

Metaphysics and the Paronymy of Names

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“Oh, come along, you silly old bastard!” cries he impatiently—and I knew it was true beyond a doubt. It would have taken a son of mine, at a moment like this, to talk to his father that way. But...no, it couldn't be true, although I knew it was. I searched for contradiction.

“You said...you said this Sioux fellow...what's his name? You said he was your father.”

“That was Standing Bear who said that,” says he in Siouxan. “Standing Bear the Brulé, the One-Who-Catches, to whom Broken-Moon-Goes-Alone was as a father.” He broke into English again. “But I'm also Frank Grouard—or, properly speaking, Frank Flashman, son of Cleonie the slave-girl and the Englishman who sold her at Santa Fe.”

--George MacDonald Fraser, *Flashman and the Redskins*

1. To illustrate the main thesis of this paper, I shall start with a puzzle about fictional characters: It is hard to give a theory that accommodates all the following facts (quoted from Brock (2002), pp. 4-5). Scarlett O'Hara is[/was] a woman; Heathcliff was haunted by a ghost on the windy moors; Scarlett O'Hara is a fictional character; Romeo has been discussed by many Shakespeare scholars;

Holmes would not have needed tapes to get the goods on Nixon; Holmes symbolizes mankind's ceaseless striving for truth; Anna Karenina is less neurotic than is Katerina Ivanovna; the character Odysseus who occurs in the *Odyssey* is identical to the character who occurs in *Inferno*, Canto 26, under the name 'Ulysses'; there are characters in nineteenth-century novels who are presented with a greater wealth of physical detail than is any character in any eighteenth-century novels; things would be better if certain politicians who (unfortunately) exist only in fiction, were running this country instead of the ones we now have; there is no Sherlock Holmes [and of course Scarlett O'Hara and Romeo and Anna Karenina never existed].

A puzzle, because some of the foregoing sentences seem to be saying different sorts of thing, and some seem to contradict each other even though we may suppose that all of them, understood as intended, are true.

I believe the solution is to distinguish between fictional *characters* and fictional *people* (Kripke (1973/2012), van Inwagen (1977), Lycan (1994, Ch. 6; forthcoming)). A fictional person is, on the face of things, a mere possibilium, inhabiting one or more worlds but not this one. But at any world at which the person does exist, s/he is a *person* and has all the sorts of properties real people have—parents, a birthplace, a height and weight, arms and legs, an address, personality traits, thoughts and feelings, a history of actions and accomplishments.¹

By contrast, a fictional *character* (as I use the term) is a literary entity, the creation of a real-world author; like its containing novel, poem or play, it is an actual abstract item. It has literary properties: It is well-drawn or a two-dimensional pinup, more creatively or less imaginatively conceived than Dickens' Pickwick, crucial or inessential to the plot, a realization of the author's original intention or an unexpectedly evolved departure, popular or unpopular with readers, etc. Such things cannot (except metaphorically) be said of real flesh-and-blood people; no more can they be said of fictional flesh-and-blood people in my sense.

(This distinction between fictional characters and fictional people removes a concern often voiced against highly deflationary theories of possibilia, viz., that there are plain and uncontroversial real-world truths about fictional entities. E.g.,

There is a group of difficulties that... [a deflationary] approach faces. The group of difficulties arises from the fact that we—commonsense readers and literary critics alike—frequently make and hold to be in some sense actual-world truths...fictional-object involving facts which do *not* obtain within those fictional situations or worlds that are indicated by the works of fiction themselves.

[Howell (1979), p. 152]²

Of course, setting aside general Quinean hostility to abstract entities, there are fictional characters in my sense and real-world truths about those literary entities, just as there are real-world truths about stories and novels. That does nothing to

show that we must be realists in any very strong sense about fictional people.)

But my main concern in this paper is to note an implication of my distinction, to point out that the implication ramifies in interesting ways, and to draw morals for some other, diverse ongoing semantic and metaphysical issues.

2. The implication is that the names of fictional characters are paronymous. If I am right, a name such as “Romeo” or “Anna Karenina” can refer either to a character in my sense or to the corresponding nonactual person. Though paronymy is only slight ambiguity,³ it is ambiguity; the same sentence can be both true and false accordingly.

The obvious example in this case is that of (some) negative existentials. “There has never been any Sherlock Holmes” is (real-world) true of people, but false of characters. But consider a few more subtle cases: “Hitler admired Iago”—Does that mean that Hitler admired the *character*, as conceived and constructed by Shakespeare and manifesting the Bard’s deep understanding of human nature, or does it mean that Hitler admired Iago himself, the duplicitous person portrayed in the play? “Holmes was a better detective than Charles Paris”—That could mean, a better-drawn fictional detective *figure* than Simon Brett’s detective character (and is open to dispute); or it could be a direct and indisputable comparison of detective prowess as between the two flesh-and-blood men as they are shown in the respective fictions. Finally, “Romeo has been discussed by many Shakespeare scholars” displays the same character-vs.-person ambiguity as did

“Hitler admired Iago.” (Notice that each of them has an obviously false third, “in the story” reading as well.)

The notion of paronymy (sometimes misleadingly called “polysemy”) is unfamiliar to many philosophers, even to philosophers of language; so let me back up and explain it a bit, first using examples of everyday expressions:

(i) “She dropped her package (on the floor)” ; “She dropped a friend” ; “She dropped two of her courses” ; “She dropped her hem-line” ; “She dropped a stitch” ; “She dropped her eyes” (compare the package sense!) ; “letter drop” ; “parachute drop” (itself paronymous) ; “drop of blood.” [Ross (1981), Kittay (1987)]

(ii) “Dead man” ; “dead duck” ; “dead silence” ; “dead ringer” ; “dead march” ; “dead-eye” ; “dead end” ; “dead-head” ; “dead assets” ; “dead heat” ; “dead-bolt” ; “dead language” ; “dead wrong” ; “dead drunk” ; “dead tired,” “dead boring” ; “dead set (on)” ; “the dead of winter.”

(iii) “Make a cake / dinner” ; “make a mistake” ; “make (someone) do so&so” ; “make love” ; “make war” ; “make merry” ; “make a mess” ; “make a reputation” ; “make (up) a story” ; “make trouble” ; “make my day” ; “make a man / one’s bones” (Mafia) ; “Nine tailors make a man” (campanology) ; “make a fourth at bridge” ; “make do with X” ; “on the make.”

(iv) Prepositions such as “in,” “on” and (especially “of” notoriously have no constant meaning from context to context. [Lakoff and Johnson (1980)]

(v) Even affixes and case markers are thus paronymous. E.g., the possessive case denotes nearly countless different relationships, only some of them expressible as “ownership” in any sense at all.

And now, some more general examples of paronymous names in particular:

Names of countries ⁴

Germany is east of France.

Germany used to be thickly forested.

Germany voted Social Democrat.

Germany decided to ratify the Kyoto accords.

Germany invaded Austria.

Germany won the World Cup.

Germany was a Fascist state, but is now a democracy.

Germany loves potatoes.

Germany is thriving despite the big economic drain from West to East.

Germany leads the world in musicology.

Names of cities, similarly

Washington (D.C.) is hot and humid.

Washington is south of Baltimore.

Washington has always been basically Southern.

Washington made panhandling illegal after dark.

Washington has no representation in Congress.

Washington didn't think Obama was ready for the Presidency.

Washington beat Denver.

Washington is corrupt through and through.

It is pretty clear in these cases that not quite the same entity is referred to by each occurrence of the name in question. Some of the referents are geographical regions, some governmental entities, some economic entities, some politically organized populations, some just populations, one a football team, etc.

Names of real persons

(i) We have seen that fictional names exhibit paronymy. Now I shall argue that names of real persons do so as well.

First, consider that real people often make appearances in fictions. Are they then fictional? They are sometimes referred to as “fictionalized,” or as “fictional versions of” their originals. Actually there is a smooth spectrum of examples, running from unadulterated historical fact at one end to complete roman à clef fantasy at the other. An example of the former would be any novel set in WWII America or Britain that quotes President Roosevelt's famous radio address to the nation on December 8, 1941. In such a novel, Roosevelt himself appears as himself, and nothing whatever is attributed to him save what he actually did in the real world.

An intermediate case would be that of an historical novel in which real

historical figures and events are described with fair accuracy, but in which conversations are interpolated and motives speculatively supplied. Farther along the spectrum would be novels based on history but in which liberties are freely taken in aid of producing a better story. Toward the other end are pastiches, such as Sue Townsend's wildly alternate tales of the contemporary British royal family. (In those, it is still important that Queen Elizabeth, Prince Philip, Prince Charles et al. are who they are, and that they maintain the personalities Townsend takes them to have in real life.)

Especially since multiple historical novels and pastiches have been written by different authors about the same real persons, the persons' names will be paronymous as between real life and one or another literary version—Shakespeare's Henry V, and for that matter that Henry vs. the Henry ("Hal") of *Henry IV, Part I*; Robert Bolt's *Sir Thomas More* vs. Hilary Mantel's; countless different authors' Lincoln; and so on.

At a wild extreme of fancy is Fiona Farrell's novel *Mr. Allbones' Ferrets*. Its main character, Walter Allbones and his associate Fowler Metcalfe were real persons, engaged in the shipping of mustelids to New Zealand, but all that is known of them is that their names appear on the receipts for a consignment of 500 stoats ordered from England by one George Riddiford in 1885. The novel is otherwise complete fiction, though realistic in its general portrayal of the great importation and the resulting eco-disaster. At the end comes a plot and identity twist, which I will not spoil except to assure you that it makes for an entirely new

layer of paronymy in the names.

(ii) Names of actors used to refer to the characters they play. (This happens when the actor is famous and the character's name is not memorable. "So Harrison Ford says to the girl Carol,....")

(iii) "Where is Smith?"

Smith died on Thursday. [He isn't anywhere, for he no longer exists.]

Smith is in the Elysian Room. [Said at the funeral home.]

As we shall see, pronouns, including the first-person pronoun, are paronymous in the same way.

(iv) Names of people re-used to designate personally associated collectives or institutions.

Hitler invaded Russia.

Photo by Mathew Brady. [The 1862 photo bearing this label was actually snapped by Alexander Gardner, but it was automatically and legitimately labeled a Brady because Gardner was an apprentice working under Brady's direct supervision.]

Kruglikova-Lvova showed that galantamine antagonizes acetylcholinesterase. [K.-L. was the PI, but it was her lab that collectively carried out the research; her own individual activities would not have established the result.]⁵

(v) And of course any name may be used as a common noun (“Trieste is no Vienna,” “You’re no Jack Kennedy”), or adjectivalized (“That was such a Geoff/Hilary/Quine thing to do”).⁶ But such uses are not to the purpose of this paper.

The paronymy of proper names causes no particular problem in use, though occasionally disambiguation might be needed. On the contrary: If we acknowledge a more widespread paronymy of proper names, including those of actual individuals, we can make progress on each of several different semantical and metaphysical issues.

3. Jennifer Saul (1997, 1999) has famously pointed out apparent referential opacity in sentences that contain no known opacity-inducing operators:

(1) a. Clark Kent always arrived at the scene just after one of Superman’s daring rescues.

b. Superman always arrived at the scene just after one of Superman’s daring rescues.⁷

(2) a. Clark Kent went into the phone booth and Superman came out.

b. Clark Kent went into the phone booth and Clark Kent came out.

(3) a. Superman leaps tall buildings more often than Clark Kent does.

b. Superman leaps tall buildings more often than Superman does.

(Note that (3b) is a contradiction.)

Various solutions to this puzzle have been suggested. Saul herself shows that Fregean and metalinguistic accounts fail (1997, pp. 103-04). She considers but rejects a solution which accepts the anomalous “b” sentences as true and explains away the appearances pragmatically (pp. 106-08; I concur in that). Finally, she considers simpler solutions according to which “Clark Kent” and “Superman” just do not corefer; but she rejects them on various grounds, showing that they lead to trouble if applied across the board in simple sentences. She adds that the identity statements “Clark Kent is Superman” and “Superman is Clark Kent” are notoriously and straightforwardly true.

David Pitt (2001) ingeniously and plausibly defends the simple, non-identity solution against Saul. He introduces the notion of a *persona*, which is like a dramatic role except that it goes deeper; a persona is assumed, not played. When a person assumes or inhabits a persona, we use the language of identity. “Clark Kent” and “Superman” express the two personae of the original immigrant from Krypton (whose real name, you may remember, was “Kal El”). When that person is wearing dull clothing and acting as a mild-mannered reporter, he is *being* Clark Kent, not (or not merely) playing the role of a character called “Clark Kent,” and when he is the Man of Steel, suitably attired, he *is* Superman. Unlike a dramatic role, a persona is not or is hardly scripted, and, we may add, is not limited to any particular story context or performance venue.

Pitt adds his own examples, of Andre Charles' glamorous female supermodel persona "RuPaul," Barry Humphries' "Dame Edna Everage," and the persona "Zorro" first inhabited by Don Diego de la Vega⁸ and then by a designated successor. (Notice that until the late 1970s, "Edna Everage" was only one of a number of roles played by Humphries in his stage shows, along with Les Patterson, Sandy Stone et al., but in time she became his official persona, and she then hosted the other characters; so the line between a mere role and a persona is not sharp. But the distinction is intuitive.) The Standing Bear example cited in my epigraph to this paper is a further example—real, not fictional: Standing Bear was the Sioux alter ego of the adventurer Frank Grouard, whose origin is unknown.

A persona, like a role or a character in my sense, is an abstract entity. Personae per se do not *do* things, such as wear glasses or go into phone booths or leap tall buildings. So Pitt introduces the notion of an *alter ego*. An alter ego is "an individual qua inhabitant of a persona, and an individual qua inhabitant of a persona is distinct from that individual simpliciter" (p. 537). The names "Kent" and "Superman" denote Kal El's two alter egos, not the two personae. Alter egos are people and do things, but as before, they are not people simpliciter.

Nor, accordingly, are they identical with the people (simpliciter) whose alter egos they are. Though Kal El is sometimes Kent, that "is" is not the "is" of numerical identity, and of course the same goes for Kal El and Superman. Even more obviously, the alter egos Kent and Superman are numerically distinct. (Pitt

holds that they cannot even exist at the same time (pp. 546-47). He goes on to offer an ontological theory of alter egos, and to compare his theory to alternatives.) No wonder, then, that substitutivity fails in Saul's sentences. And her identity statements "Clark Kent is Superman" and "Superman is Clark Kent" are simply false, not true.

Now, I am in sympathy with Pitt's solution, but I cannot accept it entire, because I cannot join him in utterly rejecting the identity statements. I agree there is a pretty clear sense in which they are false, but I agree with Saul that there is an even clearer sense in which they are true. Kent the *person* is one and the same as Superman the person. (Notice that the statements have been used for decades as uncontroversial examples of a posteriori true identity statements, and no one has complained until now.) Notice too that the "is" of persona assumption is asymmetric: Kal El is sometimes Kent, but it is incorrect to say that Kent is sometimes Kal El—and not because Kent always assumes the "Kal El" persona, because there is no such persona. Kal El is simply a person (in Pitt's term, a "primum ego"), and Kent is that person. The puzzle, or at least a smaller puzzle, remains.

Paronymy to the rescue: It seems clear that the same name can be used either to denote an alter ego or to refer to the person whose alter ego it is. "Kent" can and perhaps usually does refer to the mild-mannered etc. alter ego, but can also refer to Kal El, the person simpliciter. Once we get used to the idea that proper names can be paronymous, there is no longer anything puzzling about this,

and Saul's problem is solved.

True, a consequence of this view is that Saul's sentences are not unambiguously opaque. Though they have their opaque, alter ego readings, they should be referentially transparent when the names in them are used explicitly with their person referents rather than their alter ego referents. And that prediction is borne out, even though the transparent readings are minority, not default, and are harder to hear when the names' person referents are not made explicit. Thus:

(1b-transp) Superman, the person, always arrived at the scene just after one of Superman's daring rescues.

—True, of course, because Superman made it a point to turn up as Kent to get the scoop for the *Daily Planet*. We could make that clearer by amplifying (1b): “Superman, the person (never mind what persona he was occupying at the time), always arrived at the scene just after one of Superman's daring rescues (because of course he was one and the same person as Clark Kent).” Similarly:

(2b-transp) Clark Kent went into the phone booth and Clark Kent, the person (though in his persona as Superman), came out.

(3a-transp) Superman, the person, leaps tall buildings more often than does Clark Kent, the person.

—False. Kent, in his other disguise, leaps tall buildings too.

It is interesting to compare alter egos with respect to existence (though I shall not pursue this here). Intuitions differ from case to case. To report a few of mine: Clark Kent and Superman both exist, even though they are alter egos. RuPaul does as well. But Dame Edna does not; there is no such person—possibly because she appears only on stage and in a few other staged contexts?

Leslie McFarlane, who was the original “Franklin W. Dixon” and wrote the first Hardy Boys books for the Stratemeyer Syndicate, saw his first three books appear in print (naturally) bearing ads for other Stratemeyer books by other authors. In his autobiography he writes,

Innocent? I was just plain *dumb*! I really believed in Victor Appleton, Allen Chapman and James Cody Ferris, although I had just unwrapped three books by Franklin W. Dixon, whom I knew didn't exist because he was me.⁹

4. Suppose Cartesian Dualism were true. Then, strictly speaking, I would be nothing but a mind, and I would have a body as I might have a briefcase or a wagon. And others might refer to me in that vein, directly predicating mental properties but sometimes talking only of “my”/”his” body as if of a possession. But others would also have occasion to say things about me that presupposed a body (“Lycan is sitting down”) or that seem to refer only to my body (“Lycan weighs 180 pounds”). That would suggest that “Lycan” is paronymous.

Cartesian Dualism is not true. And Strawson (1959) famously argued that the concept of a person is primitive, a person being an entity to which both mental and physical predicates apply without semantic readjustment. But in any case “Lycan” is paronymous as between its reference to the person I am (either in Locke’s straightforward sense of “person” or in Strawson’s carefully teased out sense) and the pre- and post-personal human creatures contiguous with me, viz., Lycan in his mother’s womb and Lycan the corpse. Notice that the latter ambiguity is quite genuine: When I am dead, “Lycan is in his grave” will be both true, assuming I am buried, and false, because I the person will no longer exist.

Perhaps surprisingly, personal pronouns, even “I”!, exhibit the same ambiguities. “I weigh n pounds” was both true and false for Descartes on his own view, assuming he was willing to assert it at all. “In January, 1945, you were the size of a pea” is both true and (arguably) false if said of me. After my death, will *I* be in my grave? Yes and no.

5. The point affects the issue of personal identity through time. Consider the current debate between the traditional Lockean psychological-continuity approach and recent “animalism,” the theory according to which a human person¹⁰ is a living, thinking animal that persists exactly where and when the animal does. It is striking that each view has at least one argument that seems utterly fatal to the other.

The psychological approach is supported by Locke’s famous prince-cobbler

example and by more sophisticated science-fiction cases (brain transplants etc.). In my view, the best defended instance of the psychological account is the causal version (Lewis (1976), Shoemaker (1984)): Roughly, P2 at T2 is the same person as P1 at T1 iff P2's mental states are connected to P1's mental states by a chain of mental states related by causal or at least counterfactual dependence. Its obvious objections to animalism are the body- and brain-switching examples aforementioned: Surely the person would move to the different body, with the original animal left behind.

Animalism is supported by the nearly undeniable fact that we are thinking animals (Snowdon (1990, 1995), Carter (1989), Olson (1997, 2007), Blatti (2012), and others)). An animal's persistence condition is biological, not psychological.¹¹ Animalism's obvious objections to the psychological view are (1) that we commonsensically identify persons both with pre-psychological stages of themselves such as embryos and with post-psychological stages such as comatose Alzheimer's victims, and (2) that if a person is not identical with a thinking animal, then right now there are two distinct creatures sitting in my chair typing at my computer keyboard, William G. Lycan and the animal that temporarily coincides with him.¹²

Even I suspect that there may be no fact of the matter as between these views. Assume the four-dimensional picture of the world: Individual things are spacetime worms and have temporal slices or stages. (This seems to me undeniable, whether or not we should say that things have actual temporal *parts*.)

Now, there are many different ways of collecting animal- and person-stages into continuants. Some of the resulting 4-D collections are animals; some are persons; most are weird “grue”-style mockups (Hirsch (1982)). A philosopher may be tempted to think that there is no fact of the matter, that each such collection, no matter how unnatural, is a persisting entity, and that only convention or human propensity privileges and reifies one type as that of “person”; so the debate is, if not merely verbal, otiose.

The latter position may be right, but it is not mine here. I am concerned only with the debate as between psychological continuants and thinking animals. But there, I agree that there is no fact of the matter. I am a psychological continuant and I am a thinking animal; briefly, I am a person and I am an animal and the two are distinct. –Though to say “I am a psychological continuant and a thinking animal” would be mild zeugma. Paronymy again!

And, yes, there are numerically distinct Lycan-sized occupants of my chair as I type (or perhaps they’re both typing). The key thing to grasp is that they are not *entirely* distinct. They almost entirely overlap. They do not together weigh 360 pounds, etc. On such issues, see Paul (2006).

6. Recently it has been argued that the case of interactive internet roleplaying games and the avatars that figure in them creates semantic puzzles, leading to metaphysical ones.¹³ Ludlow (2006) defends the zany thesis that *actuality* is merely contextual. “There is no such thing as fiction, and there are no

such things as fictional objects” (p. 165). Rather, “fictional” predicates are true of real individuals “in limited contexts of use,” and “fictional” general claims are real-world true but, again, only “in a limited context.” I shall bring out the import of this below.

Regarding extant theories of fictional entities, Ludlow opines that pretense theories such as those of Kripke (1973) and Walton (1990) are far superior to more traditional possible-worlds accounts.¹⁴ Yet they face powerful objections, particularly those based on “cross-narrative” individuals, as illustrated in sentences like “Sherlock Holmes is smarter than any living detective” and “Bertrand Russell resembled the Mad Hatter” (pp. 168-70). In a pretense analysis of such sentences, without sheer ad-hoc-ness it is notoriously hard to sort out what falls within the relevant pretense and what does not. Ludlow boldly proposes that we simply drop the “pretense” quasi-operator, and say merely that domains expand or broaden with context. Thus, Holmes originally shared his domain with other fictional characters and only a few real people (such as Queen Victoria), but the foregoing sentence expands the domain to include real-world detectives; Russell usually has only actual individuals as his domainmates, but the Hatter sentence broadens the domain to include Lewis Carroll characters as illustrated by Tenniel.

This may sound all right so far as it goes,¹⁵ but Ludlow now adverts to an unusual type of cross-narrative individual, that he had introduced in a previous section: He contends that what began as “merely fictional” characters can become real. His examples are (i) the Star Trek language Klingon, which has been picked

up and used in the real world by some aficionados (p. 163); (ii) Norrathian Platinum Pieces, currency in the internet game EverQuest, which now have real-world value and an official exchange rate (ibid.); (iii) the newspaper *The Alphaville Herald*, created in The Sims Online by Ludlow himself in his game persona Urizenus, which came to be treated as a real newspaper in that its stories were picked up and carried by real media including *The New York Times* (p. 164-65).¹⁶

Now, put this contention together with Ludlow's view that the *pretense* part of pretense views can simply be dropped in favor of a system of contracting and expanding domains and that such domain variation is merely contextual. It follows that the (alleged) changes from fictional/nonactual to real or actual are merely contextual too, and not the grave metaphysical matter we take the "nonactual"/ "actual" distinction to be. Shocking!¹⁷ And if we extrapolate Ludlow's conclusion to the *entire* distinction, across the board, it is paradoxical to a degree unrivalled by Meinong:

We all agree that a fictional sentence can be true or treated as true in an appropriate context, by way of a tacit story operator or an illocutionary context of pretense. Ludlow's radical claim is that, rather, a fictional sentence can be true *without benefit of any story operator or pretense*. "Buffy slew a vampire" is just plain true in suitable context; Ludlow adds that even "Sarah Michelle Gellar slew a vampire" is as well, Gellar¹⁸ being the real-world actress who played the role of Buffy Summers on television.

In one of Ludlow's special contexts, it would be plainly and literally *false* to say that Buffy does not really exist. (And not because the Buffy character uncontroversially exists; Ludlow is talking about Buffy the person.) So if whether Buffy exists depends on context, does the same apply to you, and me, and Descartes? Why, on Ludlow's view, would it not? And if it did not, that would be an absolute ontological difference between us and fictional characters, contrary to his explicit claim.

But to return to the argument from cross-narrative actualizations: The crucial move is to identify an individual that was merely fictional, and argue that that same individual became actual merely by a widening of a contextual domain.

Klingon: It could be argued that a language is an abstract entity and hence real from the beginning, even though invented by a fabulist (Marc Okrand) and first introduced in a fiction. But let us waive that and agree with Ludlow that Klingon began life as merely fictional. However, as soon as we do that, we see that the name is paronymous. It refers to the fictional language, and it refers to the language now spoken by real-world aficionados, but those are not the same. Klingon the fictional language was not invented by Marc Okrant, or even by a fictional human being; it is the native language of the ancient Klingons. It was the first language of thousands or millions of warriors. It has existed for 1500 years, since the time of Kahless the Unforgettable. None of these things is true of Klingon the evolved real-world spoken by a few Trekkies.

No one individual language became actual; there was the Klingon of Star Trek, and there is the Klingon of the Klingon Language Institute (located in Flourtown, PA, USA, URL: <http://www.kli.org/>). They are similar, but not identical.

Norrathian Platinum Pieces are to be treated similarly. They are the official currency of Norrath. They are not traded on eBay. You can buy a house for x number of them. None of these things is true of the Norrathian Platinum pieces that are traded by hobbyists and speculators in the real world. And similarly for *The Alphaville Herald*, which was founded by the avatar Urzenius and not by Peter Ludlow. “Norrathian Platinum Piece” and “*The Alphaville Herald*” are paronymous as between their fictional referents and their real-world referents, and so the alleged transformation from fiction to actuality is an equivocation; it is not that of a single individual or type that retains its identity throughout.¹⁹

To reveal the paronymous equivocation, I have made Leibniz’-Law arguments, as I did in sections 2-5 above. But these, Ludlow will rightly say, in no way refute him. All they show is that the same sentence can be both true and false, and of course his contextualist view is made to accommodate such facts.

That is to mistake the dialectic. Ludlow has argued for an extreme, paradoxical view, relying on an inference that assumes univocality. But for all he has shown, univocality fails, because the relevant names are paronymous. Nor is it at all tendentious or ad hoc to maintain that they are paronymous, since they fit the more general and (I hope) uncontroversial pattern for paronymous names

exhibited in this paper, viz., reference to closely related but slightly different things. Therefore we have been given no reason to accept Ludlow's extreme view.

(It is worth mentioning that the view has a more specific defect. We must ask, in just what way(s) does *context* make real-world-true either a purely fictional sentence such as "Buffy slew a vampire," or a predication of vampire-slaying to Sarah Michelle Gellar, or a cross-narrative sentence such as "Norrathian Platinum Pieces were fictional but now they are real" (p. 171)? Until we are told something about what contextual factors control the truth-values of fictional utterances and how they do so, Ludlow's idea amounts only to saying that a fictional sentence can be just plain literally true when "context makes" it so. He alludes to contextualism in epistemology, but he owes us at least the beginnings of a description of the relevant contextual features and how they push judgments of truth-value.

In the case of knowledge predications, (I agree) the context-dependence is more subtle and complex than was at first believed, but we can cite some factors: what sources of evidence are available to the subject, gravity of the consequences of being wrong, background of other knowledge claims accepted in the context, subject's own doxastic history, and more; and we can give examples to show how each of these affects our willingness to ascribe knowing. But what contextual features would (rightly) make us accept "Buffy slew a vampire," as true, without qualification by a story operator and without pretense? It is hard to think of any

that amount to more than: we are entertaining a fiction and we are aware that it is a fiction.)

7. I do not (quite) claim to have resolved any of the foregoing semantical and metaphysical issues definitively. I do believe that whoever wishes to insist that such an issue is still real and difficult must confront the paronymy deflation.²⁰

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Footnotes

¹ I note two objections to the claim that a fictional person is a possibilium inhabiting one or more nonactual worlds. First, Kripke (1972/80, 1972b) has argued that even a fictional person would be identified by his unique genetic code; but, although there are Holmesish figures in other possible worlds, who solve mysteries and wear deerstalkers and have sidekicks named “Watson” etc., there is no designated genetic code; so none of those people *is Holmes*. Second, Armstrong (1993) reminds us that fictional people are not always possible even in their fictions; inadvertently or intentionally, the relevant authors may have awarded their people logically incompatible properties.

Vs. Kripke, I have argued against all initial plausibility that nonactual individuals have haecceities (Lycan, 1994, Ch.6, and more importantly Lycan, forthcoming).

Vs. Armstrong, I acknowledge the point: some fictional people are impossibilia. But (i) in my view (and very much contra Lewis (1986)) the difference between mere possibilia and impossibilia is of no great significance. Impossible objects not only do not but could not exist; but they inhabit impossible worlds just as possible objects inhabit possible worlds (Lycan (1994), pp. 38-41; Lycan (2001), pp. 46-47). (ii) If that antiLewisian point be accepted, it again becomes pertinent that fictional people have always been paradigm cases of mere possibilia, and literary commentators as well as philosophers speak of “the world” of a given fiction or fictional *oeuvre*.

² Also, Lewis (1978), Parsons (1982), Lamarque (1983), Currie (1990), and Crittenden (1991), all quoted in Brock (2002, p. 6-7).

³ A word is paronymous when it has several different but closely interrelated meanings,

derived from each other under pressure from other words with which they are juxtaposed, by what the mediaevals called “analogy” mechanisms (Ross, 1981). The classic example is from Aristotle: “healthy person”; “healthy body”; “healthy food”; “healthy complexion”; “healthy climate”;.... Kittay (1987, p. 111) reminds us of Peggy Parish’s children’s books, whose main character, the housemaid Amelia Bedelia, is deaf to paronymous variation. “When asked to ‘dust the furniture’, she uses a powder-puff to spread face powder on the furniture; when required to ‘draw the curtains’, she produces a sketch of them; and when asked to ‘dress the chicken’, she puts a miniature pair of trousers and shirt on a bird intended for that night’s dinner.” “Dust,” “draw” and “dress” each have different senses, however closely those senses may be related to each other.

⁴ Examples of this type were probably suggested to me by Chomsky’s brief discussion of “London” (2000, pp. 126-27), but the latter was aimed at a very different project.

⁵ This type of example may incur either of two objections. First, someone may say of these examples that they are merely figurative, being cases of metonymy or the like. But (a) new paronyms are typically generated by analogy mechanisms (Ross, 1981) that do produce a very low and temporary degree of figurativeness; but that is true of all syntactic categories and not specific to names. And (b) such sentences are heard as literal, not as full-bore figures of speech. Hitler just did invade Russia, despite that his own feet never touched Soviet soil.

A better objection would be to insist that the paronymy is in the relevant predicate, not in the name (cf. the Appendix to Nunberg (1993), on some specious cases of deferred pronominal reference). “Hitler” simply designates Hitler as always; it is

“invade” that has grown a looser, paronymous meaning, such as: was ultimate commander of a force which invaded.

But in these examples there are linguistic marks of deferred reference. Substitution does not go well: “{Hitler / ??The only Lambach boy chorister to have been born outside Germany} invaded Russia.” And person-directed relative clauses can produce anomalies: “Photo by Mathew Brady, both of whose hands were heavily bandaged.”

⁶ Mass nouns too; decades ago Steve Boër introduced me to the Universal Grinder. “Pour some of that Hilary into this bowl”; “Take that Quine and smear it on their windows.”

⁷ We are to ignore the fact that Kent and Superman are themselves fictional; pretend they are real.

⁸ Johnston McCulley, *The Mark of Zorro* (Grosset & Dunlap, 1924), based on a 1919 *All-Story Weekly* magazine serial called “The Curse of Capistrano” but worked up into novella form following the success of the 1920 Douglas Fairbanks movie.

⁹ McFarlane adds: “Believe it or not, I didn’t realize that *all* the advertised books came from the Stratemeyer fiction factory and that, indeed, they represented merely a small part of a prodigious output.” *Ghost of the Hardy Boys* (Toronto: Methuen, 1976), p. 181.

¹⁰ The view does not imply that there cannot be nonhuman, indeed nonanimal, persons, such as gods or robots with minds.

¹¹ Note that animal names too are paronymous as between the living animal and its dead

body, but that is not the point here.

¹² For the record, I myself do not think (2) is much of an objection. Numerical distinctness is cheap. The table at which I am now sitting is numerically distinct from, because only constituted by, the piano bench I have put my laptop on; my body is numerically distinct from itself minus a hair of my left eyebrow; etc. A bit more on this below.

¹³ To my knowledge the first philosophical work to begin exploring this was Ross (1997).

¹⁴ For the record, I strongly disagree with that (Lycan, forthcoming).

¹⁵ It more than calls to mind the Relevance theorists' notion of "ad hoc concept construction" (narrowing/tightening and expansion/broadening/loosening) (Carston 1997, 2008). But Ludlow makes no mention of Relevance theory.

¹⁶ A further example that occurs to me is that of a fictional song. In Clyde Edgerton's 1987 novel *Walking Across Egypt*, church parishioners sing a hymn of the same title. The hymn is reproduced in pseudo-facsimile at the end of the book, looking like two facing pages from a Protestant hymnal, in all the appropriate fonts. But in fact the words and music were written by Edgerton himself as part of the novel; the hymn is a fictional character. However, in his other capacity as singer-songwriter with the Tarwater Band, Edgerton recorded the song, not as a hymn but alongside some other (excellent) pop songs of his, on an album also called "Walking Across Egypt" (audiocassette, Flying Fish Records, 1992).

¹⁷ The claim is actually reinforced by the less exotic cross-narrative cases involving Holmes and Russell. If the “nonactual”/”actual” gulf is so wide and deep, how it is that comparisons can so effortlessly be made between “merely fictional” and actual individuals?

¹⁸ Not “Geller.”

¹⁹ I would make a parallel objection to the argument of Pagin (2010).

²⁰ Thanks to the audience who heard an early version of this paper at the 2009 Australasian Association of Philosophy Conference (Melbourne) for their encouragement and helpful suggestions.