condition $F(x)$ with free variable x, some object, o, *encodes* $F(x)$.

At first sight, the wording of the (ECP) seems to be slightly misleading. Readers of *A Study in Scarlet* might remark that the story of the novel describes its protagonists in a plain and simple manner. When a sentence of the text expresses the proposition that Holmes *is* a detective, then the copula can hardly be interpreted otherwise as the 'is' of normal predication. It is perhaps correct to say that Holmes is a nonexistent individual, the complaint might continue, but it is difficult to understand what it means that he *encodes* a certain property.

Zalta (2000) gives some hints about how to resolve this difficulty. One thing to notice is that the (ECP) is invalid for the ordinary objects of the spatiotemporal world. An object o is ordinary ($O!o$), in his terminology, just in case it might have been concrete ($\Diamond E!o$). An object o is abstract ($A!o$), by contrast, when it could not exist spatiotemporally ($\neg\Diamond E!o$). Ordinary individuals such as Arnold and Tilda exemplify sets of properties. Abstract objects like the fictional character Holmes both exemplify and encode sets of properties. Thus, Zalta can happily accommodate the common sense intuition that Conan Doyle has ascribed properties to his character in the standard predicative manner. The trick is that Holmes encodes exactly those properties in the story which are ascribed to him by the author of the novel. If the text tells of Holmes explicitly that he is a detective, then he – the abstract Meinongian object – encodes the property of being a detective. One might argue that this holds for fictionalia in general:[15]

> *Zalta's Biconditional:* A fictional entity $A!o_{LW}$ encodes the property F if and only if according to the literary work *LW*, $A!o$ exemplifies F.

Supplemented with Zalta's Biconditional, the (ECP) gives a rather clear picture about the ontological preconditions of fictional entities. A fictional entity *must* exemplify a particular property in order to encode it; or so it can be maintained. Holmes exemplifies a great number of properties in the internal context of the novel *A Study in Scarlet*. And he encodes these properties in that very same context. So far, so good.

But the next question pertains to the contexts which are external to the novel. What happens with fictional entities when they are seen from a fiction-external viewpoint? On Zalta's account, in such contexts a fictional entity may be said to exemplify properties that it otherwise does not encode. To quote his own words: "[H]olmes exemplifies being more famous than any real detective, being

15 Cf. Zalta (2000: 128 – 129).

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thought about by Conan Doyle, being admired by, and an inspiration to, modern criminologists, etc."[16] Clearly, it would be incorrect to claim that according to the story of the novel, Holmes is more famous than any real detective. This type of claim can be correct only in fiction-external contexts, and the same holds for all property attributions mentioned in the quote above.

The other aspect of this phenomenon is, at least according to Zalta, that natural language statements about fictional entities are ambiguous between two readings. Let us consider an everyday situation where someone utters the sentence 'Holmes *is* a detective'. The theory based on the (ECP) and Zalta's Biconditional allows for two interpretations of this sentence. When it is interpreted as 'Holmes *encodes* detectivehood', it comes out as true. When it is interpreted as 'Holmes *exemplifies* detectivehood', it comes out as false.[17] The ambiguity is thought of as resulting from the dual lexical status of the copula of predication.

Now, the difficulty is that all parts of Zalta's explanation are convincing when they are taken independently, but unconvincing if they are taken together. Recall that on Zalta's account, fictional entities encode those and only those properties which they are described to exemplify. Consider then the above-mentioned paradigm sentence of this Meinongian theory: 'Holmes exemplifies detectivehood'. Is this a true theoretical statement or not? It depends, for there are two possible interpretations available. One possibility is to treat the sentence 'Holmes exemplifies detectivehood' as a metatextual statement. In this case, it expresses a true proposition, because it is true that in the novel *A Study in Scarlet* Holmes is described as having the property of being a detective. But it can also be treated as a fiction-external statement which attempts to characterize the ontological status of Holmes. In this second case, it expresses a false proposition: Holmes is a nonexistent abstract object which does not exemplify detectivehood. I think this example points to a serious shortcoming in Zalta's view insofar as it reveals that such terms as 'exemplification' are used ambiguously even in the technical language of the theory.

Such concern has been occasionally recognized in recent discussions of the neo-Meinongian theory of objects. It is sometimes pointed out that the contrast between nuclear and extranuclear properties is drawn in an analogous way to the contrast between property encoding and property exemplification.[18] These contrasts are obtained on the basis of certain cases which are clear enough for the layman to understand, but which lack a rigorous theoretical underpin-

16 Zalta (2000: 145).

17 Zalta (2000: 146).

18 See, for example, Voltolini (2006: 27–29) and Berto (2012: 133–134).

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ning. Though this is a real concern, I would like to stress again that the source of the problem lies in the dubious assumption that fictional entities are somehow capable of acquiring new characteristics – and perhaps also a new ontological status – in fiction-external contexts. As already mentioned, I will discuss this issue in some detail in the next chapter.

The third and last proposal for avoiding the bad consequences of the (UCP) has been worked out by Priest (2005, 2011) and Berto (2011, 2012). The leading idea of this proposal consists in distinguishing between different kinds of worlds. First, some worlds are possible. The actual world we are living in is of this kind. Possible worlds are more or less similar to the actual one, as standard possible worlds theories assume. Second, there are worlds which are *impossible*. The world of square circles is one of them. Impossible worlds have features that infringe the laws of physics and logic which are in force in all possible worlds. These two kinds of world have the same domain of objects.[19] Nevertheless, they are distinguishable on the basis of the inventories of objects they contain. Some objects like the square circle or the time traveler Elderly exist only in incomplete or inconsistent worlds. Priest (2005) thinks that the Meinongian analysis of so-being can be accepted in full generality, when we read it as a modal principle:

> *Modal Comprehension Principle* (MCP): For any condition $F(x)$ with free variable x, some object, o, satisfies $F(x)$ *at some world*.

The (MCP) entails that Meinongian objects literally have the properties with the help of which they are characterized. So adherents of the (MCP) need not get entangled in the controversy about nuclear and encoded properties. They may consequently argue that there is only one single domain of properties and every object possesses its attributes in the same familiar manner.

But the (MCP) entails also that Meinongian objects have their characterizing properties only in those worlds in which they exist. The fact that geometrical figures have logically and predicationally consistent attributes is known to us by means of *a priori* reflection. In Euclidean geometry, a circle is determined by a set of points in a plane that are at equal distance from a given point. This is a maximally consistent combination of elementary properties. Likewise, squares are consistently determined by the Euclidean properties of having four equal sides and having four right angles. It is a necessary and *a priori* knowable geometrical truth that these mutually exclusive property sets cannot be possessed

19 Priest (2005) originally applied a constant-domain semantics in his modal theory, but in a more recent paper he has compared the relative merits of a variable-domain semantics. This is not of importance for our present purpose. For details, see Priest (2011).

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by a single figure. For this reason, in possible worlds like our actual world the square circle does not exist and could not exist. So the square circle is neither round nor square is such worlds, but in other worlds where it does exist it possesses these properties. Of course, worlds which are populated by such strange things as square circles must invalidate the logical law of non-contradiction. This is exactly why they are called *im*possible worlds: all of these are ways things could *not* be or could *not* have been.

One might reasonably ask whether this is more than a merely *ad hoc* maneuver to avoid the problems posed by the (UCP). To introduce metaphysically impossible worlds into the discussion may seem, for many, to be adebatable move. Neo-Meinongians are interested primarily in questions of object constitution. And these are questions which concern the space of metaphysical possibilities. The fundamental theorems of classical logic – for instance, the law of non-contradiction, the law of the excluded middle and the law of identity – play a crucial role in this respect. If we are entitled to take them to be uniformly valid in the entire modal space, then the supporters of the (MCP) cannot achieve essentially more than we have got already: we can determinately say that there are certain constitutive conditions, or ways if you like, that *cannot* be realized by any possible state of the world. Why then postulate impossible worlds?

Note, however, that our talk about possibilities and possible worlds must not always be couched in metaphysically loaded terms. Possible worlds can also be treated in terms of the intentionality of thought. Priest (2011) is quite explicit in this regard. With respect to his noneist semantics for intentional verbs he claims that "[i]mpossible worlds are required since we can have intentional states directed towards impossibilities".[20] Berto (2011) appears to agree when he says that we should admit impossible worlds in our modal semantics and ontology "because we are capable of considering logically impossible situations, and of making discriminations about what goes on at them".[21]

Priest's and Berto's approach to impossible worlds corresponds in a certain sense to the explanatory strategy that has been employed so far in this book. I have referred to objects and fictional entities up to now mostly as being things which are described or characterized in some manner. And it is clear, I think, that object descriptions and object characterizations are more intimately related to intentional activities than to metaphysical arguments.

One further point should be mentioned before dealing with the question of the applicability of the (MCP) to fictional discourse. Priest and Berto argue that

20 Priest (2011: 109).

21 Berto (2011: 322).

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objects, real and non-real alike, have their properties in worlds in which they exist. The emphasis lies here on the predicate 'exist'. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Tilda Swinton exist in the actual world we (me and you, dear reader) live in. At this moment they have a vast range of properties, again, in this actual world. In other worlds they do not possess any properties because they do not (actually) exist there. The time traveler Elderly and the geometrical figure that is both square and round have several properties too, but only in their own (non-actual and impossible) worlds where they are existent objects. This suggests that existence is, as Nathan Salmon would have it, an ordinary extensional property.[22] This account may be reminiscent of the Lewisian conception of existence. Lewis was trying to demystify the existence conditions of possible objects. If a world allows for talking donkeys, he argued, then talking donkeys exist, and they are as real as any animal in our immediate environment. Animals and representatives of other natural kinds are, however, world-bound individuals. Talking donkeys exists in concrete spatiotemporal worlds which are epistemically isolated from the actual world and that is why we cannot provide direct empirical evidence for them. The Lewisian analysis of modal existence conditions is confined to concreteness and thus it seems to be opposed to the idea of impossible worlds. On Priest's and Berto's metaphysically more liberal conception, existence is an extensional property even in impossible worlds. So, in contrast to Lewis, they can claim that objects of incomplete or inconsistent worlds satisfy normal existence conditions without thereby implying that such objects are necessarily concrete. A qualification is needed here. When a condition $F(x)$ contains existence-entailing predicates and the object o determined by the (MCP) is incomplete or inconsistent, then o will exist only in those worlds that satisfy F entirely. For example, in the case of $F \coloneqq (x|x \textit{ is square } \wedge \textit{ is a circle } \wedge \textit{ exists})$, o is a nonexistent object in the actual world, but in those impossible worlds that realize completely what F requires o is an existent object.[23] In light of this, the Meinongian Independence Principle needs to be slightly revised. In a modalized Meinongian framework it is no longer correct to say that the *so-being* of an object is independent from its *being*, because many properties do entail *being*.[24]

22 See Salmon (2014).

23 Note that the claim 'square circles *exist*' is not equivalent with the claim that there are *true* contradictions. Although some adherents of dialetheism accept the real existence of contradictions, neo-Meinongians need not be committed to a controversial position like that. On their view, square circles are inhabitants of impossible worlds but impossible worlds do not have the same metaphysical status as possible worlds. Impossible worlds are thought of rather as projections of intentional acts.

24 Cf. Berto (2011: 324).

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Now, if it is indeed true that many properties entail existence, then the same may well be true of the properties of fictional entities. Let us focus for the sake of simplicity first on purely fictional entities.[25] Sherlock Holmes and Anna Karenina are not real people; they are merely characters of literary prose works. What of their various properties? According to the (MCP), if Holmes and Karenina are described as being real people, they *are* real people, at least in those worlds in which their respective stories are completely realized. In our actual world, however, they are nonexistent individuals. Purely fictional entities cannot actually have description-based properties. Given that being a detective and being a passionate lover are existence-entailing properties, this seems to be an adequate approach for assessing the ontological status of these characters. But wait: Holmes and Karenina are protagonists of prose works in our real world, so they must bear the property of being fictional actually. What of this latter property?

Berto maintains that the property of being fictional is *not* existence-entailing.[26] This is tantamount to saying that in uttering the sentence 'Holmes and Karenina are fictional characters' one can make a statement which can be evaluated with respect to truth and falsity. Such statements do not express something like a pretend-truth. Quite the contrary: they are literally and actually true. The same holds for complex comparative predicates like 'is more intelligent than' or logical predicates like 'self-identical'. One can safely say that Sherlock Holmes is more intelligent than any real detective and that Anna Karenina is self-identical. Predicative statements of this kind are literally and actually true despite the fact that they involve nonexistent objects.

At this juncture one may wonder whether the above-mentioned distinction is tenable or not. An upholder of serious actualism might insist, contra Berto, that all genuine properties are existence-entailing. Alvin Plantinga, for example, would argue that the property of being fictional presupposes that there exists something of which that property can be truthfully predicated. In default (non-modal) cases of language use, predication serves as a means for establishing how things are in our immediate and broader environment. Predicative statements having the surface form of '*o* is *F*' are to be read therefore as implicitly indexed to actuality. We may substitute any genuine first-order property in the

25 Purely fictional entities are often called native objects. Natives are to be seen as mere products of storytelling activities. Non-purely fictional entities, on the other hand, are called immigrant objects. Immigrants exist even before they are described in stories. As far as I know, the terms 'native' and 'immigrant' have been applied to fictional discourse at first by Terence Parsons. Cf. Parsons (1980: 51–52).

26 Cf. Berto (2012: 182).

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condition $F(x)$. When F can be instantiated in the actual world, @, then the object satisfying the condition will be part of @, too. This means, in general, that the principle $\exists F_{@}(x) \rightarrow E_{@}!o$ cannot have false substitution instances.[27] Our everyday reading experiences tell us that the property of being a fictional character is actually instantiated by Holmes, Karenina and other protagonists of literary prose works. Thus, the presuppositional/conditional relation between properties and objects guarantees that fictional characters are actually existing objects.

Unsurprisingly, Berto rejects serious actualism. He cites the example of past existents. Individuals who have passed away long ago still display many properties. Aristotle does not exist now but he has the property of having written a book on poetics. He has also the property of being mentioned by contemporary metaphysicians and so forth. According to Berto, the nonexistence of Aristotle does not exclude that he possesses all of these properties actually. This is a mystery only for those who work with an unjustifiably narrow conception of properties.

It is not easy to judge whether this is really a convincing argument against serious actualism. A serious actualist like Plantinga might deny that we can attribute properties to past existents talking meanwhile in the present tense. Aristotle does not exist now, hence we cannot make true predicative judgments about *him* at the present time. Perhaps we can recourse to a metaphorical parlance and claim that Aristotle exists actually as a once-lived individual. And when it is stated that Aristotle has written a book on poetics, etc., we interpret these predications as if we were talking about the actual properties of a once-lived individual. But this is nothing more than a metaphorical talk about property instantiation. The condition $\exists F_{@}(x)$ remains unsatisfiable in these cases. Who is right? Fortunately, we do not have to decide the issue here. The fact remains, nevertheless, that the accuracy of Berto's view about purely fictional entities depends essentially on whether serious actualism is true or not.

We can now turn to the non-purely fictional entities of prose works. Texts of novels and short stories often describe or refer to objects which really exist. Historical figures, events and places are among the most frequent kinds of non-purely fictional entities. Napoleon is a non-purely fictional entity in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. The World War I has a similar status in *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and the city of London is a non-purely fictional entity as it appears in the story ofthe novel *A Study in Scarlet*. Non-purely fictional entities seem to have a

27 One can argue for a much stronger principle: for any x, if $F(x)$ had been true, then some object, o, would have existed. For this modalized version of serious actualism, see Plantinga (1985: 323).

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curious ontological standing. On the one hand, they are denizens of the spatio-temporal world to which we have or could have a direct epistemic access. As a historical individual, Napoleon is known to us from various empirical sources. These sources lead us back, more or less reliably, to the period of time from 1769 to 1821 when he was a living being. Non-purely fictional entities are to be seen, on the other hand, as mere products of storytelling activities. In *War and Peace*, Napoleon stands in relation to purely fictional characters like that of Andrei Bolkonsky. We do not have and cannot have direct epistemic access to such imaginary relations, however. One question immediately arises: can such Janus-faced entities like the Napoleon of *War and Peace* possess existence-entailing properties or not?

Berto analyzes the situation in the following way. In using the proper name 'Napoleon', we refer to the same individual both in fiction-external and fiction-internal contexts. The name is neither context-sensitive nor ambiguous. Nor has it a Janus-faced semantics: 'Napoleon' refers always to the well-known individual of European history. When a scientific book contains a sentence which expresses the proposition that Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo, then that proposition is literally true in our world – despite the fact that Napoleon is at present nonexistent. Tolstoy's novel may contain a sentence which expresses the same proposition. But it is obvious that the text of *War and Peace* contains several sentences that describe the historical Napoleon incorrectly. The (MCP) comes to the rescue here. On the basis of the (MCP) we can contend that Napoleon possesses unreal properties only in those worlds that realize the story of the novel completely. Berto writes:

> When 'Napoleon' occurs in internal discourse, such as the one constituted by the sentences composing War and Peace, the properties ascribed to Napoleon are instantiated by him at the worlds that realize Tolstoy's description. Some of those properties, e. g., that of being the self-proclaimed emperor of France, he may also have, or have had, at the actual world. Some others, such as (let us assume) being pompous, he may have only at those worlds, not at the actual one. (Berto 2011: 331–332)

Recall that we have assumed, with Berto, that the proper name 'Napoleon' has a non-ambiguous semantics. It follows from this that 'Napoleon' has a unique referent in all possible and impossible worlds. Now, compare with this the passage cited above. Berto allows for the possibility that the Napoleon of *War and Peace* may turn out to have some properties that the historical Napoleon lacks. For example, Tolstoy's Napoleon may be described as being pompous, even though the historical Napoleon lacks or lacked this property. Here is a more illustrative example. Suppose that the Napoleon of *War and Peace* has the property of being kicked by a horse. Evidently, the property of being kicked by a horse is exis-

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tence-entailing. And suppose that the historical Napoleon lacks or lacked this property. We may then conclude that the historical Napoleon – the flesh-and-blood individual of the actual world – lacks or lacked an existence-entailing property. Even though being kicked by a horse is a contingent property, it seems that we have here not one unique Napoleon, but two different Napoleons who instantiate two different property sets. That is enough to refute Berto's thesis. But we may go even further. Suppose that there is an alternative version of Tolstoy's novel, say, *War and Peace* II, which describes the historical Napoleon as it is or was in every phenomenal respect. And imagine, in addition, that in *War and Peace* II Napoleon turns out to be an extraterrestrial robot. Being an extraterrestrial robot counts as an essential property. Thus, in *War and Peace* II the proper name 'Napoleon' refers to an object which belongs to an artefactual kind. In the actual world, however, 'Napoleon' refers to a flesh-and-blood individual which is a natural kind object. This potential semantic variability reveals that 'Napoleon' cannot have a fixed referent across all worlds. The name 'Napoleon' may change its semantic profile radically when it is used in worlds which realize bizarre stories like the one above.

All of this shows, I think, that the (MCP) cannot provide an adequate account about non-purely fictional entities. There are two questionable assumptions behind Berto's view. First, *real* objects are supposed to be capable of acquiring new properties, even essential ones, in (im)possible worlds. And second, the semantics of proper names is supposed to be insensitive to the radical changes in the properties of these objects.[28] The main lesson of the Napoleon case is that both of these assumptions are untenable.

2.2 Against neo-Meinongian realism

The way neo-Meinongians think and talk about nonexistent objects is in one respect quite close to the way ordinary readers and appreciators of literature think and talk about fictional entities. If a character is *described* to have a certain set of properties, then neo-Meinongians and ordinary readers are equally persuaded that that character *has* – in the literal sense of the word – those properties. It would be hard to dispute the naturalness of this opinion. Think of someone who claims that Sherlock Holmes and Anna Karenina and their likes have

28 We will see in the next chapters that artefactualists tend to make similar mistakes by claiming that prose works may make literally true statements about real individuals. The work of Thomasson is typical in this respect. See, for example, Thomasson (2010).

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their properties only in a figurative or metaphorical way. After all, it could be argued, Sherlock Holmes is merely a *so-called* pipe-smoker, in contrast to Arnold Schwarzenegger and Christoph Waltz, who are really and literally pipe-smokers. And though Anna Karenina has been presented to us by Tolstoy as if she were a woman, actually only such individuals are women as Tilda Swinton and Emma Watson.

Before the argument is further developed, we could protest by pointing out the unintelligibility of this alleged distinction. When we read a novel carefully and are able to grasp the meaning of a particular predicative sentence, *S*, which explicitly attributes the property *F* to a fictional character *c*, then there remains simply no room for doubting that *c* is *F*. The sentence '*c* is *F*' can be regarded as expressing an epistemically analytic statement, that is, given what *S* means, it could not turn out that it is *not literally* the case that *c* is *F*. To say that it might turn out that Sherlock Holmes is merely a *so-called* pipe-smoker or that Anna Karenina is only metaphorically a woman is to misunderstand the epistemic status of property attributions in literary discourse.

Moreover, neo-Meinongian theories are in agreement with the common sense view in regarding any explicit property attribution as a sufficient condition for there being a fictional character. Details aside, neo-Meinongian comprehension principles state that when a literary work contains the predicative sentence '*o* is *F*', then there is a fictional character *c* who possesses the property of *F*-ness. From the sentence 'A child cries' it follows that there is fictional character, a child, who possesses the property of crying. This is a statement with which everyday readers would presumably concur. Maybe the text does not supply any further information about this character. If then asked whether the child is a girl or a boy, most readers would simply *shrug their shoulders* and say 'Well, who knows?'. This is a kind of ignorance no one would bother with. It merely shows that characters are sometimes introduced into a literary text by descriptive predications which contain only minimal amounts of information.

As we have seen above, neo-Meinongian theories provide an interesting and, to some extent, attractive picture about the ontological status of fictional entities. Despite their attractiveness, however, these theories suffer from three systematic objections. Perhaps one of them may be reassuringly answered, but the other two seem to be troubling. Let us begin our review of critiques with the weakest objection.

Objection One: fictional characters are created entities. Adherents of neo-Meinongianism think of objects in terms of satisfaction of arbitrary conditions. Objects within the domain of literary discourse are conceived by them as being correlated with particular property sets. In so thinking they are committed to an approach which denies the contingency of fictional characters and events. Prop-

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erty sets are Platonic entities which are not to be found in space and time, and which subsist independently of any human activity. The same must be true of the correlates of property sets. But we do not normally think of fictional entities as subsisting independently of any human activity. We do not conceive them on the model of mathematical abstracta, that is, we do not think that they are eternal entities. Rather, we tend to assume that authors of prose works are responsible for there being such purely fictional characters as Holmes and Karenina. Writing stories is a creative activity. For this reason it is tempting to say that these protagonists have been invented or created by their respective authors at a certain time. Indeed, it would be surprising to hear that someone was in a position to form a judgment about the deeds of Holmes and Karenina before the novels *A Study in Scarlet* and *War and Peace* were published. According to critics, neo-Meinongian theories cannot accommodate such intuitive data.[29]

I am not sure. The objection has some bite, but neo-Meinongians may follow Zalta's lead and argue that comprehension principles have to be relativized to particular literary works. Accordingly, a neo-Meinongian can define the term 'fictional character' in the following way: *c* is a fictional character just in case *c* satisfies some condition $F(x)$ and *c* originates in a literary work *W*.[30] On this definition, characters are no longer eternal entities because they have atemporal origin through which they come into being. Realists may take this as a promising answer to the first objection, regardless of whether they sympathize with the extraordinary ontology of the neo-Meinongian object theory or not.

Objection Two: fictional entities are not a priori accessible. This second objection is more serious. The set-based definition of objects is commonly thought to provide an *a priori* route to knowledge of what there is. And, according to neo-Meinongians, nonexistent objects must also be added to the inventory of what there is. To think otherwise would be for them "a prejudice in favour of the actual".[31] We know without performing any empirical investigation that nonexistent objects are so-and-so. We know, for example, that Nikolayevich Bolkonsky – a purely fictional character of *War and Peace* – is wounded at the Battle of Austerlitz. And we know, again, without performing any empirical investigation, that Sherlock Holmes has the property of living at 221B Baker Street.

29 This type of criticism is often used by artefactualists to question the adequacy of the neo-Meinongian approach to fictionalia. See, among others, Voltolini (2006) and Thomasson (2009). General overviews of this research area highlight the importance of this problem as well. See Kroon &Voltolini (2011) and Salis (2013).

30 Cf. Zalta (2000: 127).

31 See footnote 7 above.

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To my mind, this is a misguided stance. Consider the following condition: $F \coloneqq (x \mid x$ *is 35 years old ^ writes mystery novels ^ lives in a small New York apartment ^ likes walking*). Neo-Meinongians would argue that one can derive two categorical claims from *F:* (i) there is, or subsists, a 35-year-old character who writes mystery novels, lives in a small New York apartment and likes walking, and (ii) we have *a priori* access to that character. Even if we grant (i), (ii) leaves us in a quandary. The text of the novel *City of Glass* describes its main protagonist, Daniel Quinn, just as *F* does.[32] Daniel Quinn is portrayed as being 35 years old, writing mystery novels, etc. Thus, if it were *a priori* knowable that there is a character, c_N, which satisfies *F*, then it would also be knowable *a priori* that c_N is identical with Daniel Quinn. It would be unreasonable to assume that *F* is capable to determine the so-being of a character, but it leaves theidentity of that character unexplained. Yet we cannot know *a priori* that Daniel Quinn satisfies *F*. How could we? In order to find out anything about that character, we first need to become empirically acquainted with the text of the novel. This may strongly motivate us to reject the neo-Meinongian thesis concerning the *a priori* accessibility of fictional entities.

Objection Three: property representations are linguistically anchored. From a general theoretical point of view, there is no obstacle to conceive novels and short stories as linguistic constructs. The third systematic objection to neo-Meinongian theories is that they fail to pay sufficient attention to this aspect of the issue. Zalta, Jacquette, Berto and others claim that a particular set of conditions must be necessarily satisfied for there being a fictional entity. The debate they initiated focused more or less unanimously on the ontological side of the problem and it is rarely made explicit how these object-constitutive conditions are given to us. One of Berto's (2011: 121) remarks can be seen as typical of neo-Meinongian attitudes to this matter. He says: "I am confident that ontological issues concerning a general theory of nonexistent objects are to some extent orthogonal to the linguistic issues [...]". Yet this cannot be quite right. Of course, ordinary objects come into being independently of the way we choose to describe them. In talking about the properties of concrete individuals, neither do we intend, nor would it be possible for us to talk about meanings or senses of lexical items. When it is said that Emma Watson is the winner of the Actress of the Year Award, no one thinks for even the slightest moment that Emma's being is to be derived from the linguistic features of the definite description 'the winner of the Actress of the Year Award'. Although Emma was actually the winner of the Actress of the Year Award in 2014, she didn't come into being through the satisfac-

32 The novel *City of Glass* is authored by Paul Auster (1985).

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tion of this descriptive condition. Whatever descriptive phrases we may choose, the result will be the same: linguistic facts are insignificant when it comes to explaining the coming into being of a natural kind object.

But the case of literary fiction appears to be markedly different. It may well be expected that ontological and linguistic issues are more closely and more intimately related in a domain where entities are constructed exclusively from linguistic materials. Or, a bit more cautiously, we may expect that issues concerning the so-being of nonexistent fictional entities cannot be sharply separated from issues concerning the linguistic material with the help of which these entities are characterized.

Quine once famously argued that an interpreted first-order theory is merely a collection of sentences. The objects to which such theories are ontologically committed are determined by existentially and universally quantified sentences. Thus, with respect to the ontology of a first-order theory, the word-word relationship is more fundamental than the word-object relationship – a not too distant parallel with the theory of literary works. For we may also say, in a Quinean spirit, that a literary work is nothing else than a particular collection of sentences.[33] If the sentences of a work, *W*, convey us that an object, *o*, is so-and-so, then this indicates that we should be committed to *o*, at least with respect to *W*. Here I only want to draw attention to an important point. Neo-Meinongians are likely right in claiming that 'commitment to *o*' does not mean the same as 'commitment to the existence of *o*'. But if our commitment to *o* is determined exclusively by a collection of sentences, then we cannot separates harply the ontological issues form the linguistic issues concerning *o*. We can assent to the statement '*o* is *F*' just in case *o* is described by the sentences of *W* as having the property of *F*-ness and we stand in an acquaintance relation to *W*.

The fact that *o* is described in a particular way has therefore significant ontological consequences. First, it shows how *o* is to be singled out from the overall inventory of what there is. If we had a language-independent means for performing this task, this would be a subsidiary issue. But we do not have such a means at our disposal. Second, and more importantly, it tells us what *kind* of object *o* really is. When neo-Meinongians claim that *o* is a nonexistent object, they

33 Perhaps it is time to stress that written works of literature are strictly speaking not mere collections of linguistic expression tokens/types. A novel or a short story is a linguistic construct only in a broad (syntactic or ontological) sense of the word. Literary works are in fact syntactically and semantically individuated entities that belong to a complex network of historically determined cultural relationships. It is a further question whether such multiply instantiable entities as novels and short stories are ought to be seen as standard types or rather as non-standard types like norm kinds or generic objects.

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seem to be aware only of the first consequence. They typically talk as if it were useless to examine the theoretical implications of the circumstance that *o* is given to us by way of descriptive sentences. One might demur and say, paraphrasing Meinong's own words, that this is simply a *prejudice in favor of language-independent Objectives*. I think it is worthwhile to question the rightness of this prejudice. But before doing this, we first need to consider an alternative version of fictional realism.

2.3 Artefactualism

Defenders of the artefactualist account of fictionalia reject the (neo-)Meinongian distinction between the ontological categories of so-being and being. Accordingly, they doubt that one can establish a sensible contrast between the meaning of 'there is' and 'exists'.

An early articulation of this anti-Meinongian positionis to be found in Kripke (2013).[34] Fictional prose works, says Kripke, are part of reality. Even though novels and short stories are not as concrete as manuscripts or books copies, they are existing things. It is not that such things exist in one sense but not in another. Conan Doyle's work *A Study in Scarlet* definitely exists, not in a distant Meinongian universe of so-beings, but in the actual world. The novel was written by Conan Doyle and this is a sheer empirical fact. The same holds for fictional entities. Fictional characters (and events) definitely exist, just as novels do. This is also an empirical fact. I guess many of us would say, in agreeing with Kripke, that there is a certain point of time when fictional entities are brought into being by the creative acts of their authors and there may come a time when they simply cease to exist, perhaps, when the literary works in which they appear become physically destroyed and no one remembers them anymore. We tend to suppose that Sherlock Holmes exists simply *because* in writing his novel Conan Doyle decided to introduce him into the story, and Anna Karenina exists *because* Tolstoy invented her character when he started to write his famous work. The question then arises of what kind of entities they are. The answer is fairly straightforward: because one cannot perceptually be in contact with them and there is no concrete spatiotemporal region of our actual world where one could find them, characters (and events) of literary works must be abstract entities. Kripke states his ontological position very clearly:

34 The book entitled *Reference and Existence* is a transcription of Kripke's Locke Lectures which were delivered in Oxford in 1973. For his anti-Meinongian argument, see Kripke (2013: 72–74).

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> A fictional character, then, is an abstract entity. It exists in virtue of more concrete activities of telling stories, writing plays, writing novels, and so on, under criteria which I won't try to state precisely, but which should have their own obvious intuitive character. It is an abstract entity which exists in virtue of more concrete activities the same way that a nation is an abstract entity which exists in virtue of concrete relations between people. (Kripke 2013: 73)

The key observation in this passage is that fictional characters exist in virtue of concrete artistic activities. Sherlock Holmes and Anna Karenina and their likes are said to be abstract entities which have a temporal beginning and a possible temporal end. In this regard, they are similar to nations and other abstract artefacts.

Interestingly, Kripke does not realize that his position is based on an unclear understanding of what abstract entities are. In the Western tradition, from Plato onwards, abstracta have been *continuously* thought of as eternal, mind-independent, necessary, non-physical and causally inert entities.[35] The orthodox view is that if a thing exists without having a spatiotemporal origin, it can be properly classified as abstract. Similarly, the causal inertness of a thing is typically thought to be the clearest sign of its abstractness. I do not want to suggest that the orthodox view is invulnerable. There is no widespread consensus on the rightness or correctness of Platonism. Quite the contrary, there is a lively debate as to the most plausible way to draw the abstract-concrete distinction. Yet the Platonic characterization of abstractness is presupposed as a default assumption in the philosophy of language and in many other areas of contemporary linguistic inquiry. Elsewhere, Kripke himself seems to follow this tradition. He writes as if such things as a "unit of length" ora "quality" were abstract objects, which is in accordance with the orthodox view.[36] It is indeed tempting to think that units of length and qualities possess all of the above-mentioned features: they appear to be eternal, mind-independent (etc.) entities.

With such a notion of abstractness at hand, it is surprising to read that fictional characters exist in virtue of "concrete activities of telling stories, writing plays, writing novels, and so on …". Presumably, Kripke would take the 'in virtue of' relation as a kind of ontological dependence relation. On this interpretation, abstract characters are ontologically dependent on concrete activities. But this won't do because concrete activities occur in space, unfold in time and have

35 Meinong's auxiliary objects, like 'something blue', fall also into this Platonic tradition. Auxiliary objects are necessarily incomplete that become fully determined only if they are embedded in complete objects like 'this blue book'. In this regard, they closely resemble Fregean senses or functions which become complete objects through the process of saturation.

36 Cf. Kripke (1980: 52, 55).

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causal powers, and it is conceptually impossible that Platonic abstracta be involved in such causal/temporal relations.

However, the prospects of a non-Meinongian realism are not as bad as it may at first seem. Even before Kripke, participants of the phenomenological movement have assumed that literary entities and other cultural artefacts have the same ontological status.

Ingarden (1931/1973) was the first to argue that fictional characters, flags or nations, are alike in that they are artefactual objects the existence of which is determined by two dependence factors. On the one hand, says Ingarden, the existence of cultural artefacts depends on concrete objects and events. Consider fictional characters and flags. These are rather different sorts of artefactual object, but both depend on some underlying physical material: characters are existentially dependent on expression tokens which are located on sheets of paper and flags are existentially dependent on particular pieces of cloth. On the other hand, artefactual objects would not exist in the proper sense of the word without there being certain mental acts which add intentional features to their physical materials. Expression tokens become descriptions of characters through the intentional activities of authors. For example, without Doyle's storytelling activity we won't have any description of Holmes and so Holmes would not exist.[37] Something similar can be observed in the case of flags. To see a particular piece of cloth as a flag there is a need for collective intentional acts of a given community. The members of the community have to express their agreement that they intend to use a piece of cloth with such-and-such properties as a flag. That is precisely what happened when New Zealanders proposed to change their national flag on 24 March 2016.

This line of thought may help us resolve the above-mentioned tension in Kripke's view. What Ingarden realized was that the orthodox view of abstract objects is inappropriate for the purposes of an ontology of cultural artefacts. The orthodox view presupposes that there are no contingent and mind-dependent elements among the dependence factors of abstract objects. This is not surprising given that mathematical entities are commonly thought to be paradigm cases of abstracta. Platonists maintain that numbers and pure sets inhabit an eternal

37 Someone might object that it could have been possible for Holmes to be invented by Agatha Christie instead of Conan Doyle. Hence Holmes might be an existing character without being dependent on Doyle's storytelling activity. On some conceptions of metaphysical possibility, this may be a legitimate conclusion. But if we conceive the property of being invented by Conan Doyle as an essential property of Holmes in the actual world, then it can be argued that, necessarily, Holmes is invented by Conan Doyle in all possible worlds. Of course, those who deny that Holmes has essential properties will find this reply dissatisfying.

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realm of non-spatiotemporal entities, which exists independently of the intentional activities of the agents of mathematical discourse.

Those who accept the orthodox approach to abstracta might try to argue that cultural artefacts are not abstract, but concrete particulars, for they can be reduced to spatiotemporal objects. Fictional characters are, for example, reducible to expression tokens and flags are identical with pieces of cloth. Or they might argue that cultural artefacts are indeed abstract and have therefore the same ontological status as mathematical entities. That is, they are real existents but stand outside of space and time.[38] Should we be convinced by these arguments? I think Ingarden would dismiss these arguments as implausible. The idea that cultural artefacts are reducible to mere physical particulars has apparently counterintuitive consequences. The weight of my *copy* of *A Study in Scarlet* is 156 grams. It would be astonishing, however, if anyone supposed, for this reason, that Conan Doyle's *novel* weighs 156 grams. And even if my written *copy* would be completely destroyed by a fire, Conan Doyle's *novel* would surely survive.[39] Literary works cannot be individuated on the sole basis of physical attributes. The same seems to hold, *mutatis mutandis*, for flags, nations and other similar things. The idea that cultural artefacts and mathematical entities can be characterized in terms of a common ontology has also counterintuitive consequences. Numbers or pure sets are regarded by Platonists as eternal and mind-independent entities. But, obviously, writing a manuscript or designing a national flag are mental activities. Manuscripts and flags are authored or co-authored by conscious human beings. If so, how could cultural artefacts be independent from the mind of their creators or inventors? Ingarden is insisting, rightly in my view, that cultural artefacts cannot be classified as eternal and mind-independent because they come into being as a result of a series of creative mental acts. And we might add that even if they existed eternally, authors would have to select and bring into being one particular artefactual entity from the multitude of pre-existing possibilities. Selecting something from a multitude of possibilities and give it material reality requires mental effort. This reflects that the existence

38 Although there is room in the logical space for the first option, I am not aware of anyone who actually argued in this way. The second option has been defended by Wolterstorff (1980) and, in part, by Deutsch (1991). Wolterstorff claims that authors of literary works select their protagonists from a preexisting abstract realm. Deutsch disagrees on this point. He claims that authors stipulate their protagonists and argues further that the process of stipulation accords well with Platonism. For more on this, see Chapter 4.1 below.

39 If every copy (and every memory) of a certain book were destroyed, then it would be more appropriate to claim that the work is destroyed. But even this would not prove that literary works can be reduced to physical objects.

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of cultural artefacts relies, either directly or indirectly, on human activities, which distinguishes them from mathematical entities that are essentially mind-independent.

Ingarden can be read as proposing a reformed ontology for the domain of cultural artefacts. According to the dominant tradition of ontological theorizing, every entity is either concrete or abstract. Moreover, it is assumed that there is no third possibility: the categories of concreteness and abstractness are generally thought to be not only mutually exclusive but also exhaustive. What Ingarden wanted to show was that this strict categorial dualism cannot give a tenable account of such amalgamated objects as fictional characters, flags or nations. Note, however, that the locution 'reformed ontology' is intended to mean here a piecemeal revision of the conceptual framework rather than a wholesale rejection of the orthodoxy. A key to progress is the realization that the dualist conceptual framework can be significantly improved with introducing a subcategory of abstracta that includes non-concrete but mind-dependent entities. As we have already seen, the introduction of such a subcategory does not count as an *ad hoc* or unreasonable step in the debate. The general line of argument can be summarized in the following way.

(P1) We are committed to various cultural artefact kinds – fictional characters, flags, nations, etc. – because they are part of reality.
(P2) Instances of such kinds cannot be reduced to their concrete, physical dependence factors.
(P3) On the traditional view of ontology, any non-concrete entity is abstract.
(P4) Instances of cultural artefact kinds cannot be abstract in the traditional sense because they come into being as a result of performing (creative) mental acts.
(C) In order to account for such entities, a subcategory of abstracta should be introduced into our ontological conceptual scheme; that is, we have to allow for entities that are both non-concrete and mind-dependent.

(P1) and (P2) should be at the center of any non-Meinongian realist theory of artefacts. To profess (P1) and (P2) is, after all, to be a non-Meinongian realist. (P3) expresses the traditional account of the concrete-abstract distinctionin a theory-neutral manner. (P4) articulates the central insight of the Ingardenian conception of artefacts. Artefactualists who find in Ingarden a precursor of their work ought to agree with (P4). Of course, the argument from (P1) – (P4) to (C) is not necessitated. The theoretical status of these premises is too diverse and variable. Nonetheless, (C) is strongly supported by (P1) – (P4). The argument sheds light on how non-Meinongian realists, and particularly artefactualists, can give reasons for their mild departure from the ontological orthodoxy.

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(C) articulates the need for a novel approach to the category of abstracta. When we are prepared to accept that beyond the realm of the eternal and mind-independent entities of mathematics there are also abstracta which have contingent existence conditions, Kripke's view will seem more plausible. Thus, in echoing his words, we can maintain that a fictional character is an abstract (i.e. non-spatiotemporal) entity that has *some* common properties with concrete (i.e. spatiotemporal) entities.

One of these common properties is the property of coming into being. Kripke is aware that the apparent conflict between the interpretive perspectives of fiction-internal and fiction-external contexts does not allow us to say, without further qualification, that fictional characters come into being as a result of artistic activities. It is true that fictional characters are in some sense invented or created by the authors of literary works in which they occur. Hence, in uttering the sentence 'Sherlock Holmes has been invented or created by Doyle's imaginative activities', we can make a true statement. The problem is that Holmes is described in the novel *A Study in Scarlet* as being a concrete individual, a flesh-and-blood person, but, according to the artefactual theory at hand, he (or it) is an invented or created abstract entity. So what does it mean that a character comes into being? What has actually happened when Conan Doyle has written his manuscript?

Kripke's answer is that fiction-internal contexts have to be explained in terms of pretense. Nearly all artefactualists have later followed him in this regard.[40] In Kripke's usage, the technical term 'pretense' denotes a certain kind of imaginative mental state. 'Pretending that *p*' is intended to mean something like 'acting as if it were the case that *p*' or 'asserting *p* non-seriously'. He regards the latter as a constitutive feature of literary storytelling. Authors make various statements about their protagonists, but their speech acts lack genuine illocutionary force. They make only pretend statements. The propositions that occur in literary works are therefore only pretend propositions. For example, when Tolstoy writes that "Anna had the faculty of blushing", he makes a non-serious assertion. He merely pretends that there is a person, called Anna, to whom one can attribute the property of having the faculty of blushing. In Tolstoy's own context, 'Anna' does not refer to a concrete individual. It merely seems as if 'Anna' had a bearer, but in fact it is an empty name.

40 Cf. Kripke (2013: 24). An interesting exception is Salmon (1998). Salmon agrees with the thesis according to which fictional characters are created abstract entities, but he denies that fiction-internal contexts are governed by pretense. On his view, referring expressions of literary prose works denote abstract entities and therefore express mainly false propositions. For an incisive critique of this position, see Sawyer (2002).

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The same conditions govern the first occurrences of character names. When Conan Doyle has written down the proper name 'Sherlock Holmes' at the first time in his oeuvre, he has made a pretend statement. There was no concrete individual to which the name could have referred. In 1887, at the very start of its long historical career, 'Sherlock Holmes' was an empty name.

It does not follow from this, however, that Doyle's artistic activity was ontologically inert. According to Kripke, one should differentiate here between two levels of language use. One of these is the level of initial storytelling. The activity of authorial storytelling is necessarily connected to fiction-internal contexts where, as mentioned above, every assertion falls into the scope of pretense. At this level of language use, proper names and other referring singular terms function as empty expressions. Being an empty expression, a newly introduced fictional proper name, *N*, does not stand for anything concrete or abstract, so *a fortiori* it does not name a fictional characterc_N. Nevertheless, it is not incorrect to say that the introduction of *N creates* a character c_N.[41] Sherlock Holmes, the character, came into being at that moment at which Conan Doyle introduced the proper name 'Sherlock Holmes' into the text of his original manuscript. Seen from this internal perspective, storytelling activities appear to be ontologically productive.

On Kripke's view, reference to fictional characters occurs only if we begin to use an extended level of language. Although Kripke did not provide an explicit definition, we might understand his occasional term 'extended level of language use' as comprising fiction-external contexts. In these contexts, we can make such statements as 'there is a fictional character called *N*' or '*N* is the main protagonist of the work *W*' without engaging in pretense. We should not pretend anything about *N*s because our language supplies referents to these originally empty expressions. By now it is clear why this is so. If there is an authorial manuscript which contains an initial token occurrence of the proper name *N*, then there is a corresponding character c_N. Thus, in fiction-external contexts, *N* can be treated semantically as a referring expression: it is like any other ordinary proper name with the only difference that it does not refer to a concrete individual but to an abstract artefact.

As we have seen, in order to give a coherent explanation of how and why fictional characters come into being, Kripke had to separate two different levels of language use in literary discourse. One immediate consequence of this is that

41 Note, again, that when Kripke says that an author creates a fictional character, he makes a dubious statement, for he seems to identify characters with Platonic entities. We will see below, however, that the phenomenon of character creation raises pressing questions in its own right.

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we should regard our talk about fictional entities as being fraught with semantic ambiguity. There is only one single lexical item, 'Holmes', which can be used in two incompatible ways.[42] Being the author of the detective mystery novel *A Study in Scarlet*, Conan Doyle used that lexical item in a non-referring way. In talking about the words and deeds of the protagonist of that novel, readers and literary critics later used the same lexical item in a referring way. So we have two possible instances of the name at our disposal: Holmes_1 and Holmes_2. While the former is a thoroughly empty name which originated in authorial pretense, the latter is a genuine referring name which may contribute a semantic value to the propositions expressed by sentences in which it occurs.

Although Kripke's line of thought in his Locke Lectures represents a rather immature version of the artefactualist view, it incorporates a couple of basic insights. The most important of these are the following: (i) one can develop a suitably general theory of literary discourse without employing the extraordinary ontology of (neo-)Meinongian theories, (ii) fictional characters and fictionalia in general are part of reality, (iii) they are dependent abstract entities, and (iv) the proper names with which such entities are introduced into their respective works are semantically ambiguous.

Drawing on the works of Ingarden and Kripke, Thomasson (1999) worked up a more detailed version of the artefactualist view. From the present perspective, Thomasson's most significant contribution to the debate concerns the issues mentioned under (iii) and (iv), so my comments on her ideas will be confined mainly to these topics.

Thomasson contends – rightly in my view – that unless we know how the relevant ontological dependence relations work, we cannot adequately determine the theoretical status of fictional entities. Once Ingarden had defended a view according to which cultural entities are dependent both on concrete objects and human intentionality. More recently, Kripke has pointed out that fictional entities exist in virtue of certain artistic activities. Despite their ingenious arguments, the fine-grained structure of these dependence factors remained somewhat shadowy. It is not entirely clear, for example, whether there is a type-difference between the ways cultural and fictional entities are related to concrete objects on the one hand and to intentional acts on the other hand. It is also unclear whether dependence relations exhibit a temporal aspect or not.

42 Alternatively, one can also view character names as homonymous or polysemous. At this juncture, this is a secondary issue.

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As a first step to fill this gap, Thomasson distinguishes constant dependence from historical dependence.[43] The most general form of constant dependence is when two distinct objects, o_1 and o_2, are so related that o_1 requires the existence of o_2 at every time it exists. An object may also constantly dependent on one or more of its own parts. The existence of a three altar painting is constantly dependent on the existence of its three canvasses and on their being put together in the right way. When o_1 and o_2 or their parts are concrete particulars, this kind of dependence relation is rigid. There is no room for alternatives. The object o_1 is dependent on that very object o_2, or, to say the same thing, o_1 rigidly necessitates o_2. A three altar painting is thus rigidly constantly dependent on its parts and on their being put together in the right way. When o_1 depends on o_2, but o_2 is merely a placeholder for the existential relation, constant dependence is generic. A national flag does not exist without there being a piece of cloth with such-and-such properties. But the flag does not depend on a particular piece of cloth; its existence requires merely that there be at least one such piece of cloth. It can be said, then, that national flags are generically constantly dependent on pieces of cloth.

Historical dependence involves a slightly weaker type of relation. An object is historically dependent on another when the former requires the presence of the latter for coming into being. But, in contrast to constant dependence, in this case the continuous existence of the depender object does not presuppose the continuous existence of the dependee object. *The Isenheimer Altar* is historically dependent on the existence of its painter, Matthias Grünewald. After having come into being, however, the altar became existentially independent from Grünewald's presence. As above, this kind of dependence is modally rigid: *The Isenheimer Altar* is rigidly historically dependent on Grünewald. By this it is meant – in alluding to the thesis of the necessity of origin – that that altar might not have been painted by another artist as Grünewald. Perhaps, historical dependence may have also a generic variant. Thomasson says in this regard that "this may be understood as the kind of dependence an entity has on some of the necessary conditions forits creation that are not implicated in the identity of the created entity".[44] It may happen that o_1 depends historically on o_2, even though o_2 is not a concrete particular. One possible example is when someone's skin becomes tanned. The suntan requires for its coming into being some ultraviolet

43 For the analysis of the dependence factors of fictional entities, see Thomasson (1999: 24–34). Although it may seem self-evident, it is worth stressing that fictional prose works and fictional characters can be analyzed with respect to their dependence factors only if we limit our attention to works of fixed-text literature. Non-fixed-text forms of literature – for example, works of oral epic – lack constant properties and thus they have a different ontology.
44 Thomasson (1999: 32).

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light, claims Thomasson, but, evidently, no particular light is required and the skin remains tanned even if no amount of ultraviolet light is present. Thus, suntans may be said to be generically historically dependent on ultraviolet light.

Can one find an analogous situation in the case of cultural entities? I am not entirely sure about that, but consider the following case. There is an online community which creates a short story by performing a coordinated artistic activity. Every member of the community selects 50 items from a preestablished set of 200 linearly ordered sentences. The ultimate version of the story will contain those sentences that have been selected most frequently from that set. It seems to me that in this situation the story would depend historically on the existence of that community because the members of the community are jointly responsible for creating it. And the story would also depend generically on that community because no particular community member is responsible for its existence. Notice that coordinated activity allows for alternatives in the dependence factors of the story: every community member may be replaced by someone else having the same storytelling preferences.

Fortunately, it does not matter too much whether generic historical dependence has *bona fide* instances in the domain of cultural entities, for in identifying the dependence factors of fictional characters we do not need to reckon with this kind of ontological relation. On Thomasson's analysis, the immediate dependencies of fictional characters comprise two kinds of relation. First, a character like Holmes is dependent on the creative storytelling activity of its author. This is rigid historical dependence. It is a rigid relation because Holmes can be thought of as being dependent on Doyle's token intentional acts, and on no one else's.[45] And it is a historical relation because the continuous existence of Holmes does not require the continuous existence of Doyle. Second, a character is dependent on the fictional prose work in which it is mentioned or described. This is generic constant dependence. It is a generic relation because the existence of Holmes does not require that a particular copy of the novel *A Study in Scarlet* be kept in existence. If the available copies are strictly text-identical to the original, any copy will do. And it is a constant relation because Holmes remains an existing character as long as there is a physical or mental copy of the work mentioning or describing him (or it).

45 To repeat, if Holmes has been invented by Conan Doyle in the actual world, and it is assumed that the property of being invented by Conan Doyle is an essential property of Holmes, then we may also assume that the dependence relation between Holmes and Conan Doyle is rigid. See footnote 37 above.

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Non-Meinongian realists who are prepared to allow for contingent abstract entities in their world view may summarize the Thomassonian approach to the dependence factors of fictional characters in the following way:

> *The Artefactual Status of Characters* (ASC): Fictional characters are created abstract artefacts which are, on the one hand, rigidly historically dependent on the mental acts of their authors and, on the other hand, generically constantly dependent on the fictional prose works in which they are mentioned or described.

Compared with the early works of Ingarden and Kripke, (ASC) represents clear and recognizable progress. What earlier was only an intuitive idea, namely that characters are dually dependent on the existence of mental acts and concrete objects, have now been made entirely explicit.

(ASC) is to be read as stating both the existence and persistence conditions of fictional characters. The dependence factors listed in it have to be interpreted as being jointly necessary conditions for coming into existence and for continuing in existence of fictional individuals like Sherlock Holmes and fictional places like Middlemarch.[46] It is a further issue whether these dependence factors provide also sufficient conditions for such things. On Thomasson's original view, an author's token creative acts and the existence of a relevant prose work are, together, sufficient for there being a character. In order to decide this issue, we have to see how the phenomenon of authorial pretense can be integrated into the ontological picture outlined by (ASC).

Kripke emphasized repeatedly that in telling stories authors pretend many things. For instance, they pretend that the criteria of naming are satisfied. If *N* is a fictional proper name, it is part of the pretense that it refers to an object, *o*, in the standard sense of singular reference. It is also part of authorial pretense that meaningful sentences occurring in literary texts express propositions. But, in fact, they do not express propositions in these contexts. What authors assert are only pretend propositions. Unsurprisingly, antirealists who deny that authorial assertions carry genuine ontological commitments sympathize with Kripke's

46 Voltolini (2006) contends that the mere existence of a creative mental act of an author does not suffice to ensure that a fictional entity comes into being. The essence of his counterargument is that delusory mental processes, such as hallucinations and delusions, are also creative, at least in the sense that they are able to generate *intentional* objects. But it would be wildly implausible to conclude from this fact that they are also able to generate *hallucinatory or delusory* objects. The argument misses its target, I think, since it would have to be demonstrated first that delusory processes and storytelling processes belong to the same genus of mental acts, but Voltolini remains silent about this point.

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account of fictional reference and propositionality. Prominent supporters of this doctrine such as Walton (1990) and Everett (2013) are of the opinion that authors of prose works speak continuously from within the pretense in which it is only fictionally (not really) true that proper names refer to objects and meaningful sentences express propositions.[47]

What is more interesting for us now is that Thomasson is also among those who favor this line of thought. Thomasson (2003a) is well aware that if fictional characters are indeed abstract entities as (ASC) states, then statements of internal fictional discourse cannot concern these entities. No one can seriously think that in Conan Doyle's original sentence 'Holmes was certainly not a difficult man to live with' the proper name 'Holmes' refers to an abstract artefact.[48] Artefacts are, of course, not in any sense living persons. It is sensible to suppose, then, that Conan Doyle was acting as if it were the case that 'Holmes' refers to a person, yet the name was in fact empty. Thus, authors' pretenseful use of language might explain why empty expressions are not unintelligible in literary discourse, and vice versa. As the name 'Sherlock Holmes' was introduced into the manuscript of the novel *A Study in Scarlet* at the first time, it had no bearer. So Conan Doyle had no choice but to use it in his storytelling statements non-seriously.

If the activity of literary storytelling includes a pretense component, then we have to find out what kind of pretense it is. One option is to say that when authors are telling their stories, they engage in *de dicto* pretense. Kripke's conception about differing levels of language use indicates that he conceived pretense as operating in this form. On Kripke's view, at the level of initial storytelling where a proper name *N* has no referent, the author of a prose work *W* pretends *de dicto* that there is an object, *o*, to which *N* genuinely refers. But at this level of use the name is empty and there is really no such object; there is only a pretend object. (Nonetheless, the character c_N comes into being here as a direct result or consequence of the introduction of *N*.) Later, at an extended level of language use this initially pretend object can be referred back. While in working on the manuscript of the novel *City of Glass*, Paul Auster pretended (*de dicto*) that 'Dan-

47 Of course, antirealists go one step further and contend that authors and consumers of fictional prose works speak from within the same perspective, but consumers take part in an extended kind of pretense.

48 More exactly, no one can seriously think both that 'Holmes' refers to an artefact *and* that the sentence 'Holmes was certainly not a difficult man to live with' is true as it stands in the text. This remark is needed, since Salmon (1998) thinks that 'Holmes' refers to an artefact, though he denies that the sentence is true.

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iel Quinn' refers to a detective-fiction writer, readers or literary critics of Auster's novel can later genuinely refer to Quinn as a fictional character.

Thomasson does not straightforwardly reject this account, but she points out that the term '*de dicto* pretense' is not appropriate for all explanatory tasks. One drawback is that fictional prose works may contain proper names of existing individuals and places. For example, the proper name 'New York' occurs quite frequently in the text of the novel *City of Glass*, and it is reasonable to interpret these token occurrences as referring (or purporting to refer) to the real city. It is part of the pretense that Auster attributes a number of fictional properties to the city – among others, that it has an inhabitant called Daniel Quinn –, but he does this in a *de re* manner. That is, Auster pretends of the city, New York, that *it* has various properties. If so, Auster's attitude cannot be interpreted, in this case, as *de dicto* pretense.

This may prompt one to think that, instead of involving *de dicto* pretense, literary storytelling falls under the scope of *de re* pretense. The defense of this view presupposes an anti-Kripkean turn. We have to give up the idea that being empty expressions proper names never refer to objects in intra-fictional contexts. We should rather say that the very first occurrence of a proper name in an authorial manuscript plays the role of an initial baptism. Inscribing the first token of *N* may be thought of as performing a specific variant of ostensive dubbing.[49] The specificity of this dubbing can be explained by the fact that the object to be baptized cannot be perceptually identified. Authors cannot physically point to their protagonists because these protagonists are abstract entities. But it is not outlandish to say that they can mentally point to them. It is often claimed by non-Meinongian philosophers and cognitive scientists, that one can mentally point to an object, if that object exists and one can focus one's attention to it. This criterion can be satisfied, if the act of inscribing the name *N* is, at the same time, the act of creating the character c_N. Under such circumstances, authors can focus their attention to the abstract entities they are creating. As gestures of ostensive pointing in general, these acts are performed in epistemically safe contexts: seen from their subjective point of view, authors are infallible with respect to their own intentions. It cannot happen that an author introduces the proper name *N* in her manuscript in order to create a fictional character *other*

49 According to Thomasson (1999: 47), literary baptisms are quasi-indexical in nature. This means that a baptismal ceremony is to be paraphrased something like this: the character c_N is founded on *this* token of the name *N*. I have two problems with Thomasson's proposal. First, I do not see what the 'quasi' prefix could denote in this context. Second, and more importantly, if it is true that fictional characters are rigidly historically dependent on the mental acts of their authors, then I see no need to seek for an indexical foundation for their introduction.

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than c_N. Initial baptisms in literary texts are, so to say, automatically successful. Subsequent uses of *N* in the same manuscript may then refer back to the character c_N, so that the author of the manuscript pretends to attribute various properties to *it*. On this account, authorial storytelling is governed by *de re* pretense.

Thomasson notes that this second option has the benefit of providing a unified picture about the way authorial pretense works in the creative process of fiction writing. Authors are engaged in *de re* pretense, irrespectively whether they write about extant individuals and places or about their own protagonists. The notion of '*de re* pretense' can also explain such cases where a new author writes about an already existing character, or cases where the same author tells a new story about her former protagonist. In situations like these, the new story refers back to an earlier one and pretends that its protagonist exists.

But this option is also problematical, because it leads to the above-mentioned bad result that an author pretends about an abstract object that *it* has such-and-such properties.

It seems nonsensical to suggest that Auster pretended about an abstract object, *o*, that *it* is called 'Daniel Quinn' and that *it* is a detective-fiction writer, etc. This misconstrues the psychology of fiction writing. In hoping to avoid all of these problems, Thomasson (2003a: 212–213) offers a hybrid explanation. She alludes to Curry's (1990) early view, according to which fictional proper names are anaphoric means rather than genuinely referring expressions. On Curry's formal approach, proper names function as labels referring back to variables bound by implicit pretense operators. These operators have complete stories in their scope. Thus, tokens of 'Daniel Quinn' refer back to a variable in the overall *de dicto* pretense of the novel *City of Glass*, and the pretend object which has been assigned to this variable has the properties of writing detective mystery novels, living in a small apartment, etc. The other part of Thomasson's hybrid explanation consists in saying that writing about extant characters involves an extra-fictional perspective. When an author borrows *N* form an earlier prose work, she can use it as a genuinely referring expression in her own storytelling. She is in a position to genuinely refer to the abstract artefact c_N without engaging in any kind of pretense. Readers and literary critics are in the same position with respect to c_N. This is due to the *de re* connection which permits cross-reference between different prose works and between fiction-internal and fiction-external contexts and which is established on the basis of the initial *de dicto* pretense.

The hybrid account of authorial pretense seems to fit well with the ontological picture of (ASC). On the one hand, fictional characters are rigidly historically dependent on the mental acts of their authors and – as we have now seen –

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these acts may be thought of as falling under the scope of *de dicto* pretense.[50] On the other hand, fictional characters are generically constantly dependent on the literary works in which they are mentioned or described but this dependence relation does not involve acts of pretense. On the contrary, this dependence relation presupposes that we may have genuinely *de re* thoughts about abstract artefacts.

Interestingly, (ASC) and the hybrid explanation of pretense are not Thomasson's final thoughts about the artefactualist view. In the past few years, Thomasson's attention has shifted away from a standard focus on the ontological status of fictional entities to a new emphasis on the metaontology thereof. The general metaontological stance she defends is rather complicated and has several ramifications that are irrelevant to our current interpretative task. The main contention of her new work is worth mentioning, though. It can be summed up with a single characteristic statement: fictional characters are entities that are ontologically minimal.[51]

No doubt, the bold statement that fictional characters are ontologically minimal calls for a thorough understanding of what it means to be ontologically minimal. Thomasson (2015a, 2015b) develops a deflationary approach to this issue. What is at stake in first-order ontological disputes is whether a certain kind of entity exists or not. In most cases of such disputes, there is some *prima facie* evidence that the entity in question really exists. But *prima facie* evidence might turn out to have too little plausibility. It might turn out that what we talk about is a mere theoretical postulate or a side product of language use. Artefactualists, for instance, are prepared to argue that (neo-)Meinongian comprehension principles led us astray in that they merely postulate a difference between beings that there are and beings that exist. A (neo-)Meinongian might reply that what their opponents call theoretical postulates are actually conceptual necessities. If we agree that objects can be defined in terms of satisfying certain conditions, we cannot but accept that there are nonexistent objects. Hence, according to all indications, debates about existence involve deep and substantial issues.

Thomasson disagrees with this diagnosis. Ontological debates should be deflated, she says, because existence questions are in principle easily resolvable. Do propositions, numbers, possible worlds or fictional characters exist? In

50 In the next chapter, I will argue that it is possible to characterize the dependent nature of characters without making use of the notion of pretense.

51 The term 'metaontology' is used commonly to refer to an area of inquiry that has the capacity of evaluating the legitimacy of first-order ontological theories. For a useful overview of this relatively new area of research, see Berto & Plebani (2015).

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each case, there are easy arguments which show that the disputed entities do indeed exist. The easy arguments in question are deflationary, not because they attribute to propositions, numbers, etc., a lightweight ontological status, but because they omit reference to any deep facts about existence. Thomasson's deflationism is thus restricted only to our metaontological thinking.

Easy ontological arguments have an unvarying logical structure. The first premise consists always in an uncontroversial statement which does not contain expressions which refer (or purport to refer) to the disputed kind *K*. The next premise then is a statement which Thomasson calls a linking principle. The role of this premise is to make explicit the constitutive rule for using the term *K*. The third premise is derived from the first two statements, but the derivation is not ontologically ampliative for no new piece of information is added to the body of content that is already explicit in the uncontroversial statement and the linking principle. From these three premises a conclusion follows which affirms the existence of *K*s.

Let us see how Thomasson's argument proceeds in the case of fictionalia.[52]

(TP1) (*Uncontroversial statement*) Conan Doyle introduced the proper name 'Sherlock Holmes' into his manuscript to pretend to refer to a detective.

(TP2) (*Linking Principle*) If an author introduces a proper name *N* into her manuscript, then she creates a fictional character c_N.

(TP3) (*Derived statement*) Conan Doyle created a fictional character c_{SH}.

(TC) (*Ontological statement*) A fictional character, c_{SH}, exists.

Before explaining the rationale and motives behind the premises form (TP1) to (TP3), I think it is important to stress how the easy argument for the existence of fictional characters differs from the argument presented by (ASC). In my view, the main difference is that while (ASC) makes use of statements which concern facts about ontological dependence between distinct entities, the easy argument alludes only to a certain sort of semantic dependence. So the arguments specify quite differently what needs to be taken into consideration when arguing for the reality of fictionalia. The other, less important, difference is that, in contrast to (ASC), the easy argument does not exactly say what kind of entities fictional characters are. I shall return to this in the next section.

Viewed from the perspective of Thomasson's new argument, fictional characters are ontologically minimal in the following sense. (TP1) is to be regarded as being an empirically trivial statement about Conan Doyle's manuscript and about the proper name 'Sherlock Holmes' tokened by him at the first time in

52 Cf. Thomasson (2015a: 261).

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the history of literature. We need not mobilize our conceptual skills to see that this premise is uncontroversially true – at least Thomasson says so.[53] (TP2) is based on the standard use of the kind term 'fictional character'. That authors invent or create fictional characters seems to be a fixed element of the common sense view of literature. In using the term, competent speakers of English rely on this piece of common knowledge. This is why we can fairly easily decide whether, in particular cases, the application conditions of the term are satisfied or not. Given some empirical background information, we can know with great certainty that the term 'fictional character' can be correctly applied to Sherlock Holmes, and we are also quite sure that it is inapplicable to Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Kind terms of ordinary English like these are associated with coapplication conditions, too. It is not enough to be occasionally applicable to an entity; a kind term must refer to the same sort of entity in different contextual settings as well. So our common knowledge extends to such cases of use where we can safely say that c_N is the same character both in contexts *C* and *C'*, where *C'* differs from *C* in a respect which is relevant for the original portrayal of c_N. Note that on Thomasson's new view this does not mean that the application and coapplication conditions of *K* require that we be already committed to the *existence* of *K*s. As a Linking Principle, (TP2) presupposes only that there are certain linguistic rules in force in a speech community which govern the use of the term *K*. These are the rules that specify how we should (and do) talk about fictional characters independently of the question of their ontological standing.

Given (TP1) and (TP2), one can then contend, as (TP3) does, that a particular *K* is such-and-such. The derivation leading us from (TP1) and (TP2) to (TP3) is said by Thomasson to be trivial. Presumably, she calls this derivation trivial because the first two premises imply the third without invoking any additional linguistic information concerning the standard use of *K*.[54] Nevertheless, we are entitled to think that the term *K* occurs as a referring expression in (TP3). The basis of this entitlement may be called, for want of a better term, semantic common

53 I have my doubts. I think we have to rely on our linguistic and conceptual knowledge in determining the truth of (TP1). We have to know at least two non-empirical facts: first, that both 'Conan Doyle' and 'Sherlock Holmes' belong to the syntactic category of proper names, and, second, that there is a significant difference between the referential profile of these names. The latter is especially important because (TP1) tells us that in using the name 'Sherlock Holmes' Conan Doyle only pretended to refer to someone. But at this juncture, I bracket these doubts.

54 Tim Button rejects this classification by claiming that this derivation is trivial only in a technical sense of triviality. I am inclined to agree with this opinion. For more on this, see Button (2016).

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knowledge. We are in a position to know how *K* is to be used in ordinary English; this was the message of (TP2). Given this semantic common knowledge, we may consider ourselves entitled to apply a particular instance of *K* as a referring term. In our case, the derived statement should be interpreted so that a fictional character, c_{SH}, is such that *it* has been created by Conan Doyle. This means that the kind term 'fictional character' occurs in a referring position in (TP3). The immediate ontological conclusion drawn by (TC) from this is that a fictional character, namely c_{SH}, exists.

Without a doubt, the most remarkable feature of the easy argument is that (TC) seems simply to make explicit what is already there in an implicit form in the premises. Thomasson attempts to demonstrate that deep ontological presuppositions are irrelevant for first-order questions of existence. What is not irrelevant is the way competent speakers of English actually use kind terms. But facts about use and facts about the semantic common knowledge governing that use do not explain why the referents of kind terms have the ontological standing they are having. They cannot do that because an easy argument is not intended to be an explanatory hypothesis at all. Thomasson's deflationist stance blocks such an explanation from the outset. The argument merely states that if certain linguistic and cultural practices exist – there are authors who introduce proper names into their prose works –, then fictional characters exist, too. We have to make sure that these empirical circumstances actually obtain, but nothing more is needed. No hard conceptual work is required to decide whether there is some fundamental thing or grounding relation that metaphysically necessitates the truth of the statement of (TC). This is the sense in which characters can be said to be ontologically minimal.

The metaontological deflationary position briefly reviewed above may be summarized in the following concise form:

> *The Minimal Status of Characters* (MSC): Fictional characters are ontologically minimal entities the existence of which requires only the obtaining of a certain set of linguistic and cultural practices.

Some opponents of metaontological deflationism reacted with a sharp critique to easy arguments. It is repeatedly affirmed that application and coapplication conditions for kind terms cannot be so easily separated from other conditions as Thomasson assumes.[55]

55 For variations of this sort of critique, see, for example, Yablo (2014), Button (2016) and Evnine (2016).

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For example, Yablo (2014) wonders whether the conditions of fixing the reference of a kind term *K* are the same conditions as those which are necessary for the meaningful use of *K*. The former conditions are necessary. The circumstance under which *K* is successfully introduced into our lexical repertoire presupposes the existence of an exemplary instance of *K*. There *must* be a particular entity which guarantees that the introduction of the term is based on a word-world relation. Some failed posits of ancient scientific inquiry – such as phlogiston or ether – illustrate quite well the necessity of this condition. These kind terms remain empty precisely because the circumstance in which they have been introduced into the scientific vocabulary lacked a worldly relatum. However, the meaningful use of *K* to which Thomasson appeals in her easy arguments seems not to be dependent on such a strong condition. Aardvarks *originate from* Africa, anywhere south of the Sahara Desert. But one may make meaningful statements involving the term 'aardvark', even though one thinks that aardvarks are natives to India. Or one may effectively participate in a discussion about Anna Karenina, even though one is skeptical concerning the existence of abstract individuals. Communication does not break down when some of the participants lacks the required piece of semantic common knowledge. This suggests, according to Yablo, that conditions of meaningfulness are not uniquely and necessarily associated with kind terms. There are alternative rules one may adopt for using 'aardvark' effectively. And there are also alternative ontologies behind these rules. One of them may state the rule for 'aardvark' in terms of 'African mammal with such-and-such phenomenal properties', the other may state it in terms of 'aardvarkly arranged microparticles' or something like this. Which of these is the correct ontology for aardvarks? If aardvarkly arranged microparticles have the same phenomenal properties as aardvarks – as it seems to be –, then an easy argument demonstrating the existence of aardvarks cannot go through easily. We have to reckon with a multiplicity of linking principles containing the term 'aardvark'. Unfortunately, this will make the ontological conclusions of easy arguments ambiguous. We are led to the conclusion that aardvarks exist, but it remains obscure what sort of entity is said *ultimately* to exist. There is an analogous problem for the term 'fictional character'. The availability of alternative ontologies renders it difficult to say what easy arguments "prove". Let us accept that Sherlock Holmes exists. But what really is it: is it a mental image, or a nonactual concretum, or a pretend object, or what?

Yablo's objection can be rebutted in arguing that even though there are diverse conditions for a term to be meaningful, the rules language users adopt do not involve specific ontological presuppositions. According to Thomasson, in order to apply a kind term correctly competent speakers do not have to be committed to a particular ontology. We can acquire the rules governing the use

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of the term 'aardvark' without having a prior commitment to mammals or aardvarkly arranged microparticles. Instead, we are committed to a phenomenal/normative datum: if a circumstance with such-and-such observable characteristics obtains, the speaker is allowed to use the term 'aardvark'. And, similarly, when we learn how to apply the term 'fictional character', we do not need to start from ontologically presupposing the existence of a mental image, or of a non-actual concretum, or some other sort of entity.[56] It is enough to presuppose that the empirical/normative conditions relevant for applying the term are actually satisfied.

Of course, aardvark-talk and fictional-character-talk exhibit considerable differences. This is not too surprising, given that aardvarks belong to a natural kind, whereas fictional characters are a non-natural kind. Mastering the rules for using a natural kind term is usually more closely connected to speakers' perceptual abilities than to their conceptual capacities. In the case of non-natural kind terms, the situation is presumably the reverse: to learn the application conditions of a non-natural kind term seems to require a greater amount of conceptual knowledge.[57] These differences notwithstanding, speakers are threatened by the same danger in both type of case. They might misidentify the circumstance in which a kind term occurs. And, as a consequence thereof, they might associate the term with wrong application conditions. But I think we should agree with Thomasson that such cases can be traced back to an empirical mistake rather than to an ontological error. A group of speakers may be collectively inattentive so that when aardvarks are in their vicinity they use erroneously (and constantly) the term 'aardwolf'. Or imagine someone who believes – again, erroneously – that fictional characters are those protagonists of prose works who are described as having some odd or whimsical habits.

I do not want to deny that speakers might have varying beliefs about the essential properties of objects they are talking about. It might easily happen that someone thinks that a natural kind term refers to an abstract genotype rather than to a living creature. Or it might happen that someone thinks that a non-natural kind term refers to mental objects rather than to publicly accessible entities. This is actually the case when a reader with idealist leanings identifies fictional characters with "subjective" ideas in the mind of the author, or in the mind of other readers. It is worth stressing, however, that even these last cases are not

56 Cf. Thomasson (2014).

57 It is a complicated issue whether learning number-talk or set-talk demands only conceptual skills or this kind of discourse mobilizes also the perceptual abilities of speakers. In contrast to Thomasson, I am inclined to think that the latter is the accurate view, but I will not argue for it here.

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to be taken as examples of ontological error. Variances in usage are rooted regularly in empirically false judgments. What really happens is that one or more speakers of a given speech community misunderstand the norms by which the use of a kind term is *actually* governed in their common language.

Let us remind ourselves here that Thomasson's deflationism has only a metaontological ambition. Thus, even if we have rejected Yablo's objection successfully, there still remains a question concerning the first-order ontology of objects. What about the conclusions of easy arguments? Are they to be considered as being about full-blown objects or are they to be considered instead as being about a certain kind of quasi-objects?

Property or concept nominalists may prefer the second option. According to such a view, fictional characters are to be seen as inevitable "shadows" of certain statements.[58] This means, after removing the metaphor, that when an easy argument concludes that a fictional character exists, then the conclusion concerns merely the way we talk about fictional prose works. Characters have a semantic reality *in* the statements we make, but they do not have real existence *outside* of these statements.

Interestingly, an eminent adherent of the easy approach to ontology is of a similar opinion. At least, Schiffer (1996) appears to argue that fictional characters are nothing else but pleonastic entities. The theoretical notion of 'pleonastic entity' is very close in meaning to the nominalists' metaphor 'shadow of a statement'. Schiffer contends that fictional characters arise from so-called something-from-nothing transformations. When a proper name, *N*, occurs in an authorial manuscript, then, Schiffer maintains, it is used in the pretending way. The pretending act results in a sentence which can be used later in a hypostatizing way. Properly speaking, the character c_N arises from the hypostatizing use of the name *N*. The something-from-nothing transformation goes in a concrete case as follows. Conan Doyle pretends to assert that Holmes is a detective. From this it follows that Holmes has the property of being a fictional detective. (This is a sound inference because at the level of assertion pretense is taken to imply fictionality.) So the property of being a fictional detective is instantiated, and therefore there is a fictional detective. (The last step is accomplished by existential generalization.) Up to this point, Schiffer's method for the derivation of Holmes's existence is broadly analogous to the method followed by Thomasson herself. Yet there is a difference to be noted. According to Schiffer, when we assert that there is a fictional detective, namely Holmes, or when we claim that Holmes exists, we use the proper name 'Holmes' in a hypostatizing way. In this usage, names are not

58 The metaphor is to be found in Armstrong (1989).

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referring expressions in the standard sense of reference. To try to specify the way in which 'Holmes' is related to its referent would be a fruitless effort. Fictional names are not causally or historically related to anything. This is so because the characters that bear these names have only a language-internal reality. Although Holmes is a freestanding abstract entity, it has just a "shallow nature". And, clearly, such shadowy or pleonastic entities may be involved neither in standard causal explanations, nor in systematic semantic theorizing.[59]

Schiffer's position can be adequately characterized as a first-order ontological deflationism with respect to fictional entities.[60] Something-from-nothing transformations lead us to deflated entities, which exist in a significantly different mode than do other things that are part of language-external reality. Anna Karenina and Tilda Swinton belong to the overall inventory of what there is, but only the latter has a language-external reality. Tilda has a robust nature – care must be taken not to confuse it with her fragile beauty – for the reason that we do not become committed to her existence via Schifferian transformations.

I am agreeing with Thomasson that this approach does not necessarily work well.[61] It seems that something goes wrong when we try to draw a contrast between Anna Karenina and Tilda Swinton in the way Schiffer suggests. To see the problem, let us recall what is intended to show by easy arguments. When ontologists disagree on the existence of a certain kind of entity, *K*, easy arguments come to the rescue. These arguments are put forward to demonstrate that *K*s are part of reality. This is done first by making explicit the constitutive rules for using the term '*K*'. Then, by applying valid inferences, an ontological conclusion is derived. The procedure may be adapted for every kind of entities, be they concrete or abstract. The ontological conclusion of the procedure is that the disputed entity, *K*, exists. An important addendum is that conclusions of the form 'a *K* exists' or '*K*s exist' are taken to be *literally* true. Easy arguments and something-from-nothing transformations are on a par in this regard. The derived positive existential statements are not to be interpreted metaphorically, as if they were only seemingly truth-conditional. Neither are they to be regarded as hedged state-

59 Cf. Hofweber (2007: 5) and also Moretti (2009: 155).

60 For the sake of completeness, let us mention that there is another version of this account. Taylor (2014) agrees with Schiffer that literary figures are pleonastic entities. But, in contrast to Schiffer, Taylor claims that they are mere reifications which do not have a freestanding, real nature. As he says, "[t]he results of pleonastic reification are, rather, entirely dispensable *façon de parler*" (Taylor 2014: 204). Since it unambiguously rejects the real existence of fictionalia, Taylor's account remains incompatible with the artefactualist framework.

61 For Thomasson's careful critique of Schiffer's account, see Thomasson (2015b: 146–153).

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ments; 'a *K* exists' is not to be read as 'in a certain sense, a *K* exists'. Presumably, Schiffer would also insist on the literal interpretation ofhis own ontological conclusions. But this means that the statements 'Anna Karenina exists' and 'Tilda Swinton exists' are both literally true (if they are read as conclusions of easy arguments or of something-from-nothing transformations).

Notice, however, that there is no chance to find a contrast here. An abstract entity and a concrete individual is said to have the property of existence and they are said to have that property in the very same way. If Schiffer wants to convince us that in contrast to Tilda Swinton, who is a robust existent entity, Anna Karenina has a deflated ontological status, he must provide an independent argument. I do not want to suggest that it is impossible to argue for this claim. I want merely to emphasize that the resources of easy ontologists under discussion are not suitable for performing this task. The arguments with which Thomasson and Schiffer attempt to solve first-order existence disputes are designed to make manifest the implicit commitments ordinary speakers already have. By so doing they shed light on the fact that questions of existence are inextricably interwoven with the actual linguistic practices of a given speech community. That is, they reveal what is needed to decide whether a given kind of entity exists or not. However, the arguments of easy ontology are not in and of themselves capable to establish a first-order distinction between ontologically robust and ontologically shallow entities. As already said, the deflationist approach discriminates between substantive and easy questions of existence, but this discrimination acquires its proper sense only in a deflationary metaontological context.

Let us take stock. (MSC) is the central claim of a view which classifies fictional characters as existing but ontologically minimal entities. As (ASC) made clear, the success of artefactualism hinges, to a great extent, on identifying those very factors on which the existence and persistence of fictionalia ultimately depend. We may then wonder whether (MSC) can also be subsumed under the artefactualist doctrine. One reason for being uncertain about the correctness of this classification is that (MSC) does not *explicitly* mention dependence factors. Although the deflationist approach alludes to a given form of existential dependence between linguistic and cultural processes, on the one hand, and fictional entities, on the other hand, it does not inform us about the fine-grained structure of this relationship. The other reason for hesitating is that it is unclear how fictional characters as minimal entities should, in more fundamental ontological terms, be categorized. Conclusions of easy arguments do not tell us much about the way protagonists of literary prose works exist. Very likely, they should be taken as belonging to a certain subcategory of abstracta, but the wording of (MSC) is, again, silent about the details.

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The above-mentioned doubts may be suppressed by recognizing (i) that (ASC) and (MSC) target one and the same domain of reality, and (ii) that they are focusing on the same entities of that domain, but from a slightly different perspective. (ASC) states that fictional characters are created abstracta which depend for their existence both on the performance of creative mental acts and on the presence of appropriate concrete objects. Notice that neither the createdness of characters nor their abstract status, nor the reality of the dual dependence relation has been questioned by (MSC). In calling characters minimal entities, (MSC) just indicates that there are no deep ontological conundrums behind the statementat which (ASC) had arrived earlier. Thomasson herself explains this phenomenon in the following way:

> I have argued that we can make use of an easy argument for the existence of fictional characters (*considered as abstract artifacts*), in a way that should remove ontological worries about accepting them. (Thomasson 2015a: 263, emphasis added)[62]

The remark in parentheses is important. It shows that we are not mistaken when we regard (MSC) as being about abstract artefacts (i. e., about contingently existing minimal entities). Thus, in the end, it can be ascertained that there are two closely related articulations of the artefactualist theory: (ASC) and (MSC).

As I previously hinted, we have particular reasons to prefer artefactualism to (neo-)Meinongianism with regard to overall plausibility. One of these reasons is that in one respect (neo-)Meinongian theories do not seem to fit well the common sense conception of fictionality. Comprehension principles imply that readers are in a position to know without performing any empirical investigation that Sherlock Holmes and Anna Karenina have such-and-such properties. This is implausible. Both of the above versions of artefactualism hold that fictional characters are part of actual reality. Hence they refuse the *a priori* accessibility of characters. Another reason is that (neo-)Meinongian theories maintain a sharp contrast between the meaning of 'there is' and 'exists'. It is questionable, again, whether readers and critics of prose works would concur with such a view. I am skeptical about this. I do not think it likely that many would interpret the meaning of the statements 'there is a character called *N*' and 'a character called *N* exists' as involving different commitments. But even if I am wrong in that, and the majority of us are inclined to read these statements differently, it still remains implausible that we draw a distinction – either explicitly or implicitly – between existence and subsistence. The artefactualist theory sees this dis-

62 In most of her papers, Thomasson uses the term in the form of 'art*i*fact' instead of writing 'art*e*fact'.

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tinction as being irrelevant to our everyday reading practices. Thus, artefactualists may try to give us aviable account about the protagonists of fictional proseworks without making the detour over an empirically unsupported object theory.

There is a further point, however, about which (neo-)Meinongians and artefactualists make equally implausible assumptions. The adequacy of our talk about fictional individuals, places and events is bounded by a strong epistemic constraint: we must somehow be acquainted with the texts of the novels or short stories in which these entities are portrayed. This precondition may justly belabeled as a "strong constraint" because it narrows down the possible ways in which we may come to know of these entities to those that involve language-based capacities. As we have seen in the foregoing chapter, (neo-)Meinongians typically fail to recognize the theoretical corollaries of this constraint. They assume that the referent of a fictional name *N* is a self-standing (nonexistent) object which can be clearly and categorically distinguished from its textual descriptions. From the point of view of this book, this assumption is incorrect.

Artefactualists seem to make a similar assumption with regard to the ontological status of characters. (ASC) claims that characters are abstract artefacts which come into being as a result of the mental acts of their authors. Thomasson does not offer a detailed analysis of these mental acts, but she prefers to identify them with written assertions. She claims at a certain point, for example, that "fictional characters are created merely with words that posit them as being a certain way", and she adds to this that "characters are created by being written about by their authors".[63]

To say that a character is created merely with words assumes that what has been created (i. e. a character) is distinguishable from the means with which it was created (i. e. from the words). On the one side, we have the mental acts of the authors and the corresponding written words or textual descriptions, and on the other side we have the created characters. This means that although characters have their "birthplace" in the text, they exist externally to the expressions of the text. This assumption is also present in (MSC). If one claims, as (MSC) does, that characters require for their existence only that certain linguistic conventions and rules be followed, then it is assumed that characters are not mere linguistic phenomena. Rather, it is suggested that after having come into being by linguistic practices, characters continue to exist externally to these practices. And since both (ASC) and (MSC) construe literary figures as being abstract, we may immediately conclude that they are *not linguistic abstracta*.

63 Thomasson (1999: 12). For a similar remark, see Thomasson (2003b: 149).

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One might object that what stands behind this type of reasoning is merely a prejudice of favoring language-independent abstract entities.

In the next chapter, I will try to show that if we stay away from this prejudice, then it becomes possible to develop a more acceptable version of the artefactualist theory.[64] More precisely, we will be in a position to argue, contrary to the implicit assumptions of the Thomassonian view(s), that fictional entities belong to the textual level of literary works. It can be said, somewhat exaggeratedly, that the way they are created is the way they really are. By this I mean not just that expressions like 'fictional character', 'fictional place', or 'fictional event' are used in a pragmatically fixed way what makes the question concerning the existence of the referents of these phrases easily decidable. I do not want to deny the primacy of these linguistic considerations. Rather, I want to argue for the claim that our linguistic practices are more closely related to the textual level of literary works than artefactualists tend to acknowledge. But it would be difficult to substantiate this claim with the conceptual apparatus which has been applied up to this point. I hope it will help the discussion forward if we introduce a new term into our interpretive tool kit. So my proposal is that we should re-evaluate the main contentions of the artefactualist theory from the perspective of *linguistic representation*. Seen from this altered perspective, we will hopefully have a better grip on the basic features of the abstract entities to which the followers of the Thomassonian view – and also the upholders of the abstract object version of Meinongianism – feel themselves to be committed.

64 One might see Voltolini's recent work (Voltolini 2006, 2015) as proposing an alternative framework for artefactualism. I would not agree with this classification. Voltolini thinks of fictionalia as being compound entities. According to him, a literary character is composed of a make-believe process-type and a property set. This is an ontological status that he associates *exclusively* with fictional entities. Such approaches as (ASC) and (MSC) are, in contrast, extendable to many other kinds of artefact. What is said by them is applicable, mutatis mutandis, to flags, nations and cultural objects in general. Because of this striking difference in the scope of applicability, it is better to regard Voltolini's work as a self-standing view of fictional realism.

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3 Motives for elaborating a representational alternative

It would be certainly an interesting question of the historiography of the theory of fictionality why so many experts are reluctant to accept that literary figures are closely related, or perhaps identical, to abstract linguistic constructions. To pursue this question would take us too far afield. But we can characterize the current research situation with the help of some illustrative examples. In my view, the aversion to abstract linguistic constructions is a corollary of a broader theoretical standpoint which may be rightfully called a 'simple-minded account of realism'.

It is advisable to begin by quoting some relevant passages from the works of antirealists and then turn to the corresponding realist examples. Since the publication of his groundbreaking monograph *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (1990), Walton is widely acknowledged as one of the leading proponents of the antirealist theory of fiction. According to Walton, literary discourse is to be understood in its entirety as an overarching game of make-believe or pretense. Authors and readers are co-operating players in the same game of make-believe, so the statements which are made in the course of playing the game are not to be taken seriously. Pretend statements involve only pretend commitments: the players behave, verbally, as if the entities mentioned or described by them were existing things. But in actual fact, pretend statements do not express propositions at all and there is nothing to which the participants of the discourse could be ontologically committed. Therefore, from the Waltonian point of view, a statement which implies apparent commitment to a fictional entity should not be taken at face value. To claim otherwise is to disregard the rules of an ongoing game. Artefactualists who think that characters are created artefacts are guilty of making the same error. It is worth quoting Walton's opinion at length:[1]

> Walt Disney did invent some things, certain animation techniques, for instance, and one can point out that a certain technique was invented by him. Committees, governments, and laws are cultural artifacts, and can be described as such. But to say that *Donald Duck* was "invented by Walt Disney" or that he "is a cultural artifact" is probably to say that there is no such thing, i.e. that Donald Duck-ish referring attempts fail. If Donald Duck is anything he is a *duck* (a talking duck); not an invention or a cultural artifact. Some concepts may be "empty"; the *concept* of Donald Duck (if there is such a thing) is

1 Notice that like Thomasson above, Walton prefers the term 'art*i*fact' to 'art*e*fact.

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> one of them. But *Donald Duck* himself is not a concept. (Walton 2015: 103, emphases in the original)

The quoted passage is a succinct summary of the critical attitude Walton had adopted towards fictional realism at numerous places in his oeuvre from the 1970s onwards. And as such it exemplifies the typical contradictory features of that attitude.

First, Walton is aware that he cannot straightforwardly deny the existence of cultural artefacts. Indeed, it would be curious to suggest that such cultural inventions of the human mind as committees, governments, and laws are members of a natural kind. Second, he seems to be expressing his doubt concerning the artefactual status of fictional entities. Moreover, he seems to doubt that fictional entities have an ontology at all. In order to establish a categorical difference between the status of these groups of entities – that is, between committees, governments, etc., on the one hand, and fictional characters on the other –, Walton offers a metalinguistic analysis. According to this analysis, if a speaker makes an existential statement about a character c_N, she conveys the metalinguistic information that *N* cannot be employed in a referring use.

One problem with this analysis is that in utterances of the form '*N* is *F*' (where *F* is an existential predicate), the proper name *N* is typically used and not merely mentioned as the metalinguistic interpretation would require. To stick with the example of Donald Duck, it is implausible to claim that the utterer of the sentence 'Donald Duck is not real' wants to convey nothing else than ''Donald Duck' is not a referring name'. As regards its default semantic reading, 'is not real' is *not* a purely metalinguistic predicate. Imagine a cognitive psychologist who remarks that visual space is not real. Presumably, she is much more interested in the mental construction of the visible properties of our immediate environment than in the referential profile of the expression 'visual space'. If she wants to inform us of her own interests correctly, then she must use that expression instead of mentioning it. This and similar cases indicate that Walton errs in thinking that an existential predicate like 'is not real' is equivalent with its metalinguistic cognate 'is unable to refer'.

A further problem is that the metalinguistic analysis does not directly support Walton's distinction between genuine artefacts and fictional characters. Consider the following two statements:

(1) The American Nobel Committee was founded by Jacques Ferrand and Albert Einstein.

(2) Donald Duck was invented by Walt Disney.

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Seen from the Waltonian perspective, the American Nobel Committee is an existing artefact. So the name 'American Nobel Committee' functions as an ordinary referring expression in (1). This is not true of *Donald Duck* (or better: Donald Duck), since there is no such artefact. But then how should we interpret (2) in which the name 'Donald Duck' seems to occupy a referring position with respect to the transitive predicate 'was invented'? As already said, Walton's proposal is that we should engage in a metalinguistic ascent. If this is done, then we can understand the utterer of (2) as attempting to express her doubt concerning the referential potential of the name 'Donald Duck'. That is, we can interpret (2) as a means for expressing a general metalinguistic thought according to which "Donald Duck-ish referring attempts fail".

If this were indeed the right approach to (2), then we would find ourselves in a very odd situation. We could easily say that there is a causal and/or historical relation between Jacques Ferrand, Albert Einstein and the American Nobel Committee, but we would be unable to say that there is a similar relation between Walt Disney and Donald Duck (or *Donald Duck)*, because in the latter case we would be obliged to make a metalinguistic statement about our referring attempts. Although I have not gathered empirical evidence, I guess that ordinary speakers would draw a close analogue between (1) and (2). They would presumably agree that both statements can be viewed as true instances of the predicative schema '*something* was *founded/invented* by *someone*'. If such speakers were asked about the origin of Donald Duck, they would answer that *it* was invented by Walt Disney. They would not feel pressure to talk about issues of reference at all. And for this reason, they would reject the Waltonian analysis as misleading.

Maybe I am wrong and ordinary speakers actually follow a metalinguistic strategy to set apart genuine artefacts from fictional characters. But now let us consider a second challenge for this analysis:

(3) Donald Duck and the American Nobel Committee are artefacts.

(3) would not pose any interpretative problem for artefactualists. They would say in a sober tone that Donald Duck and the American Nobel Committee are both products of the human mind and as such they are actually existing (abstract) entities. They would conclude, therefore, that (3) is to be regarded as a true statement. A Waltonian antirealist is in trouble, however, because she cannot provide a consistent reading of (3). While one component of the conjunctive subject (Donald Duck) suggests the need for a metalinguistic ascent, the other component (American Nobel Committee) calls for a literal reading. The possibility of a collective reading is blocked by this tension. Perhaps the solution would be to offer a distributive reading for (3). But in this case, the distributive reading

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would be the wholly unacceptable 'Donald Duck-ish referring attempts fail and the American Nobel Committee is an artefact'.

One may conclude from this that the Waltonian interpretation of the artefactualist theory is not wholly adequate. But what follows in the quoted passage is even more peculiar. Walton claims there that if there is such an entity as Donald Duck, then it must be a *talking duck*, not an artefact. I am not sure I know how to understand this claim.

Perhaps Walton thinks that if a character c_N is described or portrayed in a text as belonging to a natural kind *K*, then c_N is either one of the *K*s, or it is nothing. This would explain why he excludes the possibility that Donald Duck is an artefact. (This would also explain why he denies the existence of characters. And he is certainly right about one thing: there are no *talking ducks*.) But it is misleading to suggest – if this is what Walton is suggesting – that characters cannot be artefacts because fictional prose works are typically not about abstract entities.[2] We cannot detect a mismatch between the way a character is described and the way it exists. Even though Donald Duck is described as being a talking duck, it does not follow that there must be a language-external entity that corresponds to the description. Walton seems to get this wrong when he says that the *concept* of Donald Duck (if there is such a concept) may be empty, but *Donald Duck* himself is not a concept. In my view, appreciators of Walt Disney's story may acquire and possess a Donald Duck-concept, provided that concepts are language-based entities; and, with certain provisos, we can say that this is an empty concept. But if we agree on that, then it is not clear to me what is the point in adding that *Donald Duck himself* is not a concept. What is the intended meaning of 'himself' in this context? Artefactualists and other abstract realists do not need to think that *Donald Duck* has the same identity and essence as real ducks in the backyard. The situation is the same as in the case of a toy duck. A toy duck is not a duck; it is a toy that *resembles* a duck. If Walton thinks otherwise, then he misconstrues the standpoint of his opponents.

Walton is not alone among antirealists in holding such a strange position. Another example is Kroon (2015a) who tries to give an account of the argumentative strategy of the artefactual theory. Kroon says that artefactualists have to divide properties in two groups: properties had by characters and properties held by characters. While elements of the first group show what characters are

2 Imagine a literary work, *W*, which tells a story about the largest known prime number. If the largest known prime number is anything, it is a *number* (a prime number). If we accept that prime numbers are artefacts, then the main character of *W* is an artefact. So there is at least one character that is an artefact. It would be interesting to hear Walton's opinion about this case.

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categorically, elements of the second group show how characters are described in their works. Kroon calls this the Divide-and-Rule strategy. He illustrates the duality of character properties with the case of Hamlet:

> This strategy ... was first used to deal with the problem of how the creationist [i.e., the artefactualist] can accommodate the thought that Hamlet, say, is a prince of Denmark if Hamlet is an abstract artefact. Answer: Hamlet is an abstract artefact that is *represented* in the drama *Hamlet* as being a prince of Denmark, or, more simply, an abstract artefact that, in the drama *Hamlet*, is a prince of Denmark. (Kroon 2015a: 164–165, emphases in the original)

The first statement of the quoted passage tells us that it is problematical to hold that the play *Hamlet* is about a flesh-and-blood person which is, in fact, an abstract entity. The challenge for artefactualists is then to find an explanation that resolves this perspectival duality.[3] Kroon seems to think that Divide-and-Rule strategists are compelled to offer the following explanation: an abstract entity, o_H, is *represented* in Shakespeare's play as a person. This explanation would work only if o_H had the following three properties: (i) it is created by Shakespeare, (ii) it is represented in the play *Hamlet* as Hamlet, and (iii) it has a self-standing reality, that is, it is a language-independent entity. I think artefactualists have to agree with (i), but I see no reason why they would have to agree with (ii) and (iii). The reason for accepting (i) is that when someone thinks of Hamlet as a contingently existing abstract artefact, then they must regard it, *ipso facto*, as a product of authorial intention. Abstract artefacts come into being as a result of creative acts and in one form or another we have to regard Shakespeare as being the inventor or creator of Hamlet. On the other hand, the statement that Shakespeare is responsible for inventing or creating an artefact does not imply that he invented or created a language-independent abstractum, o_H, with the purpose of representing it in his play as a person. How could he know that o_H is the right abstractum to be represented as Hamlet? And how could he reidentify it later when he tries to attribute new properties to it? These questions are hard to answer. But, fortunately, artefactualists need not follow Kroon in this direction because they may reject (ii) and (iii) as mistaken assumptions.

The above-quoted passages gave us some samples of the phenomenon which I have called the simple-minded account of realism. Both Walton and

3 It is not hard to find other antirealists who are inclined to share this opinion. Everett says, for example, that artefactualists have to "[e]xplain in exactly what sense fictional objects have the properties that the relevant fictions ascribe to them, in what sense it could be genuinely true that Holmes is a detective and Lilliput an island" (Everett 2013: 169).

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Kroon have assumed that on the realist's view the way a character is described or represented differs from the way it exists. Note, however, that not only leading antirealists are of this opinion. Goodman (2004) is a convinced defender of the artefactualist theory, but what he says about this issue seems to be quite close in spirit to the interpretation offered by Walton and Kroon. He writes:

> I think that as an author begins the storytelling process, and as she begins to regularly associate various predicates with various names, an entity gradually begins to take shape (so to speak) – an (abstract) entity that the name denotes (in some contexts) that exemplifies various properties-in-a-story. (Goodman 2004: 144)

In a single breath, Goodman expresses his agreement both with the Divide-and-Rule strategy and with the claim that characters are language-independent abstracta. He says that fictional names denote abstracta (in some contexts). Given Goodman's adherence to the artefactualist theory, the bracketed qualification is to be taken as referring to extra-fictional contexts. For example, seen from the perspective of literary criticism, Hamlet can be classified as a contingently existing abstract entity. In other contexts, contends Goodman, this very same entity exemplifies properties which are not typical of abstracta. Although Hamlet is an abstractum, it exemplifies properties typical of concreta in the story of the play *Hamlet*. That is, seen from the perspective of Shakespeare's story, Hamlet can be classified as a flesh-and-blood person. In accepting this perspectival distinction, Goodman betrays his sympathy with the Divide-and-Rule strategy. And there is a further point in the quoted sentence. It is said that in the course of the storytelling process an abstract entity gradually takes shape. The reference to the gradual nature of this process is of minor importance in the present context. The significant part of the sentence is that which suggests the language-external status of the originating entity. As other fellow artefactualists, Goodman holds that abstract fictional entities take shape due to the mental activities of their authors. This is one of the factors on which their existence necessarily depends. The storytelling process manifests itself in a set of sentence tokens which compose, in the end, a particular manuscript. This embodies a second kind of dependence factor. Recall that this ontological picture has already been summarized above under the label (ASC). Goodman remarks, later is his study, that to bring into existence a dependent entity is merely a matter of bringing into existence its dependence factors.[4] And this cannot be conceived otherwise than bringing into existence an entity which is dependent on but external to its dependence factors. This is precisely what the quoted sentence suggests.

4 Goodman (2004: 145).

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There are other supporters of the artefactualist theory who seem to follow this line of reasoning.[5] But instead of listing more examples of this thought-pattern, I would like to make some reflections on the lesson we can draw.

The first is that it is not quite clear why the simple-minded account of realism became so attractive for all participants of the debate. Perhaps the impetus behind this account is that until now no one has attempted to provide *explicit* arguments why fictional entities cannot be identical to linguistic constructions. I know only of one such attempt. Thomasson (2015b: 38) claims that the view according to which propositions are linguistic entities entails that they are, in some sense, subjective. Since, on her view, propositions and fictional characters are equally minimal, I suspect that Thomasson thinks her verdict to be correct for characters too. I find this claim wanting because of the absence of a suggestion that would explain in what the alleged subjectivity of such publicly available linguistic entities as sentence tokens consists.

The second reflection is that, in spite of its popularity, the simple-minded account is untenable because it entails an unnecessary reduplication of the object of inquiry. Fictional entities are made accessible to us by our reading experiences. The textual level of fictional prose works comprises all the entities at which our attention is directed during the act of reading. We are confronted with linguistic representations at this level directly, and we should not forget that these representations are full-fledged abstracta on their own. Therefore, if we want to know what kind of abstracta fictional characters, places and events are, it is better to focus on this basic level of literary discourse. Representations have a kind of explanatory priority in this respect. And as we recognize this, we must also recognize the unwarranted and redundant assumptions behind the talk which takes fictional entities to beself-standing cultural artefacts or other sorts of non-linguistic abstracta.

Evidently, it would be folly to try to define fictionalia in terms of linguistic representations without providing a sufficiently detailed explanation for the relevant concept of linguistic representation. In the next two sections, this conceptual issue will be discussed.

3.1 The phenomenon of non-relational representation

It is customary to say – as I did in the previous chapters – that fictional characters are described by their authors as having a certain set of properties. Sherlock

5 See, for example, Lamarque (2010) and Fontaine & Rahman (2014).

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Holmes is described by Conan Doyle as being, among other things, a clever detective and Tolstoy describes Anna Karenina as being, among other things, a passionate lover. For most theoretical purposes, this manner of speaking is harmless.

But when we are concerned with the way in which Holmes and Karenina exist, we have to proceed carefully. The problem with 'describe' is that it is a success verb. Success verbs like 'know' or 'remember' require that certain epistemic or semantic conditions be met. For example, we cannot know that Tilda Swinton is an actress without having successfully collected factual information about her personality. We cannot remember that she acted in the movie *We Need to Talk About Kevin* without successfully reconstructing our past cinema experiences. And we cannot know that she was on display to the public for a week asleep in an artistic performance in the Serpentine Gallery, London, without seeing pictures about that event. In general, in order to know or remember that *o* is *F*, we must be related to *o* in an epistemically appropriate manner, where appropriate relatedness means an external condition which cannot be satisfied by *a priori* reflection alone. Ditto for 'describe'. When a witness wants to describe verbally the physical attributes of the person she saw at a robbery scene, she must successfully collect her past visual impressions. She may say that the person she had seen was taller than an average man, wore black trousers with a green polo shirt, etc. Under such a circumstance, these descriptive phrases are used relationally.[6] The witness thinks that there is a particular person who satisfies the applied descriptive predicates 'taller than an average man' and 'wore black trousers with a green polo shirt'.[7] If she has been related to that person in an externally appropriate manner, then she is certainly right in this.

I hope it is clear from Chapter 2, and the discussion of the ontological status of artefacts thus far, that fictional characters cannot be described in this relational manner. Nevertheless, we may continue to use the 'c_N is described in work *W*' figure of speech to refer to the way c_N is given to us. When we say that the novel *A Study in Scarlet* describes Holmes as being a certain way, we merely emphasize that we are acquainted with that character by reading the novel. As attentive readers, we get to know that Holmes smokes a pipe, but it would be wrong to think that we are thereby externally related to a pipe-smoker. Such descriptive predicates as 'pipe-smoker' or 'clever detective' cannot be used with respect to

6 Instead of 'relationally', Salmon (2002) applies 'directedly'. Salmon's term refers to a kind of speech act where the speaker asserts something specific about a particular object. This is tantamount to saying that the speaker's utterance is related to a particular object.

7 Descriptive predicates are often defined in contrast to normative predicates such as 'is right' or 'has a duty'. I follow this convention here.

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Holmes relationally. It is obvious why. There are no abstract entities, of whatever kind, that could have properties like these.

Because of its limited applicability, the verb 'describe' does not entirely suit our present theoretical concerns. 'Describe' has some close synonyms which seem to exhibit the same problematic features. It might be said, alternatively, that a character c_N is *portrayed* in a work *W*. But 'portray' belongs to the same family of verbs as 'describe'. Used as a predicate, it implies relationality. Consider the following statement: Daniel Quinn is portrayed as being 35 years old in the novel *City of Glass*. As above, one possible reading of this statement is that the text of the novel informs us that a character, Daniel Quinn, is 35 years old. I think many of us would be willing to consider this as a natural and acceptable interpretation. On the second reading, the portrayal of the character is taken to establish an external relation to a 35-year-old individual called Daniel Quinn. Again, this cannot be a correct interpretation because of the abstractness of the character. The same limitation in applicability holds for other candidate synonyms such as 'depict' and 'delineate'.

In this regard, 'represent' gains a significant advantage over 'describe' and its kindred verbs. On the one hand, 'represent' has a theoretical use similar to that of 'describe'. To say that c_N is *represented* in work *W* seems close to saying that c_N is given to us by the elements of the textual machinery of *W*. In the statement 'Holmes is described in the novel *A Study in Scarlet* as a clever detective', the verb 'described' can be replaced *salva sensu* by the verb 'represented'. On the other hand – and this is a particularly important point – 'represent' should not be necessarily conceived as a success verb. At the very least, it has a theoretical use where the standard epistemic and semantic conditions of success verbs are not operative.

Goodman (1968) was among the firsts to argue that 'represent' occasionally behaves as an unbreakable one-place predicate.[8] He was concerned primarily with issues of pictorial representation, but his observations are relevant for the linguistic case too. Many artistic pictures represent existing objects, says Goodman, but there are also pictures that do not represent anything. A picture of a unicorn is one of these cases. Yet to say this sounds a bit paradoxical. What could it mean that a picture does not represent anything but it is a picture of a unicorn? If 'represent' is taken to be a two-place predicate with an argument place for objects, then the paradox cannot be resolved. We ought to talk about a particular object and attribute properties to it, when we want to talk about a representation. A way out is to recognize that a picture representing a unicorn is a

8 Cf. Goodman (1968: 21–31).

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unicorn-representing-picture, or, for short, a unicorn-picture, not a picture of or about a unicorn. This helps mitigate the paradoxical effects of the statement that although there are no unicorns, there are pictures which represent them.

An additional advantage of this observation is that it allows for distinguishing between different objectless or empty pictures. Neither a unicorn-picture nor a dragon-picture can represent objects, because there are no such objects as unicorns and dragons. But a well-informed interpreter would never mistake a unicorn-picture for a dragon-picture. Of course, in spite of their emptiness, these are different pictorial representations. As perceivers, we routinely sort distinct unicorn-pictures into one group; we are pretty sure that Raphael's painting *Portrait of a Lady with a Unicorn* and the cover of *The Unicorn Coloring Book* contains one and the same mythological figure. The same holds for grouping dragon-pictures. We know very well what we are seeking when we search for dragon representing pictures.

The key point in Goodman's analysis is, nevertheless, that representations *of o* should be categorically distinguished from *o*-representations. If *R* is a representation *of o*, then *o* exists and *R* represents *o*. Let R_{TS} be a picture of Tilda Swinton. Then R_{TS} represents an actually existing individual. In talking about the relation between the picture and the individual, we use 'represent' as a success verb. That is, R_{TS} succeeds as a representation only if it is externally related to the relevant individual and it is related to that individual in an appropriate manner. But *R* may be an *o*-representation even if there is no such object as *o*.[9] Let R_u be a unicorn picture. Then R_u counts as a unicorn-representation. In contrast to the previous case, 'represent' is used here as a one-place predicate. To be a (successful) unicorn-representation, R_u does not need to be related to any particular object. But one might then wonder in virtue of which is R_u a unicorn-representation at all. Why is it not instead a dragon-representation? Goodman would say, I think, that all that matters here is that R_u have the prototypical features which are characteristic of other unicorn-representations. That is, if R_u is picturing a horse-like animal with a large spiraling horn on its forehead, then it is probably a good candidate for being a unicorn-representation.

Whatever importance we may attribute to Goodman's conceptual apparatus, he was certainly not an early proponent of the artefactualist theory. Goodman repeatedly says that there are no unicorns and he also explicitly rejects the ex-

9 Goodman writes: "From the fact that *P* is a picture of or represents a unicorn we cannot infer that there is something that *P* is a picture of or represents" (Goodman 1968: 22). Sainsbury seems to agree with this line of argument: "the mere fact that some expression *x* represents *y* does not ensure that there is something, *y*, that *x* represents" (Sainsbury 2012: 107). Interestingly, Sainsbury does not cite Goodman's work in his list of references.

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istence of fictional entities.[10] According to him, engagement in mythological pictures does not involve commitment to entities which have a distinctive ontological status. In this regard, his opinion is much closer to the standpoint of present-day antirealists. So, if we tried to apply his insight to literary works, we would be faced with a difficulty. Goodman claims that a unicorn-picture does not represent anything. It is a picture with null denotation. However, in spite of its emptiness, we recognize it *as* a unicorn-picture. Why? Because we *see* it as if it were a picture *of* a horse-like animal which has a large spiraling horn on its forehead.

If we applied this approach to the literary case, we would get the following result. The proper name 'Sherlock Holmes' is an empty name that does not represent anything. It is a name with null denotation. In spite of this, we recognize sentences containing 'Holmes' *as* Holmes-representations. The question is, again, why this is so. Given what he said about empty pictures, Goodman's answer would be this: we take the sentence 'Holmes smokes a pipe' *as* a Holmes-representation because we *understand* it as if it were a representation *of* a person-like entity who (or which) smokes a pipe. Goodman cannot deny that the sentence 'Holmes smokes a pipe' appears to attribute a property to a person. But from his point of view, this is what it is: an appearance. Since he rejects the existence of Holmes, he must assume that 'Holmes' behaves in such sentences as if it were a name of a person-like entity. This extra assumption is needed because otherwise he could not say that we may collect all Holmes-representations into one single group. Holmes-representations must have some common features in virtue of which they are Holmes-representations and not, say, Karenina-representations.

This Goodmanian assumption is questionable for two reasons. First, it seems implausible to contend that readers of the novel *A Study in Scarlet* process and understand the name 'Holmes' as if it were designed to seemingly represent a person-like entity. Those who engage in the text are compelled to interpret this name as a conventional device for person representation, independently of whatever they think about the ontological status of Holmes. It is evident for everyone, I think, that 'Holmes' is used in a subject position in such a sentence as 'Holmes smokes a pipe'.[11] And the property attributed to the subject mentioned in that

10 See Goodman (1968: 21, 22, 30).

11 Taylor points out, correctly, that fictional names do not differ in their syntactic behavior from non-fictional names. He writes: "From a broadly structural or syntactic point of view, referring names and non-referring names are on exactly the same footing. Like names that refer, names that fail to refer can well-formedly flank identity signs, occupy the argument places of verbs, and anchor anaphoric chains" (Taylor 2014: 193).

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sentence – i.e., the property of smoking a pipe – is clearly a property of persons. If you have reservations against this being called a personal property, then consider the sentence 'Holmes was certainly not a difficult man to live with'. Here, it is explicitly indicated that 'Holmes' is used as a person representation in the novel. The explanatory predicate 'man' dispels all doubts to the contrary. Given this, I find it hard to imagine why we should associate the textual occurrences of the name with such a curious thing as a person-like entity. Perceiving one-horned horse-like figures is necessary for recognizing unicorn-representations, but one does not need to apprehend person-like entities for recognizing Holmes-representations. 'Holmes' is no less a person representation than an ordinary name like 'Swinton'. Which is not to say, of course, that 'Holmes' is a representation *of* a person. Common sense intuitions seem to converge on this point. Second, a person-like entity is not only a curious thing, but also an ontological monster. The term 'person', like other natural kind words, is often thought of as having vague application conditions. This is not particularly troubling for our present account, since we can understand the term in its most general sense, according to which persons are concrete human beings. Even though the boundaries of the term 'person' vary strongly between different metaphysical frameworks, this does not tell us much about the application conditions of the other term. But one thing is clear: person-like entities cannot be human beings, since 'Holmes' would then behave in Conan Doyle's novel as if it were a name of a human being and Goodman excludes this possibility. Nor can they be instances of a non-natural kind, for an analogous problem would then arise, namely that 'Holmes' would behave as if it were a name of an artefact. Goodman's skepticism concerning the existence of fictional entities excludes this possibility too. This does not mean that we should deny *tout court* the metaphysical possibility of person-like entities. The lesson is more specific to the ontology of literary works. I want merely to claim that in the context of a literary ontology which centers around the concept of representation we cannot have a clear idea of what person-like entities are. And so the analysis which reveals how "empty" artistic pictures work cannot be directly applied in the investigation of fictional prose works.

This is a drawback of Goodman's account. But he was surely right in stressing that for certain theoretical purposes 'represent' is analyzable as an intransitive one-place predicate. Fortunately, there are alternative frameworks which utilize the Goodmanian distinction between cases of representations of *o* and cases of *o*-representations and to which we can turn in arguing for the non-relational nature of fictional representations.

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One of these frameworks is elaborated by Burge in his *Origins of Objectivity* (2010).[12] It is worth discussing briefly some passages of this book, for we find in them a comprehensive account of the phenomenon of representation. Burge interprets 'representation' as a generic term which covers various sorts of human intentionality. By being connected with psychological (i. e. intentional) states, the events of perception, cognition, and language use all include representations. The latter is of most interest to us here.

Linguistic representation has two subtypes: reference and indication. Reference, claims Burge, is both a relation between expression tokens and extra-linguistic entities, and a function of a mental state or event to establish the reference relation. Consider a conversational situation in which the participants talk about the habits of Arnold Schwarzenegger. Imagine that in this situation someone utters the sentence 'Arnold smokes a pipe'. By focusing on the relational aspect of reference, we may say that the token name 'Arnold' is related here to the person Arnold Schwarzenegger. On the other hand, in attending to the functional aspect of reference, we may say that the utterer of the sentence is engaged in reference by using the token name 'Arnold'. This picture might be familiar to many readers, since Burge's dual-aspect approach to reference corresponds well to the standard distinction between semantic reference and pragmatic reference.

In contrast to names and other singular expressions, predicates are not devices of reference. When it is used as a predicate, 'clever' does not refer to anything. Instead, it indicates the property of being clever. In general, predicates indicate properties which can be attributed to appropriate entities. Thus, reference and indication can be seen as performing a complementary function. Suppose someone utters the sentence 'Arnold is clever' in the above-mentioned situation. Burge would say that in this sentence 'clever' functions to attribute what it indicates, that is, it attributes the property of being clever to the entity to which 'Arnold' refers. And given that 'Arnold' is used here to refer to the person Arnold Schwarzenegger, the sentence can be taken as stating that Arnold Schwarzenegger is clever. Again, this is broadly what standard theories of predicative statements contend.[13]

12 Other frameworks are to be found in Elgin (2010) and Dilworth (2001, 2005). Elgin extends the Goodmanian approach to the issues of scientific representation. Dilworth elaborates a so-called double content view of fictional representation. In this framework, sentence tokens in fictional prose works are contingently related to propositions which in turn have necessary representational properties.

13 Note that property attribution does not necessarily require singular expressions. Attribution works also with plural nouns and quantified phrases as, for example, the case of 'All actors are clever' demonstrates. Cf. Burge (2010: 33).

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On Burge's view, the primary function of linguistic representation is property attribution. A particular linguistic item represents something as being so-and-so, or as having such-and-such properties, if it represents something by an appropriate type of representation. In order to represent Arnold Schwarzenegger as being clever, speakers have to use tokens of the clever-type representation. Of course, 'clever-type representation' does not mean a representation that is clever. It is instead a representation type, individuated in terms of the predicate 'clever'.

The really interesting cases are those in which reference and indication come apart. We have mentioned earlier that scientific vocabularies may contain occasionally empty terms. For example, the expression 'phlogiston' was introduced into the chemical vocabulary of the 1700s without having a worldly referent. Phlogiston was characterized by its discoverer as a chemical substance, which is released into the air on burning. But as it turned out shortly thereafter, the proposed theory was based on erroneous background assumptions. 'Phlogiston' was (and is) an empty term. Thus, by uttering the sentence 'phlogiston is released in burning' something is indicated (a release), but nothing is represented (because 'phlogiston' lacks a referent). But in spite of the fact that nothing is represented as phlogiston, the utterance involves a phlogiston-type of representation.

At this juncture, I can imagine an objection taking the following form. It is true that reference and indication must cooperate in successful entity representations. It is also true that scientists occasionally introduce into their theories empty terms, for various reasons. But the idea of empty representations is obscure, to say the least. If there is no referent for a term *t*, then *t* is empty, and empty terms are not representational devices in any sense of the word. So the claim that there is a *t*-type representation involves a kind of conceptual incoherence.

The objection can be averted, however, by pointing out that phlogiston-like terms may have representational content in spite of their emptiness. To see how this is possible we need to take a look at the constitutive functions of linguistic representations.

One such function consists in individuating and tracking intentional states. When speakers utter sentences involving the name 'Arnold', they indicate a particular person as being a certain way. If Arnold is a concrete entity, utterances of 'Arnold is *F*', 'Arnold is F_1', 'Arnold is F_2', etc., attribute what they indicate. They represent Arnold as having the properties *F*, F_1, F_2, etc., even across different utterance contexts. Because of this, one can regard 'Arnold' and the set {*F*, F_1, F_2, ...} as jointly individuating a type of intentional state. If certain contextual and pragmatic conditions are satisfied, an utterance involving 'Arnold' makes explicit that the speaker is in this type of state. Other speakers recognize this: they acknowledge that the communicative intentions of their conversational partners

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are directed towards one and the same entity. Incoherently evolving conversations this piece of common knowledge remains stable and predictable.

One other constitutive function of linguistic representations is that they embody inferential capacities. Speakers may attribute many properties to an indicated entity, and a particular property may be attributed to an entity with using different predicates. As regards the properties of Arnold, speakers have many options. They may utter attributive sentences like 'Arnold is tall', 'Arnold is a pipe-smoker', and so forth. These are representations which are connected to each other by inferential and other logical or semantic relations. For example, from the above two utterances, one can derive the conclusion that Arnold is a tall pipe-smoker. And similarly, if it turns out that Arnold can be represented as being taller than 180 cm, one can safely conclude that Arnoldcan be represented as being taller than 70 inches.

Speakers individuate and track both their own intentional states and the intentional states of others by referring and indicating. In Burges's jargon, a *t*-type state specifies an attribute *F* if and only if it represents *t* as being *F*.[14] And given that speakers may refer to and indicate *t* in a number of ways, *t* may be represented as being *F* in a number of ways. These ways of referring and indicating can be said to be the contents of linguistic representations.

Note that Burge's account of representational content follows from a functional analysis of referring and indicating. On this account, representational contents can be construed without mentioning the content-determining role of extra-linguistic factors. Of course, if *t* is not empty, *t*-type states represent *t* successfully, and the (representational) content of an utterance '*t* is *F*' can be evaluated as veridical. Note also that the functional analysis is insensitive to the differences between the semantic behavior of non-empty terms and empty terms. While an utterance of 'Arnold is tall' may end up being a successful and veridical representation, utterances of 'Sherlock is tall' are doomed to be unsuccessful and not veridical.[15] But the difference in successfulness and veridicality does not touch upon the functional similarity of these utterances. Both can be seen as fulfilling the function of individuating a certain type of representational state. And, *a fortiori*, both can be seen as conveying a certain type of representational content.

14 See Burge (2010: 37).

15 In a slightly different theoretical context Matravers remarks that "we do not need to know whether a representation is non-fictional or fictional in order to engage with it". Matravers main contention is that there is no specific fictional stance: readers analyze non-fictional and fictional texts from the same interpretive point of view. I think this is an inspiring hypothesis. For details, see Matravers (2014:76 – 89).

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It is important to stress, again, that when we say that utterances involving empty terms are capable of conveying representational content, then we do not want to capture the specifications of content in an externalist manner. As Goodman already recognized, representations *of* objects, if successful, should be treated as possessing externally determined contents. *Object*-representations, on the other hand, can be successful even if they lack such kind of content determination. Now we are in a position to transfer this observation to the linguistic case. If *t* is an empty term, *t*-type states are representational and utterances involving *t* are to be thought of as *t*-representations. These empty states and empty utterances do not differ functionally from non-empty states and non-empty utterances. But in contrast to the latter, they convey representational content without being related to external representata. Instances of the phlogiston-type representation possess a kind of content that can enter in inferential, logical and semantic relations with other contents. We may say, for example, that the idea of phlogiston and the idea of ether are equally products of mistaken scientific theorizing. This is a familiar way of talking in which the empty terms 'phlogiston' and 'ether' are used in a contentful but non-relational manner.

Speakers individuate their own intentional states by engaging in acts of referring and indication. The representational content of these states seems to resemble meanings – at least in certain respects. Empty names cannot indicate entities, but this does not entail that such names lack representational content; quite the contrary: they represent, although non-relationally. Enthusiasts of detective novels easily recognize the difference between a Holmes-type representation and a Maigret-type representation. (You can try to deceive them, but you will end up losing.) Similarly, empty terms do not refer to entities, yet they are not completely devoid of meaning. Although 'phlogiston' and 'ether' have the same null extension, they surely differ in meaning. Consider the following pair of sentences: (a) 'Phlogiston was introduced by Georg Stahl', and (b) 'Ether was introduced by Georg Stahl'. I think it is clear that informed speakers would assent to (a), but dissent to (b). If this is so, then there must be a non-extensional aspect of meaning that can be made responsible for this attitudinal difference. Moreover, seen from the perspective of language use, representations and meanings have the same ontological standing. Both are publicly available and shareable abstract entities. And given their common sociocultural origin, both can be categorized as contingently existing artefacts. At the same time, meanings have some structural or behavioral features that representational contents seem to lack. Just to mention one, some indexical expressions are used in a token-reflexive way. When the first person pronoun 'I' is used in this way, it has the meaning 'the utterer of this token'. I believe that representations, be they relational or non-relational, cannot carry such token-reflexive contents because

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they are not decomposable along the character/content dimension that plays a fundamental role in the analysis of indexicals.[16] For this and other related reasons, representations are not to be identified with meanings.

This is only a side issue, though, because the main point of interest here is a plausible definition of a notion of linguistic representation which does not implicitly involve a semantic (or epistemic) relation to represented entities. The above discussions have shown that Goodman's insight pertaining to the content of pictorial representations has a much wider application than he had originally conceived of it. As we have seen, thanks to Burge, 'represent' can be used as an intransitive predicate in the theory of mental states, and even in the theory of linguistic content. The lesson we can learn from the intransitive uses of this predicate is that referential failure does not necessarily entail representational failure. The relevant notion of representation may then be defined in the following way:

> *Non-Relational Linguistic Representation* (NRLR): A linguistic item, *t*, qualifies as a non-relational representation if and only if the following conditions are jointly satisfied: (i) tokens of *t* are capable of conveying representational content in utterances which purport to refer and indicate, (ii) *t* lacks a language-external representatum, and (iii) *t*-representations are publicly available and shareable entities.

Condition (i) is required in order to exclude extreme cases in which referential failure entails representational failure. Imagine that someone fills in the formula 'The _ is here' with closed eyes so that the result is 'The t*9C®™n is here'. Obviously, since the character sequence 't*9C®™n' has been typed in without a communicative intention, it will neither refer to an entity nor convey or express a representational content.[17] Because of the threatening possibility of cases like this, it is reasonable to restrict our definition to such utterances where *t* has a chance to convey a representational content.

Satisfying condition (ii) ensures that *t*'s representational content is not of a relational kind. Utterances of *t* purport to refer to entities but are necessarily unsuccessful in that attempt.[18] Our definition must make it clear that this is so not

16 For more on this theme, see Vecsey (2013).

17 If the result would be, say, 'The train is here', then one could draw a similar conclusion with the proviso that in contrast to 't*9C®™n', 'train' is an expression *type* that is capable of both reference and representation. Note that as a password,'t*9C®™n' may also be used with a communicative intention, but I do not think that passwords refer to entities and have representational content.

18 According to the apt remark of Burge, "[r]epresentation is rather like shooting. Some shots do not hit anything, but they remain shootings" (Burge 2010: 45).

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because of some pragmatic error or other kind of communicative failure, but because *t* lacks a representatum.

The last condition, condition (iii), concerns the epistemic accessibility of *t*-representations. Notice that *t* is a vehicle type for constructing natural language representations. It is plausible to suppose that *t* is part of an internal code; perhaps it is an item in a mental lexicon with rich causal and computational connections, or it is a symbol in a language of thought with a compositional syntax and semantics. Acts of referring and indication involve tokens of such abstract vehicle types. Although utterances contain perceivable tokens of *t* (i.e., they make publicly available, and thus shareable, the type *t*), it is important to see that *t*-representations themselves are not perceivable linguistic entities. Concrete particulars – acoustical signals in the air or ink marks on a sheet of paper – are not apt to be regarded as representations. Someone's admiring Holmes is not admiring acoustical signals or ink marks. The right thing to say is that uttered and written tokens serve as triggers for their corresponding mental items/symbols.[19] I do not want to suggest that the complex problem posed by the type-token relationship is so easily solvable; but, for our present purposes, it is enough to note that tokens are needed to register that a particular speaker intends to convey a *t*-representation. When speakers produce and perceive utterances they register unique tokens which are unrepeatable spatiotemporal entities, but *t*-representations are registered at the type-level, and because of this they have to be categorized as repeatable abstract entities. Repeatability guarantees that the spatiotemporal contingency of utterances does not set limits to the epistemic accessibility of *t*-representations.

With (NRLR) at hand, we can now turn our critique of the simple-minded account of realism into a constructive proposal. The aim is not, of course, to rule out the artefactualist theory of fictional characters as completely misguided. I think that the Thomassonian approach compressed in (ASC) and (MSC) is much more plausible and easier to defend than other realist approaches to characters. So my proposal is that we should rethink whether characters – and fictionalia in general – exist in the way Thomassonian artefactualists think they do. That is, we should rethink what it *exactly* means to say that fictional characters, places and events are created abstract artefacts. I argue, not surprisingly, that all of these entities are at bottom linguistic constructions to which we have epistemic access only via our ordinary reading experiences. If we take (NRLR) as a con-

19 This view is supported, among others, by such philosophers of language as Seuren (2009), Ludlow (2011) and Rey (2012). For an opposite view, which denies that perceivable tokens are theoretical entities, see, for example, Chomsky (1993).

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ceptual guide, we can provide a definite answer to the question concerning the nature of these linguistic constructions. The answer, in short, is that the individuals we found in our reading experiences and the events we apprehend in interpreting texts of literary fiction are nothing else than sets of non-relational representations.

Afurther question which arises here is whether the label 'realism' can be used in connection with an account of fictionalia that is based on the conditions of (NRLR). The technical term 'realism' has been employed in a wide variety of ways in recent philosophy.[20] Nevertheless, one can argue that there is some common core to the particular understandings, and this is enough for our purposes. The common core is that they all concern the existence or non-existence of a certain type of entity. As already said in Chapter 1, *bona fide* fictional realism involves an acceptance of the real, not merely the possible, existence of fictional entities. In particular, Thomassonian artefactualists endorse a view according to which fictional individuals like Sherlock Holmes or Middlemarch and fictional events like someone squaring the circle are created artefacts and therefore they are convinced that these entities belong to the overall inventory of what there is.

The central message of the present book is consonant with this general metaphysical/ontological theory. An attentive reader might have some worries, though, about one aspect of our commitment to realism. It has been argued above that representation-apt linguistic items do not have language-external representata when they occur in fictional discourse. Within the referential paradigm, such items would be categorized as empty expressions. But the claim that the basic nominal building blocks of fictional discourse are referentially empty is one of the antirealists' most characteristic claims. And given that referential emptiness should be taken to mirror the metaphysical/ontological structure of the world, it would be better for us to agree with the antirealist and admit that our world does not contain such peculiar things as fictional entities.[21]

To see that this potential worry is unsubstantiated we must remind the reader of the explanatory usefulness of representations. No one can and should deny the meaningfulness and naturalness of fictional discourse. Yet despite its meaningfulness and naturalness, the semantic profile of this kind of discourse cannot be reassuringly characterized by using the customary means of the referential paradigm.

The main problem is, as we have seen, that the capacity of referring presupposes a causal and/or historical relation to the entities of the language-external

20 For an excellent overview, see Brock & Mares (2007).

21 I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for urging me to clarify this point.

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world, but the apparently referential expressions of fictional discourse do not have, and cannot have, such a capacity. They do possess, however, the potential to behave as *t*-representations because representations of this kind can be meaningful without being related to anything language-external. And although *t*-representations do not have representata, there can hardly be doubt about their existence.

On this basis, we may effectively respond to the worry that there is a tension between our commitment to realism and the acceptance of the referential emptiness of the nominal expressions of fictional discourse.

Fictional characters and other fictional entities have *real* existence because, as it will be argued below, (i) they can be identified with (sets of) non-relational linguistic representations, and (ii) tokens of this type of representation belong to the general inventory of what there is. Nevertheless, we can simultaneously maintain that ordinary nominal expressions lose their capacity to refer when they occur in fictional discourse. More precisely, we can maintain both that in texts of literary prose works apparently referring nominals are in fact empty expressions, and that these empty nominals are representationally meaningful in spite of the fact that they have a non-relational semantic status.

If we are prepared to allow that there is a viable representationalist alternative to the simple-minded account of realism, we will find these claims not only entirely compatible but also mutually supportive.

This is, to be sure, a rather strong position which raises a series of further issues. One of these concerns the internal structure of the instances of this kind of abstract representation. Despite their syntactic and semantic differences, 'Holmes' and 'the detective living at 221B Baker Street' are members of one and the same group of representation. It would be relatively easy to explain this phenomenon, if the proper name and the definite description represented existing entities. But they lack representata, and so we should seek an explanation which takes into account this distinctive fact.

Another issue is how to locate representations to literary works. We might wonder whether different literary works can contain the same character representation or not. The novels *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four* are numerically distinct works; they exist independently of each other, but both contain Holmes-representations. To say that these representations are identical (or distinct) requires some non-trivial justification.

A third issue is whether non-purely fictional characters, like that of Napoleon in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, can also be thought of as non-relational representations. If it is possible to give a positive answer to this question, then a thor-

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ough artefactualist position becomes available according to which literary prose works concern only fictional entities.[22]

As will be shown in the next section, within the revised artefactualist framework all of these issues can be properly tackled.

3.2 Abstracta at the textual level

In order to achieve their communicative aims, ordinary speakers refer to and indicate entities in a number of ways. There is a great variety of linguistic resources at their disposal: proper names, definite descriptions, specific indefinites, personal pronouns and other types of nominals are equally appropriate means for singling out a particular entity. Singular expressions are to be individuated in terms of their contextually determined referents. If, for example, under normal circumstances of use a proper name N_1 refers to *o* and a distinct proper name N_2 refers also to *o*, then N_1 and N_2 stand in the same-name relation to each other. Or, to take another example, if the anaphoric pronoun *she* occurs with the grammatical antecedent N_1, and N_1 refers to *o*, then so does *she*. This can be captured by saying that N_1 and *she* are connected by the same-reference relation. And given that N_1 is extensionally equivalent with N_2, *she* and N_2 must have the same referent too. Paradigm cases of singular coreference like these are relatively well-understood phenomena of non-fictional discourse.

Authors of fictional prose works have access to the very same stock of linguistic resources. As hinted at in the previous chapter, though, the token expressions they employ in creating their manuscripts do not have the capacity to indicate entities. The singular expressions we find in literary texts lack referents and thus, *a fortiori*, it is useless to seek for literary examples of coreference. But one might complain that – at least at the surface level – there is no difference between non-fictional discourse and fictional discourse in this respect: coreferring expressions abound in everyday conversations as well as in literary works.

As an illustration, let us consider the following case. The first token occurrence of the proper name type 'Sherlock Holmes' in Conan Doyle's oeuvre is to be found in his (manuscript of) *A Study in Scarlet*, page 3, line 21:

22 Voltolini (2013) argues persuasively that fictional works cannot contain immigrants (i. e. non-purely fictional characters). Voltolini calls this a 'hyperrealist position', but note that he rejects the core claims of the artefactualist theory.

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(4) You don't know Sherlock Holmes yet.

A few lines later on that page, we read the following sentence:

(5) He is a little queer in his ideas – an enthusiast in some branches of science.

This pair of sentence tokens provides us a *coreference*-like phenomenon. The semantic interpretation of the anaphoric pronoun 'he' in (5) seems to depend on the occurrence of the name 'Sherlock Holmes' in (4). In other words, it seems that the introduction of the name was an initiating act which established an anaphoric chain of use and the first link in this chain is the backward-pointing pronoun. Perhaps (4) should be regarded as a pretend assertion and so the name introduced by Conan Doyle's act only pretends to refer. If this is indeed the case, the pronoun must inherit this property from its antecedent and the semantic relation in which they stand to each other may be called pretend coreference.

However, from our present point of view, it is better to say that we are faced here with a coreference-*like* phenomenon. There is surely a kind of backward dependence relation between 'he' and 'Sherlock Holmes', because in the absence of the latter the former would either be uninterpretable or would be linked to another (possibly tacit) antecedent. But on my view this relation has to be explained in terms of corepresenting.

To see this, notice that the notion of non-relational representation can be applied quite effectively in the analysis of this example. As a first step, consider how 'Sherlock Holmes' satisfies the conditions mentioned in (NRLR). The surface syntactic order of the component words is an important feature of (4) in this regard, because it reveals, among other things, that 'Sherlock Holmes' functions as the non-subject argument of the transitive verb 'know'. It is also made manifest by the surface structure of the sentence that 'Sherlock Holmes' fulfills this function as a proper name. Presumably, both components of the name derive etymologically from Old English: 'Sherlock' can be derived from scir-lock (bright shining hair) and 'Holmes' has its origin in holm (holly tree). Taking all this together indicates that (4) purports to refer to an entity, namely to the bearer of the name 'Sherlock Holmes'.[23] We know, however, that the name was a product of Conan Doyle's imaginative invention: at the time of its first tokening, 'Sherlock Holmes' did not refer back to any existing entity. It was a singular expression (i.e. a syntactic proper name) which played a representational role in its host sentence, but

23 For the sake of simplicity, I am ignoring here the interpretative problem posed by the sentence-initiator 'you'.

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it lacked a language-external representatum since its introduction was not based on a word-world relation. Thus, the content of (4) involves a singular Sherlock-Holmes-representation or, for short, a Holmes-representation as a constituent. This Holmes-representation should be ontologically categorized as a publicly available and shareable abstract entity. That said, we can immediately add that this *is* the fictional character with which readers become acquainted through the mental linguistic processing of the words written on page 3, line 21 of the manuscript of *A Study in Scarlet*.

It is worth stressing again that when an author introduces a proper name into her work, then she does not, and cannot, intend to use it as an ordinary referring name.[24] The interpretability of an anaphoric pronoun token, on the other hand, hinges always on an initial singular expression which refers to a particular entity. Non-referring names cannot initiate genuine anaphoric chains: 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'he' are therefore not coreferring expressions. Nor are they expressions that pretend to corefer. Even if it were legitimate to claim that Conan Doyle merely pretends that 'Sherlock Holmes' is a referring name, it would not follow that it is actually a name which merely pretends to refer.[25] What is crucial with respect to the semantic profile of a fictional name is not the (possibly) pretending behavior of itscreator, but the circumstances of its introduction.

As can be expected, these circumstances are partly fiction-external and partly fiction-internal. The external part consists of the worldly conditions of the introductory act: when an author introduces a new name into her manuscript, she performs this act without focusing her attention on a potential bearer of that name. The word-world connection remains insignificant regarding the intelligibility and success of the performed act. The internal part consists of the contextually determined inferential and logico-semantical relations in which the newly introduced name becomes involved.

Again, the relations in which the singular expressions of the manuscript stand to each other and to a newly introduced name need not be specified in

24 One can deny this claim only at the price of advocating an utterly implausible view about authorial intentions. Jacquette (2015: 314) argues for an opposite view: "The fact that the paper has inscribed by Doyle on it the sentence, 'Holmes solves a crime'presupposes that this arrangement of words has meaning, and it is hard to account for the sentence's meaning in purely inscriptional terms, but only as the predication of the property of having solved a crime to an actually nonexistent intended fictional object Sherlock Holmes. If Doyle wrote down on paper the sentence, 'Holmes solves a crime', then this is undoubtedly what he meant to express". But this is tantamount to saying that 'Sherlock Holmes' was used by Conan Doyle with the intent of *referring* to a *nonexistent* object. It is hard to see why we should accept this suggestion. I do not think that authorial storytelling is actually governed by such neo-Meinongian principles.
25 This idea is to be found in Manning (2015).

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terms of reference. From a referential point of view, both 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'he' are defective, but this does not imply (i) that they cannot be taken to *purport* to refer to something as they occur in Conan Doyle's manuscript; nor (ii) that the contents they contribute to their host sentences are wholly unrelated. Just the opposite is the case. As a syntactic proper name, 'Sherlock Holmes' purports to refer to a newly introduced entity in (4), but it fails in that attempt; and similarly, as an anaphoric pronoun, 'he' purports to refer back to a previously mentioned entity in (5), but it fails in that attempt. However, these expressions still retain their ability to contribute compositionally to sentential contents. What they add to the content of their host sentences is the same in both cases. When readers register the representational function 'he' performs in '*He* is a little queer in his ideas …', they recognize that it coincides with the representational function of 'Sherlock Holmes' in 'You don't know *Sherlock Holmes* yet'. My contention is, then, that the contents of (4) and (5) should be regarded as coordinated or related, since both contain a particular Holmes-representation as a constituent. This is a paradigm instance of the phenomenon which may be called *t*-corepresentation.

It should be added that there are other instances of *t*-corepresentation which, at least at first sight, may appear somewhat puzzling. Readers can recognize the representational relatedness between 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'he' in (4) and (5) relatively easily because this sentence pair was tokened in the same fiction-internal context. However, such coreference-*like* phenomena occur often in contexts which involve mixed perspectives. Consider the following sentence, in which the plural pronoun seems to be backward-dependent on different kinds of proper names.

(6) I admire both Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sherlock Holmes although they are different type of guys.

The first proper name in this sentence involves a real-world perspective and a real object, while the second one involves a storytelling perspective and a fictional object. The sentence seems perfectly understandable, but it is not entirely clear how the pronoun 'they' can refer back to such a mixed plural object.

Everett (2013: 176) contends that antirealists can provide a quite straightforward explanation for this sort of phenomenon. Unsurprisingly, according to the antirealist explanation, utterances of (6) and similar sentences should be seen as falling under the scope of pretense. By pretending that both Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sherlock Holmes are real persons, one can unify the above-mentioned two distinct perspectives. Within this pretense, both proper names refer

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to existing objects, and therefore the pronoun 'they' can anaphorically refer back to this (pretend) plurality.

However, this explanation is not so straightforward as it seems. For it is natural to assume first that the pretense mandates that we imagine Holmes as if he were a flesh-and-blood person, and second that pretense takes a wide scope over the whole utterance of (6). The first assumption can be taken as an integral element of standard antirealist accounts. Undoubtedly, pretense dispels the ontological commitment to such alleged fictional charactersas Sherlock Holmes. So if one is willing to adopt an antirealist stance concerning fictional characters, then one can unproblematically assume that there is a real detective living at 221B Baker Street, who smokes a pipe, who has a friend called Dr. Watson, etc. But the second assumption can be questioned. Does this mean that one ought to deny that pretense takes a wide scope in (6)? No, not at all. Yet one should realize that this theoretical move has at least one troubling consequence. According to standard antirealist views, in uttering (6) one should imagine both Schwarzenegger and Holmes as being a flesh-and-blood person. The trouble arises just from this composite demand. Since Schwarzenegger is *actually* a flesh-and-blood person, it is hard to understand why one should imagine or pretend something trivial about his ontological status. Or, to put it otherwise, it is hard to understand why one should imagine or pretend that one is ontologically committed to an actually existing person like that. This counterintuitive consequence shows that distinct perspectives – the real and the fictional ones – cannot be unified together into a single perspective by the intervention of pretense, and thus that the antirealist explanation for the anaphoricity of 'they' in (6) is neither straightforward nor particularly helpful.

By relying on the concept of *t*-corepresentation, as it has been introduced above, one can provide a better explanation. Or so I will argue. Notice that there are two claims with which even a whole-hearted antirealist like Everett could agree. First, it is obvious that 'Arnold Schwarzenegger' and 'Sherlock Holmes', as syntactic proper names, purport to refer to flesh-and-blood persons in (6), but only the former one can succeed in that attempt. Second, it is also obvious that since the name 'Sherlock Holmes' has been introduced into our language by an imaginative act of Conan Doyle, it does not refer to a flesh-and-blood person, and therefore the anaphoric pronoun 'they' cannot have a default reading as *referring* back to an existing plurality of objects in that sentence. As we have seen, the Everettian antirealist infers from these claims that the anaphoric behavior of the pronoun should be governed by an appropriate kind of pretense.

The other possible inference is representationalist. Competent users of English who understand (6) must be aware of the fact that 'Sherlock Holmes' is ref-

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erentially defective. 'Awareness' should be taken here in a relatively broad sense, which by no means implies that competent users do indeed possess the technical notion of 'referential defectiveness'. However, they are also aware – in the same broad sense – that a referentially defective name may still be able to perform a representational function. That is, they are aware that what 'Sherlock Holmes' contributes to the sentential content of (6) is not a referent (i.e. not a flesh-and-blood person) but rather a certain kind of linguistic representation (i.e. a Holmes-representation). Therefore, in order to satisfy the requirement of grammatical consistency, they will interpret 'Arnold Schwarzenegger' with respect to the same semantic function, that is, as a vehicle of natural language representation.

It does not matter in this particular context that 'Arnold Schwarzenegger' is a name of a real person since one of its proper semantic functions is to contribute a singular representation (i.e. the representation of Schwarzenegger) to sentential contents, and, again, competent users are presumably aware that this is the function that has been triggered by the utterance of (6). If we assume that the interpretation of this kind of utterances is performed incrementally, then we should allow that 'Sherlock Holmes' exhibits a backward effect on the interpretation of 'Arnold Schwarzenegger', but this does not seem to do much harm.[26] We have, then, the case before us that both proper names are interpreted as representations that "concern" instances of the same natural kind (i.e. persons), so the requirement of grammatical consistency will be fully satisfied. In this particular grammatical environment, the pronoun 'they' has to be traced back, then, to a *plural representation*.

It should be stressed, however, that the semantic link between the sentential constituents 'Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sherlock Holmes' and 'they' is not a genuine (i.e. referential) *anaphoric* chain but instead a coreference-*like* connection. Compared with the antirealist alternative, an advantage of the proposed representationalist explanation is that it resolves the conflict arising from the mixed perspectives of (6) by purely semantic/grammatical means without invoking the controversial notion of pretense.

The interim conclusion reached by the above analysis is that the (NRLR) conditions for non-relationality are satisfied in our approach to the singular fictional terms of (4), (5) and (6). Now we can take a further step in this direction by generalizing the result arising from the analysis of these examples. The connections between character representation scan be further examined along two axes.

26 Local backward effects are not unknown in the literature. For example, from the late 80s onwards cognitive models of speech processing often referred to this contextual phenomenon.

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The first axis concerns matters of epistemic status. Notice that from the point of view of accessibility, we can separate primary or proto-character representations from derived ones. If we look back to our example, we can see this difference between 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'he'. The token proper name in (4) is a token of the proto-representing type *Sherlock Holmes*. The token name has this distinctive epistemic status because it provides us the most direct and specific access possible to the character in question. Other textual occurrences of the name type retain this status. Therefore, every sentence token which includes 'Sherlock Holmes' conveys us a proto-character representation. The situation is reminiscent of the behavior of ordinary proper names which refer directly to the same entity in every context of use.[27] And so it is not incorrect to say that for a competent speaker a token occurrence of the name 'Arnold Schwarzenegger' provides a direct and specific epistemic access to an existing person.

In contrast, other sorts of singular expressions like pronouns (e. g. 'he'), complex demonstratives (e. g. 'that man'), specific indefinites (e. g. 'a detective'), or possessive constructions (e. g. 'my best friend') are to be classified as derived Holmes-representations. These are either means of *t*-corepresentation – like 'he' in (5) and 'they' in (6) –, or means of character representations which are not underpinned by any proto-representing type. The latter case occurs when an author introduces a new character into her manuscript without applying any syntactic proper name. Just to cite one example: Jane Austen wrote in her (manuscript of the) novel *Persuasion* that "A servant came in to say it was ready". Readers have *direct* epistemic access to Austen's new character through processing the indefinite nominal phrase 'a servant'. This is obviously not an instance of proto-character representation. Austen cannot use that phrase as a constant identifying marker in the subsequent sentences of her manuscript. For purposes of *t*-corepresentation, she may later apply definite nominal phrases like 'the servant', 'the man who came in', etc., but this does not alter the fact that the initial token use of 'a servant' is in itself unable to establish a *specific* epistemic access to a repeatable abstract entity.

The second axis is structural. Character-representations are sometimes isolated to a single textual place. For example, a given literary work can be said to contain an isolated servant-representation just in case the phrase 'a servant' occurs only in one sentence token and there are no appropriate *t*-corepresenting singular expressions in the subsequent parts of the manuscript. But this is not typical. In most cases, character representations occur in multiple textual places

27 I am convinced that some version of the direct reference theory of ordinary proper names is correct, but will not argue for it here.

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and generate quite complex *t*-corepresenting chains. Individual character representations and *t*-corepresenting chains are thus organized into greater structures which closely resemble networks. Although in a different theoretical setting, Kamp (2015) made essentially the same observation regarding the organization of these structures.[28] It is worth quoting one passage from his work:

> In short, the fictional character just is the embodiment of a given network that integrates all the representations which belong to it into a single supra-individual whole. Formally we can, following this way of thinking, 'define' the fictional characters that are represented by fictional entity representations by identifying them with the networks to which those representations belong. (Kamp 2015: 309)

If we read Kamp's lines in the light of (NRLR), we must fully agree with him. It is correct to claim that characters are, in a certain sense of the term, embodiments of integrated networks of representations. But before proceeding further and exploring how network integration might come about, I would like to make a short comment on the intended meaning of the term 'embodiment'.

This term has been used recently in two related ways in the literature. In elucidating the type-token distinction for artistic works, Walters (2013: 463) calls the objects "which allow for the generation of tokens the *embodiments* of a type".[29] According to this understanding, musical and literary works as types can exist only if it is possible to generate tokens of those types. Thus, embodiments are thought of as distinctive objects the existence of which is a necessary precondition for the existence of the corresponding works/types. If these distinctive objects are taken, as they should be, as creatable, then one can see how and why musical and literary works can be brought into existence. For example, the manuscript of the novel *A Study in Scarlet* was surely created by Conan Doyle, and therefore the necessary precondition for the existence of the novel is satisfied. Walters emphasizes, however, that the novel as a type does not depend on a particular concrete object, the manuscript Conan Doyle *actually* wrote, since he could have written a syntactically and semantically identical but numerically different manuscript. All that is required is that there exist at least one dis-

28 In his analysis of proper names, Kamp uses the framework of Discourse Representation Theory (DRT). What makes DRT relevant for our current purposes is that it describes natural language constructions in terms of abstract mental states, Discourse Representation Structures (DRSs), that are thought of as preconditions for successfully referring to extramental entities. Meaningful constructions which do not refer to anything real are classified in DRT as DRSs that lack external anchors. But, as far as I know, followers of this theory do not make use of the term 'non-relational linguistic representation'.

29 A forerunner of this kind of approach is to be found in Margolis (1974).

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tinctive object which has been created by Conan Doyle. If it is correct to say that this created object serves as an embodiment of the type *A Study in Scarlet*, then one might arrive at the conclusion that Conan Doyle's novel exists as a created abstractum.

To connect the discussion of the type-token distinction directly to the problem of creation seems to be an obvious theoretical move. This is what we observed briefly in the previous section. Note, however, that in Walters' usage, the term 'embodiment' has a *modal* import that does not have a crucial role to play in our understanding of the nature of non-relational *t*-representations. We do not (and should not) think that the non-relationality of these representations is sensitive to the modal aspects of the context in which they are interpreted.

As the quoted passage above reveals, Kamp's usage of 'embodiment' is free from such modal implications. But it should be added that the term lacks a strict formal definition in his communication-theoretic analysis of fictional discourse. What is evident, nevertheless, is that Kamp consequently distances himself from using figurative or metaphoric expressions in theoretical arguments. Thus by following his style of reasoning, we can easily construe a relatively rigorous definition of 'embodiment'.

According to this definition, 'embodiment' means an operation which binds separate but related elements of entity representations into particular unities. Kamp focuses primarily on the *mental* aspects of this operation. When Kamp mentions networks of entity representations, he alludes to the multiple ways in which the mental states of the members of a particular speech community are coordinated. This is the reason why they can talk about the same (fictional) entities by using the resources of their common language. In our present context, the emphasis lies instead on the fact that the emerging unities of these operations are non-relational *t*-representations which are *linguistic* rather than mental in nature. This is the network meaning of the term 'embodiment' that will be employed in the subsequent parts of this book.

Kamp's core idea according to which fictional characters have to be regarded as embodiments of integrated networks of representations can be supplemented by noting thatnetwork integration may be divided into two types. One integration type is direct integration which links explicit textual *t*-representations together. The other type might be called inferential integration since it links those *t*-representations together that are only implicitly given by a particular textual arrangement. Let us briefly examine each of the two integration types just mentioned.

Conan Doyle's novel *A Study in Scarlet* contains many Holmes-representations. Holmes is portrayed as being a detective, as being not a difficult man to live with, as being a pipe-smoker, and so forth. These characteristics are given

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to the readers in the form of property attributions. This means that Holmes is portrayed by integrating the elements of the property set *P*, where $P = \{p_1, p_2, ...p_n\}$, and p_1, p_2, ... and p_n are the properties explicitly represented by the token sentences of the novel *A Study in Scarlet*. Three different cases may arise here.

Case One. The properties *P* contains are mainly and perhaps entirely personal properties. But Conan Doyle never says explicitly that Holmes is a *person*. That is, the property of being a person does not occur among the elements of *P*. Yet even the first textual occurrence of 'Sherlock Holmes' suggests that Conan Doyle intends to use this proper name as a personal name. Moreover, each expression of the form '_ Holmes _' seems to involve attributing a property to a person. And one cannot find such attributive constructions in the text which would lend direct support to the claim that 'Holmes' is not a vehicle for person-representation. So the property of being a person is strongly consistent with *P*. Hence, it can be concluded that Conan Doyle's character is represented implicitly as a person.

Case Two. According to the novel, Holmes is a pipe-smoker. We know, however, that smokers often have *lungs* that are gross and black. So Holmes might also have gross and black lungs. But Conan Doyle's text is absolutely silent about this matter. *A Study in Scarlet* represents Holmes neither as having gross and black lungs, nor as having healthy lungs. This is not to say that Holmes is an incomplete character representation; it means simply that he is not explicitly represented either way. But some elements of the property set *P* may jointly imply that he has healthy lungs. For example, someone might saw Holmes running fast uphill onto a rock. It is reasonable to suppose that only those are capable of such an action who do not have breathing difficulties. If this were the case in the novel, it would be certainly correct to state that Holmes is represented implicitly as having healthy lungs.

Case Three. Compare this with the case when someone claims that Holmes is a computer program. We would definitively reject this claim by saying that the property of being a computer program is strongly inconsistent with *P*. For this reason, we can say that Holmes is represented neither explicitly nor implicitly as a computer program in *A Study in Scarlet*.

In order to treat such cases uniformly, we may introduce the property set *P**, where $P^* = \{p^*_1, p^*_2, ... p^*_n\}$, and p^*_1, p^*_2, ... p^*_n are the implicit properties deduced from *P* through an appropriately designed interpretative method *M*. For example, in reading that "Sherlock Holmes rose and lit his pipe", we are registering that the property of raising a pipe and the property of lighting a pipe belong to *P*. Then, with the help of *M*, we may immediately come to the conclusion that the property of having handsis an element of *P** – provided that this property has

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not been added already to *P. M* may also prompt the conclusion that the property of being conscious and the property of being liable for acting intentionally follows from the property of lighting a pipe. Without doubt, *P** can be enriched with several related properties. Since it is not a trivial task to develop such a method as *M*, we must be content to *assume* that it can in principle be developed. Under this assumption, the Holmes character of the novel *A Study in Scarlet* may be seen as completely determined by integrating the property sets *P* and *P**. This is the so-called supra-individual whole to which Kamp alludes in the passage cited above.

It is important to keep in mind that the terms 'property' and 'property set' are *not* used here in their (neo-)Meinongian sense. We can say, if we like, that in writing his manuscript Conan Doyle ascribed a particular property (say, being a pipe-smoker) to his protagonist. But this idiom is to some extent misleading, since in the context of the novel *A Study in Scarlet*, property-ascribing predicates like 'is a pipe-smoker' can acquire only non-relational interpretations. There is no language-independent entity (Holmes) to which the text may ascribe a language-independent property (being a pipe-smoker). Thus, in contrast to the (neo-)Meinongian theory which conceives property attribution as a relational act, the present view acknowledges properties only at the level of non-relational linguistic representation. To repeat, the central claim is that Conan Doyle's character exists as an embodiment of the network that integrates directly and inferentially the elements of *P* and *P**.

Here a brief digression from our main theme is in order. If it is correct to say that characters are embodiments of networks of linguistic representations, then this characterization may also be true of other kinds of abstract entities. One might wonder, for example, whether numbers can also be ontologically understood as embodiments of the same type of representational networks.

Recall that defenders of the Thomassonian deflationist position contend that one should not delve into the realm of deep first-order ontological questions to decide which entities belong to the overall inventory of what there is. According to them, these questions simply do not arise, not even in such controversial cases as abstract entities. By using anappropriate easy argument one can demonstrate that the general existence question concerning numbers is in principle easily resolvable. The core message of such an argument would be that if one uses the term 'number' in the way it has been introduced into our public language, then one ought to be committed to numbers. As in the case of fictional characters, the argument would state that if certain linguistic and cultural practices exist – the application and coapplication conditions of number terms are actually fulfilled – then numbers exist, too.

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Recall also, however, that one of our concerns with the deflationist method was that linguistic and cultural practices are not specific enough to allow a finer discrimination among various subtypes of entity types. That is, the commitment to numbers as abstract entities leaves entirely in the dark exactly what subtype of abstractum one is committed to. Perhaps numbers were abstracted from everyday computational routines at the beginning of human culture and thus they are cultural abstracta like institutions, laws and other socio-historical products. Thomasson herself seems to sympathize with this account. But the claim that a certain kind of entity is a cultural abstractum emphasizes only the historical origin of that entity and tells us nothing about its subtype classification. An alternative view would be that numbers are second-order concepts as Frege once maintained. This alternative is not especially appealing in our present context of discussion since Frege interpreted concepts within a Platonist ontological framework. Thomasson expresses her own reservations about Platonic concepts, too, by saying that "[o]ne might try to avoid entering into a theory of concepts by working instead with terms".[30]

If we abandon the Platonic idea of concepts and turn to terms, as Thomasson proposed, we may try to approach the classificatory problem of numbers from the perspective of (NRLR). As we have seen, (NRLR) emerges from the following insight: if *R* is a representation *of* a particular object, *o*, then *o* must exist in the spatiotemporal region of our actual world. On the other hand, if *R* is an *o*-representation, then *o* need not exist in the spatiotemporal region of our actual world. This insight motivated the introduction of the type distinction between representations of *o* and *o*-representations.

Now, simple number names like 'two' or 'three' are obviously not representations *of* numbers in the above specific sense. It is much less easy to decide whether 'two' or 'three' can be regarded as *number*-representations.

Interestingly, simple number names and character names seem to share certain common features. One important commonality is that number names also lack language-external, worldly representata. 'Three' does not have a representatum neither in predicate position – 'The number of my cars is now three' –, nor in argument position – 'Three is my favorite number'. If someone would disagree, they should offer a suitable method for identifying the object to which 'three' is representationally related in these sentences. I doubt this can be done. Another commonality is that in spite of their lacking language-external representata number names and character names alike can contribute representational contents to utterances which purport to refer. Substituting 'two' for

30 Thomasson (2015b: 85).

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'three' in the utterance of 'The number of my cars is now three' would generate a different content. Trivial tests like this show that number names are not representationally idle. One last common feature is that the representational contents number names typically contribute to utterances are publicly available and shareable among different speakers. An utterance of the sentence 'Three is a fortunate number' may evoke various reactions from receivers ranging from agreement through neutrality to disagreement. Reactions of this type would certainly not be evoked, if the representational contribution of 'three' to the content of utterances were not publicly and interpersonally graspable.

So it seems that all of the conditions of (NRLR) enlisted in Chapter 3.1 are met not only by character names but also by number names. Is it reasonable to conclude, then, that numbers exist in the same way as fictional characters – namely, as embodiments of networks of non-relational linguistic representations?

There is one potential consideration against this conclusion. If character-representations and number-representations belonged to the same subtype of abstracta, then there would be no definite way to distinguish between them. By this I mean that if we assume that fictional characters and numbers are ontologically on a par, then we will have to ascribe to them the same essential characteristics concerning their behavior in linguistic, epistemic and other contexts. In such a situation, there would remain no clear criterion to tell them apart. But it is intuitively very likely that 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'three' do differ in some important respects. Presumably, one of these respects is the intended fictionality of literary entities.[31] Names can be introduced into fictional prose works freely without obeying the external constraints of entity representations. This holds not only for paradigmatic examples of syntactic proper names like 'Holmes' or 'Bolkonsky' but also for names in general.

Consider just one example. Imagine an author who intends to introduce into her manuscript a new whole number between two and three. However absurd it is, she might invent or create this new abstract entity under the number name 'twee'. If she does so, she can use the first token occurrence of this name in the internal context of her authorial work as a starting point for building a wider network of explicit and implicit textual twee-representations. Obviously, something like this can easily happen in an ontologically productive process like that of literary storytelling but it could hardly be part of serious, non-fictional mathematics. In the internal context of a mathematical model, where number-representations are governed by high-level logico-mathematical standards, there

31 On the interpretation of intended fictionality, see also Gu (2006: 46).

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is no place for number names which are introduced by purely fictional purposes. It is clear, furthermore, that sentences containing tokens of 'twee' could not be intelligibly uttered even under the looser standards of everyday mathematical practice.

While it would be tempting to claim that numbers can be accounted for in *exactly* the same way as fictional characters, the above considerations do not support such a strong claim. We have seen that intended fictionality can be taken as a criterion with which character-representations and number-representations can be distinguished from each other.

The difference may be explicated in the following way. Character-representations – even inconsistent ones like Elderly in Chapter 2 – are intelligible in whatever context and under whichever perspective one entertains them. It does not matter, in this regard, whether we entertain them in fiction-internal or fiction-external contexts. In both cases, language users mobilize in their thought and talk tokens of the same (NRLR)-type representations. The intelligibility of number-representations, in contrast, is strongly constrained by the internal standards of non-fictional mathematical reasoning. That is, although there are literary contexts in which absurd or inconsistent number-representations such as 'twee' are freely inventable, this is certainly not true for *all* conceivable contexts and for *all* possible number-representations.

On this basis, perhaps numbers could be thought of as non-relational representational units the intelligibility of which is determinedby certain context-sensitive standards instead of universal ones. One kind of standard might be operative in conversational contexts where, for example, twee-representations are subsumed under whole-number-representations to make a certain fictional narrative coherent and interpretable. Another kind of standard might be operative in conversational contexts where, for example, two-representations and three-representations are subsumed under whole-number-representations to make a particular mathematical model logically and structurally coherent. Thus, depending on the features of the conversational context in which they are uttered, 'twee is a whole number' and 'two is a whole number' might function equally as explicit number-representations. But this functional sameness has to be seen as being determined by incompatible standards of intelligibility. Such standards may be thought of as belonging to the context of assessment of these representational units rather than to the (representational) content of the sentences that have been assessed. But it would take us too far afield to get into these issues here.

We are now equipped to return to our main subject. Up to this point in this chapter, we have focused on the connections between character-representations with respect to a self-standing, single fictional prose work. However, many stories exhibit a serial structure so that one or more of the characters of a serial-be-

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ginning work reoccur in later works.[32] While the stories we are told exhibit signs of continuity, the works are clearly discontinuous. It can be difficult to see, how to account for such cases in the present framework. To stick to our example, the question concerns the criterion for the transfictional or crossworks identity of the Holmes character. *A Study in Scarlet* was the first novel to feature Sherlock Holmes. The character occurred next time in the story of *The Sign of Four*. Common sense would dictate, I think, that these novels share their main protagonist. Three intuitive thoughts are relevant in this regard. First, the novels are authored by the same writer, Conan Doyle, and this seems to guarantee that the protagonists are intended to be identical. Second, the protagonists have a lexically identical proper name and this is in itself counts as a significant sign of character identity. And third, the protagonists possess a number of common properties which would ordinarily be sufficient for their identity.

This is a point where our theory must depart from common sense. Recall that in the first chapter we opted for the methodological stance of moderate revisionarism which accepts the prima facie reliability of common sense data. But moderate revisionarism accepts also theoretical claims as data sources, and in cases of conflict it allows for revising the reliability of the former kind of data.

Consider, in this light, the common-sensical thoughts mentioned above. Is it plausible to claim that the novels *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four* contain the same Holmes character because they are written by the same author? This seems to be a rather weak criterion for character identity. The identity of the authors is not a sufficient condition for serial fiction. We can imagine a scenario in which Conan Doyle has forgotten that he was the author of the novel *A Study in Scarlet*. Perhaps this was the result of a temporary memory disorder. In this period of time, he decided to write a novel entitled *The Sign of Four* which told a story about a clever detective. The Sherlock Holmes of this work was therefore an entirely new character, not the reappearing of the old one. Here is another example. If we use 'identity' in a broad sense, we can say that the James Bond series is based on the identity of its main character. The James Bond series was initiated by Ian Fleming. But besides Fleming, eight other authors have written Bond novels. Bond writers include, among others, Kingsley Amis and John Gardner. This shows that the identity of the authors is not a necessary condition for the crossworks identity of characters.

32 There has been recently a growing interest in the study of serial fiction. See, among others, McGonial (2013) and Caplan (2014). While McGonial offers a relativist solution to the problem of continuity between works of serial fiction, Caplan argues for a contextualist view.

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Maybe, characters are to be individuated across different works on the basis of "their" names. If the identity of character names implies the identity of characters, then the Sherlock Holmes of *A Study in Scarlet* is identical with the Sherlock Holmesof *The Sign of Four*. Should we regard this as a stronger criterion for character identity? I believe that the right answer is "no". Although proper names are vehicles of proto-character representation, they cannot in themselves alone establish character identities across distinct works. There are many possible examples that illustrate the point I want to make. Consider this one. Thorne Smith's novel *The Night Life of the Gods*, published in 1931, contains several tokens of the syntactic name type 'Alfred Lambert'. Jonathan Franzen's novel *The Corrections*, published in 2001, contains also several tokens of the lexical name type 'Alfred Lambert'. One might think that the occurrence of these syntactically type-identical proper names demonstrates that, in a certain sense, Franzen continues Smith's story and their characters are identical. In fact, however, there is no historical or other connection between these prose works. Consequently, we have not one, but two Alfred Lambert characters. One might interject that this does not hold in the case of Conan Doyle because his novels are intimately related to each other. Conan Doyle intended to continue his first story with Sherlock Holmes in it, so it is plausible to assume that there is only one single Holmes character. But this assumption is unlikely to be strictly correct. We wondered whether proper names could perform an individuating function across distinct works and authorial intentions are wholly irrelevant to this question.

Perhaps characters can be individuated on the basis of their common properties. If Conan Doyle's stories invariably tell us that Holmes is a clever detective, that he is a pipe-smoker, that helives at 221B Baker Street, etc., then we can safely say that these stories contain the same fictional character.

We could go even one step further by claiming that the same character can occur in different fictional media. There are a number of movies and TV series whose screenplays are closely related to Conan Doyle's literary works. Thus, a movie or TV series episode which is based on the text of the novel *A Study in Scarlet* may be said to feature the same Holmes character as the movie or TV series episode which is based on the narrative of *The Sign of Four*.

Again, this thought has certain intuitive pull, but is ultimately incorrect.[33] From our present perspective, Holmes is the embodiment of the network that in-

33 In approaching this issue from a different perspective, *de Ponte*, *Korta* & Perry (2018) seem to hold a similar view: "One might wonder whether the uses of 'Sherlock Holmes' related to, for instance, the recent BBC series do co-refer with the uses of the name in statements about Conan Doyle's stories; that is to say, whether we are talking about the same fictional character or not. We are not going to discuss this question in detail, but our intuitions lead us to suspect

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tegrates the elements of P and $P^{\star}$. A thorough analysis of the text of the novel *A Study in Scarlet* would completely determine both P and $P^{\star}$. (Suppose that there is a fixed M-type method for performing this task.) Given that the novel *The Sign of Four* consists of a different set of token sentences, it will not determine the same P and, consequently, neither will it determine the same $P^{\star}$. Let us denote the relevant sets constituting the Holmes of *The Sign of Four* by P^{+} and $P^{+\star}$. Of course, P and P^{+} will share certain elements – namely those about which we talked above – and thus the intersection of $P^{\star}$ and $P^{+\star}$ will not be empty. Yet partial representational sameness implies resemblance, not identity. The networks that are built on the integration of $P/P^{\star}$ and $P^{+}/P^{+\star}$ are therefore not identical. Though it seems counterintuitive, the two protagonists occurring in Conan Doyle's novels are distinct fictional characters.

Armed with these theoretical reflections, we can conclude that there is no direct and sufficiently strong criterion for crossworks identity.[34] While common sense suggests that characters are distributed over subsequent works of serial fiction, our reformed artefactualist principles imply the essential locality of characters. It seems to me that we are forced to think, contrary to everyday thought, that every characteris located in a single fictional prose work. The works in which they are located are those into which they have been originally introduced by their authors. Seen through our representation-theoretic lens, we can make a precise distinction between $\text{Holmes}_{\textit{A Study in Scarlet}}$ and $\text{Holmes}_{\textit{The Sign of Four}}$ without thereby denying that there is a partial resemblance relation between these characters.

As has been mentioned in Chapter 2.1, texts of novels and short stories often concern or are "about" things which really exist. Historical individuals, events and places are among the most frequent kinds of non-purely fictional entities.

At this point in our discussion, we cannot evade the question of how these entities are represented in their respective works. For example, Napoleon is a non-purely fictional entity in Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace*. Note that 'Napoleon' stands in a causal and/or historical relation to its referent, just like any ordinary proper name. It is tempting to think, therefore, that Tolstoy used this name with the intention of talking about the historical Napoleon, who died when he was seven years old. In Chapter VII of the novel, one can read the following sentence: "There is a war now against Napoleon". A possible artefactualist approach to this passage is to say that Tolstoy intended to refer here to a real

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that, despite their many similarities, in these particular examples the two Sherlock Holmeses are two different fictional characters". In arguing so, de Ponte, Korta and Perry allude to the semantic phenomenon of conditional coreference (coco-reference).

34 A similar standpoint is advocated by Voltolini (2012).

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individual even though the conversational context in which the sentence occurred was not a real one. Thomasson (2010) seems to propose a similar explanation:

> There is a Napoleon character created in the story (to which readers can refer) even if the story is making *de re* reference to the historical Napoleon and pretending to assert various new things about him. (Thomasson 2010: 19)

According to Thomasson, 'Napoleon' plays a twofold role in the text. It introduces a fictional character into the story, and at the same time, it refers to a historical individual. Tolstoy asserts new things about this individual, but he uses the name within the context of pretense.

In this form, however, the explanation is not entirely accurate. If 'Napoleon' refers to a historical individual in the text, then what is the point of pretending? Authorial pretense works properly only in ontologically defective contexts. To pretend to assert that '*N* is *F*' is appropriate just in two cases. The first is when it is known that there is actually no such entity as *N*. In such cases, one must talk within the scope of the pretense because an assertive utterance of '*N* is *F*' would be infelicitous. Antirealists prefer to describe the main motive for authorial pretense in this way. In the second case *N* exists, but one knows that a face-value reading of '*N* is *F*' would involve a category mistake: an abstract entity, *N*, would be wrongly identified with a concrete one. Many realists think that in order to avoid this type of mistake, authors must merely pretend to assert that '*N* is *F*'.

Given that Napoleon exists, or once existed, the first case is irrelevant. Since the face-value reading of 'There is a war now against Napoleon' does not involve a category mistake (i.e. 'Napoleon' appears to refer to a concrete individual and it really refers to such an individual), the second case is also irrelevant. Now it is hard to understand how Napoleon can be a fictional character, if the name 'Napoleon' refers to its original bearer in the novel and its use ought not be associated with pretense.[35]

An alternative artefactualist explanation would be to say that Napoleon is a fictional character *because* it is an abstract product of Tolstoy's storytelling activity. The emphasis lies here on the abstract and created nature of the character which excludes that it has been imported into the novel from the extra-fictional world. This takes us away from the Thomassonian explanation as we may con-

35 Recall that in Chapter 2.1, we saw that Berto's neo-Meinongian approach to non-purely fictional entities is also inaccurate.

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tend that Napoleon is a *purely* fictional entity like Bolkonsky, Natalya Ilyinichna Rostova and other famous protagonists of *War and Peace*.

This means, in our present terminology, that a token occurrence of the name 'Napoleon', as it stands in the text, conveys a Napoleon-representation, not a representation of Napoleon. Accordingly, in Tolstoy's sentence 'There is a war now against Napoleon' 'Napoleon' functions as a proto-character representation without being causally and/or historically related to the original bearer of the name. This may seem curious at first, but let us try to explain.

We argued in this chapter that fictional characters are to be thought of as embodiments of networks that integrate the elements of two property sets. Let us denote the explicitly represented properties of Tolstoy's character by P^{++}. Then P^{++} = {being an emperor, having an army, having met Andrei Bolkonsky, ...}. By applying an *M*-style method, we get the set of the implicitly represented properties, $P^{++}\star$, such that $P^{++}\star$ = {being human, having foresight, having a short term memory, ...}. My claim is that the network based on $P^{++}/P^{++}\star$ cannot be conceived as a representation of the historical Napoleon, for two reasons.

First, P^{++} contains elements that are purely fictional. One of these elements is the property of having met Andrei Bolkonsky. Of course, the historical Napoleon has never met abstract objects like Bolkonsky and so he cannot have this property. It would not help to maintain that Tolstoy merely pretended to assert that the historical Napoleon met Bolkonsky. As we have seen just before, there is little point in pretending to assert things about existing entities.[36]

Second, even if P^{++} were restricted to the properties of the historical Napoleon, $P^{++}\star$ would certainly include some purely fictional elements. Let us suppose that Tolstoy mentions Napoleon's name only once in his novel by writing down the sentence 'Napoleon was in Austerlitz'. Assume also that no anaphoric reference is made to this character. If this were the case, then we would get a singleton set for explicit character representation such that P^{++} = {being in Austerlitz}. Since the historical Napoleon has or had this property, one might conclude that Tolstoy's character is identical with the real individual. But now recall that Tolstoy told us that Andrei Bolkonsky has been wounded at the Battle of Austerlitz. Suppose this part of the novel remains unaltered. This has the consequence that the explicit Bolkonsky-representation comes into contact with the explicit Napoleon-representation, so that we can deduce that Napoleon is implicitly represented as being at the place where Andrei Bolkonsky has been wound-

36 This kind of pretense is possible only in irony or other figurative modes of speech. When I say 'Arnold is rude' in an unnatural tone, my conversational partners immediately realize that I do not want to assert that Arnold has the property of rudeness.

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ed, that is, we arrive at $P^{++}\star$ = {being at the place where Andrei Bolkonsky has been wounded, ...}. Analogously to 'having met Andrei Bolkonsky', the property 'being at the place where Andrei Bolkonsky has been wounded' is a fictional property. So, if Napoleon, the character, is the embodiment of the network integrating P^{++} and $P^{++}\star$, then it cannot be identical with the historical individual, because either P^{++} or $P^{++}\star$ (or both) must contain one or more fictional element.

If it is true, as seems to be the case, that every fictional prose work contains at least one fictional character, then the above result generalizes to other examples of literary storytelling. The overall conclusion we can draw is that there are no non-purely fictional characters in novels and short stories. Every literary character is purely fictional. More generally, every fictional entity – be it a character, a property, or an event – is native to its host work and thus there are no cross-categorical entities in literary works.

Of course, at the surface level of storytelling, character representations may sometimes be indistinguishable from representations of real entities. It may happen that a literary work and a scientific study contain tokens of the same sentence type. Proper names like 'Napoleon', 'London', or descriptive phrases like 'the World War I' may occur in the same sentential construction in both kinds of text. But if we look more closely at how these token sentences represent what they do, we find a decisive difference. In texts of literary prose works, Napoleon, London, or the World War I are embodiments of created representational networks that do not stand in a causal and/or historical relation to language-external representata. In contrast, authors of scientific studies use these singular expressions as devices of relational representation. In order to describe and understand a particular area of reality, scientists create representational networks, but (apart from cases of failed theoretical posits) they do not create mere linguistic constructions. This is a sharp but not wholly isolated contrast.

What we have here is on a par with the contrast between the knowability of fictional and real entities. We know that the character of Napoleon "met" the character of Bolkonsky on the basis of our knowledge of the text of Tolstoy's novel. We must read and understand the passage in which the author tells us that Napoleon met Bolkonsky. In contrast, the knowledge involved in knowing that the historical Napoleon was in Austerlitz is not language-based but perception-based. This is a piece of knowledge which can be ultimately traced back to a perceptual encounter with Napoleon when he was present at that place. The parallelism of these contrast pairs arises from the fact that when we try to give an answer to the question of how non-relational representations differ from relational ones, semantic and epistemic considerations mutually reinforce each other.

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We are now in a position to provide a new artefactualist account of fictional characters. In Chapter 2.3, we started with an analysis of the best extant artefactualist views of characters. We have seen that, compared with (neo)-Meinongian comprehension principles, (ASC) and (MSC) have made some progress, but they still wrongly assumed that characters were language-independent abstract entities. Then, following Goodman's and Burge's suggestions, we have also seen that there is a notion of non-relational linguistic representation which can fruitfully be employed in a systematic theory of literary fiction. This led us to the formulation of (NRLR). The employment of (NRLR) raised certain questions concerning the inner structure and identifiability of literary entities. In the present chapter, I tried to show how to find appropriate answers to these questions. By bringing these lines of thought together, we can propose the following final definition:

> *Characters as Non-Relational Representations* (CNRR): fictional characters are embodiments of networks of non-relational linguistic representations. Such networks possess the following essential properties: (i) they are created by an author (or authors), (ii) they are directly and inferentially integrated, (iii) they are located in a single prose work, and (iv) concerning their ontological commitments, they are confined exclusively to the domain of purely fictional entities.

One apparent feature of (CNRR) is that it cannot be charged with an unnecessary reduplication of the object of inquiry. Many realists think that characters are abstracta dependent on but not identical to the linguistic structures of fictional prose works. The idea varies in its manifestations. Some theorists say that characters are cultural artefacts (Thomasson 1999), others say that they are generic objects (Wollheim 1968) or initiated types (Levinson 2013); again others contend that they are to be thought of as historical individuals (Rohrbaugh 2003).[37] These views suggest that in analyzing the ontological status of characters, a double work is being done: first, a particular abstract linguistic structure is detected and scrutinized, and second, aspecific kind of abstract entity is attached to this structure. If we adopt (CNRR), we can reject the idea of such a double work. Since (CNRR) defines characters in terms of linguistic representations, our analysis should stop at the first stage of inquiry. That is, we need *not* go beyond the analysis of abstract linguistic structures because the objects of our inquiry are given to us already at the level of these structures.

37 It must be added that apart from Thomasson, all other theorists talk about the ontological status of literary works. Nonetheless, they all seem to assume that literary characters belong to the same ontological category as literary works, so all statements which hold for the latter must also hold for the former.

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Seen from a broader perspective, (CNRR) can also help avoid the problems arising from the simple-minded account of realism. Among other things, it can enable us to see why the antirealist critique of the realist's ontological commitment is flawed. Antirealists like Walton (1990), Brock (2010) or Everett (2013) err in thinking that realists must be committed to self-standing abstract (or concrete) entities which have language-independent identity criteria.

To see this, consider an example taken from Everett (2013). Everett claims that if Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* tells us that 16 policemen came to arrest Tess, then the realist seems to be committed to 16 different characters even though the text does not make explicit distinctions between them. This is an uncomfortable situation for realists, argues Everett, because it is hard to see how they could offer any sort of identity criteria for characters which do not possess discriminating properties. Two things need to be noted here. Everett seems quite justified in claiming both that the plural phrase '16 policemen' introduces 16 distinct characters into the text and that realists have to interpret this phrase in an ontologically committing way. On the other hand, the question of character identity is not so straightforward as Everett seems to take it. In ontological and metaphysical debates, the treatment of identity questions is usually separated from the treatment of the questions of representation. This is so even when the debate concerns the identity of abstract entities. For example, if *A* and *B* are sets, then it is correct to say that *A* and *B* are identical if and only if *A* and *B* have the same members. Otherwise they are distinct. The set membership relation is crucial for the definition of the identity criteria of sets, but it is irrelevant that the identical (or distinct) sets are represented by the symbols '*A*' and '*B*'.

The case of Thomas Hardy's 16 policemen differs from this, at least seen from the perspective of (CNRR). Here we talk about fictional characters and the identity criteria of these entities are to be defined in terms of representation. If we denote the set of explicitly represented properties of the 16 policemen individually by P_1, P_2,..., P_{16}, what we get is P_1 = {being a policeman, coming to arrest Tess}, P_2 = {being a policeman, coming to arrest Tess}, ..., P_{16} = {being a policeman, coming to arrest Tess}. As predicted by antirealists, there is no possibility to appeal to a representational difference here on the basis of which we could say that Hardy has introduced 16 distinct characters into the story of Tess. Implicitly represented properties come to the rescue, however. Let us mark each character with a number index so that c_{p1}, c_{p2}, ..., c_{p16} symbolize the 16 policemen to be identified and distinguished. So the implicit property set of c_{p1} may be denoted by P_1* such that P_1* = {being distinct from c_{p2}, c_{p3}, ..., c_{p16}, ...}. This means that c_{p1} is implicitly represented, among other things, as being distinct from the remaining other 15 characters. Analogously for c_{p2} where P_2*

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= {being distinct from c_{p1}, c_{p3}, ..., c_{p16}, ...}; and so on until you get to c_{p16} and P_{16}*. The implicit property sets P_1*, P_2*, ..., P_{16}* are different and from this it follows that the characters c_{p1}, c_{p2}, ..., c_{p16} are different too. (Recall that each c_{pi} is an embodiment of a representational network that integrates the elements of P_i and P_i*, where $1 \leq i \leq 16$.)

I think this result would be quite close to the responses of everyday readers. It is intuitively tempting to believe that Hardy's 16 policemen constitute a group of characters that consists of identifiable and distinguishable individuals even if explicit textual clues are absent. The intuitive thought is, of course, that the text (non-relationally) *represents* this group as having identifiable and distinguishable individuals as members. The deductions drawn from the plural phrase were similar when a newspaper would run a headline claiming that 16 policemen came to arrest a suspect. Newspaper readers would believe that the headline (relationally) *represents* a group of identifiable and distinguishable individuals. This does not imply, however, that everyday readers must believe that fictional and real policemen possess the same identity criteria. We are reasoning here about a phenomenon of language use, namely, that a plural phrase supports the same implicit conclusion at the level of (both kinds of) linguistic representation.[38]

This brings us to a related problem. Let us assume that (CNRR) is correct in its fundamentals. How can it be the case, then, that in appreciating a story readers are thinking about the *same* fictional character?

To answer this question, two cases need to be considered. The first one is easier to handle. It can happen that a given literary work contains a character-representation, which is based on a single textual occurrence and there are no appropriate *t*-corepresenting singular expressions in the subsequent parts of the text. A good example for this case is the only (and isolated) occurrence of the indefinite description 'a servant' in Jane Austen's novel *Persuasion*. When readers process the sentence 'A servant came in to say it was ready', they cannot but recognize the same servant-representation. That is, when one hears, after reading Austen's novel, that 'a servant was mentioned in this novel', they will necessarily think "about" the same fictional character. It does not matter wheth-

38 Everett (2013: 229) mentions a related problem. A plural phrase like'many trolls' seems to commit artefactualists to a totality of indeterminate cardinality. But, Everett claims, if characters exist, then we need to know exactly how many troll characters there are. On my view, the right response is to reject this question as nonsense. Artefactualists can say that trolls are explicitly indistinguishable from each other, but they are implicitly represented as being distinct individuals. And that is all. At the level of non-relational representation there are no other criteria available for identifying a fictional plurality like 'many trolls'.

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er such a single textual occurrence is a proto-character representation or not. The important thing is that the intersubjective sameness of the representation is guaranteed exclusively by the textual occurrence of an appropriate singular expression.

But this kind of textual configuration is the exception rather than the rule. The other, more frequent, case is where the vehicles of character representation occur in multiple textual places and generate complex integrated (and *t*-corepresenting) networks. In such cases, the intersubjective sameness of characters depends on the way readers engage with these networks. Proto-character representations (i. e. syntactic proper names) play an important role in that process since they enable a direct epistemic access to characters. Obviously, the most efficient way to think "about" the same fictional character for different readers is to utter and interpret a sentence which contains a syntactic proper name. Derived character representations such as 'Dr. Watson's best friend' are less efficient in this regard. Of course, an attentive reader knows pretty well that 'Dr. Watson's best friend' belongs to a particular property set *P*, the elements of which are explicitly represented by the token sentences of the novel *A Study in Scarlet*. She knows also pretty well that the property set in question serves to portray the main protagonist of the novel (i. e. Sherlock Holmes).

But there is no epistemic guarantee that *every* reader can identify the network to which a derived representation like this belongs. On the other hand, identity judgments depend on how the individual elements of *t*-corepresenting chains are accessed and interpreted. Although readers might be ignorant about 'Dr. Watson's best friend', they may nevertheless be able to recognize that 'is a detective' and 'lives at 221B Baker Street' belong to the *Holmes*-corepresenting chain. Something like this could be enough to prevent a misunderstanding between them concerning the identity of the character in question.

The consequence of this potential epistemic asymmetry and/or sufficiency is that in everyday conversational situations the intersubjective sameness of characters, the identity of the abstract entities readers think and talk "about", is rarely an absolute matter. Character identity can come in degrees and allows for cases that are practically undecidable.[39] Given that readers cannot have epistemic access to fictional entities independently of their contingent interactions with texts, this appears to be a reasonable account.

39 Observe that thus far we have made two substantive claims concerning character identity. The first is that there is no direct and sufficiently strong criterion for *crossworks identity* of characters. The second is that the *intersubjective identity* of characters is a matter of degree. I hope it is obvious that these claims address the same metaphysical/ontological issue from different but related perspectives.

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At this point, antirealists and other opponents of the artefactualist view might claim that even if one reinterprets the standpoint of fictional realism along the lines of (CNRR), there remain well-known theoretical problems which cannot be dealt with by a purely representationalist account.

One of these problems concerns the createdness of fictional entities. Although (CNRR) mentions the created nature of characters, it does not explain what should be understood by 'creation'. In other words, it is not yet clear what does it mean to create integrated networks of linguistic representations. Until such an explanation is given, one must be skeptical regarding the efficacy of (CNRR).

Another often-discussed problem is the problem of emotional response to literary fiction. It is a vexed question whether readers may be related emotionally to fictional characters or not. In everyday situations of interactions, emotional states are typically caused by existing or once existed entities. Although fictional characters exist, they are not flesh-and-blood persons. So, it is a real puzzle how readers can genuinely pity Anna Karenina or really admire Sherlock Holmes.

A further concern is the treatment of negative existential statements. Such a sentence as 'Anna Karenina does not exist' generates a headache especially for realists – including artefactualists – because it seems to express a true statement (i.e. there is no such person/individual as Anna Karenina) which contradicts to the realists' most basic claim (i.e. Anna Karenina and other fictional characters definitively exist). What is needed is an explanation of how existence-denials like this can tell us something true about our actual world.

These problems provide further tests for the tenability of (CNRR). In the next chapter, I will argue that (CNRR) passes these tests rather well and this makes it plausible that our reformed artefactualist theory is able to accommodate a wider range of data than its rivals.

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4 Recalcitrant problems for theories of fictionalia

As the previous chapters demonstrated, some of the questions we have addressed about fictional characters are rooted in the conflict between two possible interpretive perspectives. Seen from an internal perspective, a fictional character might appear as real as a concrete individual in our immediate environment. Seen from an external perspective, the same character can be thought of either as a nonexistent object or as an abstractum, or, alternatively, it can even be conceived as an epiphenomenon of authorial pretense.

The conflict of interpretative perspectives is not bound to a particular theoretical framework. For example, a Waltonian antirealist would not hesitate to say that Conan Doyle's token sentence 'Holmes was certainly not a difficult man to live with' is connected to an internal interpretative perspective and thus readers have to follow Conan Doyle's suggestion and pretend with him that there is such a person as Holmes. The Waltonian antirealist cannot make the same verdict about sentence tokens that apparently presuppose a fiction-external interpretative perspective. It is implausible to say that in processing 'Holmes is a fictional character' readers have to pretend that Holmes is a person, since this token sentence expresses a true statement even in non-pretend contexts. Antirealists might try to resolve this conflict either by saying that in occupying an external perspective readers extend the original pretense so that they pretend that fictional characters exist, or by regarding the assertion of extra-fictional sentences as a kind of "betrayal" of the original pretense.

Life is not easier for realists. An adherent of the Thomassonian approach is forced to say that tokens of 'Holmes' do not refer to anything in Conan Doyle's novel, but she must hold that in extra-fictional contexts tokens of this name can be used to refer to an abstract artefact. The conflict between these interpretations might be mitigated by claiming that the original occurrence of the name establishes a semantic chain of use which, due to the referential intentions of readers, may function as a genuine referential chain in fiction-external contexts.

Presumably, this perspectival phenomenon is what lies behind the problems I mentioned at the end of the last chapter. Let us consider creation first. The statement that Sherlock Holmes has been created by Conan Doyle has only one true reading. This statement is true just in case one interprets it from a fiction-external perspective. But this fact can be explained in two different ways. Antirealists may base their explanations on the notions 'extended pretense' or 'betrayal': in saying that Conan Doyle is the creator of Holmes, we readers are just extending or betraying the original pretense that is mandated by the internal

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context of the work.[1] On the other hand, realists can argue that Holmes as a character has been created in the internal context of the novel *A Study in Scarlet* and this is why the name 'Holmes' genuinely refers to the created character in contexts that are external to the novel.[2]

The account one gives of readers' emotional responses to fictional characters is also affected by this duality of perspectives. An author may attempt to elicit sympathy or pity for her main protagonist by telling a story that is capable to trigger an appropriate emotional involvement. Theoretical debates concern the status of the target of such emotional responses. One option is to say that emotions have only an imagined target which belongs to the internal context of authorial pretense. Note, however, that the holders of this opinion should elucidate how genuine emotional states can be triggered by entities that do not have real existence outside of make-believe games or pretenses. Another option is to claim that if the emotions readers feel are genuine mental states, then their targets must exist somewhere, and somehow, outside of the story.[3] But arguing for this opinion would of course require explaining how characters outside of the story are capable to induce emotional states at all. This is not a trivial task if characters are construed as abstract entities.

True negative existentials are puzzling for the same reason. At first sight, they seem to be compatible with both interpretive perspectives. A true statement 'c_N does not exist' tells us that *N* is ruled out of the overall inventory of what there is. Note, however, that in whatever way one establishes an interpretation, one will be in trouble.

When 'c_N does not exist' is interpreted as involving the internal context of a fictional work, then *N* turns out to be a non-referring expression. This is certainly consistent with the view that internal contexts are governed by authorial pretense, but, approached in this way, the utterance of the negative existential sentence will not express a complete proposition. This, in turn, yields the consequence that 'c_N does not exist' cannot be evaluated neither as true nor as false, which goes against our pre-theoretical intuitions.[4] On the other hand, when 'c_N does not exist' is interpreted as involving fiction-external contexts, then *N* may refer to something, but in this case the negative existential statement will predicate of an existing thing that that very thing does not exist. From a pre-theoretical point of view, this is unacceptable too; it would come as a surprise if

1 Cf. Everett (2013: 60).

2 Cf. Thomasson (2010: 28, fn. 14).

3 Cf. Gendler & Kovakovich (2005).

4 Recall that Salmon (1998) is an exception in this regard as he contends that names are referential expressions even in fiction-internal contexts.

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existence-denials were commonly understood as paradox-like constructions which do not express or even purport to express factual statements.

I do not think the best response to these conflicting cases is that we try to develop an explanatory strategy which favors one perspective at the cost of the other. This is a move typical of antirealists who argue for the exclusiveness of the fiction-internal interpretive perspective, according to which every assertion in literary discourse falls in the scope of (extended) pretense. It is not much better to claim, as some realists have done, that fiction-internal perspectives from which pretend assertions are interpreted substantiate automatically fiction-external perspectives which allow for making real assertions about fictional matters. The resulting view can be seen as still attaching a certain explanatory priority to fiction-internal perspectives.

In my view, a representationalist account of fictional discourse offers a serious alternative here, in that it regards the internal/external contrast as of secondary theoretical importance. The crucial question is rather how representational networks come into being and how consumers of literary texts can, and do, engage with these networks. In order to see this, we have to discuss the above-mentioned problems in a little more detail.

4.1 Creation

Every version of the artefactualist view of literary fiction is committed to the thesis that characters are abstract entities, which are created by the intentional activities of writers. On this view, to compose a manuscript is to perform an ontologically productive activity. Certainly, those who have nominalistic scruples against admitting abstract entities into one's ontology would reject the whole idea. Note, however, that for nominalists who hold that postulating a realm of abstract entities is simply unintelligible, the explanation of the meaningfulness of the talk about these (alleged) entities is still an important and pressing task.

Putting nominalism aside, the artefactualists' conception of authorial creation can be – and has been – criticized from two different directions. One kind of critique emphasizes the abstract status of characters but rejects the assumption that acts of writing are ontologically productive. The second kind of critique accepts that if there are any characters at all, they have to be created in a non-metaphorical sense, but adds that artefactualists are unable to elucidate how such a thing can be possible. I will discuss these critiques in this order.

Deutsch (1991) is one among those who are elaborating a conception according to which stories and fictional characters are, in the final analysis, purely abstract entities. Deutsch prefers a Platonist account of creation that rests on the

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following two general assumptions: (i) there is a plenitude of characters, and (ii) authors characterize their protagonists attributively.

The content of the first assumption is that every possible fictional character exists but their existence is confined to a realm of idealities that is isolated from us spatiotemporally. We humans cannot enter into a causal relation with this realm. This implies that artefactualists are doubly wrong when they claim that characters come into being as a result of intentional acts. They are wrong because characters exist prior to the mental activities of the participants of literary discourse; and they are wrong because they conceive creation as a causal relation between an author and an abstract entity.[5]

But if characters are not literally created by the authors of literary works, in what sense can the term 'creation' be used in this context? Deutsch's second assumption gives the answer to this question. The assumption that authors characterize their protagonists attributively is compatible with the claim that artistic writing is a creative process. According to Deutsch, there is a plenitude of existing characters and authors are free to choose between them in composing their stories. He summarizes his Platonist account of creation as follows:

> My view is that when an author creates a character and the story in which the character figures, the author makes various *stipulations* that serve to describe the character and tell the story. In creating Sherlock Holmes, for example, Conan Doyle *stipulated* that Sherlock Holmes is (or is to be) a detective. These are stipulations in the sense that if an author indicates (in the course of creating the story) that a character has a certain property, then it is true (in the story) that it has that property. (Deutsch 1991: 218, emphases in the original)

To this we may add that Conan Doyle stipulated not only that his protagonist is a detective, but also that he is a pipe-smoker, that he lives at 221B Baker Street, etc. Holmes can be seen as the result of this series of stipulations. This is a contingent matter because Conan Doyle might have chosen other options on the basis of his authorial freedom. For example, he might have stipulated that Holmes is an adventure photographer and mountaineer living at 108 Crawford Street. But whatever stipulations he would have made, there would always be a corresponding character which exists independently of his decisions. Although describing a character attributively is consistent with the facts of authorial activities, it does not entail that a new abstract entity comes into being.

In my view, Deutsch's Platonist critique of the artefactualist theory is unpersuasive. Although it is not an innocent assumption, he does not explain why we

5 See also Uidhir (2013) who argues for the rather radical view that authors and readers can interact only with concrete entities.

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should believe that characters exist prior to the mental activities of authors and readers. It is also unclear what the explanatory advantage of the Platonist argument is supposed to be. If authors possess, literally, a creative freedom in making up their stories, as Deutsch says, then the claim that there is a plenitude of pre-existing stories adds nearly nothing to the general picture. We might stick to this creative freedom and maintain that by composing their novels or short stories authors bring into existence something new (i.e. the manuscripts of their novels or short stories). And if someone inclines to regard novels and short stories themselves as existentially dependent on ordinary concrete objects (i.e. on manuscripts), they might argue for the creatability of literary entities without referring to the Platonist's model of creation.

At present, however, let us bracket this worry. Even if we tolerate the idea of pre-existing stories and characters, the view to which his Platonism finally leads us remains questionable. Deutsch claims that literary characters are *described* with the help of certain stipulations. Like many others, Deutsch seems to suggest that the way a character is described differs from the way it exists. He is committed to the view that a particular character has such-and-such properties due to the fact that an author describes that character as having such-and-such properties. Moreover, we are told that Holmes is an entity that exists when described as a fictional character and does not exist when described, say, as a detective.[6] By so arguing, Deutsch fails to notice the real significance of the difference between the ontological statuses of 'being described as a character' and 'being a character'. All of this indicates that we are faced here with a variant of the simple-minded account of realism which we have already examined and dismissed.

Brock (2010) offers a different critique of authorial creation. Artefactualists often argue that a particular character comes into existence at the moment when an author writes down a sentence that contains the first token occurrence of the name of that character. However, as Brock points out, the *when* question implies the *how* question. And this seems to be a question to which artefactualists cannot give a plausible answer.

> In order to learn *when* a fictional individual is created, we mustfirst learn something about *how* it is created. One explains how a character is created in the relevant sense either by describing the act of creation in terms already well understood *or* by specifying the act's proximate cause. (Brock 2010: 356, emphases in the original)

According to Brock, artefactualists are divided about the *how* question. First, there are those who attach no importance at all to the question. Since these ar-

6 Cf. Deutsch (1991: 209).

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tefactualist usually keep silent on this crucial theoretical issue, they cannot offer us a complete theory. Second, there are those who follow Searle (1975) and contend that fictional characters and events are created by acts of pretend assertions. Given that the term 'pretend assertion' is relatively well understood, these artefactualists might be in a position to provide a satisfactory answer to the *how* question.

By way of an example, Brock argues against this possibility. Consider Robert Louis Stevenson's story *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In the first two chapters, the author introduces two proper names into the text, 'Jekyll' and 'Hyde', pretending thereby that the story he tells us is about two persons. Yet later in the book it turns out that Jekyll is really Hyde. But on the artefactualist's theory, claims Brock, these characters cannot be identical. Artefactualists are forced to say that a particular character cannot be introduced into a story (i.e. it cannot be created) under two different names.

Perhaps artefactualists can give a better answer to the *how* question, if they concentrate on the proximate cause of the creative act. Brock rejects this possibility too. Creative acts are intentional acts, so it is not unreasonable to suppose that a particular character comes into being when an author intends to create such a character. Unfortunately, the problem of creation cannot be solved with reference to intentional acts.

The reason for this is the following. One might try to argue that the Jekyll/Hyde character has been created by an intentional act of Stevenson. But this can be a correct description of the case only if (i) Stevenson intentionally creates a Jekyll character and then pretends to assert things about him, and (ii) Stevenson intentionally creates a Hyde character and then pretends to assert things about him, and (iii) by a final intentional act, he merges Jekyll and Hyde into one single character. Brock regards this explanation as unintuitive. Perhaps the first two intentional acts are possible, but it remains completely mysterious how different existing abstract entities can be merged by simply performing an intentional act. On Brock's view, what really happens in the Jekyll/Hyde case, and in other similar cases, is that the author of the story creates just "one fictional character under two different guises".[7] From this he concludes that artefactualists are unable to answer the *how* question.

I must admit I don't actually understand Brock's main point. When he says, as a conclusion of his discussion of the creation problem, that, from an intuitive

7 See Brock (2010: 361). Regrettably, Brock hadn't made clear what it exactly means that an author creates a character under a "guise". Perhaps guises involve a meta-fictional pretense to the effect that 'Jekyll' and 'Hyde' are proper names of different pretend individuals.

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point of view, Stevenson *creates* one fictional character under two different guises, then he explicitly takes a stand concerning the question of *how* a Jekyll/Hyde-type character can be brought into existence.

In such cases, the author of the story should invent or construct two guises, whatever they may be, and use these guises for portraying a compound or mixed character. Initially, the guises have to indicate the presence of two distinct characters. But as the story proceeds, the individual guises must lose their discernibility and become assimilated. By following the twists and turns of the story, readers can finally recognize that the characters that had seemed for a long time to be distinct are actually identical.

Artefactualists can happily accept this explanation by saying that in such peculiar cases where a particular character is referred to by different names, authorial creation should be analyzed in terms of guises. Because of the opacity of the term 'guise', this may seem a rather bold claim, but I believe the details could be worked out.

This is one of the possible responses to Brock's concern. Another possible response is to point out that Brock misconstrues the theoretical context in which artefactualists analyze the preconditions and effects of character creation. In fact, this is what Thomasson (2015a) contends. Thomasson finds Brock's *how* question misleading because it presupposes that character creation involves a deep ontological conundrum. As we have seen, the core objection is that it is hard to explain how abstract entities can be created if the process of creation involves causal and intentional phenomena. Thomasson's response is as follows:

> But this whole line of objection is seen as misconceived onceartefactualism is understood in the deflationary meta-ontological context: the view that there are fictional characters (and that, given the activities of authors in writing literary works, these are guaranteed to exist) is not a causal or explanatory hypothesis [...]. It is not a causal or explanatory 'hypothesis' at all, but rather a view about the way our language concerning fictional characters works: such that trivial entailments take us from uncontroversial truths (e. g. that an author wrote a certain set of sentences not intending to refer back to any real person) to truths that there is a certain fictional character. (Thomasson 2015a: 262)

Thomasson alludes here to her own view that we have summed up under the label (MSC) in Chapter 2.3. Recall that (MSC) classifies fictional characters as existing but ontologically minimal entities. Thomasson claims, rightly I think, that Brock's objection is pointless in the context of this view. (MSC) is based on the empirical observation that there are certain linguistic and cultural practices in force in our speech community which govern the use of the term 'fictional character'. In the light of these established practices, the ontological problem of character creation appears to be a kind of pseudo-problem. That is, where an oppo-

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nent of the artefactualist theory, like Brock, seeks forthe proximate causes of creation, a deflationist artefactualist, like Thomasson, sees only trivial ontological entailments which are licensed by empirically-based observations. One can, of course, analyze the validity of these entailments in a couple of ways, but neither of these analyses would reveal anything about the "mystery" of the ontological genesis of fictional characters.

My sympathies are with Thomasson on this issue, but I do not believe that (MSC) have to be regarded as the best artefactualist account of fictional characters. (MSC) is certainly right in that it conceives characters as abstract entities which are accessible by the methods of an "easy" ontology. Nonetheless, (MSC) suggests inaccurately that characters like abstract entities have a language-independent status. Then, if it comes to the question of character creation, the views of (MSC) and (CNRR) part from each other. (CNRR) regards characters as embodiments of networks of non-relational linguistic representations. Therefore, in applying the *how* question to the view encapsulated in (CNRR), the question we need to ask is the following: how can these abstract representational networks be brought into being?

My own response to Brock's concern is then twofold. On the one hand, I think we have to accept that artistic writing is an ontologically productive process, which involves various intentional and causal phenomena. On the other hand, since characters are to be identified with linguistic structures (i. e. with integrated sets of non-relational representations), the task before us is to ask whether the pertinent linguistic structures can literally be created.

The conviction concerning the ontological productivity of writing can be motivated on independent grounds. To produce a particular sentence token is to perform an intentional act. For example, this very paragraph began with a sentence token which resulted from my intentional act. In fact, the act itself was constructed from a sequence of discrete but interwoven mental and physical processes starting from formulating the thought in my mind and ending with entering the chosen words into my computer. This act involved a number of causal relations. Just to mention one, the typed sentence 'The conviction concerning the ontological productivity of writing can be motivated on independent grounds' induced a change in the pattern of dots on the screen of my computer, which, in turn, induced a change in my current visual experiences.

If acts of writing are parts of causal events and abstract entities are causally inert, then characters cannot be created. Or so might one suppose. Butit is not a proven theoretical result that abstract entities cannot be created.

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There are philosophers and set theorists who are of the opinion that some sets, the impure ones, can be created.[8] According to the usual understanding, impure sets include empirically accessible individuals as members. Consider a set, *S*, which satisfies the reflexive condition 'the most often mentioned two movie stars in this book'. Given that its members are Tilda Swinton and Arnold Schwarzenegger, *S* counts as an impure set. So we have *S* = {*Tilda Swinton*, *Arnold Schwarzenegger*} which is an abstract entity. The creatability of *S* poses an intricate question, though. It seems only those sets are creatable which have creatable individuals as members.[9] In a certain sense Tilda Swinton and Arnold Schwarzenegger are creatable and created individuals, but it is obvious that the condition of being mentioned in this book is irrelevant with respect to the question of their creatability. On the other hand, the condition satisfied by *S* seems to be dependent for its existence on the previous parts of this book. If this is so, then if this book had not been written, *S* would not exist. And this counterfactual suggests that *S* is creatable.

We can leave open here whether *S* is created or not. What we are seeking is an affirmative answer to the question of character creation. Is it legitimate to interpret characters as *impure* sets of non-relational representations? An embarrassment for this interpretation might be that linguistic representations are abstract entities and, as we have mentioned, impure sets are permitted to contain only concrete individuals among their members.

It should not be forgotten, however, that the representations in question become accessible to us only through our reading experiences. As has been mentioned in Chapter 2.3, this can be understood as a strong epistemic constraint on character accessibility. It narrows down the possible ways in which we may come to know of these entities to those that involve our language-based capacities. And, trivially, reading experiences become possible because authorial manuscripts (as well as published works) are composed from perceptually accessible sentence tokens. This epistemic "because" suggests a firm ontological consideration. Although the vehicles of linguistic representations and the representations themselves belong to different ontological kinds, at the endpoints of creative acts they occur fundamentally interwoven or entangled with one another. In short: sentence tokens and representations are *co-creatable* entities.

Any authorial act that ends up in producing a concrete inscription, creates, *ipso facto*, a corresponding abstract representation. These representations are

8 See, for example, Juhl & Loomis (2010: 257) who argue for the legitimacy of impure sets in the theory of fictional characters.

9 Caplan & Matheson (2004: 133) seem to endorse this view.

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generated by the syntax of sentence tokens plus the contextually determined meaning of their component words. This does not mean that abstract representations are available only if there is a secondary reflective act on the part of the author (or reader), which abstracts from the spatiotemporal properties of the produced inscriptions. Inscriptions are processed at the expression and the content level simultaneously. In a similar context of debate, Moltmann (2012) remarks, correctly, that a parallel processing mechanism like this should be taken as a formal function of non-relational language use.

This brings us back to our former question about impure sets. The phenomenon of co-createdness helps decide whether characters should be identified with such sets or not. Remember, (CNRR) defines characters in terms of sets of explicit and implicit property representations. But when involved in the debate about character creation, sets of property representations could be replaced *salva definitione* by sets of concrete inscriptions since the former are co-created with the latter. Thus, when a character like Sherlock Holmes is defined on the basis of $P = \{p_1, p_2, \ldots p_n\}$ and $P^\star = \{p^\star_1, p^\star_2, \ldots p^\star_n\}$, the ps and the $p^\star$s could be interpreted as formal counterparts of concrete inscriptions. On this interpretation, P and $P^\star$ are reckoned as impure sets.

Nothing more is required for our reformed artefactualist position. We can now see how the relevant linguistic structures can be created for there being a fictional character.[10] In composing the manuscript of the novel *A Study in Scarlet*, Conan Doyle performed a series of intentional acts.[11] The concrete vehicles of representation he used in telling the story were causally effective in a variety of ways. Many of them were intended to function as vehicles for abstract Holmes-representations. But the kind-difference is unimportant here since the concrete vehicles and the abstract Holmes-representations had been brought into being at the same time, by the same series of intentional acts. For this reason, Conan Doyle may be seen not only as the creator of a concrete entity, the manuscript, but also as the creator of an abstract structure of linguistic representations, that is, as the creator of the Holmes character.

The case of Holmes generalizes even to derived character representations like 'the servant' in Jane Austen's novel *Persuasion*. As a character of the

10 For an opposite view, see Uidhir (2013). Uidhir argues that fictional prose works cannot be impure sets, for these sets are abstracta despite their impureness and only concreta can be created. Seen from the point of view of the present book, Uidhir's nominalist approach to the creation-relation appears to be unjustifiably restrictive.

11 It is worth adding that on some views fictional entities can also be created inadvertently. Zvolenszky (2016) argues persuasively for this position. I tend to agree with her arguments, but the issue is at present of minor importance.

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novel, the servant may be an extremely thin entity but, notwithstanding, it exists as an abstract product of Jane Austen's conscious intentional activity. In the end, fictional characters can be classified as created entities independently of the complexity of the representational networks of which they are embodiments.

4.2 Emotion

It is quite customary to think that literary characters and events are capable to move us in various ways. No doubt there are many readers around the world who feel sorry for Anna Karenina and we would surely find a large number of detective novel fans who admire Sherlock Holmes. On the common sense conception of fictionality, our emotions directed toward the protagonists of literary works are as real as our emotions directed toward the individuals of the actual world.

Things are not so straightforward, however, when it comes to theories about readers' emotional involvement in literary fictions. What a theorist may think about the possibility of fictive emotions is constrained by her previous ontological decisions. Let us take first the theoretical options open for antirealists who deny the existence of fictional characters.

To date, antirealists have developed two conceptions about our emotional responses to written fiction; or perhaps it would be better to say that they developed one conception which appeared in two close variants in the literature. Both variants ensued from Kendall Walton's general work on make-believe games.

Antirealists are faced with the following conflicting triad of claims:

> *Claim One*. An emotional response to a character (or an event) counts as a genuine emotional response only if the character (or the event) in question exists or existed. (This follows from the highly plausible general claim that emotions are elicited directly or indirectly by entities of the external world.)
> *Claim Two*. Our responses to fictional characters like Anna Karenina and Sherlock Holmes appear to be genuine emotional responses. (The relative high plausibility value of this claim rests on an empirical generalization.)
> *Claim Three*. Fictional characters do not and did not exist. (This is a distinguishing thesis of the antirealist doctrine.)

Claim Two is an instance of Claim One, but if we accept Claim Three, Claim Two should be rejected because Claim Three is inconsistent with Claim One. This diagnosis was first considered by Walton (1978). Walton admits that a story of a character's life may affect us both physically and psychologically. In pitying Anna Karenina, readers may display the same sorts of symptoms as when they

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are pitying their own relatives. However, characters like Anna Karenina are not part of reality, they exist only make-believedly. This is reminiscent of children's games when they make-believe, for example, that bushes on the playground are fairies. In such games, the rules prescribe imagining that there are fairies in the vicinity of the players. Similarly, Tolstoy's novel prescribes imagining that there is a woman called Anna Karenina. By processing the text, readers enter into the game of make-believe which was initiated by Tolstoy. Within this game of make-believe, they regard it astrue that Anna suffers misfortune. And since the suffering is only part of the jointly played game and not a fact of the real world, Walton can deny that readers genuinely pity Anna. Given that all types of readers' responses may in principle be treated similarly, Claim Two should be rejected as incorrect.

But if genuine emotional responses to characters are impossible, what happens with readers when theyare absorbed in playing the game? According to Walton, readers react to the misfortune of Anna Karenina with quasi-emotions. Quasi-emotions may be regarded as emotions elicited by the prescriptions of games of make-believe. When someone pities Anna, she experiences quasi-pity which is a mental state phenomenologically indistinguishable from genuine pity. It follows from Walton's general view that our emotional engagement with literary fiction involves imaginations necessarily. Since Anna does not exist, readers have to imagine that there exists a certain individual who is so-and-so and thus what they think about and how they are affected by the deeds of this individual is causally dependent on the contents of their imaginations.

Walton acknowledged later that 'imagination' is not easy to define, but it may serve as a placeholder for a term yet to be fully understood.[12] Thus the difference between genuine emotions and quasi-emotions can be explained by the following hypothesis: while genuine emotions are elicited by real-world scenarios in which the objects of the emotional states exist (or existed) actually, quasi-emotions are elicited by imagined scenarios in which the objects of the emotional states exist (or existed) only make-believedly.

Everett (2013: 46) seems to follow Walton's guidelines when he claims that "[o]ur practice of ascribing psychological attitudes towards fictional characters simply grows out of our practice of ascribing psychological attitudes to the participants in children's games of make-believe". Like Walton, Everett regards Claim Three as true, but, interestingly, he does not argues traightforwardly against Claim Two. Instead he tries to show that when we characterize readers' responses to fictional stories, we are in a position to provide real-world informa-

12 Walton (1990: 21). For a critical summary of Walton's view, see Matravers (2014: 10 – 20).

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tion about their emotional states. If we can properly characterize the mental behavior of readers, says Everett, then it becomes a secondary issue whether they feel genuine pity or feel only quasi-pity in reading Tolstoy's story about Anna Karenina. Consider the following real-world situation involving Arnold:

(7) Arnold pities Anna Karenina.

According to Everett, (7) conveys real-world information about Arnold's emotional state iff the following two conditions are jointly satisfied: (i) Arnold knowingly participates in the relevant make-believe and imagines that Anna Karenina exists; (ii) as observers, we make a true statement about Arnold's emotional state within the scope of that make-believe.

Note that (7) can be true only if the statement satisfying (ii) is thought of as "piggybacking" on the real-world fact that Arnold feels pity.[13] Of course, the make-believe game in which Arnold is participating is only fictionally committed to such entities as Anna. Therefore, if we want to assert (7) felicitously, we should play a complex game which presupposes that we are immersed in the make-believe and at the same time step outside of it. Otherwise we could not make a true report about Arnold's real (i. e. not make-believe) emotional state.

But to say something like this is not sufficient to understand what it means to claim that Arnold has *really* the experience of feeling pity. Everett seems to be aware of this and provides an additional complementing explanation. According to this, Arnold's emotional state can be characterized as an instance of the scheme '*x* pities *o*'. The scheme may be evaluated as true when *x* has a mode of presentation *m* which designates *o*, and the deployment of *m* leads *x*'s affective mechanisms to generate the emotional response of pity. Here, again, the explanation should be read so that Arnold has a mode of presentation of Anna within the scope of the make-believe game and the deployment of this mode of presentation is the cause of his *real* feeling in that game. Then to assert (7) is to reflect on what happens in the game, that is, to convey information about Arnold's real emotional state which was generated by the deployment of *m*.

I do not think this is a successful strategy for avoiding the conflict arising from the above triad of claims. There are at least two reasons for being skeptical. First, suppose for the moment that Claim Three is indeed true and there is no such individual as Anna Karenina. If so, it is highly misleading to contend that there is a mode of presentation, *m*, and that *m* designates *that* individual.

13 The term 'piggybacking' has been introduced by Richard (2000).

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As a relational semantic mechanism, designation requires real existence in the actual world (or in some possible world), not make-believe existence in a make-believe game. Anna Karenina lacks real existence and thus "she" cannot be designated by applying any mode of presentation. Consequently, the mode of presentation to which Everett alludes in his explanation cannot play a causal role in eliciting Arnold's real emotional state. If antirealists uphold Claim Three, and they obviously must do so, then they can hardly give a plausible explanation of why and how readers react emotionally to fictional characters. Second, even if one allows the possibility of Everettian modes of presentation, there remains an unsolved problem that might be called the Directedness Problem. As regards their causal origin, readers' emotional states are responses to external stimuli.

Unfortunately enough, reading experiences involve ambiguities because a particular emotional response might be elicited by numerically different experiential stimuli. For this reason, when we try to construct mental explanations about the behavior of readers, the causal connection between emotional states and external stimuli must first be disambiguated. Without identifying the object *o* at which *x*'s attention is directed, instances of such schemes as '*x* pities *o*', '*x* fears *o*', '*x* admires *o*', etc., remain equivocal. This is the root of the Directedness Problem.

As Kroon (2015b) aptly points out, Everett's view is manifestly inadequate since it leaves this problem completely out of consideration. Imagine that we explain Arnold's behavior in the way Everett proposes: in playing a make-believe game, Arnold deploys a mode of presentation *m*, and *m* causes in him an experience of pity. Now, *m* might lead to a response of pity because it presents to Arnold a prototypical Russian woman and this is, for some reason, what he pities, or *m* might lead to a response of pity because it presents to Arnold a tender and passionate lover and this is, again, for some reason, what he pities, and so forth. A mode of presentation like *m* leaves us in the dark as regards the question of the real cause of Arnold's emotional state. I do not believe that in developing his view Everett merely disregarded the Directedness Problem. The situation seems to be worse. In my view, those who insist on Claim Three cannot delineate in a principled way what counts as an unequivocal instance of '*x* pities *o*'. It is clearly useless to invoke modes of presentation for they are not traceable back to uniquely determinable objects. Modes of presentation are presentations of certain kinds of objects, of course, but *m* cannot be a presentation of Anna since "she" is not thought of as possessing a status of an object in the first place.

A variant of this antirealist conception is to be found in Walton's recent work. Walton (2015) complains that many have misinterpreted his earlier conception of fictional emotions. Critics like Carroll (1995) or Hartz (1999) often objected that the make-believe theory calls the immediacy and real phenomenology of fic-

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tional emotions into question. It would be hard to deny that the term 'quasi-emotions' was used by Walton in such a way as to generate such an impression. Walton's theoretical remarks suggested unmistakably that readers' emotional responses are to be seen as differing from genuine emotions in that they are causally dependent on make-believe games. But now Walton emphasizes that his negative claim was more modest in its ambition:

> My make-believe theory was designed to help explain our emotional responses to fiction, not to call their very existence into question. My negative claim is *only* that our genuine emotional responses to works of fiction do notinvolve, literally, fearing, grieving for, admiring fictional characters. (Walton 2015: 275, emphasis in the original)

Anyway, this looks like an acknowledgment of the plausible common sense thesis that readers are genuinely moved by fictional *stories* and that fictional emotions are *real* emotions. On the other hand, Walton still distances himself from Claim Two. His current position, according to which readers are *not literally* connected to characters, arises partly from his old acceptance of Claim Three and partly from a new intuitive idea.

The new idea Walton utilizes comes from simulation theory. Broadly put, the central claim is that in reading fictional stories, readers imagine themselves in the other person's place. They come closer to the characters of the stories by mobilizing their imaginative abilities. Usually, when a reader is interested in a character, she makes mental conjectures about what that character might think about the world of the story, how it is related to other characters mentioned in the text, and so forth. Simulation theorists prefer to describe this well-known phenomenon in terms of input and output. According to them, the inputs of mental simulation processes are imagined or pretend circumstances and situations. Mental simulations are effective means for considering what would we think and how would we act in various conceivable circumstances. 'Simulating that *p*' means nearly the same as 'acting as if it were the case that *p*' which is a close variant of 'Pretending that *p*'. Here we may recall that these near-equivalences play a crucial role in every pretense theoretic account of fictional storytelling. The outputs are told to be also products of imagination and pretense: beliefs, intentions, emotions and other non-factual states. In simulated circumstances we do not react responsively to the inputs and do not have experiences in the literal sense of the word: our responsive acts are performed in the off-line mode.

Instead of getting entangled in the intricate details of the simulation theory, it is better to turn to the general question of whether the application of the tenets of this theory may improve the antirealist conception of fictional emotions or not. Walton contends that it is true only in imagination that readers pity or ad-

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mire the life of such characters as Anna Karenina. It is possible to simulate without much effort that there is a circumstance in which Tolstoy's heroine performs a tragic action. The content of such a mental state can be expressed by (8):

(8) Anna threw herself under the wheels of a train.

By asserting (8), one imagines oneself in the final circumstance of Anna's life. In continuing the simulation, one can imagine that this circumstance is capable to evoke the feeling of pity in others, and then the simulation process may culminate in an assertive utterance such as (7).

Seen from this perspective, (7) neither states nor implies that Arnold is related to an individual, Anna, for whom he feels pity. Rather, it is a report about someone who actively engages in a particular mental simulation. Therefore, taken *literally*, (7) is false or uninterpretable: there is no such individual, of which it is true that Arnold pities her. This does not mean that Arnold's appreciation of the story of Anna cannot be a moving one. Although readers simulate their emotional responses to literary fictions, they bring much of themselves – their personal memories, interests and other mental factors – to these simulations and this may generate real emotions in them.[14] Antirealists can then evaluate (7) as true by saying that Arnold pities_s Anna Karenina, where the subscript s indicates an occurrent mental state of simulation accompanied by an accessory set of other mental factors.

In my view, the application of the simulation-theoretical vocabulary didn't lead to a significant change in the Waltonian framework. What we can see is at best a rhetorical redescription of an already-known antirealist thesis, which leaves the conceptual underpinnings of that thesis intact.

Walton denied that one can really be emotionally related to fictional characters (i.e., as said above, he accepted Claim Three), nevertheless, like other proponents of the antirealist theory of fiction, he felt pressure to adopt a (possibly weaker) thesis which is in line with Claim Two. That was why he has introduced into his analytical toolkit the rather deceiving term 'quasi-emotion'. In this setting, to replace 'quasi-emotion' with 'mental simulation' does not cut much ice. Since the basic ontological picture remains unchanged, it does not matter how Walton tries to alleviate the conflict between Claim Three and Claim Two. One may say that because of the lack of the object of emotion readers are compelled to feel quasi-pity, or, alternatively, one may say that because of the lack of the object of emotion readers are compelled to simulate mentally the feeling of

14 Cf. Walton (2015: 285).

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pity. One can freely move between these ways of speaking without inducing a significant alteration in the overall structure of the antirealist's position. So if we regard Walton's original approach to fictional emotions (and Everett's version thereof) as erroneous, because it is unable to resolve the inconsistency between Claim Three and Claim One, we should regard his more recent approach as erroneous too.

Artefactualists and other fictional realists seem to be in a more advantageous position in one respect: they can resolutely reject Claim Three. And those who accept the existence of fictional characters can subscribe to Claim One and Claim Two without further reservations. This does not mean, though, that they need not make any effort to develop a persuasive account of fictional emotions. Quite the contrary, they have to define accurately and precisely the kind of object to which our emotional responses are directed.

In Chapter 2.1, we have seen that according to neo-Meinongian comprehension principles, when a literary work contains the predicative sentence '*o* is *F*', then there is a fictional character *c* which possesses the property of *F*-ness. Thus, as a nonexistent object, *c* has the constitutive or nuclear property of being *F*. Perhaps, neo-Meinongian realists can find a way to attribute specific properties to characters which might solve the riddle of fictional emotions.

The best candidates to play this role seem to be the so-called converse intentional properties.[15] Converse intentional properties are properties that are contingently instantiated. For example, when Tilda Swinton admires the director of the film *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, Lynne Ramsay, then she has the intentional property of admiring Lynne Ramsay. And in this case Lynne Ramsay has the converse intentional property of being admired by Tilda Swinton. One may contend that characters can also possess such properties: Anna, for example, can be thought of as having the converse intentional property of being pitied by Arnold. By reversing this statement, one might conclude that there is a nonexistent Meinongian object, Anna, and Arnold's emotional response was elicited by this (nonexistent) object.

If this line of thought is consistent with at least one of the comprehension principles of (NCP), (ECP) and (MCP), then the following two argumentative paths open up to neo-Meinongians. They may argue that, despite their contingent nature, converse intentional properties are constitutive for the so-being of characters. So Anna Karenina is the object it is partly because she has the con-

15 The term 'converse intentional properties' has been coined by Chisholm (1982). For more on this term, see Jacquette (2015:102–104). Note also that such properties are known as 'Cambridge properties' in contemporary metaphysics.

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stitutive property of being pitied by Arnold. Note that this would made characters modally and temporally extremely fragile since readers may relate to the stories in which they occur with different attitudes at different times. Or they may argue that converse intentional properties do not belong to the genuinely characterizing properties of objects and so are extraconstitutive for the so-being of characters. This would entail that the property of being pitied by Arnold has the same relational status with respect to Anna as the property of being admired by Tilda Swinton with respect to Lynne Ramsay. Given this, a situation might occur in which someone gives the same emotional response to Anna and Lynne Ramsay. Then the question would arise whether or not a nonexistent object (Anna) and an existing object (Lynne Ramsay) can possess the same converse intentional property in the same way. Since we have already seen that there are independent grounds for rejecting neo-Meinongian realism, I do not want to compare the explanatory power of these proposals here (compare Chapter 2.2 above).

Somewhat surprisingly, the literature of artefactualism contains only sparse comments on the problem of fictional emotions. Many now-classic works – including Van Inwagen (1977), Salmon (1998, 2002) and Thomasson (1999, 2010) – did not even touch the issue. An exception worth mentioning is Kripke (2013) who provides a relatively detailed analysis of a particular type of emotion-statements. Fictional emotions can be expressed by quite simple predicative sentences. As our previous example (6) showed, such sentences seem to express relational statements containing an existing subject and an empty name. The presence of empty names generates a well-known problem: how can one express a statement or a proposition by asserting a sentence which contains a non-referring expression in object position? One popular suggestion has it that empty names contribute to the expressed content of these sentences with their modes of presentation. According to this Fregean solution, the emotion verb 'pities' in (7) establishes a relation between Arnold and the mode of presentation of the name 'Anna Karenina'.[16] Yet, however popular this solution is, it has its own difficulties. Kripke picks out one of them. Fregeans seem to be forced to say that non-referring expressions resist substitution in intentional contexts. As an example, consider the following one-premise inference:

Arnold pities Anna Karenina.
Arnold pities Alexey Vronsky's lover.

16 In fact, Kripke analyzes the behavior of such verbs as 'worship' and 'admire', but this causes only minor differences in the results.

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Fregeans have to reject this inference as fallacious on the ground that the expressions 'Anna Karenina' and 'Alexey Vronsky's lover' have different modes of presentation, and, therefore, Arnold is said to be related to different things in the premise and the conclusion. Kripke observes, I think rightly, that in contrast to the Fregean view most of us would find such inferences natural and compelling.

Kripke's own anti-Fregean solution to this problem is based on a distinction between two levels of language use. We already touched upon this distinction in Chapter 2.3. As mentioned there, one of these levels is the fiction-internal level of storytelling, where character names are used under the pretense of being referential expressions. The other is the fiction-external level, where speakers use such names in a serious, non-pretending way. According to Kripke, when we say that someone pities Anna Karenina, we talk on the fiction-external level where the name 'Anna Karenina' refers actually to the character.

No doubt this might work as a successful alternative to standard Fregean views, but I would hesitate to accept it as a reassuring solution to the problem of fictional emotion. As an early artefactualist, Kripke thought that novels and fictional characters are created entities and this motivated him to say that they are denizens of reality. So far, so good. But we should not forget that he considered literary and mythological figures to be abstracta.

Now, in trying to put the pieces together, weare faced with a difficulty. Kripke told us that Tolstoy created a character to which one can refer with the name 'Anna Karenina' at the fiction-external level of language use. Sentences of the form '*x* pities Anna Karenina' – where *x* is an existing subject – are certainly supposed to belong to this level of use. In such sentences 'Anna Karenina' refers invariably to an abstract entity. Then, to assert that *x* pities Anna Karenina is to assert that *x* pities an abstract entity. But it is questionable whether abstract entities, as Kripke understood them, are able to enter into such a relation. It is telling that Kripke had not made any attempt at all to back up his argument with a terminological definition. We never get to know how mind-independent and causally inert entities can be created and it remains also unclear how we can be related to them if they already exist. All we are offered is an analogy. Kripke claims that nations have the same ontological standing as literary figures in that they are also created abstracta. According to him, both of these groups of entities come into existence in virtue of concrete human activities and relations.[17]

Unfortunately, this analogy serves only to obscure the issue. There are two points of difference that need to be taken into consideration. First, according to Kripke's artefactualist view, literary figures are created under authorial pre-

17 Cf. Kripke (2013: 73 – 74).

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tense. The statements that occur in literary works are therefore only pretend statements. This is not an accidental or optional feature of the creation process: reference-apt expressions in literary works are to be classified as necessarily empty.[18] There is nothing comparable in the case of nations. The activities and relations on which nations are ontologically dependent are not pretend activities and relations at all. Second, whatever one might think about the determination of the reference relation, it is clear that literary works necessarily and essentially involve words, sentences and other kinds of linguistic expression. This trivial observation leads us to say that literary figures are (in a certain sense) linguistic constructions. At this point, the analogy breaks down again since nations do not necessarily require for their creation linguistic expressions. Or, to put it more mildly, one can invent a new nation (i. e. one can create an abstract nation concept for concrete people) without making essential reference to such linguistic resources as stories, descriptions or representations.

Given these remarkable differences, it seems to be an idle claim that literary figures and nations are to be classified equally as created abstracta. To merely point out the cogency of such an analogy does not bring us much closer to understanding how we can be emotionally related to literary figures.

In my view, a more promising approach is to emphasize the apparently tight connections between fictional emotions and representations. Somewhat surprisingly, such an approach has also been occasionally used outside of the artefactualist theory. One example is Currie (2014), who holds that emotional responses to fictions are actually responses to entity representations. Currie follows a widespread view according to which there is a sharp division between fiction and non-fiction. Adherents of this view are convinced that the main distinguishing mark of fictional communication consists in adopting a specific fictive stance.[19] In reality, we have the emotions we do because we believe that things are a certain way. We are worrying about our friend's hopeless love because we are vividly aware of her suffering. The situation changes, when one adopts a fictive stance. Consumers of literary fiction direct their feelings towards the things that are represented by the texts they read.

Currie is interested in the first place in the appropriateness criteria of fictive emotions. The following excerpt summarizes his position:

18 Kripke (2013: 23).

19 The most extensive argument for positing a fictional stance is to be found in Lamarque & Olsen (1994). For an opposing view, see Matravers (2014). His main argument is that readers engage in a narrative as a narrative. From the point of view of text processing, says Matravers, the fictional status of a particular story is completely irrelevant.

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> Admiring my friend Albert, my emotion represents him as admirable, and my admiration is appropriate (in one of the several ways emotions can be appropriate) if he is admirable. On the account I have given, my admiration for Holmes is appropriate (again, in one of several possible ways) just in case he is represented as admirable. (Currie 2014: 156 – 157)

Seen from the perspective of (CNRR), the statements expressed by the sentences of this passage are partly correct and partly erroneous.

Currie is certainly not mistaken in suggesting that an emotional response towards a concrete individual counts as appropriate only if that individual possesses a property which is capable to trigger that emotional response. It is also a correct suggestion that the appropriateness of an emotion which is directed to a fictional character depends on the fulfillment of certain representational criteria.

As Curry reminds us, there is a fine distinction, typically unrecognized, between what an emotional state represents and what makes that emotional state an appropriate one to have.

The situation closely resembles to the imaginative responses to fiction. When one reads in Conan Doyle's novel that 'Holmes was certainly not a difficult man to live with', they imagine Holmes as being a tolerant, considerate, etc., person. The correctness of the imaginative response does not consist in imagining that Holmes is a tolerant, considerate, etc., person. Since there is no Holmes, this would have to be seen as a mistake. The appropriate response is to imagine that, in the novel, Holmes is represented as having these social properties. Yet the content of the imagination is not that the novel represents that Holmes has these social properties. To be appropriate, one's imagination should correspond to the novel's storyline in that it has to represent as the story represents. But this does not mean that one should represent the story's representing.[20]

Emotional responses are similarly structured. Admiring Holmes in an appropriate way is to be in an emotional state that corresponds to the novel's storyline regarding its representational content (i. e. that Holmes is admirable). Readers' emotional responses should be directed at the novel, in which Holmes is represented as having admirable properties. But the resulting emotional state should not represent that the story represents Holmes as being admirable. Because neither imaginative responses nor emotional responses are meta-representational states, their appropriateness criteria depend on correspondences between first-order representations: an imaginative or emotional response to fiction counts as appropriate only if there is a correspondence between how the fiction repre-

20 Cf. Currie (2014: 157).

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sents its object and how the elicited imaginative or emotional response represents that very same object.

Note, however, that in explaining the (first-order) representational nature of fictive emotions Currie falls prey to the same mistake that we have mentioned several times earlier, namely, that of reduplicating the object of investigation. To stress that Holmes "is represented as admirable" is not to make an innocent explanatory claim. It is, instead, to adopt a heavyweight ontological approach on which there is a language-independent entity that is represented by a particular work as being so-and-so. Even if the Holmes character is an abstract entity – a view Curry hesitatingly accepts –, it must be sharply distinguished from the linguistic vehicles of representation which serve merely to make it accessible *as* an abstract entity. The adequacy of this approach can be questioned on both ontological and methodological grounds. For this reason, Currie's solution to the problem of fictive emotions appears to be only partly compatible with our artefactualist position as it was articulated in Chapter 3.

The other example worth mentioning is the view advanced by John (2016). John is of the opinion that both creating and appreciating literary works require a specific attitude, and as many others who take part in the realism/antirealism debate, she acknowledges the explanatory usefulness of the concept of pretense. But she cautiously refrains from taking a stand in this debate because her primarily interest lies in the question of what matters for readers when they go through their reading experiences. Here, as in our discussion of the accessibility of characters, the notion of reading experience is interpreted in an epistemic sense. John indicates that readers' experience is concerned with the vehicles of representational content, with words and sentences as they are offered for comprehension, and any further relation to characters should be thought of as being determined by this initial epistemic condition.

This would lend support to the, in my view, correct contention that when readers are involved emotionally in fictional stories, they are related to (certain kinds of) networks of linguistic representations. It is worth quoting here one characteristic passage from John herself:

> Although pretense and caring about pretense are in play in this context, and are needed to explain some of what we experience as readers, I think we also care about what we really encounter in works of fiction. My way of putting this is to say that we care about characters *as representations*, not as people. We really encounter representations in a work of fiction, specifically verbal representations in the case of literary works of fiction, and readers have interests at stake in projects of representation. (John 2016: 34, emphasis added)

To this, John adds that to a certain extent the life of human beings also depends on representations and that is why we are so intensely interested in stories which

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involve fictional characters. In expressing our feelings towards characters, we detect certain psychological features that we have in common with them. And the commonalities we recognize are made explicit by coordinating and processing diverse sets of verbal representations.

But this is only a side issue which might be more satisfactorily handled in a cognitive psychological theory of interpretation. For present purposes, the decisive point is that a (CNRR)-based understanding of fictive emotions need not be seen as totally idiosyncratic.

As we have seen, some of the crucial elements of the (CNRR) account are already present in Currie's and John's approach to this matter. Nonetheless we may stick to our more demanding artefactualist definition – according to which characters are embodiments of networks of non-relational linguistic representations – and try to provide a solution to the problem of fictive emotions on this basis. Since the main building blocks for the solution are already at hand, the only task remaining is to collect them into a coherent structure. Consider the following four-step argument:

> *Step One:* An emotional response to a character counts as a genuine emotional response only if the character in question exists or existed. (Claim One)
> *Step Two:* Fictional characters exist. (Realism)
> *Step Three:* Responses to fictional characters like pity or fear are genuine emotional responses. (Claim Two)
> *Step Four:* The objects at which our genuine emotional responses are directed are embodiments of networks of non-relational linguistic representations. (CNRR)

Three remarks are in order here. First, there is no doubt that antirealists would reject the first two steps as false, so they would dismiss the last step as illegitimate or unworthy of thoughtful consideration. Friends of antirealism may then take my argument conditionally: *if* fictional realism is the correct attitude to fiction, *then* we can give a convincing account of the target of fictional emotions along the line of Step Four.

Second, the claim that responses to fictional characters are genuine emotions should be taken as based on the surface phenomenology of ordinary reading experiences. From this it does not follow that one must deny categorically the possibility of quasi-emotional mental states. Perhaps antirealists are right and from the point of view of readers who are absorbed in playing a make-believe game, quasi-emotions are indistinguishable from genuine emotions. My contention is merely that this phenomenology lends sufficient support to Step Three, *when taken in and of itself*.

Notice also that Step Three is compatible with a wide range of standpoints. The claim or assumption that readers produce genuine emotional responses to

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fiction has been endorsed by many otherwise diverse theorists, from realists like Kripke to half-hearted antirealists like Currie. But the thought expressed by Step Three can be accepted even by a theorist like John who is neutral on the debate between realists and antirealists.

Third, we should not be particularly troubled by the fact that our fictional emotions are said to be elicited by abstract entities. Something similar can also happen in non-fictional discursive situations. Testimony is a good case in point. Suppose that we are told a miserable story about a, for us, completely unknown individual. And suppose that we are deeply moved by the story. Though we may trust in the reliability of the narrator and the story we heard might be true, our pity or sympathy will not be *directly* elicited by that individual. Apart from what has been said in the story, we would lack the necessary epistemic resources to think anything about that very individual. Therefore, in such a case of testimony, our emotional responses would be triggered exclusively by a series of abstract representational stimuli.

The difference between the two cases is this: being free from constraints of correspondence-to-the-facts, fictional storytelling mobilizes networks of non-relational representations, non-fictional storytelling, on the other hand, aims to create a connection to reality which can be done only by utilizing relational representations. Although this is a crucial discursive difference, it remains important to recognize the possibility of everyday situations of communication in which, instead of being triggered directly by concrete individuals, our emotional responses are triggered by abstract linguistic entities.

4.3 Negative existentials

Singular negative existential statements raise profound problems for all theories of fictional discourse. The natural intuition is that in using sentences of the form of (9) speakers are able to express true statements:

(9) c_N does not exist.

Like in the case of fictive emotions, what theorists may think about this intuition is dependent mainly on their previous ontological decisions. The modifier "mainly" is intended to suggest that opinions concerning the ontological status of characters interact in this particular area with two further theoretical questions.

One of these is the question of the correct semantic of fictional proper names, the other is the question of the right analysis of the complex predicate

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'does not exist'. Anyone who has the ambition of giving a satisfactory account of negative existentials must give a parallel treatment of these diverse phenomena. This is why it is especially hard to decide whether (9) can really have true instances or not. I do not wish to suggest that a (CNRR)-based artefactualist theory is capable to offer an account that is completely satisfactory in all respects, but I believe that such a theory fares relatively well when compared to its rivals. In order to show this, we must first give an overview of the different approaches with which (9) can be analyzed.

It is not too surprising that antirealists feel themselves to be committed to the truthfulness of the assertions of negative existentials. If fictional characters do not exist, then one must be in principle in a position to assert this elementary fact and the simplest way to do this is to utter (9) or an instance of it. It is also not surprising that antirealists cannot follow this strategy without generating a conflict with other parts of their overall view. They think that sentence tokens are not really asserted in intra-fictional contexts. According to them, everything told in a literary work falls within the scope of authorial pretense. Works of literature serve as props which have the function of prescribing how to imagine the entities of the "world" of the story. As a consequence of this, fictional names do not refer to entities in intra-fictional contexts, they merely pretend to refer to them. Or to say the same thing, they are, as a matter of necessity, referentially unsuccessful. Now, this piece of the antirealist theory makes it difficult to take (9) and its instances at face value. When it is true to say that fictional proper names are not ordinary names that refer genuinely to entities, we acknowledge that negative existentials contain an empty singular term in subject position. That is, we acknowledge that c_N has zero contribution to the semantic content of (9). But then negative existentials must be viewed as being unable to express complete, meaningful statements that can be evaluated with respect to truth and falsity.

The conflict is sharpened if we add that utterances of negative existentials involve extra-fictional contexts. In uttering (9) or its instances, we talk about the protagonists of fictional stories from a perspective that does not require pretenseful behavior on our part. We can be pretty sure that antirealists do not want to pretend to assert that fictional characters do not exist. Quite the contrary, such assertions are intended to be part of a serious theory.

One way out of this conflict is to try to demonstrate that, in spite of appearances, speakers can make genuine assertions about characters in extra-fictional contexts. Walton (1990) follows this strategy when he attempts to persuade us that making an externally formulated assertion about c_N can be conceived as a betrayal of the original pretense in which c_N occurred. Betrayals of this kind should be imagined as comments about the content of ongoing make-believe games. For example, when someone utters that 'Sherlock Holmes is a fictional

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character', she is to be seen as making a comment about the make-believe game which was initialized by Conan Doyle's work. The utterer makes it clear with her speech act that it is only make-believedly true that 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to an individual. That is, she acknowledges that there is a literary work in which the name she pronounced is used in a pretenseful way. So, according to Walton, an utterance of 'Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character' will result in conveying a true statement. The statement will be true – not because the sentence attributes a property (i. e. the property of being a fictional character) to an individual (i. e. to Sherlock Holmes) and the individual in question really has that property, but because the sentence reveals that the existence of the individual is just pretend existence.

Negative existentials require a slightly different treatment. The setting remains the same as above: a negative existential – 'Sherlock Holmes does not exist' – is thought of as involving an extra-fictional perspective from which a particular pretense is betrayed. But in this case, the betrayal is not what is asserted. The content of the assertion is instead a kind of disavowal. And disavowals concern not ongoing make-believe games or pretenses but what might be pretended, or so says Walton. In literary works, referential attempts are blocked by authorial pretense: there is nothing to which one could successfully refer by means of a fictional name. Thus, when a speaker utters a sentence which denies the existence of a character, then she makes a comment (a negative one) on a certain kind of referential attempt. What she asserts "is simply that to attempt to refer in a certain manner is to fail".[21] Walton (2015) summarizes his main argument in the following succinct passage:

> We can think of the existential claims like this. To say "Neptune exists" is to say:
> Neptune: That was successful.
> To say "Falstaff doesn't exist" is to say:
> Falstaff: That didn't work.
> In both cases the demonstrative "that" refers to the kind of attempted reference illustrated by the utterance of the name. (Walton 2015: 102)

On this view, affirmations and denials of existence convey metalinguistic information about proper names. Recall that we have already considered this view in connection with the example of Donald Duck in Chapter 3. There we quoted Walton's opinion, according to which when speakers say that Donald Duck is a cultural artefact, they want to assert that there is no such thing, i. e. that Donald Duck-ish referring attempts fail. I found this approach dissatisfying because it

21 Walton (1990: 426).

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rests on the questionable assumption that names are mentioned and not used in such sentences.

Here I want to call attention to a further objection voiced by Kripke (2013). In ordinary conversational settings, speakers often make counterfactual statements about existence. They wonder what might or would happen in nonactual situations which are compatible with their actual web of beliefs. For example, one may believe, truly, that the wooden house in the backyard, as always, is still there and undamaged in the morning, but it can easily be imagined that it has been completely destroyed by a fire at midnight. If the imagined situation were actual, the wooden house would not exist.

The question is whether or not speakers purposely attach metalinguistic information to the content of such counterfactual existence claims.[22] There is good reason to be skeptical about this.

Walton contends that in uttering sentences about Neptune's ontological status speakers intend to communicate to their conversational partners that Neptune-ish referring attempts are successful. But now consider the following counterfactual statement:

(10) If attempts to refer to Neptune would have been failed, Neptune would not exist.

I think (10) illustrates quite well that the link between reference and existence is not as tight as Walton takes it to be. The eighth planet from the Sun would surely existeven if 'Neptune' had at all times been used as a name of a mythological god. How an object has been baptized is always a matter of contingency. The planet in question might have been called 'Planet 8S' or 'Poseidon', if things had taken another turn. And the name/bearer relation retains this momentum of contingency however far away we are from the initial baptismal ceremony.

It is also interesting to observe what is going on when the structure of (10) is reversed:

(11) If you have to consider a case in which Neptune does not exist, then what you have to consider is a case in which attempts to refer to Neptune fail.

If Walton's metalinguistic approach to existential statements were right, then we would find (10) plausible. But, again, the contingency of the name/bearer relation seems to imply that 'Neptune' might refer even if the eighth planet from

22 Cf. Kripke (2013: 152).

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the Sun does not exist. This dramatically lessens the intuitive plausibility of (11). A counterfactual circumstance where Neptune is imagined to not-be or be absent, leaves entirely open what we should think about the reference of 'Neptune'. This line of reasoning is also applicable to characters. Consider an example containing the fictional name 'Falstaff':

(12) If attempts to refer to Falstaff would have been succeed, Falstaff would exist.

As I see things, (12) rests on a dubious understanding of counterfactual consequence. It is assumed that the existence of the referent of 'Falstaff' entails the existence of Falstaff, Giuseppe Verdi's character. This seems to be false since the referent of 'Falstaff' might be any arbitrary entity. And from the fact that 'Falstaff' might turn out to have a referent, one cannot conclude that Giuseppe Verdi's character must exist. The supposed direct route from reference to existence breaks down again. So I am inclined to think that Kripke's objection is successful and we should therefore reject the Waltonian view, according to which the content of true negative existentials is to be conceived as disavowals of referring attempts.

Note, however, that antirealists need not necessarily agree with Walton. Everett (2013), for example, is one of those antirealists who express their doubts about the tenability of the metalinguistic approach. According to him, one need not read (9) and its instances as being about the referential capacity of fictional names. There is an alternative reading available which focuses on the constitutive rules of our extra-fictional discourse.

Everett reminds us that when we talk about the protagonists of a literary work from an outer perspective, we take part in an extended make-believe game. One important feature of these extended games is that they allow us to make reflexive remarks on the content of the pretense we are actually engaged in. This means that in the scope of an extended pretense we can make statements that count as genuinely true in a particular make-believe game. And that is not all. In contexts of extended pretense we can make genuinely true statements about the real world, too. Sometimes a statement may be evaluated as true in a pretense only if certain facts of the real world obtain. In such cases, in order to keep up an ongoing make-believe game, we have to make clear that these worldly facts really obtain. That is, we have to engage in an extended make-believe game where genuinely true real world statements are piggybacked on statements which are made within a base pretense.

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On Everett's account, when we use negative existential sentences, our purpose is to convey accurate information about the real world.[23] This implies that true negative existentials are to be classified as sentences that have genuine truth conditions but which are, at the same time, piggybacking on pretend statements. Everett describes the conceptual interrelation between pretense and true (positive and negative) existentials in the following way:

> On this account an utterance of "Holmes exists" will count as true within the pretense just in case those singular representations which count as referring to Holmes within the scope of the pretense genuinely refer. Thus an utterance of "Holmes exists" will count as false within this pretense, and an utterance of "Holmes doesn't exist" will count as true within it. And utterances of "Holmes doesn't exist" will carry the information that singular representations which count as referring to Holmes within the scope of the pretense fail genuinely to refer. (Everett 2013: 72)

As a first remark, it is important to note that 'singular representation' is used as a double-faced term in Everett's book. On the one hand, this term is used by Everett to denote those representational devices which are tokened in a mental language; on the other hand, it is used to denote natural language expressions that have the capacity to represent something. Since Everett talks about utterances in this passage, we may presume that he uses the term in the latter sense. There is another thing to note. We are told that there are singular representations – presumably, natural language expressions – that may count as referring to Holmes. One of the main findings of the present book is that this way of talking is entirely inappropriate. Strictly speaking, natural language expressions should never be thought of as *referring to* fictional characters. This does not mean, of course, that singular terms cannot contribute with their non-relational contents to networks of character representations. What is objectionable is to take proper names, pronouns and other singular expressions as if they were representations *of* characters. But we can disregard this conceptual difficulty here.

The problem now is that instead of providing an alternative antirealist reading of negative existentials, Everett turns back to the Waltonian view. According to the standard antirealist doctrine, singular expressions or representations do not genuinely refer to Holmes in the scope of the base pretense. Everett thinks that in an extended pretense an utterance of the negative existential 'Holmes does not exist' may be able to convey this real world information via piggyback-

23 Cf. Everett (2013: 115–116). Everett remarks here that '*o* does not exist' is standardly used for close down a discourse about *o*. At another place, he claims that the problem of existential statements would really require a book-length treatment (ibid. 72). To be sure, a book-length treatment would then use '*o* does not exist' in a non-standard way.

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ing. This corresponds to the logic of the Waltonian explanation where existence statements are thought of as providing us information about the referential capabilities of names and other singular expressions. And thus, although Everett is ultimately skeptical of the tenability of the Waltonian metalinguistic approach, he lays out his view without departing from its spirit or essential characteristics. But it is hard to believe that statements about existence (failure) are nothing more than metalinguistic statements about reference (failure). It certainly sounds very odd that the utterer of the sentence 'Holmes exists/does not exist' wants to convey *nothing else* than ''Holmes' is a referring/non-referring name'.

Interestingly enough, Everett holds that the presuppositional approach may also prove useful in solving the problem of negative existentials.[24] On this approach, an instance of (9) is to be seen as an utterance that removes the presupposition that there is such an entity as c_N from the common ground. The link between pretense and presupposition removal has to be understood in the following way. When someone is engaged in the pretense that c_N is an existing entity, they will typically utter instances of (9) as a proposal for closing off the relevant pretense and turning back to a real-world discourse. After the existential presupposition carried by the empty name *N* has been removed from the common ground, there remains no reason for continuing the pretense.

Can this amalgamated approach provide a more secure basis for Everett's antirealist view? If it can be demonstrated that the presuppositional approach to negative existentials is untenable, then Everett's view will prove to be untenable, too. And this is indeed the case.

To see this, let us take a look at a more detailed version of the presuppositional analysis of existence-denials. Imagine a conversational situation where two speakers, A and B, disagree about the existence of Sherlock Holmes. A believes (mistakenly) that Holmes exists, but B believes (correctly) that there is no such person. At a certain point of the conversation, A utters that 'Sherlock Holmes can help you to find your lost dog'. B replies by uttering the sentence 'You are wrong; Sherlock Holmes does not exist'. Clapp (2009) contends that when it comes to the interpretation of A's utterance, B recognizes that the common ground fails to satisfy the existential presupposition carried by the proper name 'Sherlock Holmes'. Then, says Clapp, B may attempt to repair the presupposition failure in two consecutive steps.

24 It is also interesting that on Everett's view the presuppositional approach is pragmatic in its orientation. For this, see Everett (2013: 116). We shall see, however, that this approach has been categorized as belonging to the domain of (dynamic) semantics.

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The first step consists of the accommodation of A's utterance: B simply adds to the common ground the belief that the name 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to an existing person. But, after accommodating globally the missing presupposition, B discerns that the resulting common ground is incompatible with her broader belief set. She then makes explicit this incompatibility by uttering the negative existential 'Sherlock Holmes does not exist'. This is the second step. Note that B's utterance is entirely appropriate, since the belief that concerns the existence of Sherlock Holmes is already part of the common ground. But B's final intent is to provide for A an updated common ground in which the existential presupposition of the name is *not* satisfied. This can happen only if it is possible for the utterance to deny its *own* presupposition.

According to Clapp, this is the correct reconstruction of the situation. Negative existentials canbe regarded in general as examples of presupposition removals. If their primary function in conversations is to remove certain presuppositions, instances of (9) lose their contradictory features. Obviously, to deny a presupposition of an utterance is not the same as to produce a contradiction. Moreover, it can be demonstrated that utterances of negative existentials are meaningful in the sense that they can update the common ground. B's utterance was clearly meaningful for A in the example above because it changed the conversation in a way which was incompatible with her prior beliefs. In interpreting B's utterance, A acquired a new belief. Additionally, because the existential presupposition of the empty name has been removed, and because empty names have in fact no worldly correlates, predicating nonexistence of the referent of an empty name may yield a true utterance. Truth should be considered here from a dynamic perspective: dynamic truth signals how the belief sets on which the context change potentials of utterances operate correspond to something in the world.

Regrettably, Clapp's conception suffers from an inherent conceptual defect. According to standard dynamic semantic theories, one should globally accommodate a presupposition only if the resulting common ground is *consistent*. After hearing an utterance of 'My dog has been lost since the storm', the participants of the conversation may believe that the utterer has a dog even if this information was not part of the common ground before the utterance. Normally, a global case of accommodation like this wouldn't impose even a minimal risk of inconsistency. The same does not hold for sentences containing empty names and other kinds of empty nominals. Utterances of these sentences are puzzling since the presuppositions they carry seem to resist accommodation altogether: a consistent common ground cannot be updated with an utterance that presupposes the existence of a nonexistent thing.

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If this is so, Clapp is wrong when he claims that after hearing A's utterance, B can accommodate the presupposed existence of Sherlock Holmes, in spite of the fact that the accommodation yields an inconsistent common ground. The belief concerning the existence of Sherlock Holmes may not so simply be added to their commonly accepted set of beliefs. But then, again contrary to what Clapp holds, the sentence 'Sherlock Holmes does not exist' cannot be appropriately uttered by B. I think Clapp's analysis of the example rests on an implausible assumption (i.e. the assumption that a missing presupposition can be accommodated even if it results in an inconsistent belief set), and therefore provides no support for the conclusion he wants to draw.[25]

The above solution to the problem of negative existentials makes use of two components of the dynamic semantic framework – accommodating *and* removing the existential presuppositions triggered by empty names – which cannot be linked together so that they form a coherent explanation.

This is undoubtedly an unwelcome result for Everett's amalgamated approach. If pretense generates a common ground in which existential presuppositions are satisfied and utterances of negative existentials require that these presuppositions be (at least) provisionally globally accommodated, then instances of (9) cannot have the function of steering fictional discourses back to real-world discourse. It needs to be so because the processing of negative existentials unavoidably reaches a point where the common ground becomes inconsistent.

So there seems to be little reason to assume that there is a real explanatory connection between pretense and presupposition removal based on the instances of (9). But if this kind of approach does not work, Everetts till owes us an explanation of how and why existence-denials can fulfill a purely metalinguistic (or metadiscourse) function. That is, he should explain how and why instances of (9) can turn us back from pretending and reorient to a real-world discourse.

25 One possible response to this critique would be to say that the existential presupposition of 'Sherlock Holmes' is only *locally* accommodated in B's utterance. One might argue that the local grammatical environment of the name ('Sherlock Holmes does not _') entails the existence of the relevant person. Regardless of how the sentence ends, the required presupposition is thus accommodated. That is, at this point in the incremental processing of the utterance, B recognizes that she should accept provisionally 'Sherlock Holmes' as a name of a person. Otherwise her utterance would make no sense. This would make the utterance conversationally appropriate without implying the process of common belief update. The problem with this response, however, is that on Clapp's view, utterances of negative existentials remove the presuppositions that are carried by theirempty names. But one might wonder how B's utterance can remove the existential presupposition of 'Sherlock Holmes', if that presupposition has already been accommodated within the local environment of the name.

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Importantly, in denying that utterances of 'exist' convey *solely* metalinguistic information, I do not want to suggest that there is only one true theory of the existence predicate. Far from this, there is a spectrum of views on the semantic analysis of 'exist'.

At one pole of the spectrum are the Quinean views which claim that to exist is to belong to the set of entities over which the quantifiers of a true scientific theory are taken to range. Adherents of this view regard 'exist' as a well-defined first-order predicate.[26] At the other pole are deflationist views which deny that 'exist' can be used to express a constitutive property of entities.[27] Existence deflationists contend that utterances of '*o* exists' are unable to add anything to our conception of *o*. On this view, 'exist' does not contribute to the characterization of entities, and it is thus not a genuine predicate. There are many factors – overall theoretical purposes of a research, metaphysical or epistemological predilections, etc. – that may influence whether we prefer a Quinean or a deflationist approach to existence or something in between of these contrasting views.

But whatever one's theory of the existence predicate, it needs to be clarified how the existence of an entity can be denied without getting involved in liar-like antinomies. In our specific case, the task is to explain how one can explicitly deny the existence of such an entity as Sherlock Holmes. How can one assert without pretense that Holmes does not exist? Unfortunately, neither Walton nor Everett has provided a direct answer to *this* question. They have tried to show that Holmes' existence may be denied through the denial of the referential capacity of 'Holmes', plus an account of the constitutive rules of extended make-believe games. Obviously, this kind of explanation was successful in one sense: it has avoided the mistake of postulating an arbitrary referent for a proper name which was used originally as an empty expression.

But, to repeat, when a speaker utters that 'Holmes does not exist', we tend to hear the uttered sentence as expressing a true statement about the way the world is. If needed, I think, we would try to paraphrase this statement so that 'There is no such real person as Holmes', 'There is no such thing as Holmes', or simply that 'There is no Holmes'. Existence-denials of this sort must, *in some sense*, be actually true, considering that no one can seriously claim that they are acquainted with the bearer of 'Sherlock Holmes'.

26 For example, Van Inwagen (2008) argues that '*o* exists' may be interpreted as an instance of the schema '$\neg(\forall y)\neg(y = x)$'.

27 Armour-Garb & Woodbridge (2015) argue for such a view. What Armour-Garb & Woodbridge say about existence statements is inspired mainly by Walton (1990) but they diverge from his view in that they regard reference-talk as being only indirectly about entities.

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Let us now consider how fictional realists can accommodate negative existential sentences. As we have mentioned above, instances of (9) are used typically in extra-fictional contexts. This in itself is enough to create a problem forrealists. The root of the problem is that realists accept the existence of fictional entities and think that fictional names can refer to characters in extra-fictional contexts. Therefore, they have to claim, contrary to common sense intuitions, that negative existentials are false.

One promising solution to this problem is offered by Thomasson (2010). In principle, realists could follow two different lines of argument. One possibility is to point out that common sense intuitions rest on certain assumptions about the way fictional characters exist and these assumptions are erroneous. Readers may assume that if Sherlock Holmes, Anna Karenina and their likes exist, they must exist as flesh-and-blood persons. It could then be said that negative existentials are regarded as true on the basis of these commonly held erroneous assumptions. The other possibility is to argue that common sense intuitions are correct and negative existential sentences are really true. They are true because character names do not necessarily behave like ordinary names in such sentences. Thomasson follows the second line.

The starting point of the Thomassonian argument is the claim that standard causal-historical theories of proper names should be replaced by a hybrid theory which assigns a role to speaker intentions in reference determination. The hybrid theory of reference was advanced first by Devitt & Sterelny (1987) who have pointed out that pure causal accounts of reference are unable to explain how a proper name can be used to refer to a specific kind of entity and not another. In the subsequent literature this concern has been known as the *qua* problem.

For example, if someone gives her dog the name of Watson, then the causal-historical theory can explain quite well how the reference of 'Watson' gets fixed and transmitted, but it cannot elucidate how and why 'Watson' refers to an entity which belongs to the kind 'dog'. In spite of the fact that the dog is made ultimately of subatomic particles, no one would think that 'Watson' refers to a specific collection of such particles. According to Devitt and Sterelny, the reason why such mistakes should be extremely rare is that in baptismal situations speakers always have in mind a particular kind and intend to refer to one of its instances. In our example, the baptism will succeed if and only if the name-giver has the intention of using the name 'Watson' as a dog's name. If subsequent users of the name can somehow recognize that the name has been introduced by this descriptive baptismal intention, then the *qua* problem will be neutralized.

In her own version of the hybrid theory of reference, Thomasson claims that in order to have the capacity to refer, proper names have to be introduced into a

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given language with determinate application (and co-application) conditions. The fulfillment of these condition ensures that 'Watson' will be applied (and re-applied) successfully only to a particular instance of an intended kind *K* (i.e. to a particular *dog*). On the other hand, one can easily imagine a baptismal situation where the name's application conditions remain unfulfilled. The baptizer might utter 'I name this dog 'Watson'', where the complex demonstrative 'this dog' would pick out a hologram or a deceivingly perfect robot dog instead of a real dog. In such a case, the baptismal act would count as unsuccessful and utterances involving the introduced name would lead to misunderstandings and other types of miscommunication.

Borrowing an idea from Donnellan (1974), Thomasson says that when the introduction of a name *N* can be traced back to a mistake, then the history of the uses of *N* ends in a "block". In this regard, names of failed scientific posits like 'phlogiston' and 'ether' and names used in unsuccessful ordinary baptismal acts like 'Watson' are in exactly the same position: they have been introduced into our language without invoking a determinate word-world relation.

According to Thomasson, the hybrid theory of reference and the idea of historical blocks together provide conditions sufficient for solving the problem posed by negative existentials. In order to see how the proposal is supposed to work, let us turn back to our standard example. When the question arises whether an utterance of 'Holmes does not exist' expresses a true statement or not, Thomasson's answer is that it depends. In principle, one must reckon with two possibilities.

It could happen that the utterer assumes that 'Holmes' is a name of a detective. There is certainly a historical chain of use in which speakers intend to refer with 'Holmes' to a flesh-and-blood person. It is clear that the application (and co-application) conditions of the name are not fulfilled in this kind of case. Those who use 'Holmes' for referring to a real person are ignorant of the important fact that this name has been invented by the author of a fictional novel.

The second possibility is that the utterer intends to use 'Holmes' as a name of a fictional character. Those who want to talk about Conan Doyle's novel can take the name to refer to a thing which has a different ontological standing than a flesh-and-blood person. They may think, for instance, that Holmes is a kind of pretend or non-concrete entity. In this case, the historical chain of use leads us back to the original baptismal act performed by Conan Doyle where the application (and co-application) conditions of 'Holmes' are, of course, fulfilled. It is illuminating to see how Thomasson derives her conclusion from these observations:

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> [T]he view is that whether a name-use chain encounters a block depends on what application conditions prior speakers associated with the name. Wherever the application conditions presupposedare not met in a grounding situation that name use chain ends in ablock. So in cases in which prior speakers used 'Holmes' as a person name, the reference chain does end in a block, and the nonexistence claim is true. But in cases in which prior speakers used 'Holmes' as a character name, the reference chain isnot blocked but properly grounded in certain uses of the name in works of literary fiction. (Thomasson 2010: 131, reference omitted)

The message of this passage is, in short, that (i) negative existentials express true statements iff fictional names in them are taken to refer to real persons, and that (ii) negative existentials express false statements iff fictional names in them are taken to refer to characters.[28]

There are two obvious problems with this approach – and I hasten to stress that this is independent from what we might think about the explanatory power of Thomasson's artefacualist theory.

The first problem arises from the application of Donnellan's idea of blocking. From the fact that the use chain of *N* ends in a block, one may conclude that *N* does not refer. This is evidently so with the names of failed scientific posits which were intended to refer to some entity but the empirical world did not cooperate. Perhaps 'Watson' belongs also to this group of names even if it may have provisionally referred to a hologram or a robot dog. It seems that fictional names are empty expressions too, at least in one of their paradigmatic use. From this it follows that 'Holmes_{p}' (i.e. 'Holmes' as a person name) is an empty expression in (13):

(13) Holmes_{p} does not exist.

(13) is a true negative existential since there is no such person as Holmes. But if Holmes_{p} can be traced back to a block, how can (13) express a statement that has a definitive truth value? Empty names are unsuited to play this role.

28 Everett (2013: 154–163) raises several objections to Thomasson's solution. One of these is Thomasson's starting point is too strong since there are obvious examples where names are introduced successfully into a language without specifying the kind *K* to which the referred entity belongs. Such cases are numerous in literary fiction. Solodkoff (2014) points out, however, that the solution may work in the domain of fiction if we contextualize Thomasson's proposal and understand *K* as serious (i.e. non-pretend) or concrete object. Thus 'c_{N} does not exist' will be true in a context *C* iff *N* is not a K_C. Here I do not attempt to discuss Everett's other objections in detail because I think Thomasson could answer them adequately.

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In order to avoid this difficulty, Thomasson proposes the following theoretical move: let us derive the truth value of the object-language sentence (13) from the truth value of the meta-language sentence "'Holmes$_p$' ends in a block'. This is a kind of semantic descent which explains the semantic properties of an object-language expression with the help of meta-language information. It seems, then, that (13) acquires its truth value from a sentence which expresses a statement about an unsuccessful act of reference fixing. Thomasson reinforces this when she says that "nonexistence claims are the object-language shadows of claims about reference problems".[29] Therefore, as a true negative existential (13) is to be understood as saying that 'Holmes$_p$' fails to refer.

Notice, however, that this result coincides with what antirealists think about the communicative function of negative existentials. Again, the problem is that if (13) conveys that 'Holmes$_p$' ends in a block' or that 'Holmes$_p$' fails to refer', then we are not in a position to directly reject the existence of 'Holmes$_p$'. But I see no reason why we should accept such an implausible view. There is a more pragmatically oriented theory, which attempts to show how speakers can make statements directly about the world by uttering negative existential sentences. But before discussing the details of this alternative, let us consider the second problem with the Thomassonian approach.

The second problem arises from the way Thomasson employs the notion of name use chain. If we agree with her conclusion, we should say that 'Holmes$_c$' (i.e. 'Holmes' as a character name) occurs as a referring expression in (14):

(14) Holmes$_c$ does not exist.

Thomasson can say that in contrast to the previous case (14) expresses a false statement. This is definitely a welcome result for her overall project. But assigning a subscript to a name (type) might offer sometimes only a specious solution. Allegedly, we should be able to distinguish between two different name use chains and on this ground differentiate 'Holmes$_p$' from 'Holmes$_c$'. I think it is evident that conversational context is the sole conceivable source of this distinction. Thomasson seems to agree when she claims that negative existentials are used typically for "criticizing prior uses" of names as illgrounded.[30] Contexts must then contain appropriate clues – whatever these clues might be – that will guide speakers in identifying the name use chain to which a particular token utterance of 'Holmes' belongs. My objection is that some contexts will

29 Thomasson (2010:127).
30 Thomasson (2010: 126).

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not satisfy this demand. Consider the following sentence, uttered in a discourse initial position:

(15) I have wondered whether Holmes is a real person or a fictional character but it was a waste of time because Holmes does not exist.

I am inclined to think that the method of subscripting is not applicable to (15). Notice that the utterance of this sentence does not rest on any historical chain of communication. The utterer would not have been able to express her uncertainty concerning Holmes if she had presupposed that it is correct to use 'Holmes' as a person name/character name. Thus, if we would assign a subscript (p or c) to the first occurrence of the name, we would make the main clause of (15) incoherent, which it is not. And if the first occurrence of 'Holmes' is unsubscripted in the main clause, as it appears to be, then it would be wrong to claim that the negative existential occurring in the explanatory clause criticizes a prior use of that name.

There are cases that are even worse in this regard. 'Holmes' is a paradigmatic example of fictional names which can intuitively be thought of as referring either to real persons or to characters. It could happen, however, that a fictional name cannot be used for referring to a person in extra-fictional contexts in spite of the fact that it has been introduced into a prose work as a person name. Consider the following (very) short story which nicely illustrates this point:

> *A Solitary Creature*
> A. E. Folmes was a creature of a very peculiar kind. He has lived his solitary life outside of space and time because he was fictional. All he wanted was to be a flesh-and-blood person, to be able to touch and be touched by others, feel how time goes by. But his hopes and desires remained unfulfilled.

In *A Solitary Creature*, 'A. E. Folmes' functions as a proper name of a non-concrete entity. The second sentence of the story indicates that Folmes had a life like no one else since "he" was fictional. What is then the intuitive truth value of the negative existential sentence 'A. E. Folmes does not exist'? Thomasson might try to argue that this nonexistence claim is true just in case the utterer uses 'A. E. Folmes' as a person name. That would be an appropriate answer because the protagonist of our story is not a flesh-and-blood person.

But I do not see how anyone could think that 'A. E. Folmes' can be used in that way. We are explicitly told in the story that A. E. Folmes is a creature that lived outside of space and time. Therefore, the text of *A Solitary Creature* cannot have a reading according to which 'Folmes is *F*' would entail that a particular real person is *F*. I think the concept of person cannot be so easily divorced

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from everyday usage that such non-concrete creatures as A. E. Folmes be contained in its extension.

There are, presumably, many fictional stories which resist such a reading. In these cases we cannot assign to a fictional name, *N*, the subscript p and say that it is true that N_p does not exist. Insofar as there is no personal name use chain for *N*, this cannot be done. If I am right in this, and there are many intuitively true negative existentials which cannot be evaluated with the method of subscripting, we may conclude that, also in this second respect, Thomasson's approach is unsatisfactory.[31]

As already mentioned, there is an alternative realist approach to the problem of negative existentials which rests, basically, on pragmatic considerations. The pragmatic strategy might itself be expounded in two different ways.

The first is conservative in the sense that it differs from the standard Gricean framework of pragmatics only in one minor respect. Followers of this strategy claim that sentences containing fictional proper names can convey meaningful content via some pragmatic mechanism. In general, while fictional names are acknowledged to be lexically/semantically empty, instances of (9) are nevertheless seen as being able to convey complete propositions or thoughts.

The background idea is that, within a given speech community, every proper name, fictional and non-fictional alike, is associated with a more or less stable set of pieces of individuating information. The link between a proper name and an information set is established typically through associative learning or through other forms of conditioning. When it comes to utterances of negative existentials, participants of the conversation make an attempt to activate certain common elements of this set. Thus, in a successful conversation, an empty name gets to be associated with some piece of individuating information which is assumed to be currently available for each party. The procedure is supposed to work in the following way:

(16) Anna Karenina does not exist.

(16') {Alexey Vronsky's lover, the splendid woman, ...} does not exist.

Whichever element is selected from the available set of information in (16'), the pragmatically enriched sentence will be interpreted as conveying a truth-evalu-

31 In a similar approach, Hanks (2015) claimed that in denying the existence of *N*, we say that a given type of referential practice, N, is empty. And since N exists, negative existential statements about *N* can be true. In my view, Hanks illegitimately assumes the existence of N and, therefore, he repeats the mistake of Thomasson.

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able content. One might be tempted to think that the transition from (16) to (16') is implemented by a Gricean conversational implicature. This would mean that in order to identify the proposition or thought expressed by (16'), conversational participants need to perform a pragmatic inference. Wyatt (2007) offers a slightly different explanation.

> In short, the view I am advocating is that with any use of a name, empty or not, the lore of the name serves to contribute considerable extra content that can form part of what is said in a broad sense, and that while speakers may in general be able to distinguish conversational implicatures from what is said in the broad sense, and thereby recognize a Gricean explanation when one is given, that does not translate into a reason to expect speakers to immediately recognize as correct the distinction between the semantic content of a sentence and what is said in a broad sense. The notion of implicating something rather than saying it – of reading between the lines – is an ordinary notion explained. The distinction between semantic content and what is said in the broad sense is a technical one, and we should no more expect competent speakers to recognize it as correct upon hearing it than we should expect competent pool players to recognize theoretical physics as correct upon hearing about it. (Wyatt 2007: 672)

That is, according to Wyatt's hypothesis, a particular instance of (16') is actually expressed and not merely implicated by an utterance of (16). Although the transition from (16) to (16') is in fact a transition from semantic content to what is said (in the broad sense of the term), competent users of (16) need not properly recognize what happens. They tend, therefore, to accept the content of (16) as meaningful and true.

In sum, Wyatt argues that negative existentials can convey truths by virtue of the fact that the empty names in them are substituted pragmatically with some associated piece of information. It does not matter that speakers remain ignorant of how the underlying mechanism of substitution in fact works. In many other cases of language use, speakers are in a similarly deprived epistemic situation regarding the structural rules of their language.

I don't want to delve too deeply into the details of this strategy because it rests on a shaky assumption: namely, that merely associating an empty name with some additional piece of information is in itself *sufficient* to generate a truth-evaluable proposition or thought.

Mousavian (2014) rightly observes that there are too many counterexamples to this assumption. Consider again the transition from (16) to (16'). Let us suppose that in a particular speech community the empty name 'Anna Karenina' has standardly become associated with the individuating description 'Alexey Vronsky's lover'. *Pace* Wyatt, the pragmatically enriched sentence 'Alexey Vronsky's lover does not exist' should then be interpreted as the content actually expressed by the utterances of (16). This expressed content, again according to

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Wyatt, should be evaluated as being true. This cannot be right, however. Given that it belongs to the text ofthe novel *Anna Karenina*, 'Alexey Vronsky' counts also as a fictional name. And if 'Alexey Vronsky' is a fictional name, it is a lexically/semantically empty expression (on Wyatt's background theory), so it cannot be used to generate a true utterance.

The problem in general is that, in principle, certain empty names might be exclusively associated with sets of information the elements of which are themselves apparently empty expressions. Unfortunately, in the case of fictional names, which are distinguished elements of *t*-corepresenting chains, this is always so. It seems therefore that if we follow Wyatt's advice, we cannot find a non-circular way to explain the meaningfulness and truth of negative existentials like (16).[32]

The second version of the pragmatic strategy differs more radically from the spirit of the standard Gricean account of pragmatics.

As we have seen, in trying to explain how negative existentials with empty names are able to convey complete propositions or thoughts, Wyatt applied a standard static semantic framework accompanied by a *static* pragmatics. However, since Stalnaker's early work on assertion, there have also been attempts to apply a *dynamic* pragmatic view to the problem of empty names and their behavior in negative existentials.

The demand for a dynamic pragmatics was originally motivated by the recognition that static semantics in itself is unable to provide an account of a wide range of truth-conditionally relevant processes. These are typically processes in which the value of a propositional constituent undergoes a change, but the change is not lexically/semantically mandated.

In recent literature, such processes are categorized under the label 'modulation'.[33] Modulation is an umbrella term that embraces a wide group of top-down pragmatic phenomena. All of the processes that fall under this category are controlled purely pragmatically: meaning transfer, loosening and free enrichment are among the most prominent examples.

Propositional constituents which undergo one of these types of modulation change their semantic values for general pragmatic reasons. These include the rationality of the conversation, various cooperative norms and other non-seman-

32 One might try to remedy the situation by limiting information sets only to those containing non-empty elements. Negative existentials containing fictional names that are associated with other empty expressions would then be treated as truth-valueless at the level of pragmatics. The success of this move is doubtful since (16) would still seem to express a content that is truth-evaluable.

33 For a systematic treatment of the topic, see Recanati (2004).

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tic factors. If pragmatic processes can indeed induce "dynamic" changes in the behavior of certain propositional constituents, then it is not unreasonable to assume that negative existentials contain expressions whose propositional contribution is also modulated in one way or another.

The most elaborated version of this idea is to be found in Spewak (2016). Spewak's primary goal was to give an account of negative existentials that is consistent with the Thomassonian artefactualist view of fictional entities but, as we shall see, his view is general enough to be extended to other kinds of negative existentials.

Let us suppose, with Spewak, that utterances of negative existentials containing empty names undergo a pragmatic process of modulation. Then the first question that needs to be answered concerns what precisely the factors are that generate this process. One such factor, perhaps the most important one, is the topic of the conversation. According to Spewak, the topic of a particular conversation determines *how* and *why* the meaning or sense of a propositional constituent is modulated. However, once this first answer has been given, a second question immediately arises: *which* of the propositional constituents is or should be involved in the process of modulation? Since negative existentials are uttered in conversations that concern issues of existence, the obvious candidate for this role is the constituent which corresponds to the predicate 'exists'.[34]

In its most general use, the predicate 'exists' may be considered as equivalent with 'to be' or 'have being'. The fact that 'exists' cannot take event modifiers such as 'slowly' or 'quickly' shows that it qualifies as a stative predicate. To say that *o* exists (in our world) is to say that a particular non-temporal entity, *o*, is or has being (in our world). This informal extensional "definition" may exhaust the lexical sense of 'exists' which can be predicated of all things, be they concrete or abstract.

The lexical variant of the predicate is well suited for inquiries into the logical or metaphysical foundations of reality. It occurs also frequently in the generali-

34 In a similar spirit, Hanks (2015) contends that the key observation for solving the problem of negative existentials is that the predicate 'exists' creates a shifted context. According to this approach, when someone utters that 'Zeus does not exist', the context of predication shifts to the predicative act itself. Instead of talking about Zeus, the utterer says that there is no Zeus-type act of predication which has true instances. Modulation might also be conceived as generating a metalinguistic context-shift. If this is possible, then the modulation of the existential sentence 'Zeus does not exist' would yield the metalinguistic sentence 'The name *Zeus* does not refer'. As we have seen, this is quite close to the proposal put forward by Walton (2015: 102), but I think the metalinguistic account of modulation would be incompatible with Spewak's view, as he presented it in his 2016 paper.

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zations of the special sciences. But in everyday conversations, 'exists' is used typically in a different manner. Spewak attempts to clarify the difference in the following passage:

> For children, what matters is whether there is something in their closets that is *physically* the Boogie man, or a *real* monster. When parents tell their children that the Boogie man does not exist, they are trying to convince them that noone is going to eat them in the middle of the night. For the child and the parents, there is no thought given to whether some abstract artifact is the Boogie man. What matters in most ordinary cases is what physically exists. When we think about existence and what exists, we tend to focus on physical existence. (Spewak, 2016: 233, emphases in the original)

The specific idea is, then, that when our ordinary, medium-sized world is the topic of a conversation, the lexical sense of 'exists' is strengthened so that it applies only to a subset of all things, namely those that are part of the physical world. For purposes of illustration, let us introduce a simple technical notation. Consider once again our earlier example (now numbered (17)):

(17) Sherlock Holmes does not $\downarrow \text{exist}_{ct}$.

In (17), the downward arrow indicates that the semantic value of the predicate undergoes a process of modulation, while the subscript 'ct' denotes a conversational topic with respect to which the utterance is interpreted. If 'ct' denotes a topic as described above, then 'exists' acquires a sense which is stronger than the sense of its lexical variant. Because of this, '$\downarrow \text{exist}_{ct}$' in (17) can be said to be equivalent with 'to be physical' or 'to exist as a physical thing'. In the end, Spewak's reasoning allows us a reading of (17) which is apparently free from semantic or lexical contradiction:

(18) Sherlock Holmes does not exist as a physical thing.

Given that the literary character 'Sherlock Holmes' is the product of Conan Doyle's artistic imagination, there is no physical thing with which it is identical. Therefore, when uttered, (18) may be used for expressing a *true* proposition or thought.

Notice, in addition, that if the subscript 'ct' in (17) were used to denote a different conversational topic, (17) would allow another reading. In a philosophical debate, for example, where the topic is existence in its entirety, 'exists' probably retains its original lexical sense. If so, the topic of the philosophical debate would not trigger a modulation of the predicate and therefore the downward arrow in (17) would have to become inert. Adherents of Spewak's pragmatic

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view would then surely contend that an utterance of 'Sherlock Holmes does not exist' is *false* in such a conversational situation because literary characters belong to the class of abstract entities and the members of this class are supposed to exist in that situation.

Spewak's dynamic pragmatic account has some commonalities with the Thomassonian proposal discussed above. Like the idea of blocking, the pragmatic process of modulation is certainly independently motivated: it has recently been shown through several case studies how modulation affects the values of the constituents of propositions (or thoughts). Recanati (2004) and others have argued convincingly that the sense of color adjectives like 'green', 'blue', or 'red' may vary under the influence of the topic of the conversation in which they are uttered. The same modulatory processes have been observed in the behavior of gradable adjectives like 'small', 'expensive', or 'tall'.

Moreover, Spewak's account, like that of Thomasson's, is intended to be applicable to a wide range of cases in the sense that it allows the value of 'exists' to be modulated in a variety of ways.

For example, Spewak describes a research situation where social scientists are engaged in a debate about the reality of race. Very probably, many evolutionary psychologists and biologists are today of the opinion that race is merely a socio-cultural construct that lacks a firm biological basis. Accordingly, in uttering (19) they may want to reject the view according to which race is a purely biological phenomenon:

(19) Race does not $\downarrow\text{exist}_{ct}$.

If this is so, '$\downarrow\text{exist}_{ct}$' should be interpreted here as being equivalent with 'to be biological' or 'to exist as a biological thing'. In such a conversational setting, Spewak argues, 'Race does not exist' may be regarded as a true utterance.

At first sight, this explanatory strategy might seem to fit neatly with our pretheoretical intuitions about negative existentials. That is, it might seem to have the capacity to account for the common belief that utterances of these sentences are *in some sense* about our actual world; and it uses a conceptually conservative vocabulary which is flexible enough to cover a wide range of conversational settings where such sentences may be uttered. I contend, however, that we may have serious doubts about the tenability of Spewak's account because the strategy it uses is one that cannot in fact be applied to *all* types of negative existentials with empty or fictional names.

To see the problem, recall the way modulation is supposed to work. As already mentioned, modulation has to be thought of as a top-down pragmatic process that operates on the lexical senses of certain expressions. It is important

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to stress that sense modulations must be performed before the procedure of propositional composition has been completed. This holds also for the modulation of the lexical sense of 'exists'. Conversational topic first affects the sense of the predicate, and then the modulated sense is calculated in the compositional procedure. As we have seen, that is why utterances of negative existentials like (17) or (19) can express true propositions or thoughts.

But it is important to stress that in order to express *true* propositions or thoughts, utterances of negative existentials must express *structurally complete* propositions or thoughts in the first place. This is the point at which Spewak's explanatory strategy seems to break down. For it is not sufficient merely to say that the sense of 'exists' *occasionally* undergoes a process of modulation. One should also explain how negative existentials containing *genuinely* empty proper names, rather than apparently empty proper names, can express structurally complete propositions or thoughts.

To borrow an example from Kroon (2003), consider the case of 'Max'. In talking about Arnold, a speaker says 'He went to the max' intending to emphasize her belief that Arnold definitely gave it his all. A hearer overhears the 'max' part of the utterance and interprets it as if it were a token occurrence of the proper name type 'Max' and asks: 'What was the reason for doing that? And anyway, who is Max?' The speaker then corrects the hearer's mistake by saying that 'In fact, Max is not a person, he is the result of your mishearing my utterance. Max does not exist'. According to Kroon, 'Max' has been introduced into the above mini-conversation as a genuinely empty name: it was used neither as a name of a real person nor as a name of a fictional character. Applied to this case, Spewak's explanatory strategy delivers the following result:

(20) Max does not $\downarrow \text{exist}_{ct}$.

(21) Max does not exist as a biological human being.

Here 'ct' denotes a conversational topic which is centered on flesh-and-blood persons. Accordingly, the modulated sense of the existence predicate in (20) can be said to be equivalent with 'to be human' or 'to exist as a biological human being'.

Spewak might be right in that (20) allows a pragmatically modulated reading, (21), that is semantically or lexically non-contradictory. It is confusing, however, that the proposition or thought expressed by (21) still contains a compositionally inert constituent (i.e. 'Max').

The source of this confusion is twofold. First, Spewak thinks both that fictional entities exist, and that they are the referents of character names. He is ex-

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plicitly committed to the view according to which "Holmes does exist [as an abstract artefact] and is the referent of 'Holmes'".[35] This is one of the most characteristic claims of the simple-minded account of realism, which, I hope, has already been convincingly refuted in this book. It would be unfortunate, if the employment of a pragmatic argument forced us to rehabilitate this ontologically misguided account. Second, as it is shown above, Spewak's explanatory strategy focuses exclusively on the sense(s) of the existence predicate. And by concentrating on how this predicate can change its sense in different conversational settings, he takes for granted the compositional non-inertness of fictional proper names and other kinds of empty nominals (e. g. 'race'). But the proper names that have been introduced into Kroon's story might be taken as a counterexample to this assumption. If Kroon is right (as he seems to be), 'Max' cannot be assigned any compositional value in (21). Regrettably, there is no hint given in Spewak's work of how this remaining problem of semantic *incompleteness* might be resolved within the modulation account.

It bears emphasis that utterance misinterpretation is not the only source of genuinely empty proper names. Dream-like hallucinations and figments of imaginations may encourage speakers to create and introduce into their idiolect similar expressions.

Note also that genuinely empty proper names can be introduced into conversations even by deliberate intentional acts. A well-known example for this can be found in Salmon (1998). Let us say that 'Nappy' stands for or refers to the *actual* emperor of France if there is such a person, and it is an empty name otherwise. Since everyone knows that there is actually no such emperor, 'Nappy' has to be interpreted as a deliberate genuinely empty proper name.

Or consider Oliver and Smiley's 'zilch'.[36] 'Zilch' is a proper-name-like term, which has been introduced as a paradigm empty expression: it stands for a logically unsatisfiable condition, $\iota x\ x \neq x$, and therefore it should be regarded as empty as a matter of necessity.[37] 'Nappy', 'zilch' and their likes manifest the phenomenon of intended *referential* emptiness. In general, applying the modulation account to genuinely empty names yields a sentential structure 'does not exist as an *F*', where the argument place of the complex predicate remains necessarily unfulfilled. If real, this phenomenon may strengthen our argument against characterizing existence-denials solely in terms of sense modulation.

35 Spewak (2016: 236).

36 Oliver & Smiley (2013).

37 Neo-Meinongians who are committed to the Modal Comprehension Principle would protest by saying that $\iota x\ x \neq x$ is satisfiable in (logically) impossible worlds. However, we have formulated some reservations against this view in Chapter 2.2.

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From what has been said above it may be concluded that the proposed pragmatic explanatory strategies, be they static or dynamic, do not offer a satisfactory basis for explaining the apparent meaningfulness and truth of negative existentials.

Now the question is whether there is a plausible account of negative existentials at all. The account we are looking for must satisfy at least the following three requirements: (i) it must avoid the pitfalls of the approaches discussed above, (ii) it must be in accordance with our truth value intuitions about the instances of this kind of statement, and (iii) it must be compatible with the (CNRR)-based artefactualist theory of characters. In what follows, I will try to demonstrate that there is an approach which is capable to satisfy all of these requirements simultaneously.

To start, consider a brief remark from *Much Ado about Nonexistence* (Martinich & Stroll 2007), which closely resembles to the kind of approach I favor:

> To say that, say, 'Sherlock Holmes does not exist' makes a comment about the world ... but also indicates something about the source of the sensibleness of the name 'Sherlock Holmes'. (Martinich & Stroll 2007: 25)

What gets articulated in this quotation is that an utterance of 'Holmes does not exist' can be taken as having a twofold meaning. Unfortunately, Martinich and Stroll are too laconic here. They do not explain how the negative existential can deny the existence of an entity and at the same time affirm that the name of that entity is sensible. What they do say is that a fictional name acquires its sensibleness from the linguistic practices we are engaged in. Conan Doyle tells a story about a detective as if it were a fact and readers try to interpret this story in the most effective way. The problem is that in these linguistic practices Holmes counts as a detective who exists in the same way as real people. And if the sensibleness of the name of this character somehow mirrors this fact, then the negative existential should count as false rather than true.

Nonetheless, the thought that negative existentials have a twofold meaning or a twofold informational structure is an inspiring insight. On the one hand, one may conjecture that speakers' intention behind the utterance of these sentences is that they want to deny the existence of an entity. As we have seen, to claim that (9) and its instances are *solely* about the referential capacities of names or about reference chains is a controversial theoretical move. One might wonder why speakers would feel themselves tempted to utter sentences that do not properly correspond to their communicative intentions. Why would a speaker choose to utter 'c_N does not exist' instead of simply uttering '*N* does not refer'? It has also been shown that existence-denials cannot be thought of as being conveyed

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through pragmatic mechanisms. Neither enriched sentence contents nor sense modulations proved to be suitable for resolving the just mentioned tension between communicative intentions and communicated contents.

From a representationalist point of view, it is plausible to assume that speakers utter negative existentials because these sentences are best suited to express the message they intend to communicate, that is, that they want to deny the existence of a particular entity. And this specific sort of communicative intention cannot be satisfied otherwise than by making statements directly about the world. On the other hand, it should not be left out of consideration that fictional names share a common non-standard feature in that they are meaningful but not object-related representations. One should expect competent speakers to be aware about this fact. Thus it is not entirely unreasonable to suppose that in using sentences of the form 'c_N does not exist' such speakers intend to make statements not only about the world but also about the representational features of *N*.

My contention is that these suppositions are fundamentally correct and existence-denials play such a twofold role in fictional discourse. We must take care, however, not to identify this twofoldness with a simple perspectival phenomenon. When we say that Holmes does not exist, we do not want to claim that, seen from an extra-fictional perspective, Holmes does not exist. This would entail that we are convinced that, seen from the intra-fictional perspective, Holmes exists. I think existence-denials are not context-dependent in this strong sense. Since Holmes is, after all, a certain kind of linguistic representation, we can attribute to it the same ontological status – being an existing abstract entity – in both kinds of context.

Nevertheless, existence-denials can be said to be context-dependent in a weak sense. Consider the following sentences, (22) and (23), both of which have already been discussed:

(22) You don't know Sherlock Holmes yet.

(23) Sherlock Holmes does not exist.

As was mentioned in Chapter 3.2, (22) was the speech act with which Conan Doyle has introduced his main protagonist into the text of the novel *A Study in Scarlet*. Obviously, (23) is not part of the text of the novel. Maybe it was uttered at the first time by a detective novel fan who was straightforwardly or naïvely interested in ontological issues. For all we know, this is how it happened. But this is not the central issue here.

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The important point is that the above sentences are representationally related to each other because both contain a token of the proto-representing type *Sherlock Holmes*. But the immediate sentential environments of these tokens are significantly different due to the differences of the contextual settings in which they are uttered.

As for (22), there are two contextual effects that are immediately relevant for its interpretation. First, in the intra-fictional context of the novel this sentence expresses a statement that should not, and cannot, be evaluated with respect to truth and falsity. By uttering (22), Conan Doyle's aim was in all probability to establish a network of non-relational representations, not to refer to a familiar or novel entity. Second, although it was the very first time Conan Doyle has used a token of the proto-representing type *Sherlock Holmes*, his sentence is not about this vehicle of representation nor about the abstract content of the representation. There is a syntactic proper name after the verb and it contributes to the compositional content of the sentence with a (non-relational) person representation, and that is all. 'Sherlock Holmes' does not play a meta-representational role in (22).

In the case of (23), the situation is partly different. As hinted above, the right analysis of the complex predicate 'does not exist' is a contested matter. Maybe Van Inwagen is right to think that existence-denials used in public languages are too complex to be analyzed in a uniform way.[38] Yet it can be said without exaggeration that there is anatural reading of these sentences which takes them to be about the world. More carefully, it seems that there is at least one kind of use of existence-denials that can be interpreted as telling us something about the world. Imagine someone who says in a normal tone that Arnold Schwarzenegger's twin brother gave an interview to the BBC. The listener can make the following response: 'Are you joking? Schwarzenegger's twin brother does not exist'. As I read it, this response conveys the information that the world is a certain way. It says that Arnold Schwarzenegger is an actually existing entity, a real person, but his twin brother does not belong to the overall inventory of what there is.[39]

Can (23) be read in this way? Yes, it can – insofar as it is assumed that speakers keep in mind that 'Sherlock Holmes' is a fictional name. If utterers of (23) want to make a statement about the world, they need to reflect on the fact that fictional names are not designed for relational entity representation. This can be achieved when they regard the performed existence-denial as a reflective

38 Van Inwagen (2008: 57).

39 Note that we are not concerned here with language. The point is not that the possessive phrase 'his twin brother' lacks the capacity of referring. Instead we are claiming that the thought *that there is an entity which has the property of being Schwarzenegger's twin brother* is false.

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or meta-representational speech act. Accordingly, when they deny that Sherlock Holmes exists, what they deny is that 'Sherlock Holmes' can function as a representation *of* an entity. This denial can be performed in a perfectly intelligent and coherent manner. The result of the meta-representational speech act is free from paradoxical consequences since 'Sherlock Holmes' behaves as a meaningful expression in every possible extra-fictional context.

That is one side of the twofoldness of negative existential statements: in uttering (23), speakers express their view on the (non-standard) representational features of a fictional name. The other side concerns the world-directedness of existence-denials. Utterances of (23) may also be seen asspeech acts which convey the information that the world is a certain way.[40] For to say that 'Sherlock Holmes' is not a representation *of* an entity amounts to saying that the representatum of 'Sherlock Holmes' is *not* part of the world. We can reverse the picture and claim that to say that the world does not contain the representatum of 'Sherlock Holmes' amounts to saying that 'Sherlock Holmes' is not a representation *of* an entity. This means, in other words, that (23) enables to perform two speech acts "at the same time". These speech acts are of different types – one is meta-representational and the other is world-directed – but their content is obviously mutually dependent on each other.

Now suppose for a moment that there is a comprehensive list of existing things. Suppose that this list contains every entity of the actual world independently of whether they are concrete or abstract and independently of whether they have been attached a name or not. Under this supposition, when we claim that (23) denies the existence of a particular entity, what we really claim is that there is no such entry on this list which has *the property of being the representatum of 'Sherlock Holmes'*. The thought expressed in this way is, roughly, that any attempt to identify such an *entity* is doomed to fail.

Although this is only a speculative hypothesis, it illustrates quite clearly the direction and scope of the statement one can express by uttering a negative existential. It is crucial to see, however, that utterances of (23) may have an ontological import only in such cases where the world-directed speech act functions as a complement of the meta-representational speech act. That is, in order to be able to make a statement directly about the world, speakers must provide the in-

40 The idea that uttered sentences can be paired with more than one speech act is not entirely new. For example, Cappelen & Lepore (2005) have argued for a view according to which every utterance says, states or asserts indefinitely many things at once. Fortunately, we may defend our conception of the twofold structure of negative existentials without endorsing such a radical speech act pluralism.

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formation to their conversational partners that the *Holmes-representation* they use is *not* to be interpreted as a *representation of Holmes*.

I think the proposal for reading negative existentials in this way satisfies the above-mentioned three requirements.

As for (i), in attributing a twofold informational structure to the instances of (9), we can avoid the mistake of regarding negative existentials as being *solely* about failed referential acts. So we can explain, among other things, why speakers decide to utter 'c_N does not exist' instead of uttering the seemingly more obvious '*N* does not refer'. It is worth mentioning that our proposal may also be applied to such peculiar characters as A. E. Folmes. While Thomasson's approach does not work in this type of case, we can contend that by uttering 'A. E. Folmes does not exist' competent speakers can perform two diverse but closely connected speech acts. One of these speech acts asserts the fact that 'A. E. Folmes' is a non-standard name. That is, it asserts that the name in question does not have the semantic function of representing an entity *relationally*. The other speech act tells us something about the ontological implications of this fact. It tells us that the comprehensive list of existing things does not contain an entry for the representatum *of* 'A. E. Folmes'.

As for (ii), we can save the common sense intuition that negative existentials express true statements. Of course, this claim should be somewhat qualified. The theoretically important claim is that *some* utterances of negative existential sentences are true. These sentences are weakly context-dependent. If some contextual factors hold – factors of competence and communicative intention –, speakers can truly say that a particular entity does not exist.

A further advantage of this treatment is that it can be extended to positive existentials. Presumably, many speakers are disposed to the intuition that the sentence 'Sherlock Holmes exists' is *in some sense* true. We can do justice to this intuition: if a speaker knows that 'Sherlock Holmes' belongs to a particular network of non-relational linguistic representations, she can truly say that Sherlock Holmes exists.[41]

An utterance of a positive existential sentence may also be seen as being equivalent with performing two interrelated speech acts at once. The content of the meta-representational speech act will be the same as in the former case: it will tell us that the proper name occurring in this type of utterance does not have the function of representing a language-external entity. But now

41 Note here that natural language speakers do not possess the technical notion of non-relational linguistic representation. This is not a disadvantage, however, for they can make accurate judgments about the status of characters by utilizing the resources of their pre-theoretical vocabulary.

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the world-directed speech act will express a different content. It will tell us that there is, indeed, an entry for 'Sherlock Holmes' in the comprehensive list of existing things. This entry is about a particular entity that actually exists, according to its own nature, as an embodiment of an abstract network of linguistic representations.

It might be objected that on this interpretation both kinds of existential sentences – the negative and the positive ones – can, in principle, be uttered truly which would imply that we are committed ourselves to a tedious contradiction. But I think this is not quite so. It is not the case that negative and positive existentials can be uttered truly *in one and the same conversational context*. Though it has been mentioned previously, it is important to stress once again that existential sentences with fictional names are weakly context-dependent in the sense that utterances of them have certain conditions of satisfaction.

One of these conditions is that speakers must be aware that fictional names and ordinary names are similar in one significant respect: both have the capacity to contribute a certain kind of representational content to sentences. Seen from a representational point of view, 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'Arnold Schwarzenegger' take part in the compositional process in the same way. Both are representational vehicles the content of which "concerns" instances of the same natural kind (i.e. persons). At the same times peakers should keep in mind that these types of names are completely different concerning their referential profiles. While ordinary names are devices of singular reference, fictional names belong to the class of referentially defective expressions.

Another condition is that in uttering existential sentences speakers must have the appropriate communicative intention. That is, when someone wants to deny or assert the existence of a fictional character, they should be properly prepared to perform both a meta-representational speech act and a world-directed speech act, and the latter should fit their primary communicative intention. Ultimately, therefore, whether negative and positive existentials are true or not depends on the features of the conversational context in which they are uttered. It is crucial to see, however, that there are no conversational contexts in which (i) participants of the conversation are engaged in a discussion about the ontological status of an entity and (ii) the conditions for uttering negative and positive existential sentences about that entity are *simultaneously* satisfied.

Nevertheless, it would be preposterous to conclude from this that fictional names are polysemous or multi-faceted. Realists might try to argue that negative and positive existentials can equally be uttered truly because character names belong to the class of systematically polysemous expressions. Negative existential sentences are uttered habitually in contexts in which the "story world" is taken to be salient. In such contexts, a character name, *N*, behaves as an

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empty expression and the negative existential will be evaluated as true on the basis of some non-semantic mechanism. In contrast, positive existentials are uttered mostly in contexts where some aspect of the real world has been made salient. In such contexts, the very same character name, *N*, behaves like an ordinary referring expression, and so it can be used to refer to an existing abstract entity, c_N. An utterance of the positive existential sentence with *N* will therefore be evaluated as straightforwardly (semantically) true.[42]

This (naïve) realist argument is misleading in a fundamental way. It is important to keep apart the question about the semantics of fictional names from the speech act theoretic analysis of negative and positive existentials. A particular character name, *N*, does not vary in its semantic or informational content across contexts; there is only one type of the name, the proto-representing one. Negative and positive existentials are, on the other hand, sometimes true, sometimes false (or uninterpretable), and this is so because tokens of *N* can be used with considerably different communicative intentions.

As for (iii), we can contend that the true reading of negative existential sentences is not incompatible with the (CNRR)-based account of characters. On this artefactualist account, fictional characters are embodiments of representational networks. True negative existentials would be incompatible with (CNRR) only if they were used for the purpose of denying the existence of such things. In order for this to happen, (23) should be read in the following way:

(24) Sherlock Holmes, the non-relational linguistic representation, does not exist.

It is not hard to see that the twofold structure of (23) allows for such a reading. Speakers can reflect on the representational features of 'Sherlock Holmes' and, based on this reflection, express the meta-representational statement that the world is such that there is no entity which has these features. But seen from the point of view of (CNRR), (24) is false. In fact, Sherlock Holmes definitely exists. It is the fictional character that has its first occurrence at the third page of the detective mystery novel *A Study in Scarlet*, and, as it was explained on the basis of (CNRR), this character is to be identified with an embodiment of a network of non-relational linguistic representations.

42 This sort of argument would be available to those who follow the advices of Kripke (2013) and maintain that, in order to understand the puzzling behavior of character names, one should differentiate between two levels of language use.

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The falsity of (24) is a good sign that the present approach to negative existential sentences is on the right path: although (23) *can* be used to express a true statement about the world, this *need not* be taken as contradicting the main underlying assumption of our artefactualist theory. This holds in general. Instances of (9) have a twofold informational structure which rests on the sharp categorical difference between two kinds of linguistic representations, the relational and the non-relational ones. And if we can understand how and which of these representations are mobilized by the speech acts of competent speakers in a given conversational context, we will consider negative existential sentences less paradoxical than they seemed to be at first glance.

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5 A metatheoretical epilogue

The main aim of the previous four chapters has been to try to give a systematic overview of a reformed artefactualist theory of literary discourse. Our analysis was based all the time on composite data sources. On the one hand, we have drawn on a variety of claims that originated from pre-theoretical data sources, such as the folk's conception of fictionality, the common sense view of literary figures, and the assumptions speakers make about the informational content of fictional names. On the other hand, we have used a great number of insights which were gathered from theoretical sources. The distinction between fiction-internal and fiction-external contexts, the technical term of property set, and the abstract notion of non-relational representation are among the most prominent examples for such insights.

The data sources we have relied on have differed sometimes in their reliability to a significant extent. It was inevitable, therefore, that at certain points of our argumentation conflicts should have arisen. In such cases where we have combined terms, notions or concepts which have originated from differently reliable sources, we have tried to solve the arising conflict by means of the method of moderate revisionarism. The advantage of his method was that while it assigned explanatory priority to pre-theoretical data sources, it allowed also to modify the initial reliability of these sources in the light of opposing theoretical considerations.

Perhaps the most obvious example for this was the analysis of the individuation criteria of characters. According to the common sense view of fictionality, a given character may occur more than one time in a serialized fiction provided that it has a constant name and the works of the series have been written by the same author. After some theoretical considerations, however, the common sense view turned out to be less acceptable in this connection than elsewhere. We have seen that characters can be best individuated on the linguistic basis of integrated property sets. But it also seemed evident to us that distinct literary works must be constructed from distinct property sets. If two works, W_1 and W_2, feature a character c_N, and W_1 and W_2 are distinct works, then c_N cannot be individuated on the basis of the same property sets in W_1 and W_2. From this we have been able to infer the conclusion that every character is located in a single prose work. We were then in a position to argue that despite appearances to the contrary the Sherlock Holmes character of *A Study in Scarlet* is not identical with the Sherlock Holmes character of *The Sign of Four*. This was a case where we rejected a pre-theoretical hypothesis in favor of an account which had its roots in our theoretical considerations.

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Another example was when we were looking for the proper targets of our emotional responses to fictional stories. The folk theory of emotions strongly suggested that in everyday conversational situations emotional responses are directed to existing individuals. On this pre-theoretical picture, an emotional response towards an existing individual counts as appropriate only if that individual possesses a property which is capable to trigger the emotional response in question. Given that participants of everyday conversational situations aim to create a connection to the objects of the extra-linguistic reality, and given that the language of this type of conversation can indeed establish such a connection by employing relational representations, this seemed to be an innocent and natural view.

We have found, however, that this view about the targets of emotional responses becomes much less persuasive if it is extended tothe individuals offictional discourse. According to our reformed version of artefactualism, there are fictional individuals but they exist in a special way, namely, as embodiments of integrated networks of linguistic representations. This position was backed up with a couple of theoretical arguments. On these grounds we came to the conclusion that in our appreciative and critical practices our emotional responses are directed not to abstract fictional individuals who possess in some way or other certain properties but rather to embodied networks of representations. In the light of this conclusion, the initial reliability of the folk theory of emotions has been significantly decreased.

Selecting and combining different data sources, comparing their reliability and mitigating particular conflicts between them is not merely an issue of argumentative methodology, though. These issues have far wider consequences which can be treated properly only at the level of *metatheoretical* analysis. The reasons for this are the following.

First, methodological principles are not able to tell us anything informative about the nature of data and data sources. For example, moderate revisionarism can be applied only if one conceives certain terms, notions or concepts as data. Applicability requires that the researcher has at least an implicit understanding of datahood but a methodological principle in itself cannot be used for definitory purposes. Having recognized this, we are faced with a number of questions – for example "What is the structure of data?", "How can the reliability of data sources be determined?", "What is the function of data in theories of fictional discourse?". Answers to such questions seem to require a metatheoretical reflection on the fundamental principles of theory development.

Second, theories of fictional discourse are obviously not axiomatic-deductive systems. Theory development does not start in this domain of research with formulas and theorems which have previously been proved and the hypotheses cannot be supported or refuted unambiguously by the available data. In such

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an environment, the formulas of first-order classical logic cannot be used mechanically for constructing inferences. Therefore, realists and antirealists alike must reckon with a certain type of uncertainty or imprecision in their arguments and counterarguments. Once again, it seems, that in order to assess the direct consequences of this research situation, we have to engage in a certain kind of metatheoretical reflection.

Third, in order to emphasize the relative acceptability of individual hypotheses at a given stage of the argumentation process, researchers in this field often make assertions that have clear metatheoretical overtones. They reflect on the fact that the acceptability of hypotheses depends in great part on the acceptability of the data that give support to them. And they seem to be aware of the difficulties that are inherent in the conditional nature of acceptability judgments. But on closer examination, the language of their metatheoretical commentaries consists of standardized idioms rather than well-defined terms. Therefore, it is not sufficiently clear what they think about the criteria of data-handling and how they conceive of the function of data in theory development.

As far as I know, Rescher (1976) was the first who tried to develop a framework of metatheoretical reasoning which is capable to describe the above-mentioned intricate relationship between data and theoretical hypotheses.

Rescher's framework was centered around the technical concept of *plausibility*. This was a fruitful choice because in metatheoretical contexts this concept can be used in a more flexible way than standard truth-conditional concepts. Genuinely true and genuinely false hypotheses can be said to exemplify the extreme cases of plausibility $|H| = 1$ and $|\neg H| = 1$, respectively, but the concept of plausibility may cover also such cases where hypotheses have to be associated with values somewhere in between these extremes: $0 < |H| < 1$. In general, when H_1 and H_2 are rival hypotheses neither of which can be evaluated as genuinely true or genuinely false in a given research context, then $|H_1| < |H_2|$ indicates that H_2 possesses a higher degree of plausibility than H_1 in that research context. Individual hypotheses acquire their plausibility-status through a comparative analysis of their most respectable sources.

Rescher took great pains to emphasize that the assigned plausibility-status of hypotheses has to reflect the reliability of the sources that vouch for them.[1] It goes without saying that one cannot find an analogue for this source-sensitivity in metatheoretical frameworks that characterize the informative value or content of hypotheses in truth-conditional terms.

1 See, for example, Rescher (1976: 12, 20, 31).

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The concept of plausibility has some comparative advantages over the basic concept of probability, too. While there is a common domain of application for these two concepts (i.e. the domain of uncertainty), the latter cannot be used for determining the conditions of hypothesis acceptance and rejection. The Lottery Paradox and other epistemic paradoxes show that the limits of probability theory arise from the fact that at bottom it works with quantitative and mathematical methods. In contrast, the theory of plausibility is based on qualitative and comparative content analysis and thus it is considerably more sensitive to subjective preferences. Plausibility theory can exploit this sensitivity even in complicated epistemic circumstances. By alluding to this methodological virtue, Rescher contended that plausibility measuring can serve as a rational guide to acceptance in the face of inconsistent and/or incomplete information.[2]

Rescher's metatheoretical work has also provided some interesting insights concerning the concept of *datum*.[3] One of these insights is that 'datum' belongs to the class of acceptance-relative concepts. A datum can be best understood as a *prima facie* truth in the sense that one should grant it as acceptance-as-true insofar as there are no reasons or evidence against it.

On this conception, we are not epistemically committed to data for they cannot be regarded as genuine truths. Rather, when we regard them as in some sense "given", we adopt the attitude of conditional acceptance. This is a rather thin attitude: we accept a statement as a datum only if we have a rationally warranted expectation that it might somehow turn out to be true. It does not follow from this, however, that conditional acceptance requires or presupposes genuine truth. As it happens in many other cases of theory development, our expectations may also be incorrect with respect to epistemic possibilities. Thus, statements that have acquired the status of accepted-as-true can be promptly rejected without involving serious systematic difficulties in our pursuit of truth.

The question of which statements can perform the function of data depends in great part on our decisions. In principle, we can deliberately select the best candidates for the acceptance-as-true status. In spite of this, not everything can be considered as datum; there are certain epistemic constraints on the use of this technical concept.

Rescher emphasized, first, that although we are not epistemically committed to individual data, we cannot make decisions about them independently from our commitments elsewhere. For example, when a statement is clearly and strongly inconsistent with our current epistemic state, then it makes no sense

2 Cf. Rescher (1976: 36).

3 Cf. Rescher (1976: 9–10).

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to assign it the acceptance-as-true status. Reversely, when a statement is (genuinely) true as a matter of logical necessity, then there seems to be no point in regarding it as accepted-as-true.

The second constraint is that we have to assign at least some degree of positive plausibility to a particular statement, if we are willing to regard it as a datum. There is no strict requirement for uniformity here: the sufficient degree of plausibility may differ from case to case. This can generate epistemic tensions even within the argumentative structure of a single theory. At a given stage of theory development, we may assign the acceptance-as-true status to different statements that have similar theory-internal implications. Nevertheless, it might turn out at a later stage that there are some statements among the accepted ones which are not entirely compatible with each other. When the statements that appear to be incompatible possess similar degrees of plausibility, the argumentative structure of the theory will be temporarily inconsistent. The question is how to handle such cases properly. According to Rescher, plausibility measuring may be considered as a means that can be successfully employed for resolving this kind of theory-internal tensions.

Taking these insights together, one could say with some simplification that Rescher's plausibility theory was designed to tell which hypotheses – or inferential procedures which enable one to construe theoretical hypotheses – may be accepted in the face of diverse or conflicting data.

More recently, Kertész and Rákosi have elaborated a metatheoretical model for linguistic research which has close connections with Rescher's original idea but exceeds it in conceptual rigorand consistency. They provided a detailed discussion of the development and implementation of the metatheoretical viewpoint in their 2012 book, *Data and Evidence in Linguistics: A Plausible Argumentation Model*. Interesting clarifications and extensions to this groundwork can also be found in their shorter summaries (e. g. Kertész & Rákosi 2009, 2014a, 2014b). Certain parts of Kertész and Rákosi's metatheoretical conception are especially enlightening for the current debate on literary fictionality, so it is worth reviewing briefly the basic structure of their model.

The first thing to note is that Kertész and Rákosi's model conceives of linguistic data as pieces of information.[4] However, in agreeing with Rescher's opinion, they claim that not all pieces of information can function as datum for a linguistic hypothesis. For them to play this role, it is essential that they possess a certain degree of initial plausibility when entering the process of theory develop-

4 In fact, they think that pieces of information are available for us typically in the form of statements but this precisification is not crucial here.

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ment. This means that a given piece of information counts as a datum just in case it has a positive plausibility value originating from some *direct* source.

Direct sources come in a great variety of types: immediate sense perception, reflective introspection, the use of special technical tools, events, reports, corpora, contents of the memory system, historical documents, conjectures, methodological principles, theories, etc. In the case of direct sources, the plausibility value of the information in question has to be evaluated with respect to the reliability of the source. For instance, if one regards the theoretician's intuition as a highly reliable source of information, then intuitive judgments about, say, the well-formedness of linguistic expressions have to be assigned a relatively high plausibility value. Or, if one thinks of written corpora as having only a low degree of reliability, then one should attach low plausibility values to the pieces of information that stem from this kind of source.

It is worth noting that, in order to improve the efficacy of their research, adherents of a particular trend or school often adopt a consensual view concerning the plausibility ranking of alternative data sources. Therefore, in most areas of linguistic research, degrees of plausibility are measured and determined by the research tradition within which the questions of data reliability are actually formulated. This does not mean, however, that such plausibility rankings must be set once for all. Rankings that are determined by convention are persistently exposed to change. Every consensual agreement concerning the reliability of data sources can in principle be revised and re-evaluated.

Data may originate also from *indirect* sources. When a datum stems from an indirect source, its plausibility value is measured and determined on the basis of some additional pieces of information. Typically, this happens when data are generated by plausible inferences. At certain phases of theory development, the epistemic criteria for making sound logical inferences cannot be fully satisfied. These are situations in which (i) either there is no logical consequence relation between the premises and the conclusion, or (ii) the premises of logically valid arguments support the conclusion only partially because at least one of the premises is only partially acceptable.

In such situations one ought to take into consideration some unformalizable features of the inferences one wishes to draw. In cases (i), for example, one can enrich the inference with latent background assumptions which help to establish a consequence relation between the premises and the conclusion. In cases (ii), one might consider the plausibility values of the premises of a particular inference and weigh in the sources from which these values are drawn. In this way, one can make inferences that contain premises, which have some intermediate plausibility value instead of being genuinely true or genuinely false.

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Conclusions of these "uncertain" inferences have the same features as their premises, that is, they are not genuinely true or false but only to a certain extent plausible. Thus, when one considers the conclusion of a plausible inference as a datum, then the plausibility value of that datum should be calculated on the basis of the plausibility values of the premises and other non-formal but nonetheless relevant properties of the inference.[5]

From this it follows that the notion of datum cannot be interpreted solely in terms of information content. According to Kertész and Rákosi's approach, the structure of data consists of two components: one of them is a piece of information, the other is a plausibility value which stems from a direct or indirect source.

Yet it is also important to note that, by relying on the insights of Rescher (1976, 1980), Kertész and Rákosi do not regard data as theory-independent and unquestionable starting points for the construction of linguistic models. Instead they hold that data are entities that are basically uncertain, fallible and revisable. They inherit these properties from the sources with which they are associated. Therefore, in contrast to standard truth-conditional views, data are regarded here not as "established" facts, but as more or less reliable "truth-candidates". Nevertheless, it is not wrong to say that data are in a certain sense given like facts since they receive a plausibility value from direct sources, that is, their *initial* plausibility is judged not with the help of plausible inferences constructed within an argumentation process but directly on the basis of the reliability of their source.[6]

Accordingly, for something to be a datum does not mean to have a stable, once-for-all status. Kertész and Rákosi argue for this in the following way:

> If the reliability of a data source is called into question, then the usability of this source as well as the plausibility of the statements originating from it have to be re-evaluated. This means that information concerning the reliability of the source and the relationship between the source and the statements stemming from it have to be integrated into the argumentation process. In this way the data stemming from this source will lose their data status (but not necessarily their plausibility). (Kertész & Rákosi 2012: 176)

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5 The notion of *evidence* can be defined in terms of plausible inference: a datum is evidence-with respect to some hypothesis if it is a premise of a plausible inference which makes that hypothesis plausible. For more on this, see Kertész & Rákosi (2012: 178–185) and (2014b: 45–46). The problem of scientific/linguistic evidence is one of the central themes on which Kertész and Rákosi's work focuses, but we shall disregard this problem in what follows. The reason for this is that the notion of evidence has been defined within their model in terms of linguistic data.
6 Cf. Kertész & Rákosi (2012: 175).

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The first sentence in the quoted passage can be read as an explanation of why data may vary with respect to their plausibility values. In principle, any argumentation process may be extended to take new pieces of information into account. If the new pieces of information have been gathered from relevant sources and have positive plausibility values, they may function as new data for the development of a given theory.

On the other hand, the newly acquired data may have a potential to call into question the reliability of certain data sources already used in the process of argumentation.

Two possible cases can be distinguished in this respect. The first occurs when a datum derived from a new source affects directly and negatively the reliability of another datum. In this type of case, a newly introduced datum renders an already accepted statement implausible by supporting another statement that is incompatible with it. This is a matter of degree – the greater the support, the greater the decrease in plausibility. In an extreme situation, a statement may become false with certainty (i.e. genuinely false) if its negation must be taken to be true with certainty (i.e. genuinely true) on the basis of the new datum.

The second case is when a new datum renders an extant data source irrelevant to the problem actually discussed. Then all statements which got their values from the extant source will become neutral with respect to plausibility measures. Neutral plausibility means, more precisely, that on the basis of a newly introduced source, one judges an older statement neither plausible, nor implausible, nor genuinely true, nor genuinely false, and there is no equivocality involved on the basis of this source, either. For these reasons, it can be argued that theoretical statements may not only change their plausibility values, but could also lose them entirely as the process of research progresses.

Seen from this metatheoretical perspective, linguistic theory development is a dynamic process in which pieces of information are – or can be – constantly re-evaluated with respect to their plausibility values.

What is then the function of data in linguistic theories? Kertész and Rákosi provide the following definitional answer to this question:

> The primary *function of data* is to supply the theory with plausibility values. That is, data receive their initial plausibility value directly from reliable sources. All other hypotheses obtain their plausibility value indirectly (with the help of plausible inferences) from the data. (Kertész & Rákosi 2014b: 45, emphasis in the original)

The claim that the primary function of data is to supply the theory with plausibility values means, in other words, that data serve as (theory-dependent, fallible and revisable) starting points for systematic argumentation. Because of this,

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the opening phase of an argumentation process ought to receive its plausibility value from a direct source which possesses some degree of reliability. When a given piece of information acquires the status of datum in a particular linguistic theory, it can be used later to determine the plausibility of other pieces of information with the help of plausible inferences.

This leads to cycles of argumentation where a particular piece of information is or can be evaluated more than one time, perhaps even from significantly different perspectives. As a consequence, linguistic theory development should not be thought of as a linear progress, but rather as a cyclic and retrospective re-evaluation of previously assumed data. Such argumentation cycles can also occur between rival theories either because they may judge the initial plausibility value of informational units differently, or because they may accept different forms of plausible inferences as legitimate.

Let us take stock. Kertész and Rákosi's metatheoretical model contains at least three insights that are pertinent to the topic of the present book. These are the following:[7]

1) *The role of plausibility in linguistic theory development*. The metatheoretical approach to plausible reasoning reinterprets the standard notion of datum and regards it as an effective means of linguistic theory development. Although data may be thought of, in a certain sense, as given, they do not have such a secure epistemological status as facts. Quite the contrary, their basic property is their uncertainty. Apart from cases that one can justly call extreme, data may not be seen as constituting true starting points for theoretical reasoning. Instead, they have to be regarded as being more or less reliable truth-candidates.

The model interprets this type of epistemic uncertainty in terms of plausibility. Accordingly, it can be claimed that the primary function of data is to introduce plausibility values into linguistic theories.

One of the main advantages of this interpretation is that it allows us to make decisions even in circumstances which are not particularly friendly to standard truth-conditional theories. As has been already emphasized by Rescher, plausibility ranking is to be thought of as a tool that helps us decide which hypotheses and inferential procedures are acceptable in such circumstances where our epistemic position is not secure enough to satisfy the most rigorous standards of reasoning.

7 Cf. Kertész & Rákosi (2012: 254–255) and (2014a: 5–7).

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2) *Status and handling of data*. Data in linguistic theories are not only uncertain, they are also fallible and revisable. They are to be recognized as having a fallible status because any claim one can make about them can be disputed. This is a consequence of the fact that data are essentially theory- and problem-dependent. One can propose a hypothesis that assigns a positive plausibility value to a given piece of information, p_i, if p_i stems from a source which has been acknowledged by a particular research community to be reliable. An advocate of a rival hypothesis may reject this decision by arguing that the data source in question is unreliable or at least not reliable enough to make p_i plausible.

This need not necessarily lead to an impasse since both decisions can be revised by extending the debate with new pieces of information. If this has been done, one should set up an argumentation cycle in which old and new decisions can be evaluated in a coordinated manner. 'Coordination' is intended to mean here not only the summation of the actually available informational units but also the examination of their consistency. One should never evaluate informational units without taking into consideration the totality of their supporting sources: decisions should always be made as to which data sources must be regarded as unreliable and which of the informational units have to be excluded from the process of argumentation.

The final aim of this process of re-evaluation is to replace the starting theoretical context with a modified one in which the reliability of the contested data sources can be compared so that a tentative resolution of the initial dispute becomes achievable.

3) *Open-endedness*. Modeling data as uncertain, fallible and revisable has an implication that concerns the prospects and limitations of linguistic research in general. If linguistic research is to be thought of as a process in which data, plausible inferences and hypotheses are continuously re-evaluated, then object-scientific questions can never be answered in a conclusive way. Or, to put this less powerfully, it seems that for *most* object-scientific questions only provisional answers can be offered.

The metatheoretical model reveals that object-scientific problems have usually more than one acceptable solution. Overall consensus concerning research results is very rarely obtained since all disputants ought to check and revise their standpoint continuously through the cyclic re-evaluation process of plausible argumentation. To repeat, linguistic research does not start with genuinely true formulas and theorems from which sound inferences can be formed by applying deductive rules mechanically. In most cases, starting points are based on insecure epistemic ground. Strictly speaking, the opening arguments of linguistic theories are not already established truths but merely candidates for being true.

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Even though obvious uncertainties are eliminated step by step as the research process progresses, one should always expect a certain amount of epistemic insecurity. Therefore, at a particular phase of the research, adherents of a given theory must take into consideration all available hypotheses and should choose the most plausible one among them. As already hinted at, this is not a pressure that arises from applying a local standard of methodology like that of moderate revisionism. Here the model invites us to think about the most general and abstract features of linguistic theorizing.

Given that uncertainty is understood as a pervasive phenomenon in theoretical reasoning, Kertész and Rákosi's approach requires a disengagement from the usual understanding of scientific progress. The most important implication is that the core idea of the model is incompatible with "the unreflected and absolutistic defence of particular theories and the unreflected and mechanical rejection of their rivals".[8] This understanding has to be replaced by another one which emphasizes the open-endedness of object-scientific debates.

Although debates in semantics and pragmatics and in other areas improve permanently in their capacity to find reassuring answers to troubling questions, they rarely come to an endpoint.

Note, however, that open-endedness should not be taken as excluding the possibility of theoretical progress in linguistics. Indeed, quite the opposite is the case. The fact that the vast majority of theoretical claims lack definitive justification has a positive impact on long-run knowledge growth because it motivates – or should motivate – everyone to involve more and more data into their research and thus to find more plausible solutions to the problems they encounter.

In the light of these metatheoretical considerations, I want to make somefinal remarks about our main topic. First note that three of the central notions of the above model – datum, data source, and plausibility – have occurred at several places in the previous parts of this book. This reveals that we have applied metatheoretical reflection in our argumentative practices even if only in a methodologically naïve or uncommitted way.

This is in accordance with Kertész and Rákosi's model of plausible argumentation, which conceives of metatheoretical reflection not as a kind of second-order or higher-order reasoning but as an element of object-scientific research. Strategies of plausible argumentation (i.e. ways of finding provisional solutions to problems arising from the uncertainty of data) are modeled so that they bridge

8 Kertész & Rákosi (2014a: 7).

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the gap between metatheoretical reflection and everyday linguistic research practice. This shows that it would be a mistake to regard metatheory as a theory-independent or theory-neutral tool for the analysis of the argumentative structure of linguistic investigations. Quite the contrary, metatheory has to be seen as being largely dependent on the conceptual and methodological commitments of particular theories.

Understood in this way, higher-order reasoning about linguistic theorizing contributes to the solution of linguistic problems at the object-scientific level where these problems originate. There is a reciprocal and cyclic relationship between metatheoretical reflection and object-scientific investigations, which means that "the former is continuously weaving through and influencing the latter, and it may undergo changes as well".[9]

The argumentative style of the present book seems to support their opinion. More importantly, many prominent works of the realism/antirealism debate seem to fit this model as well. Although experts in this field rarely overtly acknowledge the uncertainty, fallibility and revisability of their data, the careful manner with which they approach every question suggests that they are aware of the relevance of this epistemic factor. This is even more so in the case of plausibility. Although it is nowhere defined explicitly, the term 'plausibility' is commonly used as if it were a metatheoretical tool for introducing epistemic rankings over individual hypotheses.[10] To illustrate this, let us consider some characteristic passages from both sides of the debate.

It often happens that antirealists about fictional entities use 'plausibility' and 'plausible' for qualifying, comparing, or contrasting hypotheses. One of the earliest antirealist manifesto, Walton's *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, serves as a good example. Because Walton's book is extremely rich in arguments and counterarguments, comparative statements about plausibilities can fulfill their function within it rather easily. Here is a typical quote from this book, where Walton considers the possible relationship between fictional language and communication:

9 Kertész & Rákosi (2012: 261).

10 In Badura & Berto (2018) one can find an attempt that is somewhat exceptional. Badura and Berto understand fiction as a kind of belief revision. This understanding has been underpinned by a formal semantics in which the term 'plausibility' plays an important role. They write: "Let us have a domain of possible and impossible worlds, totally ordered by a plausibility relation, as in the semantics for doxastic and epistemic logics of belief revision [...]. Think of the ordering in terms of nested spheres around a core, as in the standard Lewis semantics for counterfactuals, except that the spheres don't model objective similarity. They model subjective plausibility, or degrees of belief entrenchment" (Badura & Berto 2018: 6).

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> Along with the act of fiction making (and that of presenting or displaying a fiction) we must exclude *communication* in any sense involving human communicators from the essence of fiction. Language may be essentially a means whereby people communicate with one another; hence the *plausibility* of basing a theory of language on actions of communicators, language users. To suppose that fiction is essentially a means of communication is no more *plausible* than to suppose it incapable of serving this purpose. (Walton 1990: 89, emphasis added)

Like Walton, Everett uses the adjective '(im)plausible' in his book *The Nonexistent* quite frequently.[11] Let us consider two typical examples from this book. The first one is a passage in which Everett discusses the requirements for engaging in pretense. It reads as follows:

> Our ability to grasp the real-world truth conditions of sentences of the relevant discourse will therefore require two things. First, when engaging in the pretense, we will need to be able to assign the sentences of that discourse the truth conditions they count as having within the scope of the pretense. And second, we will need to recognize how what is the case in the pretense is determined by what is the case in the real world. I take it that, in the case of fictional character discourse, it is *plausible* to suppose ordinary language users have both capacities. (Everett 2013: 104, emphasis added)

The second example-passage, which addresses the problem of character identity, contains two occurrences of 'plausible':

> I also argued that the most *intuitively plausible* identity criteria for fictional characters are not those we considered that were offered by various fictional realists but rather ones which see the identity or distinctness of fictional characters as being determined by what we are mandated to imagine when we engage with the relevant fictions. These criteria are *intuitively highly plausible* and seem to capture how we actually talk and think about fictional objects. (Everett 2013: 208, emphasis added)

It can easily be recognized that both Walton's and Everett's claims can be traced back to composite data sources in the above passages. The content expressed by their statements depends partly on theoretical considerations (i.e. conceptual analyses), and partly on common sense knowledge (i.e. intuitive insights). Accordingly, the metatheoretical role of 'plausible' in their sentences consists in qualifying and comparing the reliability of these data sources.

11 More precisely, the adjective '(im)plausible' has exactly 30 occurrences in Walton's book. In Everett's case this number rises up to 75, which means that this expression occurs, on average, at every third page of his book.

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More accurately, 'plausible', 'intuitively plausible' and 'intuitively highly plausible' function in Everett's remarks like noun modifiers or sentence operators that have the effect of showing that a particular statement which can be traced back to one type of data source is (much) more acceptable than its rival statement which can be traced back to a different type of source.

Note also that in the second quoted passage above, Everett seems to regard the common sense conception of fiction as a more reliable data source than the realists' theoretical considerations. This is a rather typical argumentative strategy that has been used for producing a double effect. On the one hand, it serves to emphasize that the realists' account of character identity lacks a sound theoretical footing, which, in turn, helps to strengthen the antirealist's own position against its traditional realist rivals. On the other hand, it brings nearer the antirealist's position to the common sense conception of fictionality, which has implicitly been taken as a relatively highly reliable data source.

It is not too surprising, I think, that fictional realists try to follow a similar argumentative strategy in their works. Let us look at two characteristic examples. Consider first the following remarks from Thomasson's paper *Speaking of fictional characters:*

> Certainly it is *plausible* that, in writing a work of fiction, the fictionalizing discourse of the storyteller involves a pretense (shared with readers) that she is telling a true story about real people. It's also *plausible* that internal discourse by readers about the content of the story invokes the same pretense, and can be understood as discussing what is true according to the story (with the pretense obviating the need to explicitly state this prefix). (Thomasson 2003a: 207, emphasis added)

Thomasson is not the only one to apply the adjective 'plausible' to the basic hypotheses of her theory. In her paper *Fictional realism and negative existentials*, von Solodkoff expresses her own realist view in the following way:

> Now, I take 'Fictional characters are unreal', 'Fictional characters are non-existent', 'Fictional characters are not real' and 'Fictional characters don't exist' to be four different ways to convey the same claim. As I noted earlier, this seems to be *plausible*, since ordinary speakers find it extremely natural to switch between claiming that something 'is not real' and claiming that that thing 'doesn't exist'. (von Solodkoff 2014: 346, emphasis added)

Note that both of these authors work with data that originate from a direct source. They use common sense intuitions for supporting their arguments: Thomasson's text refers to our everyday reading experiences, von Solodkoff's text mentions the linguistic habits of ordinary speakers. 'Plausible' in their usage indicates that common sense intuition should be taken as a relatively highly reliable data source at a particular phase of the argumentation process.

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These quoted passages are examples of the double effect strategy which we have already observed in Walton's and Everett's arguments above, but now with a reverse twist: allusions to the everyday aspects of literary experiences help here to strengthen the *realist's* theoretical position and, in addition, bring it nearer to the supposedly reliable data source of common sense reasoning.

Trying to demonstrate a general phenomenon with randomly chosen examples may seem a little desperate. That is an apt remark. In response to this it can be said that direct allusions to plausibility occur in nearly all works of this kind. The examples could be easily multiplied: to talk about the plausibility of a claim or hypothesis is the norm rather than exception within this particular area of research. And this is enough to show that the expressions '*p* is (highly, extremely, etc.) plausible' and 'it is (highly, extremely, etc.) plausible that' are not mere cliches of the language of object-scientific research.[12] Instead they are indicators which reveal that the participants of the realism/antirealism debate continuously calculate how reliable the data sources are from which they draw their information. They also show that in order to compare rival hypotheses and theories and to elaborate alternative explanatory frameworks, researchers have to rely on some measure of reliability.

This is also true of the line of argumentation that hasled us to the (CNRR)-based account of characters. Although the common sense conception of fictionality did not unanimously support the realist account of fictional entities, it seemed to be an appropriate starting point for us in many respects. This conception was viewed, even if only tacitly, as a data source which has a relatively high initial reliability. Then, after reviewing the main candidates in the realist camp, we found that artefactualist views are better suited for our systematic purposes than other theories. And, finally, we have tried to establish that our newly introduced representationalist framework has numerous compelling advantages over all of the existing theories of fictional entities.

In order to reinforce this claim, we have shown that a (CNRR)-style account can be successfully applied to the most pressing and most often discussed issues of fictionality. And just as it was predicted, some of our own responses to these issues proved to be incompatible with the underlying assumptions of the common sense view. Therefore, certain intuitively attractive assumptions were given up and replaced by more theory-laden conceptions.

Plausibility rankings played an often invisible but significant role at every turn of our argument. Individual claims and hypotheses were accepted only if (i) we tacitly assigned them a value which were drawn from a continuum of val-

12 The same holds for expressions that are based on the adjective 'implausible'.

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ues between that of neutral plausibility (i.e. 0) and certainty (i.e. 1), and (ii) we assigned to their rival claims and hypotheses lower values.

It would be interesting to see how the assigned plausibility values are connected to each other and how they fit into our overall representationalist framework. The detailed reconstruction of this assignment structure, however, must be the subject of another study.

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