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Alberto Voltolini

Assoc. R.I.P. | *Revue internationale de philosophie*

**2012/4 - n° 262
pages 561 à 576**

ISSN 0048-8143

Article disponible en ligne à l'adresse:

<http://www.cairn.info/revue-internationale-de-philosophie-2012-4-page-561.htm>

Pour citer cet article :

Voltolini Alberto, « Crossworks 'Identity' and Intrawork* Identity of a Fictional Character », *Revue internationale de philosophie*, 2012/4 n° 262, p. 561-576.

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Crossworks ‘Identity’ and Intrawork* Identity of a Fictional Character

ALBERTO VOLTOLINI

In this paper I want to show that the idea supporters of traditional creationism (TC) defend that success of a fictional character across different works has to be accounted for in terms of the persistence of (numerically) one and the same fictional entity, is incorrect. For the supposedly commonsensical data on which those supporters claim their idea rely are rather controversial. Once they are properly interpreted, they can rather be accommodated by moderate creationism (MC), according to which fictional characters arise out of a reflexive stance on a certain make-believe process. For MC, success of a fictional character across different works amounts to the fact that, first, different work-bound *ficta* are related with each other by means of a relation weaker than numerical identity, *transfictional sameness*, and second, that all those *ficta* are related by *transfictional inclusion* to a *fictum* that in some sense gather them all, the so-called *general character*. Since a general character is an abstract constructed entity, moreover, the more those particular *ficta* are generated, the more general fictional characters including all of them arise.

1. How Traditional Creationism fails to account for the data

As is well known, some fictional characters have more success than others. Sometimes, in fact, a story concerning a certain character – say, Sherlock Holmes, or King Arthur – is matched by other stories seemingly about the same character, so as to give rise to a cycle – say, the Holmes stories, or the Breton cycle. Moreover, some other times, a character appearing in a certain story apparently reappears in other stories very far from the original one. So Faust, that originally appears in the anonymous *Historia von D. Iohan Fausten*, not only apparently appears again at the beginning of the 17th century in John Marlowe’s *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, but also apparently reappears two centuries later in Wolfgang Goethe’s *Faust*. But also Holmes apparently reappears in stories other than the Conan Doyle’s ones: for example in the recent Jô Soares’ *A Samba for Sherlock*.

Now, what happens in the case of *different* works (either belonging to the same cycle or not) seems exactly to match what happens *within* one and the same work: once appeared in a certain part of the work, a certain character seemingly reappears in other parts of that work. So not only, after its first appearance in the *Song of Roland*, Roland seemingly reappears in Matteo Maria Boiardo's *Orlando in Love* as well as in Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Enraged*, but also once having appeared at the very beginning of the *Song of Roland* as the commander of the rear guard of Charlemagne's army at Roncesvaux, he seemingly reappears later in that work, for instance in the last part of the same work as dying while blowing his olifant horn.

In the latter case, it seems natural to say that, through the work of (typically) the same author, one and the same character develops. Whereas in the former case, it seems natural to say that one and the same character *migrates* from one work to another. In either case, one seems to be confronted with the typical vicissitudes of a concrete individual. While in development a character seems to accrue more and more properties, in migration it apparently loses some properties and gains some others.

Creationism is the metaphysical position on fictional entities saying that *ficta* are abstract artifacts, i.e., non-spatiotemporal entities dependent on human mind for their own (non-spatiotemporal) existence: necessarily, if a certain *fictum* exists, then a certain mental state or process of someone exists as well. *Traditional creationism* (TC) is the account stating that the existence of that mental state or process is *sufficient* in order for a *fictum* to be generated. In point of fact, traditional creationists divide themselves as to what has to be considered the proper mental moment of a *fictum*'s generation. For *naïve* traditional creationists (Thomasson 1999), that moment is the very thought in which an author first conceives of its creation, while for *sophisticated* traditional creationists (Schiffer 1996, 2003; Thomasson 2003a,b), that moment coincides with the end of the creative make-believe process that involves at least a storyteller narrating that once upon a time there was an individual (e.g., an individual named "Holmes", or "Ulysses") that made several things.¹ Yet this difference may be seen as irrelevant for our present purposes. For in both versions, TC claims that it is able to straightforwardly account for both the 'development'- datum and the

¹ One should distinguish a *creative* make-believe process from a *conservative* make-believe process. In a conservative make-believe process, *of* an already existent individual, a story-teller makes believe that that individual has certain properties. A paradigmatic conservative make-believe process is that involving Napoleon in Tolstoj's tale of *War and Peace*: of Napoleon, Tolstoj makes believe that he meets Prince Andrej, etc. For this distinction cf. Evans 1982, p. 358.

'migration' - datum. These two data are the following. First, once a certain *fictum* is created either by means of a certain author's thought or after a certain make-believe process, *it* appears again in different parts of one and the same work – thereby being attributed some more properties. Moreover, *it* may also appear again in different works either belonging to one and the same cycle or group of stories (written by the same author or by different ones) or being utterly different stories written later typically by authors different from the author of the first work. Thus, *it* gains some new properties and loses some of the old ones. Now, the only difference between naïve and sophisticated traditional creationists in accounting for such data is that for the former the relevant creative make-believe process already yields a first copy of the work, while for the latter the creative make-believe process and the work come apart.

Within the great family of creationism, TC confronts itself with moderate creationism (MC) (Voltolini 2006). Moderate creationism is that version of creationism claiming that by itself not even the fact that a creative make-believe process comes to an end is sufficient in order for a *fictum* to come into being. Something more is required, namely, a reflexive stance in which such a process is taken as mobilizing a certain set of properties, the properties ascribed to a given pseudoindividual within that process; so that *creatively* making believe *that* there is a certain individual doing such and such is the same as *conservatively* making believe, *of* a certain set of properties, that it is identical with one such individual.² That stance manifests itself in one's engaging in a piece of extrafictional discourse of the sort "FC is a fictional character", where "FC" is a singular term standing for a fictional entity. Once that reflexive stance occurs, a certain *fictum* arises.

Clearly enough, MC prefers sophisticated TC to naïf TC, although in the end for it both versions of TC are doomed to fail.³ Yet for the time being let me put this aside. For what I want to stress here is, first, that TC is ultimately unable to account for the above intuitions, and second, that once those intuitions are properly understood, MC can accommodate them.

First of all, according to TC, *qua* abstract entities, *ficta* do not really possess the properties by means of which they are qualified in the relevant stories. As Thomasson acknowledges, it is literally false that Holmes is a detective, or Arthur a king; being artifacts, such *ficta* cannot possess those properties that only concrete individuals may have. At most, it is true in the worlds of their stories

² On conservative make-believe processes, cf. the previous footnote.

³ For some reasons as to why MC is better than TC, cf. Voltolini 2009.

that *ficta* have such properties; or, which is the same, what they really possess are *story-relative* properties, e.g. the properties of *being a detective in A Study in Scarlet* or *being a king in Lancelot, the Knight of the Cart*.⁴ So, it is not clear how much TC accounts for both the ‘development’- and the ‘migration’- datum – a *fictum* neither increases nor gains nor loses the properties it is attributed in the story; it simply increases, gains or loses its story-relative properties.

Now, let us put aside for a while the problem of intrawork identity. The real problem is that TC is only able to provide necessary conditions for crossworks identity, but for reasons more serious than those openly acknowledged by its supporters.

As Thomasson herself claims, the conditions she provides for crosswork identity of fictional characters are only necessary, not sufficient. As she says, *x* and *y* are the same fictional character only if an author well acquainted with character *x* of a story *S* intends to import it as character *y* in another story *S'*. For Thomasson, these conditions can only be necessary ones.⁵ For if, that intention notwithstanding, the properties an author ascribes to *y* in *S'* are too far from the properties that have been ascribed to *y* in *S*, then *x* and *y* are different characters.⁶ For instance, even if someone well acquainted with *The Iliad*'s Ulysses intends to import Ulysses in a new story as a dragon, that dragon and Ulysses are different characters.

Of course it is disputable how far from the original ones the properties ascribed to a certain character in a new story must be in order for the first character not to be identical with the second character, the relevant intention notwithstanding; a problem of vagueness arises. We intuit not only that *The Iliad*'s Ulysses and the afore-mentioned dragon are distinct characters, but also that *The Iliad*'s Ulysses and *The Odyssey*'s Ulysses are the same one. But what about *The Iliad*'s Ulysses and *Ulysses*' Leopold Bloom, a contemporary Irishman whose name even differs from the one of the old Greek hero?

Yet TC has to face a harder problem. Appearances notwithstanding, there is no crosswork identity of a character. For, as both the case of fusion of a character and the symmetrical case of fission of a character show, there is always the possibility that throughout different works a character ‘splits’ into two characters or the converse possibility that two characters ‘become’ the same one. Let me explain.

⁴ For those options cf. Predelli 1997, Salmon 1998, Thomasson 1999.

⁵ In point of fact, even this may be questioned: cf. Dolcini 2010.

⁶ Cf. Thomasson 1999, pp. 67-8.

In the 'fusion' - case, two characters x and y of a story S are imported as a character z into another story S' . Given the transitivity of identity, since x and y are obviously distinct, there is no identity either between x and z or between y and z . Now, an author well acquainted both with x and y may intend to make such an importation; that is, she may well intend both to import x of S as z of S' and to import y of S as z of S' . This clearly shows that an author's having *one* such intention is not a sufficient condition for crossworks identity.

In the 'fission' - case, a character x of a story S is imported both as a character y into another story S' and as a character z into this new story. Given the transitivity of identity, since y and z are obviously distinct, there is no identity between x and y or between x and z . Now again, an author well acquainted with x may intend to make such an importation; that is, she may both intend to import x of S as y of S' and to import x of S as z of S' . This again shows that an author's having *one* such intention is not a sufficient condition for crossworks identity.⁷

Curiously enough, concrete cases both of fusion and of fission often occur in so-called versions of the same work. On the one hand, in the 1912 version of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, both the musician Berget and the naturalist Vington occur, while in the final version only Vinteuil occurs. We may well suppose that Proust intended both to import Berget as Vinteuil and to import Vington as Vinteuil again.⁸ On the other hand, in Carroll's *Alice's Adventures Underground*, the preliminary version of *Alice in Wonderland*, we only have the Queen of Hearts, while in *Alice in Wonderland* we both have a character again labelled as the Queen of Hearts and the Ugly Duchess. Once more, we may well suppose that Carroll intended to import the Queen of Hearts both as the new Queen of Hearts and as the Ugly Duchess.

Now, presenting the above problems by means of *versions* of a work is very important. For this way of putting things shows that there is no clear distinction between the crossworks formulation and the intrawork formulation of the problem. That is to say, an author who is well acquainted with how her story proceeds, as is ordinarily the case, may indeed even intend to go on telling the story of x as the story both of y and of z , or the story of x and y as the story of z , within the *very same version* of a work. So, all in all, TC seems unable to

⁷ To be sure, one may reinforce Thomasson's condition by making it explicit that in normal cases an author having the intention of importing x of S as z of S' must have neither the further 'fusive' intention of importing y of S as z of S' nor the further 'fissive' intention of importing x of S as w of S' . Yet even though an author has no such intentions she may well be compelled – for instance by unconscious reasons – to do those importations. So, appealing to a lack of explicit intentions does not work.

⁸ For this case, cf. Bonomi 1994, p. 66.

account for both the ‘development’- datum, concerning the intrawork identity of a fictional character, and the ‘migration’- datum, concerning the crossworks identity of a fictional character. For the criterion TC appeals to guarantees neither kind of identity.

2. How Moderate Creationism Accounts for the Data

It is time to look in a different direction. As we have seen, fiction involves two different levels: the *make-believe* level, that involves a storyteller recounting, in the case of a creative make-believe process, that there is an individual that does such and such, and the *story* level, that involves the propositions constituting the story according to which an individual does such and such. Now on the one hand, if sophisticated sophisticated traditional creationists are right, as I hinted at before, the make-believe level typically involves no fictional character; indeed, when the relevant make-believe process is a creative one, it really involves no entity whatsoever. For, when a storyteller makes believe that there is an individual doing such and such, that individual typically is a concrete individual existing only within the scope of the make-believe process but which does not figure at all in the overall domain of what there is. For instance, when Doyle makes believe that there is an individual named “Holmes” who is a detective solving baffling crimes etc., he also makes believe that that individual is a *concretum*, not a fictional character, notably an abstract artefact. So in the world of that make-believe process there is such a concrete individual, but outside that world, hence in the overall domain of what there is, there is no entity whatsoever identical with that individual. On the other hand, consider all the traditional creationists who are not also *prudent* realists, namely, those who do not believe that fictional characters are mobilized only by extrafictional discourse – i.e., by saying things that do not involve any bit of fiction, like “King Arthur is a fictional character” and “Holmes is a fictional character”. For them, the story level precisely involves fictional characters *qua* abstract artefacts. So when we truthfully say “Holmes is a detective” and “Arthur is a king”, the overall domain of what there is contains both Holmes and King Arthur *qua* fictional individuals.⁹ Now, once we accept this two-stage picture, involving both a non-committal and a committal level on *ficta*, it is possible to account for the above data not at the story level, but rather at the make-believe one. Let me explain.

As I said, a creative make-believe process is typically qualified by the fact that a storyteller makes believe that there is an individual doing such and such.

⁹ Cf. Thomasson 1999.

Within that process, numerical identity is guaranteed to such a pseudoindividual (“pseudo”, for as I just said one merely makes believe that there is such an individual, while in actual fact there is none). Once one makes believe that there is such and such individual, one can indeed go on making believe that *that individual* is also so and so. So for instance, if Doyle makes believe that there is an individual named “Sherlock Holmes” who is a detective solving baffling crimes, he goes on making believe that *he* lives in Baker St. 221B, and so on. Thus, the ‘development’- datum is accounted for at *this* level: the more the creative make-believe process proceeds, the more properties the pseudoindividual receives within the tale involving ‘it’.

Once a certain make-believe process is over, moreover, nothing prevents the same story-teller or even a different one, from *reviving* that process. This is precisely what happens whenever someone reactivates a make-believe process that had come to an end, as it happens either with tales that trace back to a previous tale (so as to generate a literary cycle) or with tales that single out a certain make-believe process in order to protract it (as with sequels, novel variants etc.). In such cases, the very pseudoindividual that is originally made believe to be such and such is also, or rather alternatively, made believe to be so and so. So for instance, if by telling *The Song of Roland* its anonymous author makes believe that there is an individual named “Roland” who is the commander of Charlemagne’s rear guard at Roncesvaux, in telling *Orlando in Love* Boiardo revives that make-believe process by making believe that *that guy* falls in love with the whimsical Angelica; soon later Ariosto again revives, in writing *Orlando Enraged*, that process by making believe that *that guy again* becomes mad after having discovered that Angelica has a relationship with the Saracen knight Medoro. Thus, the ‘migration’- datum is accounted for at this level: while the pseudoindividual Roland gains the property of *being mad* in the later parts of the (revived) make-believe process, he loses the property of *being pious* which he had acquired at the very beginning of that process.

Naive non-prudent traditional creationists *à la* Thomasson 1999 may raise here an objection. Suppose we discovered a letter written while writing *A Study in Scarlet* by Doyle to one of his friends, or perhaps to Queen Victoria herself, saying that in so writing he is creating a character named “Holmes”. Would not this be an evidence to the effect that a character has been already created by Doyle while writing the tale, so that *it* cannot be but further developed in completing that tale (and possibly changed in writing the subsequent tales)?

Yet one must be here very careful. To begin with, neither naive nor sophisticated creationists claim that a *fictum* is generated through a *process*, as a concrete

individual may be. According to the former, a *fictum* is generated in the very first act of conception of the tale, while according to the latter it is generated at the end of the make-believe process that involves the whole tale. So the fact that Doyle would have used in his letter the *progressive* form – “I’m *creating* a character named ...” – makes it suspicious that a generation of a *fictum* is there involved. The suspicion becomes greater if one reflects on the fact that, after having written that letter, Doyle might have split his purported creation in different personages – say, he might have intended to continue the tale ‘about’ Sherlock Holmes so as to make it both a tale ‘about’ Holmes, a clever detective, and a tale ‘about’ Sherlock, a cocaine-addicted dropout. This possibility shows once more that the idea that the relevant tale concerns one and the same *fictum* named “Sherlock Holmes”, whose features are increased or changed by the unfolding of that tale or the appearance of other ones, is not well grounded.

There is indeed an alternative way to account for the fact that a storyteller says things to the effect that she is creating a fictional character; an account which again squares with the fact that a creative make-believe process is utterly non-committal. Many story-tellings contain cases of *explicit metalepsis*, that is, cases in which the story-teller says things like “Let us continue the story of N.N., which we have left aside some time ago”.¹⁰ One may well take cases of explicit metalepsis as paradigmatic instances in which a certain make-believe process, typically a creative process according to which there is an individual doing such and such things, is *resumed*: a process that was somehow put in standby is reactivated. In some of these cases, by so doing a story-teller simply goes on making believe that there is a concrete individual doing such and such things. For instance, Ariosto often uses this device in order to go on narrating ‘about’ someone whose initial deeds he described various chapters before (the pagan knight Ruggiero, for instance). But in some of these other cases, by so doing the story-teller makes it explicit that the pseudoindividual he is talking ‘about’ is not only a concrete, but also a fictional, individual. For instance if the story-teller says things like “Let us continue the story of the (fictional) *character* N.N., which we have left aside some time ago”. Truly enough, saying this makes the tale an inconsistent one: a personage of the tale, which presumably was previously described as a concrete individual, is now described as a fictional character. But this often happens with fictions, that they are inconsistent in many respects (in soap operas like *Beautiful*, which counts on its audience’s faulty memories, its different episodes make it the case the one and the same personage

¹⁰ See on this Pelletier 2003.

has two different ages at one and the same time: Eric jr., for instance). If this is the case, we may well suppose that what a story-teller does in saying to her friends things like "I'm creating a fictional character so named" is simply an instance of *implicit metalepsis*. In implicit metalepsis, the story-teller is simply playing an *extended* game of creative make-believe 'concerning' a certain individual, in the very same way in which her audience may play an analogous game while attending the tale (for instance, a hearer may well phantasize that the Werther Goethe's tale of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* is 'about' is also a charming man whose face reminds that of Brad Pitt, and so on).¹¹ Again, that extended game would make the make-believe process as a whole inconsistent: one and the same personage turns out again to be both a concrete individual and a fictional character. Yet again this is no harm; being inconsistent, when it occurs, is one of the fiction's beauties. But this further shows that one such case of implicit metalepsis does not presuppose that a fictional character has been created, it is simply an admittedly curious way of prolonging a non-committal make-believe process.

An utterly different thing would be if Doyle had written in his letter, "I have created a fictional character named 'Holmes'". For this would show that a certain reflexive stance leading to the generation of a particular fictional character would have already occurred. In point of fact, in the framework of MC we can well rely on the occurrence of a certain reflexive stance as a criterion to tell *resumptions* of a certain creative make-believe process from *revivals* of such a process. Both resumptions and revivals are typically intentional events: a story-teller typically intends to continue a certain make-believe process that either she or another story-teller has previously inaugurated.¹² Yet whether in the case of a creative make-believe process her intention, when successful,¹³ leads to a resumption or to a revival of that process depends on whether a generation of a fictional character somehow corresponding to the pseudoindividual that process 'mobilizes' has already occurred or not. In the latter case, the reprise counts as a resumption; in

¹¹ On extended games of make-believe, cf. Walton 1990.

¹² Properly said, make-believe processes are *causal-intentional* events. For the necessary condition in order for one such process either to occur or to be protracted is *either* that a certain intention to inaugurate or to continue the process obtains *or* that there is a certain causal chain starting with a certain use of a singular term. To be sure, this is not a sufficient condition. For instance, one such intention may well be frustrated. Suppose one erroneously think that she is making believe something, or that she is protracting one such process. This may well happen when one mistakes a merely real process for a make-believe one. Or even when one thinks that she is protracting a certain make-believe process that there is an individual doing such and such, when she is actually making believe that there are two such individuals.

¹³ See previous footnote.

the former case, as a revival. Thus, when in *Orlando in Love* Boiardo continues a certain creative make-believe practice ‘involving’ Roland, he is reviving that practice, insofar as there already is a fictional character so named. Yet when he continues a creative make-believe practice ‘involving’ Bradamante he is simply resuming that practice, insofar as there is yet no fictional character so named. However, when Ariosto in *Orlando Enraged* again continues that creative make-believe practice, he is reviving it, for at that time a fictional character so named has already been generated: Boiardo’s Bradamante. Analogously when Italo Calvino in *The Nonexistent Knight* will continue that practice he will revive it, for at that time there already is a fictional character so named (actually, two of them, the Boiardian and the Ariostesque one: see immediately below on this).

3. Crosswork ‘identity’ and intrawork* identity of a fictional character for MC

One might be surprised in reading what I have just said. What if Doyle had written the sentence “I have created a fictional character named ‘Holmes’” before having completed *A Study in Scarlet*? Would that imply that *A Study in Scarlet* contains two Holmeses, one arisen out of the first part of the tale – that completed before uttering the infamous sentence – and another one arisen out of the second part of the tale – that initiated after having uttered that sentence?

Well, yes, this is exactly what follows. But this is not surprising at all. Notoriously, pretheoretically speaking the identity of literary works is rather vague. Let us go back to the fact that we often speak of versions of one and the same work. This is practically convenient: in point of fact, there is a causal-intentional link connecting all *prima facie* versions of one and the same work as if they effectively were mere versions of such work; this link is ultimately based on the fact that, even in this case, there is an intentional reprise (actually, a revival) of one and the same make-believe process. Yet it is not theoretically convincing: it can hardly be the case that two *prima facie* versions of one and the same work are mere versions of that work if they do not share the same fictional characters, as in the cases of fusion and fission illustrated before. Now, if one claims that the identity of works depends on the identity of fictional characters, as I claim,¹⁴ then one has a clear-cut criterion to classify ‘versions’ that do not share the same characters as different works. But then, if one applies the very same criterion to the above Doyle case, one precisely gets the same result: if there were two Holmeses arisen out of the respective parts of the tale, then there would be two

¹⁴ Cf. Voltolini 2006.

different works, two *A Study in Scarlet – Part I* and *Part II*, say. As a result, according to MC, there definitely is intrawork identity of a fictional character: as I just said, the identity of a work depends on the identity of a fictional character in such a way that a character is a work-bound entity. Yet the work which is affected by a character's identity may well not be what we pretheoretically take as a work, for our pretheoretical understanding of a work is rather vague. So, the work whose identity is fixed by the identity of a character is a work in a theoretically reconstructed sense – let me call it a work*.

Incredibly enough, this is a welcome result. For example, if we do not use the above criterion, it is rather vague e.g. whether a work that remains unfinished is the same or not as its completion which is later performed, typically by another author. For example, as is well known, Boiardo left the tale of *Orlando in Love* unfinished; Ariosto starts his tale of *Orlando Enraged* letting one understand that in his poem he wants to let the story told in *Orlando in Love* proceed.¹⁵ So, why not considering the two tales as mobilizing different parts of one and the same work? For MC, the reason is simple. At the end of Boiardo's telling his story, a reflexive stance has occurred which fixes a certain Roland as a certain fictional character: Boiardo's Roland. As a result, *Orlando in Love* is a certain work, or better a certain work*, which is *inter alia* constituted by that Roland. As I said, moreover, Ariosto's creative make-believe process 'about' a certain Roland cannot but be a revival of Boiardo's process. Thus, the Roland coming out of Ariosto's tale cannot but be a different one from that of Boiardo. For it comes out of a reflexive stance involving that revival, not the original Boiardo's make-believe process. Hence ultimately, Ariosto's *Orlando Enraged* is a work* different from Boiardo's *Orlando in Love*, for it is *inter alia* constituted by this Roland and not by that one.

As a further result, from the picture MC actually shares with other realists on *ficta* on this point, notably the Neo-Meinongians (e.g. Castañeda 1989, Parsons 1980, Zalta 1983), there is no numerical identity either between apparently connected fictional characters which are protagonists of utterly different stories (say, between the Ulysses of *The Iliad* and the Ulysses of the *Divine Comedy*) or between characters belonging to either the same group of stories (such as the Holmes of *A Study in Scarlet* and the Holmes of *The Hound of Baskerville*) or to the same cycle (such as the above Rolands). Properly speaking, therefore,

¹⁵ "In the same strain of Roland will I tell/ Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme./ On whom strange madness and rank fury fell./ A man esteemed so wise in former time." transl. by William Stewart Rose, 1910, London; <http://omacl.org/Orlando/1-2canto.html>.

for MC (as well as for these other positions) there is no crosswork identity of a fictional character.

But this obviously raises a problem. Even if MC accounts for the ‘development’- and the ‘migration’- data at the make-believe level rather than at the story level, how can MC explain the starting point of this discussion, namely the fact that some characters have more success than others? Put alternatively, why instead of speaking in these cases of utterly different characters, as in the case of Anna Karenina, Emma Bovary and Werther, we speak of all such characters as the *Fausts*, the *Holmeses*, the *Rolands*?

Within realist theories of fictional entities, Meinong-inspired theories of *ficta* have provided an answer to this question. Even though there is no numerical identity between apparently connected *ficta*, not only there is a weaker relation holding between all of them, but they must also be somehow related to a *general* character. So all the particular Holmeses are related with a general Holmes, all the particular Rolands with a general Roland, and so on.

Yet this position seems to raise more problems than those it solves. For the nature of general characters is not clear. Meinong-inspired theories have divided themselves into *minimalists* and in *maximalists*. On the one hand, minimalists believe that the general character corresponds to the core shared by all the particular related characters; that is, it is a character having just the non-renounceable features that, among the properties that are ascribed to each particular related character in the respective story, any such character must have in order for it to be one of the particular characters of the same group. So, the general Holmes is just a clever detective solving many baffling crimes, a feature that all Holmeses are ascribed, the general Faust is a doctor trying to become immortal through a pact with the devil, a feature that all Fausts are ascribed, and so on. On the other hand, maximalists claim that the general character collects all the properties that are ascribed to the relevant particular characters in the respective stories. So, the general King Arthur is, among other things, both the young guy extracting the sword Excalibur out of a rock and the old king dying after the final battle with Mordred, while the general Roland is both the pious paladin dying at Roncesvaux and the mad knight whose brain has been transported to the Moon, etc.¹⁶

As is well known, both options have troubles.¹⁷ On the one hand, minimalists hardly find an essence that all the relevant particular characters, all the characters that we pretheoretically perceive as belonging to the same group, share.

¹⁶ On these two proposals, cf. Reicher 1995.

¹⁷ For such troubles, cf. Thomasson 1999, pp. 57-62.

We sense that Joyce's Leopold Bloom is just another variation of Ulysses. Yet which properties does the Ulysses of *The Iliad* share with Bloom?

In various works (e.g., 2002, 2006), Orilia provides a possible reply to this problem. He appeals to contextual fictional essences. Contextual fictional essences are essences that are shared by *ficta* relatively to a certain contextual reidentification criterion. For instance, one such criterion may enable us to select *being a very clever detective living in London* as the fictional essence that all the Holmeses of the Doyle's stories share.

Now, this proposal warrants numerical identity between certain characters relatively to a certain contextual fictional essence. Yet, this also means that transitivity of identity may well fail, insofar as *ficta* OF and OF' are identical relatively to a certain contextual fictional essence, *ficta* OF' and OF'' are identical relatively to another contextual fictional essence, yet *ficta* OF and OF'' are not identical, for there is no contextual fictional essence they share. For instance, a certain reidentification criterion may enable one to pick up a certain fictional essence – *being an adventurous clever Greek of the old times* – as what both Homer's Ulysses and Dante's Ulysses share. Yet another reidentification criterion may enable one to pick up another fictional essence – *being a symbol of human insatisfaction who strives for knowledge of some kind* – as what both Dante's Ulysses and Joyce's Ulysses, aka Leopold Bloom, share. But such essences prevents Homer's Ulysses and Leopold Bloom from having anything in common that makes them the same *fictum*. As a further result, there can be no general character connecting those three *ficta*, a character that the minimalists would like to have.

Maximalists on the other hand face the problem of finding a criterion for general characters without making them too inclusive. What reasons do we have to prevent, say, the Stephen of Joyce's *Stephen Hero* from contributing with the properties that are ascribed to him in such a work to the general character Telemachus arising out of *The Odyssey*'s Telemachus and *Ulysses*' Dedalus?

Yet MC may precisely provide the criterion required. The particular characters that have to be included in the selection list of a certain general character are all the characters that stem from the successive revivals of the very same creative make-believe process. The reason why, for instance, Leopold Bloom contributes the properties it has in *Ulysses* to the general Ulysses is that Joyce revived the creative make-believe process according to which there is an individual, originally named "Ulysses", who in the Greece of the very old times did a lot of things. Yet, since Joyce did not intend, in telling the story of Stephen while writing *Stephen Hero*, to revive the creative make-believe process having to

do with the story told by Homer in the *Odyssey*, nor did any causal connection subsist between the two tales, *that* Stephen does not contribute to the general Telemachus to which both *The Odyssey's* Telemachus and *Ulysses' Dedalus* contribute.

Thus, MC wants to corroborate maximalism. By so doing, it saves both the idea that there is a relation weaker than identity between the relevant particular characters, which are selected by appealing to a specific creative make-believe process and its revivals – let me call this relation *transfictional sameness* – and the idea that there is another relation still weaker than identity that connects all such characters to a general character – let me call it *transfictional inclusion*, insofar as the general character inherits its properties from the properties all those singular characters are ascribed in their respective stories. On the one hand, transfictional sameness is weaker than identity for it is not transitive: OF may transfictionally be the same as OF', OF' may transfictionally be the same as OF'', yet OF may transfictionally not be the same as OF'' – the intentions of reviving the same make-believe process notwithstanding, one may well end up creating a *fictum* OF'' which is too unlike OF, because of the difference in the properties ascribed to them in their respective stories. On the other hand, transfictional inclusion is weaker than identity for it is not symmetrical: a particular character is transfictionally included in the general character insofar as the latter has all the properties that are ascribed to the former, but the converse is not the case.

To be sure, by simply singling out the inclusion criterion for a general character MC does not seem able to skip another problem that maximalism faces, namely that, insofar as more and more relevant particular characters arise, there are even different general characters. Before Joyce's *Ulysses*, the general Ulysses was the *fictum* characterized by properties having to do with deeds happened in the Mediterranean area at old times. Yet, after that work, the general Ulysses radically changed, by including properties having to do with deeds happened in contemporary Ireland. So, there are two general Ulysses. Don't we have too many entities for our needs?¹⁸

Yet, this is not a problem, but again a consequence of the theory, indeed a welcome one. To begin with, it is a consequence of the theory, for the general character is an abstract *constructed* entity which, as such, has *essentially* all the properties that stem from the properties ascribed to the relevant particular characters in their respective stories. As a result, if new properties are mobilized, a new general character arises as well. This is what always happens with abstract

¹⁸ For this problem, cf. Dolcini 2010.

constructed entities, namely, that they precisely have their features essentially. Suppose that *mathemata*, the prototypes of *abstracta*, are also constructed entities. For instance, suppose that π , the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter, is an entity that arises from dividing that circumference by that diameter. Since each step in the division essentially qualifies π , it turns out that there are different π s, each of which is more fine-grained than the previous one insofar as it contains more properties than that previous π , that is, insofar as its non-integer part is more developed than that of the previous one.¹⁹

Moreover, it is a welcome consequence of the theory, for this is how things must be with general characters. Consider indeed mythological entities, which are a kind of fictional entities (mythological entities are simply fictional entities originally not recognized as such). No doubt, the Greek-Roman Jupiter is different both from the Latin Jovis and the Greek Zeus. In point of fact, for MC Jupiter is the general character stemming from both Jovis and Zeus. Now, suppose that in the times of the Roman Empire there was a Northern people adoring a divinity taken to be the father of all (Northern) gods. Let us call this divinity "Odin". Let us further imagine that a Greek-Roman of those times became acquainted with Odin; being religiously biased towards syncretism she said: "Well, Odin is nothing but our Jupiter". That would make a bigger character arise – Jupidin, let us call it. No one would in fact deny that literally speaking Jupidin is not Jupiter; Jupidin indeed is a more general character that conflates the previous general character Jupiter with Odin. But then this shows that general characters are always, as one may say, under construction.

University of Turin
alberto.voltolini@unito.it

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¹⁹ For this mathematical constructivism cf. e.g., Wittgenstein 1978². Wittgenstein explicitly emphasized this similarity between mathematical and fictional beings: see 1978², IV, §9.

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