A DEFENSE OF CREATIONISM IN FICTION

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Summary

Creationism is the conjunction of the following theses: (i) fictional individuals (e.g. Sherlock Holmes) actually exist; (ii) fictional names (e.g., 'Holmes') are at least sometimes genuinely referential; (iii) fictional individuals are the creations of the authors who first wrote (or spoke, etc.) about them. *CA Creationism* is the conjunction of (i)—(iii) and the following thesis: (iv) fictional individuals are contingently existing abstracta; they are non-concrete artifacts of our world and various other possible worlds. Takashi Yagisawa has recently provided a number of arguments designed to show that Creationism is unjustified. I here critically examine three of his challenges to CA Creationism. I argue that each fails to undermine this version of Creationism.

1. *Introduction*

Some philosophers—call them *Fictionalists*—wish to defend the claim that fictional individuals, i.e., the sorts of individuals mentioned in works of fiction (e.g., Sherlock Holmes, the kerchief around Dmitri Karamazov's neck, the U.S.S. Enterprise) really, or actually exist. Fictionalists, we may say, hold that such individuals exist *simpliciter*. There really is such a thing, e.g., as James Tiberius Kirk; the proper name in this instance has an actual referent. Other philosophers—call them *Anti-fictionalists*—wish to defend the contrary claim: no fictional individual exists *simpliciter*. According to Anti-fictionalists, while there is a sense in which Kirk, e.g., exists 'in the world of *Star Trek*', the name 'James Tiberius Kirk' has no actual referent. I think it is natural to hold that the Fictionalist's stance seems surprising, or radical, and that it is also natural to hold that the stance taken by the Anti-fictionalists seems more level-headed, or commonsensical.

Some Fictionalists are *Platonists*. According to the Platonist, fictional individuals are abstract objects that exist necessarily, and so

actually exist.[1] Strictly speaking, then, fictional individuals are things to be *discovered* on this view. A species of Fictionalist distinct from the Platonist is the *Creationist*.[2] The Creationist is one who accepts the following thesis:

> (CR): Fictional individuals really, or actually exist, and fictional names are at least sometimes[3] genuinely refererential expressions; moreover, fictional individuals are the creations of the authors who first wrote (or spoke, etc.) about them.

Takashi Yagisawa (2001) has recently argued vigorously against Creationism. I, however, am a believer in the view.[4] I not only think that fictional individuals really[5] exist, but that these are the sorts of individuals that are brought into existence by us. I do not think it plausible that we, as authors, 'tap into' a realm of necessarily existing abstracta and there discover Kirk, e.g.; rather, we actively and intentionally create individuals such as Kirk in writing about them. So, I think that Yagisawa's objections must be defective.

Yagisawa sets his sights on two sorts of Creationists. He first focuses

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1. See Edward Zalta (1983), e.g., for a defense of Platonism.

2. Furthermore, there are those who seem to deserve the label 'Fictionalist' even though the term does not apply to them given its usage here. For example, *Neo-Meinongians* such as Terence Parsons (1980) hold that *there are* nonexistent fictional individuals. And *Possibilists* such as David Lewis (1978) hold that fictional individuals (really) exist, they just do not actually exist. That is, none of the individuals that are fictional for us exist in our world, but some of these individuals exist in other possible worlds; they are mere *possibilia*.

3. Some Creationists hold that even though fictional individuals exist and are created by the intentional activities of authors, an author's own inscription of a fictional name is a non-referring expression. A fictional name may be genuinely referential in certain contexts, however. *We* can succeed in referring to Sherlock Holmes, e.g., with the name 'Holmes' given some appropriate intentions to do so (intentions that were lacked by Doyle at the time he first inscribed the name). Such a Creationist thus holds that while Doyle did not write about Holmes, his activities succeeded in creating Holmes. For the best discussion of these issues see David Braun (2003); also see Amie Thomasson (2003), and Nathan Salmon (1998).

4. Some fellow believers are Nathan Salmon (1998), Amie Thomasson (1999), and Peter van Inwagen (1977).

5. I will henceforth drop the term 'really' as a modifier of 'exists' since some who say that fictional individuals actually exist wish to distinguish such individuals from concrete individuals with particular spatiotemporal locations in part by saying that the latter *really* exist while the former do not.

on what may be called *Pretense-Theoretical Creationists*,[6] and later on what may be called *Contingent-Abstracta* (henceforth, 'CA') *Creationists*. His objections against the former sort of theorist seem to me to be completely successful. That is, his arguments indeed seem to undermine the reasons given by the Pretense-Theoretical Creationist for (CR). I will therefore not address these objections in this paper. I will instead focus on three of Yagisawa's challenges to CA Creationism. I aim to show here that each of these objections fails to undermine the CA Creationist's support for (CR).

2. *CA Creationism and van Inwagen's Argument*

CA Creationists are those who accept (in addition to (CR)) the following thesis:

> (CA): Fictional individuals are contingently existing, abstract objects; these entities are non-concrete artifacts of our world and various other possible worlds.

So, Kirk, e.g., actually exists, and some uses of the name 'Kirk' refer to an abstract artifact. Kirk also exists in various other possible worlds. Which ones? All and only the worlds where Gene Roddenberry (the author of *Star Trek*) and the appropriate creative events involving Roddenberry exist. Kirk is *ontologically dependent* on Roddenberry and Roddenberry's literary works (more on this matter later).

Let us now turn to the first of Yagisawa's objections. He fairly notes that the claim that *fictional individuals exist* ought to be understood as a fully universal generalization, i.e., it is the claim that *all fictional individuals mentioned in all works of fiction actually exist*. One of the most influential arguments for this—and the one Yagisawa sets his sights on—has been given by Peter van Inwagen (1977).[7] After attempting to formally reconstruct van Inwagen's argument, Yagisawa then criticizes the argument on the basis that one of its inferences is faulty. Before

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6. John Searle (1974–5) is an example of this sort of theorist (and Yagisawa's primary target here).

7. Van Inwagen's argument for the existence of fictional individuals is in many respects a typical Fictionalist argument. See Thomasson (1999), Parsons, *op. cit.*, and Salmon, *op. cit.*, for their versions of the following argument.

examining this issue, however, we first need to consider the following sentences provided by van Inwagen:[8]

(2) Mrs. Sarah Gamp was, four and twenty years ago, a fair representation of the hired attendant on the poor in sickness (From Dickens' preface to an 1867 edition of *Martin Chuzzlewit*).

(3) Mrs. Gamp is the most fully developed of the masculine anti-woman visible in all Dickens' novels (Sylvia Bank Manning, *Dickens as Satirist* [New Haven, 1971], p. 79).

(4) There are characters in some 19th-century novels who are presented with a greater wealth of physical detail than is any character in any 18th-century novel.

(5) Some characters in novels are closely modeled on actual people, while others are wholly products of the literary imagination, and it is usually impossible to tell which characters fall into which of these categories by textual analysis alone.

(6) Since 19th-century English novelists were, for the most part, conventional Englishmen, we might expect most novels of the period to contain stereotyped comic Frenchmen or Italians; but very few such characters exist.

(2)–(6) are what van Inwagen labels *sentences of literary criticism*. That is, they are part of "all 'informed' discourse about the nature, content, and value of literary works".[9] In setting out to formally reconstruct the argument for the existence of fictional individuals that makes use of (2)–(6) and sentences of their ilk, Yagisawa states:

> Sentences such as (2) and (3), when understood correctly, are sufficient for establishing the existence of Mrs. Gamp, according to van Inwagen. (4)–(6) simply provide more sentences of the same pertinent general type as (2) and (3), except that (4)–(6) explicitly contain apparent existential quantification over fictional characters. All of these sentences are meant to be suggestive examples. …
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> The idea, therefore, is that we should accept literary criticism "at face value" and if we do, we should accept the existence of the theoretical entities it postulates, namely, fictional individuals. So, what is really suggested

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8. All of these sentences are taken from van Inwagen, *op. cit.*, pp. 41–43.
9. p. 45.

by van Inwagen's (4)–(6) is not a particular argument or arguments. It is instead an argument schema.

The argument schema that Yagisawa then produces on van Inwagen's behalf is the following:

(A)   It is a truth of literary criticism that *M*
(A′) Therefore, *M.*
(B)   *M* entails that *x* exists
(C)   *x* exists.

M here stands for any statement of literary criticism such as (2)–(6), while *x* stands for any fictional individual. Thus, the conclusion (C) is the essential component of (CA) that is at stake. Yagisawa states that "this is the strongest reconstruction of van Inwagen's argument I can think of that is faithful to his text", and then proceeds to criticize the argument schema on the following basis: the inference from (A) to (A′) is fallacious. To demonstrate this, he first provides some remarks about the nature of literary criticism. It is unclear to me, but I suppose these remarks are given to show that counterexamples to the inference from (A) to (A′) can be produced in principle; that is, that there are instances in the offing in which some truth of literary criticism is not a truth *simpliciter*. He later argues that some of the very sentences van Inwagen has provided, viz., (3) and (4), can be shown to be counterexamples of the sort just mentioned. I will make some critical remarks about the first of these strategies later and argue that Yagisawa's considerations provide no compelling reason to reject the crucial inference. First, however, I wish to address a more fundamental flaw.

Yagisawa's attempt to undermine van Inwagen's argument indeed represents a novel line of criticism. Usually, critics have attempted to demonstrate that (B) is false. That is, detractors have most often claimed that a paraphrase strategy could be employed that would allow us to interpret sentences of literary criticism in such a way that the need for genuine reference to fictional individuals would be (in all contexts) eliminated. This novelty aside, however, Yagisawa's criticism of the inference from (A) to (A′) is strictly *irrelevant* to the matter at hand. Even if Yagisawa is correct that some truths of literary criticism are not truths *simpliciter*, he has not succeeded in undermining van Inwagen's argument for the existence of fictional individuals because van Inwagen's argument (schema) for that claim is not in fact the one Yagisawa

targets here. Yagisawa's reconstruction is simply a misconstrual of van Inwagen's real argument. *A fortiori* it is not the strongest reconstruction of van Inwagen's argument. *A fortiori* it provides no reason to either reject Creationism or accept Anti-Fictionalism.

Van Inwagen never endorses the inference from (A) to (A′). In a passage that is crucial for understanding his argument, he merely states:

> I think it would be absurd to think that *nothing* that can be said only in the language of literary criticism is true. … And *sometimes*, if what is said in a piece of literary criticism is to be true, then there must be entities of certain type, entities that are never the subject of non-literary discourse, and which make up the extensions of the theoretical general terms of literary criticism. It is these that I call 'theoretical entities of literary criticism.' To say this much, however, is not to answer the question, Which theoretical terms of criticism must be taken as having special sorts of entity as their extension?, or the question, Which, if any, of these terms is in principle eliminable from critical discourse?…I see no way to paraphrase sentences (4), (5), and (6), and others like them, in such a way as to produce sentences that seem to 'say the same thing' and which do not involve 'quantification over creatures of fiction'.[10]

So, the examples provided are indeed supposed to be suggestive of a general sort, but they are *not* meant to be suggestive of the class *sentence of literary criticism*; rather, they are provided as examples of a sub-class of that class. Let us call the sentences comprising this sub-class *extra-fiction sentences*. An extra-fiction sentence is one that, at least apparently, associates *merely via a non-ascription relation* some property with a fictional individual. When I say 'at least apparently…', I mean that there appears to either be no way whatsoever, or no theoretically preferable way, to provide the semantics of the sentence without quantifying over fictional individuals and properties exemplified by these individuals (and by 'exemplified' I just mean: had in the ordinary sort of way that concrete objects, e.g., have properties). Extra-fiction sentences are to be contrasted with *intra-fiction sentences*—sentences that associate a property with a fictional individual *merely via the ascription relation*. In other words, an intra-fiction sentence is one that mentions a fictional individual and a property that is *not* exemplified by that individual but rather had-by-the-individual-according-to-the-fiction.[11] Here are some

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10. p. 45, my emphasis.
11. For van Inwagen's technical account of the *ascription* relation as a ternary relation

examples of intra-fiction sentences:[12]

(7) James Tiberius Kirk is the Captain of the U.S.S. Enterprise.
(8) Sherlock Holmes smokes a pipe.
(9) Dmitri Karamazov has a more violent temper than his brother Ivan.

In his argument for the existence of fictional individuals, the claim that van Inwagen really means to endorse is not that all truths of literary criticism are truths *simpliciter*, but rather that all true sentences of the form ⌜According to literary criticism, Φ⌝ (or: ⌜It is a truth of literary criticism that Φ⌝), in which Φ stands for an extra-fiction sentence, are sentences in which Φ alone would be true. It is the extra-fiction sentences that can be embedded under the 'according to literary criticism' operator to form truths that we ought to take at face value, i.e., as literal truths; accordingly, we ought to commit ourselves to the entities whose existence is entailed by these extra-fiction truths (again, because finding an alternative semantics would either be impossible or theoretically less attractive).

So, the strongest, most charitable reconstruction of van Inwagen's argument (schema) that *I* can think of is the following:

PVI's Real Argument

(D) There are some sentences of kind Φ that are truths of literary criticism.
(D′) Therefore, some sentences of kind Φ are true.
(E) All true sentences of kind Φ entail that entities of kind x exist.
(F) Entities of kind x exist.

A sentence of kind Φ here is any extra-fiction sentence. As I stated above, Yagisawa argues that (3) and (4) are truths of literary criticism that are not truths *simpliciter*. For instance, he holds that (3) ought not be taken literally because to do so would commit one to the false-

among *properties*, *creatures of fiction*, and *(parts of) works of fiction*, see van Inwagen, *op. cit.*
    12. I will not go deeply into some of the proposed semantics for intra-fiction sentences, but I will have a bit to say about how some CA Creationists understand them below.

hood that Mrs. Gamp is a masculine anti-woman (when she is, on the CA Creationist's view, a contingent abstractum). This claim, though, is tantamount to the claim that (3) is a *merely apparent* extra-fiction sentence. I am unconvinced by Yagisawa's allegations that (3) and (4) constitute counterexamples to the (A)/(A)′ inference. However, even if they do, this does not constitute any objection to PVI's Real Argument. In particular, they would not show that the inference from (D) to (D′) is fallacious. They would only show that these particular examples are merely apparent extra-fiction sentences, so the inference van Inwagen really relies on simply fails to apply to all the examples van Inwagen thinks it does. It would thus be an error on van Inwagen's part that he chose those examples to illustrate the inference, but that is a benign error. We simply are obliged to propose some better examples on his behalf. And it seems that we can provide an example of an extra-fiction sentence that is *uncontroversially* so.[13]

Consider the following:

(10) James Tiberius Kirk is a fictional individual.

Even if Yagisawa is correct that the inference from (A) to (A′) fails, it seems that there is at least one *sort* of literary criticism sentence, viz., the sort exemplified by (10), that ought to be taken as true (since van Inwagen's defense of (E) seems correct) when not embedded under the 'it is a truth of literary criticism' operator. And since we could in principle devise a sentence relevantly similar to (10) for any fictional individual whatsoever, it seems that van Inwagen's Real Argument for the existence of fictional individuals is unharmed.

Van Inwagen can perfectly well admit that *some* truths of literary

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13. Yagisawa seems to realize all of this when he begins his discussion with the following remarks (p. 16): "So, for example, as long as there is at least one piece of literary criticisms in van Inwagen's sense that is true and entails the existence of Holmes when taken 'at face value', van Inwagen has an argument for the existence of Holmes. And there appears to be such a piece of literary criticism about Holmes: e.g., 'There is a unique fictional individual that is portrayed as a superb detective with the name "Sherlock Holmes" in Arthur Conan Doyle's *Holmes* stories'. Such a sentence appears to be true and have the right existential implication when taken 'at face value'." However, Yagisawa quickly seems to forget the apparent truth of the sentence he has provided when he proceeds to his reconstruction and evaluation of van Inwagen's argument. At the very least, Yagisawa never does anything to explain away the compellingness of the face value reading of his sentence here, i.e., the appearance of its literal truth.

criticism fail to be truths *simpliciter*—all the ones that have as embedded sentences merely apparent extra-fiction sentences. What Yagisawa would have needed to demonstrate that van Inwagen's Real Argument was unsuccessful would have been that there was some extra-fiction sentence embedded under the operator 'it is a truth of literary criticism' that failed to be a truth when not so-embedded. As I said above, I think the examples van Inwagen relies on are at most unfortunate choices; a sentence such as (10) is a *clear-cut* example of an extra-fiction sentence, and one that would have provided van Inwagen more efficient service. However, there is a stronger claim that Yagisawa seems to accept (although he nowhere explicitly asserts it) that, if true, would have made his objection successful against van Inwagen's Real Argument. Yagisawa suggests that *any* sentence whatsoever (genuine extra-fiction sentences included) embedded under the operator 'it is a truth of literary criticism' will fail to be true when not so-embedded. That is, he makes the following general remarks about the *nature* of literary criticism that seem to provide the basis for thinking that we are never justified in moving any sentence *S* embedded under the operator 'it is a truth of literary criticism' outside of that operator:[14]

> [Van Inwagen's justification for the move from (A) to (A′)] rests on the assumption that literary criticism is a discipline, or activity, that is aimed at discovering truths about the actual world, on a par with physics. This assumption is false. No empirical discipline is on a par with physics as a way of discovering truths. Every natural science is secondary to physics in the sense that it is not allowed to contradict physics. Every social or behavioral science is secondary to natural sciences in the sense that it is not allowed to contradict natural sciences. Literary criticism is not even a social science. It is not a science of any kind. Its main aim is not to discover truths, but to help enhance aesthetic and other kinds of experience by the readers and listeners of literary or fictional works…Literary criticism is not a discipline aimed at propositional truth at all. Instead it is an activity aimed at practical results.

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14. To be fair, Yagisawa does make it clear that there will be at least some sentences of literary criticism, viz., those that *fail to be 'indigenous'* to literary criticism, that can correctly be taken at face value. Sentences of this sort are sentences that "express truths about the actual world in a straightforward sense" and whose "truth is ascertained by other disciplines". The following, then, should strictly be understood as a discussion concerning sentences *indigenous* to literary criticism.

But the reasons given in the above quoted passage—if they are indeed meant to imply that *no* truth of literary criticism whatsoever can be taken literally—are weak for the following two reasons.

First, Yagisawa states that van Inwagen is committed to the false assumption that literary criticism is on par with physics as a method for discovering truths. But that seems to be another misrepresentation of van Inwagen's views. Van Inwagen admits that literary criticism is no science, and thus would (seemingly) admit that it is a sub-par way of discovering truths. Again, he merely claims that "it would be absurd to think that *nothing* that can be said only in the language of literary criticism is true" and thus concludes that "there must be entities of a certain type … which make up the extensions of the theoretical general terms of literary criticism". So, van Inwagen's claim that fictional individuals are to be counted among the general realm of 'theoretical entities' seems to be no comment on the degree of *fruitfulness* of the methods used by literary critics as compared to the methods used by other theoretical enterprises such as physics. It seems merely to be the claim that since the tidiest, most straightforward semantics tells us that some truths of literary criticism are best seen as true *simpliciter*, there are contexts in which we ought to treat quantification over fictional individuals as genuine and objectual in the same way that we treat quantification over quarks and gluons as genuine and objectual.[15] All that is perfectly consistent with literary criticism being a way of discovering truths that is sub-par to physics.

Second, it simply does not matter that literary criticism is not on a par with any science as way of discovering truths, that it is not a science at all, and most importantly, that its main aims are practical. That is, it just does not follow from all of this that no truth of literary criticism ought not be taken as a truth *simpliciter*. Yagisawa's charge suggests

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15. I have two quick comments that seem relevant to the present discussion. I am certain that there are times when it would reasonable not to take a physicist's claims at face value either, but that does not seem to detract from van Inwagen's point. Also, if we follow van Inwagen in taking extra-fiction sentences such as

(10) James Tiberius Kirk is a fictional individual.

at face value, it seems that we are not forced, as Yagisawa suggests, to contradict physics. Physics does not entail that contingent abstracta, and hence entities such as Kirk, do not exist. Hence, physics does not entail that the face-value reading of (10) is false. Physics is utterly silent on such matters. That is, physics is a discipline concerned with fundamental particles, forces, etc.; physics does not rule out contingent abstracta such as Kirk, it simply fails to say anything about such entities.

that taking a sentence such as (10) as literally true forces us to maintain the implausible view that the primary aim of literary criticism is truth-assertion. But that is simply not the case. It is perfectly reasonable to take the main aim of literary criticism (an admitted non-science that is sub-par to any science as a way of discovering truths) to be mainly practical (have as its main goal the promotion of aesthetic pleasure, say) and still contend that some[16] sentences of literary criticism, e.g. (10), are literally true assertions. The measure of whether or not any sentence is a literal truth is not what people are attempting to achieve by uttering it. People utter sentences with all sorts of aims or goals in mind. Whatever these happen to be, though, one's aim is clearly not sufficient for determining whether or not what has been uttered *is* literally true (nor do our aims even seem to be largely indicative of whether or not what has been uttered expresses a (true) proposition). I clearly may utter something literally true without meaning to and with only practical goals in mind, such as when I direct the following statement, 'That anvil is headed for your foot', at my friend whose foot is in the way of a falling anvil.

It seems to me that the present discussion serves to further reinforce a point made above: while van Inwagen's Real Argument escapes unscathed, Yagisawa's remarks indeed seem to point to ways in which van Inwagen's own examples were unfortunate choices on which to rest his argument for fictional individuals. Many sentences of literary criticism—including (3) and (4), perhaps—bear primarily *interpretative* and *evaluative* relations to literary works. As such, they are intended by their authors to be vehicles for enhancing aesthetic appreciation, not vehicles for truth-assertion. Hence, many sentences of the discipline will not be serviceable in the way van Inwagen intended. But sentences such as (10), which are also clearly part of literary criticism, are plausibly thought of more along the lines of documenting facts about *literary history*. They are analogous to claims made by cultural historians, and thus do not seem to be interpretative and evaluative in nature. To be sure, cultural historians also engage in making claims that are (primarily) interpretative and evaluative assertions, and we can also be sure that given the nature of that discipline, the amount of these sorts of assertions will be less than the amount of (primarily) interpretative and

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16. Strictly, this sentence should read "some *indigenous* sentences of literary criticism …"; see footnote 14.

evaluative claims comprising literary criticism. But the high volume of claims that are (primarily) interpretative and evaluative in a discipline does nothing to preclude the (small) amount of (primarily) non-interpretative and non-evaluative claims also present in that discipline from being straightforwardly true (or false). It simply tells us to be more careful when carving up the discipline into the parts that can, and the parts that cannot, be taken at face value.

3. *The Charge that Creationism is Unfathomable*

Before we examine Yagisawa's next objection, I think it is important that we get at least a bit clearer regarding some of the details of CA Creationism. Above, we briefly noted that this theorist takes fictional individuals such as Kirk to be ontologically dependent on the authors of the works in which they are mentioned. That is, it is the intentional acts of Roddenberry that bring Kirk into existence here and they serve to bring him into existence in other possible worlds, and the fictional starship captain simply could not exist in a world where the appropriate creative acts of Roddenberry (and the resulting literary works of Roddenberry) failed to exist.

Amie Thomasson (1999) is a CA Creationist who has provided some helpful elaboration of the nature of this dependence relation that fictional individuals such as Kirk bear to the (acts of their) creators, as well as elaboration of the dependence relations fictional individuals bear to the literary works which mention them.[17] She has stated that the sort of dependence a fictional individual bears to the intentional acts of its creator or creators is *rigid historical dependence*. The dependence here is *rigid*—as opposed to *generic*—because it is a dependence on an individual intentional act or a number of individual acts rather than a dependence on a general type of act or acts; it is *historical* because the fictional entity depends on the acts of its creator to come into existence initially, but it may continue to exist once those creative acts have ceased. This is opposed to *constant dependence*, the sort of dependence in which the dependent entity exists at all and only the times when the

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17. What follows will be merely a very rough sketch of her views. The varieties of dependence and the sorts of dependence among fictional individuals, literary works, and authors, is fully discussed by Thomasson (1999), Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

entity on which it depends exists. According to Thomasson, then, not only is a fictional individual created by the (intentional acts of) the author who first mentioned it, each fictional individual is essentially tied to a particular creator; that is, each fictional individual is rigidly historically dependent on (the intentional acts of) the author who first mentioned it in some literary work.[18]

Let us now turn to the second of Yagisawa's objections. It proceeds as follows. If CA creationism is true, then Kirk, e.g., is not a starship captain. Nor is he a man, nor does he seek out new life on distant planets, nor does he admire Spock's intellect. There are contexts in which speakers may convey the proposition that *according to the story, Kirk is a starship captain* by uttering 'Kirk is a starship captain', and thus we should interpret them as saying something true in that context. But literally, Kirk is a contingently existing abstractum. Such a thing has no particular spatiotemporal location[19] and so cannot possibly captain a starship, or seek out new life, etc. So, the sentence, 'Kirk is a starship captain'—while true-according-to-the-Star-Trek-stories—is literally false. Now, let us consider all of the sentences of this sort inscribed by Roddenberry when writing his first *Star Trek* story. These are one and all literally false.[20] According to Yagisawa, it is just *unfathomable* that

18. Thomasson (1999, p. 36) has also elaborated on the sort of dependence a fictional individual bears to some literary work which mentions it. This sort of dependence is *generic constant dependence*. The relation here is generic because a individual can remain in existence provided any literary work of the relevant sort remains in existence (i.e., there must remain some literary work or other where the individual is mentioned), and it is constant because a individual can exist when, and only when, some literary work of the relevant sort remains. Literary works are in turn dependent in various ways on creative acts of authors, copies or memories of the work, and an audience capable of comprehending the work. These varieties of dependence should be kept in mind for the last section of the paper in which I discuss Yagisawa's direct attack on Thomasson's views.

19. Let me say a bit here about how I am understanding the term 'abstract'. I cannot give the necessary and sufficient conditions for abstractness. This is an incredibly difficult task that I think has nowhere to this date been successfully performed. When I say an entity is an abstractum, I merely mean to imply that the entity lacks any particular, well-defined spatiotemporal location. However, this condition is not sufficient for being an abstractum, since some microphysical particles such as quarks and gluons should not be counted as abstract. I have argued in Goodman (2003) that fictional individuals are abstract entities that *do* have locations in some sense—they are 'vaguely located' in spacetime—and, as I further suggest there, all contingent abstracta seem to have location in this sense. But a full explication of how contingent abstracta have vague locations, and attempting to provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for abstractness, are matters that must be left for future projects.

20. According to van Inwagen's, *op. cit.*, views, however, Roddenberry did not *assert*

the mere uttering of so many falsehoods could succeed in creating a fictional individual such as Kirk. And that, I suppose, is reason for thinking that one simply *cannot* create such an individual in such a manner. But according to CA Creationism, that is how fictional individuals are in fact created.

My reply here is as follows. I do think the very process that Yagisawa is unable to fathom is the process by which fictional individuals are in fact created, and the very nature of this sort of creative process consists in doing just what the CA Creationist says authors do. Moreover, it is a process that we are able to acquire some sort of grasp of after all.

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. (A property-in-a-story is a property attributed to an entity by at least some of the literary works in which that entity is mentioned. Such entities will also exemplify other properties that it fails to have attributed to it by every story which mentions it, e.g., *being fictional*). That is, an abstractum that is essentially a 'story-bound' entity emerges. For example, Spock is a pointy-eared Vulcan according to the *Star Trek* stories. While he could have failed to have pointy-ears-in-the-stories (had Roddenberry inscribed different sentences),[21] he could not have failed to be a thing about whom some (*Star Trek*) story or other is partially concerned with (and is in this sense 'story-bound'). Now, it is literally false to say that Spock is a pointy-eared Vulcan, but it is literally true to say that Spock has (i.e., exemplifies in the ordinary way) the property of *being-a-pointy-eared-Vulcan-in-the-actual-*Star-Trek-*stories*.

More broadly, when Roddenberry engaged in the storytelling process, he tokened some names (such as 'Spock') and definite descriptions (such as 'the first science officer') that were at first empty. But as he began associating properties with those names and descriptions, he thereby began to 'attach' properties to a certain entity (an entity non-identical

anything false. This seems correct to me, but it also seems clear that we can separate the particular speech acts authors engage in from the semantic values of the results of those acts.

21. Or so I believe. Admittedly, this claim is controversial even among Fictionalists. Thomasson (1999), at any rate, also explicitly supports this sort of modal view about fictional entities.

to the mere collection of those properties)[22] that, while 'story-bound', now exists 'outside of the story', or exists *simpliciter.* That is, he began to 'add' properties to a thing, a thing that now literally exemplifies, *inter alia.*, *having-pointy-ears-in-the-actual-*Star-Trek-*stories, being-a-superior-logician-in-the-stories, being-a-first-science-officer-of-a-starship-in-the-stories*, etc.[23] And that is how Spock was created.

But a defender of Yagisawa's line may at this point complain: "But what is unfathomable, what you still have not explained, is how our human activities, based in the world of concrete objects, could possibly create an object that is part of an abstract realm. What is it about this process that allows for such a seemingly magical interaction between the concrete and the abstract?"

To this I reply: For the most part, we know how to create concrete objects; we take other concrete objects and link them to each other in the appropriate sorts of ways. But we also already know, for the most part, how to create (other) entities that seem to fall into the category of contingent abstracta. For instance, we know the processes by which we can create certain abstract *social entities*, such as such as federal laws, international treaties, and state budget deficits. That is, we are aware of what the concrete bases are on which these entities depend, and we know that bringing about the abstract, dependent entity is merely a matter of bringing about those concrete bases. There is nothing mysterious about these sorts of procedures, but the end result is an

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22. We need to be clear about this point: Roddenberry was not writing about some already extant set of properties that then gets *identified* with Spock. This is true because the following is true: Had Roddenberry not existed, Spock would not have existed, even though the properties in question would have. (I intend to make some remarks in defense of this counterfactual in the last section of the paper.) Is Spock some other sort of collection of properties? I do not think so. It seems correct to say that there is something that has the property of *being-a-Vulcan-in-the-stories*, but an entity having a property is not the same as any sort of collection having a member.

23. All talk here of 'adding' or 'attaching' properties is, of course, metaphorical. But I simply do not know how to speak literally. What is meant here is just what is meant when I say I 'added' the property of redness to my chair by painting it red. And we should be careful to note that I surely do not create a new chair by doing this. A chair is distinct from any set of properties. Similarly, Roddenberry does not create a new fictional individual by 'adding' new properties to Spock. (Even though Spock is created merely by description. That is, Spock comes into existence by description, but once in existence, he is not identical to any set of properties—not even the set of his essential properties. There is a 'bare abstractum' here that has the property of *being fictional* just as there is a 'bare concretum' that has the property of *being red*.) See footnote 22 for related points.

extant artifact occupying no particular region of spacetime. (A bit more controversially, it seems that we also know how to create *sets*—at least sets whose members are concreta—and these entities also seem best regarded as contingent abstracta.[24] For instance, it seems that I am (at least partially) responsible for creating the set consisting of Bob Dole and the ham sandwich I had for lunch yesterday simply by making myself the ham sandwich.)[25]

For fictional individuals, we know that we can create the bases on which they depend by uttering or inscribing (etc.) some literal falsehoods (along with the appropriate intentions, usually some intentions to produce something aesthetically pleasing). That is, we begin by uttering or inscribing a sentence token that says that there is an entity (named) *x* and then proceed to utter or inscribe numerous other descriptions mentioning *x*. And for every such sentence we utter or inscribe, a property is 'added on' or 'attached' to the thing (that eventually gets) denoted by '*x*' (in some contexts). By saying in this way that Spock was a pointy-eared Vulcan, e.g., Roddenberry 'added on' the property of *having-pointy-ears-in-the-actual*-Star-Trek-*story* to the (thing that eventually is) Spock. In this way, Spock gets gradually created by Roddenberry just as David was gradually created by Michelangelo (and just as the ham sandwich, and hence the set containing it, was gradually created by me). The sculptor added new pieces of clay to that which eventually became David (as I added slices of ham, cheese, bread, etc. to that which eventually became my sandwich) as the *Star Trek* author 'added' new properties to that which eventually became Spock.[26]

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24. Why think that a set is necessarily existing when both of its members – its only members – are contingent? The only real issue here seems to me to be whether or not sets of concreta are themselves abstract or concrete entities.

25. Musical works, poems, and whole literary works also seem to me to be other sorts of contingent abstracta. Other entities often discussed by metaphysicians, such as propositions and states of affairs may also count. I have no finished view about these matters, and I of course realize that it is highly controversial to claim that any of these things are contingent abstracta. But I do not think that diminishes my point here. I am simply claiming that *if* these things are examples of contingent abstracta, then we can clearly fathom how their creation goes, and so we can at least get some hold of how the creation of fictional entities would go.

26. There will be vagueness concerning when a fictional name has enough properties associated with it so that it actually can succeed in referring (given an appropriate context) to an individual that exemplifies those properties, and so vagueness concerning when an individual comes into existence. This does not seem problematic to me (or at least not prob-

The method of constructing an abstract object via utterances and inscriptions seems as fathomable as the methods used to create a federal law via the creation of some of the concrete governmental entities on which that law ultimately depends (or the methods used to create a set of concreta via the creation of some of its concrete members.) To the extent that we grasp the processes involved in the latter sort of creation, we can also grasp the processes involved in the former sort. And the knowledge that we in fact possess these sorts of abilities, that we have this *know-how*, provides us with the only sort of grasp we can have of matters of creation.[27] That is, the only sort of insight we can gain into the possibility of such things occurring is via the processes by which they actually occur. But this by no means makes such insight insignificant.

4. *The Alleged Disanalogy between Fictional Individuals and Whole Literary Works*

Let us now examine Yagisawa's third objection to CA Creationism. Thomasson (1999) is Yagisawa's main target here. She has claimed that there exists a tight analogy between fictional individuals and whole literary works, and her support for this analogy is the following. It would be a mistake to hold that we have reason to doubt that fictional individuals exist as human artifacts either because they are mind-dependent entities or because they are abstract entities. Whole literary works are best regarded as mind-dependent, abstract human creations, yet we have no good reason to doubt their existence. There is thus an *ontological parallelism* between whole literary works and fictional individuals that makes a commitment to fictional individuals no less strange or theoretically costly than a commitment to whole literary works.

lematic in a way that is peculiar to fictional individuals). It seems analogous to the clearly correct claim that there is vagueness concerning when our name 'David' began to refer to Michelangelo's statue and hence vagueness concerning when David actually came into existence. But see Matthew Phillips (2001) for an argument for the claim that reference to fictional entities, if it takes place, can in no way be indeterminate. (One should also keep in mind here points made in footnote 22 regarding the non-identity of the abstractum which exemplifies various properties with the set of those properties.)

27. I think all this applies not just to issues of creation involving abstracta that are dependent on concreta for their existence, but matters of creation involving the 'purely' concrete. At least, all the analogous questions seem to arise and seem to have analogous answers.

According to Yagisawa, however, there can be no such ontological parallelism. Whole literary works are entities that are ultimately *reducible* in ways that fictional individuals, as characterized by Thomasson, are not. To understand this charge, Yagisawa invites us to consider just what it is to be a whole literary work. He claims that a literary work composed in English, say *A Study in Scarlet*, is just a collection of English sentences. That is, *A Study in Scarlet* is nothing more than a well-formed sequence of English words. That sequence of words is in turn reducible to a well-formed sequence of letters of the English alphabet, which is in turn reducible to a well-formed sequence of line-shape types. We may say that *A Study in Scarlet* is a literary work *written by Doyle in 1886* (or that Doyle is responsible for that work, that he is its author, or *loosely*, that Doyle created it), then, simply because Doyle in fact tokened an instance of a particular sequence of line-shape types (without copying another such instance) in 1886.

So, according to Yagisawa, *'A Study in Scarlet'* (like all names for literary works) is ambiguous between the *story*, or the abstract object that is ultimately reducible to an abstract sequence of line-shape types, and the *story copy*, or the instance of that sequence that was in fact produced by Doyle. Now, Yagisawa wishes to know, to which of these two entities does the CA Abstractionist claim the fictional individual Holmes is ontologically parallel? Suppose it is the story copy. In that case, the alleged parallelism fails to obtain because the story copy of *A Study in Scarlet* is, unlike Holmes, a concrete object with a particular spatiotemporal location. Moreover, once in existence, this story copy is not dependent for its existence on any mental activities. Suppose it is the story. In that case, too, the alleged parallelism fails to obtain because the sequence of line-shape types to which the story is ultimately reducible to did not come into existence when Doyle tokened them. It follows that, unlike Holmes, the story existed prior to Doyle, and it exists independently of anyone's mental activities.

So, the argument Yagisawa seems to be presenting here is the following:

Anti-Parallelism Argument

(P1) Stories are reducible to strings of purely syntactic items.
(P2) If stories are reducible to strings of purely syntactic items, then the ontological parallelism between stories and fictional individuals,

as CA Creationists describe them, fails to obtain.

(P3) If the ontological parallelism between stories and fictional individuals, as CA Creationists describe them, fails to obtain, then the CA Ceationist cannot appeal to it as a justification for commitment to fictional individuals.

(C1) Therefore, the CA Ceationist cannot appeal to the ontological parallelism between stories and fictional individuals as a justification for commitment to fictional individuals.

Yagisawa considers, and then rejects, a potential objection to (P1). One might argue that a story cannot be identified with a collection of mere syntactic items. A story is an entity that must be defined semantically as well. That is, a story is an ordered pair of a sequence of syntactic items (like line-shape types) and the contents to which those items are mapped. In the absence of such a mapping, or interpretation, no well-formed string of symbols can count as a story. Interpretations, moreover, are mind-dependent entities. Thus, stories are mind-dependent items, and cannot be reduced to strings of purely syntactic items. Thus, (P1) is false, the Anti-Parallelism Argument is unsound, and we have no reason here to doubt the CA Creationist's justification for a commitment to fictional individuals.

But Yagisawa claims that this objection to (P1) is faulty. He believes that even if we admit that a story ought to be defined both syntactically and semantically, the contents onto which the syntactic items are mapped are not the sorts of things that are dependent on the (mental activities) of any *particular* author, let alone any particular intentional agent. A perfectly suitable mapping of (tokens of) strings of syntactic items onto contents may exist without any mental activities whatsoever being responsible for those syntactic items. To say otherwise is to confuse ontological dependence of a story on a particular author with the mere causal dependence of a story on whatever produces it. While some stories are in fact causally dependent on their human authors, we can imagine other stories being produced by fantastic, purely natural forces or by the activities of creatures that lack the relevant sorts of intentions. For instance, we can imagine a story copy of *A Study in Scarlet* being produced in a different possible world by a chimpanzee randomly striking keys on a typewriter, or tidal forces arranging sticks on the shore with just the right pattern. Such a story copy could be a genuine instance of the story *A Study in Scarlet*, according to Yagisawa,

given a perfectly matching mapping relation among our world and the merely possible world under consideration.

If Yagisawa is correct here, and if his reply to the Thomasson-style objection to (P1) is to have any force, it is because the ontological parallelism Thomasson had in mind all along consisted not just in both stories and fictional individuals being mind-dependent and abstract, but in both sorts of entities being essentially tied to the activities of a particular mind and abstract. So, let us thus suppose that this is what the parallelism is alleged to consist in. Yagisawa's proposed reductionism, then, either amounts to the view that stories are *purely reducible* (stories are to be defined simply in terms of strings of syntactic items) or the view that stories are *partially reducible* (stories are to be defined both syntactically and semantically; we require of each a mapping of strings of syntactic items onto contents, but those contents may be tied to no rational agent whatsoever, let alone one rational agent essentially). That is, the claim that Yagisawa now seems to be endorsing is not (P1), but rather the following:

(P1)*: Stories are either purely reducible or partially reducible entities.

I wish to argue in the sequel that the version of the Anti-Parallelism Argument that makes use of (P1)* is weak. Specifically, I wish to argue that the following premise is unjustified:

(P2)*: If stories are either purely reducible or partially reducible entities, then the ontological parallelism between stories and fictional individuals, as CA Creationists describe them, fails to obtain.

Before doing so, however, it should be noted that Yagisawa never provides any positive support for (P1)* (or (P1) for that matter). He merely assumes that an ontology wherein stories are given a reductive treatment is preferable to a Thomasson-style ontology wherein stories are considered to be irreducible entities (on an ontological par with the fictional individuals they mention). I would suppose that he takes the reductive account to make for a preferable ontology for Occamist reasons—it is less profligate. But that is far from obvious. Furthermore, I believe that Thomasson has successfully argued against the notion that a non-reduc-

tive ontology ought to be rejected for being too extravagant.[28]

At any rate, I think the proposed objection to the Anti-Parallelism Argument that Yagisawa tries on is exactly the right sort of objection to make here. I maintain that a story copy is not a genuine instance of a story unless there is a suitable interpretation of the syntactic items comprising the story copy. Furthermore, there can be no suitable mapping relation of symbols onto contents without the relevant sorts of intentions of a particular author because an author's intentions are partially responsible for determining what the contents are that at least some of the symbols get mapped onto. It follows that a story simply could not exist independently of (the mental activities) of its author.

Consider a world in which Doyle never existed. Suppose it is a world where there is a duplicate token of the actual Doyle-tokened *A Study in Scarlet*, but the story copy there was produced by a chimpanzee randomly striking keys on a typewriter. What are the syntactic items of the chimpanzee's story copy mapped onto in that world? Many of those items may be mapped onto the same contents that they are actually mapped onto in such a world, but, as I will argue, it is impossible that all of them are. I have some general remarks that establish this claim and some remarks that are more specific.

Generally, the actual meanings of the word tokens as they occurred in the Doyle-produced token of *A Study in Scarlet* depend on the ways Doyle intended to use those tokens at the time he produced them. The meaning of a term is at least partially given by how it is used on a particular occasion, so the meanings of the word tokens in the actual copy of *A Study in Scarlet* depend at least partially on how they were used by Doyle when he produced that story copy in 1886. How Doyle was using the word tokens in 1886 depends partially on his mental activities, his intentions, at the time. Since Doyle is absent in the chimp world, his intentions cannot possibly be present there. Hence, there can be no perfectly matching interpretation between the chimp world and our world with respect to the distinct story copies. Hence the chimp-produced story copy would not be a genuine copy of the actual story *A Study in Scarlet*.

More specifically, we should consider what the contents would be of the fictional proper names in the chimp world that were in fact introduced into English by Doyle. If it is possible that the interpreta-

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28. See Thomasson (1999), Part Two, especially Ch. 9.

tion between our world and the chimp world match perfectly, then the content of 'Holmes', e.g., must be the same in the chimp world as it is here. But the content of 'Holmes' cannot be the same in both worlds. I will now argue for that claim.

Let us begin by assuming that 'Holmes' is meaningful (at least in some contexts) here in our world.[29] Space for discussion of this topic is limited here, but we can rather briefly point out that there are fundamentally two candidate theories for the meanings of fictional proper names. To simplify, I will assume that exactly one of these views is correct. These two views parallel the two fundamental candidate theories of meaning for non-fictional proper names. Call the first candidate theory *fictional anti-descriptivism.* According to fictional anti-descriptivism, the content of a fictional proper name is simply its referent. So, the content of 'Holmes' (given an appropriate context) would be (the contingently existing abstract object) Holmes, were that entity to exist; otherwise the name is meaningless.[30] Since 'Holmes' is assumed to be meaningful here, if fictional anti-descriptivism is correct, then 'Holmes' here just means Holmes. Now, the way a name gets initially attached to its referent on this view depends on how the name was introduced. Hence, the way a name gets introduced partially determines what that

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29. And we must be careful to note here that we are merely making an assumption about the *meaningfulness* of 'Holmes'; we are *not* beginning by assuming that 'Holmes' is a genuinely referring expression. In replying to Yagisawa's Anti-Parallelism Argument, we do not wish to beg any questions about the existence of Holmes. The fact that the best semantics for fictional proper names identifies the meaning of 'Holmes' with Holmes is, however, a likely *result* (but not the only option—see footnote 30) of the argument that follows against (P1)*, but it is not an assumption that we begin our argument with.

30. There is another way to maintain fictional anti-descriptionism without having to take the implausible line that all fictional names are meaningless. This is the sort of fictional anti-descriptionism endorsed by David Braun (2003). Braun holds that fictional proper names are meaningful in virtue of the fact that sentence-tokens containing them express 'gappy', structured propositions (that can play all of the critical roles in our psychology that we require of sentential meanings). Thus, 'Holmes is a detective' may be meaningful in a particular context, even though 'Holmes' may fail to refer to anything whatsoever in that context. Braun's line may seem open to Yagisawa, but then my earlier, more general point kicks in: the actual meanings of Doyle's word tokens (of all sorts—kind terms, event terms, etc.) as they occurred in his story-copies depend, at least partially, on the ways he intended to use those tokens at the time he inscribed them. And since the meanings of terms (of all sorts) are at least partially given by how they are used on a particular occasion, the meanings of Doyle's word tokens depend (at least partially) on Doyle's intentions at the time. Worlds where Doyle is absent, then, are worlds where the appropriate mapping relation from symbols to contents fails to obtain.

name means. Hence, if fictional anti-descriptivism is correct, then the fact that 'Holmes' was introduced here by (the mental activities of) Doyle entails that the content of 'Holmes' here partially depends on (the actual mental activities of) Doyle. Hence, if anti-descriptivism is correct, then there can be no perfect match of interpretations between the chimp world and our world because 'Holmes' was introduced by a chimp, and not Doyle, in the chimp world.

Let us call the second candidate theory *fictional descriptivism*. According to fictional descriptivism, the content of 'Holmes' is something that is synonymous with a definite description (perhaps a description that expresses a certain property that some story ascribes to Holmes); 'Holmes' may thus have the same content as 'the clever pipe-smoking detective living at 221B Baker Street in London'. Again, 'Holmes' is assumed to be meaningful here—and this view can accommodate that—but 'Holmes' will almost always fail to refer. That is, it will fail to refer in every actual case in which the definite description to which the name is synonymous fails to be satisfied (i.e., if nothing has the property expressed by the appropriate description).[31] If fictional descriptivism is correct, then, it is at least possible that there be a perfect match between the interpretations present in the chimp world and our world; after all, the definite descriptions associated with 'Holmes' in the chimp's story copy will be the same descriptions appearing in Doyle's story copy, so the properties expressed by those descriptions may be the same.

However, it can be shown that fictional descriptivism is false using examples similar to the ones used by Saul Kripke (1980) and others to show that *descriptivism* is false (i.e., descriptivism for non-fictional proper names). Suppose there really happens to be a clever pipe-smoking detective living at 221B Baker Street in London, either here or in

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31. It might seem that the appropriate definite description would not be the one given but rather one such as 'the fictional individual that *in the Doyle stories* is said to be a clever pipe-smoking …' That description would, unlike the one I provide, make the name turn out to be a referring expression. Thus, while it would not be open to Yagisawa and those who think all fictional names are empty, it would seem to be a natural choice for the fictionalist. However, if that is the description synonymous with 'Holmes', then the partial reductionism that Yagisawa wishes to rule in is *automatically* ruled out. Yagisawa needs a case here where one and the same story (i.e., a mapping of syntactic items onto contents) is authored by someone *other than* Doyle. But the content of 'Holmes' cannot be *both* 'the clever … in the Doyle story …' and 'the clever … in the chimp story …'.

the chimp world. In neither world should that person be identified with Holmes, yet, if fictional descriptivism is correct, that is precisely who everyone is referring to when using the name 'Holmes'. That is simply how reference works on this view; if an entity satisfies a definite description that is synonymous with some name, then that name refers to that entity.

So, if we do not wish to embrace an implausible view regarding the meanings of fictional names, we ought to conclude that fictional anti-descriptionism is correct. We thus ought to conclude that in the chimp world, there is a duplicate story copy of the Doyle-produced copy of *A Study in Scarlet,* but the story *A Study in Scarlet* does not exist there because the appropriate mapping relation is absent. Specifically, 'Holmes' in the chimp world cannot mean what it does in the actual world because, without Doyle's intentions, it either refers to something other than the actual Holmes or it is meaningless in that world. (The latter seems much more plausible if we assume that chimps in the chimp-world are like actual chimps with respect to their lack of appropriate mental activities—but this is just a peculiarity of the present example. That is, the same general points could have been made here had we chosen something else from the start, say Bob Dole existing in a different possible world, as the factor on which the duplicate story copy was causally dependent).

I conclude that the Anti-Parallelism Argument (whether it is the version which employs (P1) or the version which employs (P1)*) is unsuccessful. Partial reductionism for stories fails to imply that the ontological parallelism suggested by Thomasson does not obtain. Yagisawa thus provides us here with no reason to doubt the justification she has provided for a commitment to fictional individuals.[32]

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