Inadvertent Creation and Fictional Characters

ZSÓFIA ZVOLENSZKY

Department of Logic. Institute of Philosophy. Eötvös University
Múzeum krt. 4/i. H-1518 Budapest. Hungary
zvolenszky@elte.hu

ABSTRACT: In several papers, Petr Koťátko defends an "ontologically modest account of fictional characters". Consider a position (which I have been defending) that is anything but ontologically restrained: positing fictional characters like Andrei Bolkonsky in *War and Peace* as abstract artifacts. I will argue, first, that such a position turns out to offer a nice fit with Petr Koťátko's proposal about narrative fiction, one that fares better than an alternative pretense-based theory that doesn't posit Bolkonsky as existing in any sense. Second, I will explore a recent challenge by Jeffrey Goodman—which I will call the *inadvertent creation challenge*—that is originally posed for those who hold that fictional characters and mythical objects alike are abstract artifacts. The crux of the challenge is this: if we think that astronomers like Le Verrier, in mistakenly hypothesizing the planet Vulcan, inadvertently create an abstract artifact, then the "inadvertent creation" element turns out to be inescapable yet theoretically unattractive. Third, based on considerations about actually existing concrete objects being featured in fictional works (as Napoleon is in *War and Peace*), I argue that regardless of where one stands on mythical objects, admitting fictional characters as abstract artifacts is enough to give rise to the inadvertent creation challenge; yet this very set of considerations serves to undermine the challenge, indicating that inadvertent creation is not nearly as worrisome after all as Goodman is suggesting. Taking fictional characters (and mythical objects) to be abstract artifacts therefore remains a viable option.

KEYWORDS: Abstract artifacts – mythical objects – realism about fictional characters – semantics of fictional discourse.

1. Introduction

Back in 2005, when Petr Koťátko was putting on a conference in Prague to celebrate the 100th anniversary of *On Denoting*, he was half the age

of Russell's seminal paper; this was a fact I didn't know at the time, arriving at Villa Lana, meeting Petr for the first time. Since then, I have become a Prague "regular", returning every other year or so, following Petr's advice on Czech functionalist and cubist architecture and relishing his remarks and work on a broad range of philosophy of language themes. One of these is the semantics and metaphysics of fictional discourse, a topic we have both been thinking about for years.

Indeed, the last time we met was at a Prague aesthetics conference in 2013, where both of us presented on this very topic. In his conference talk, Petr urged, among other things, that we maintain an…

> …ontologically modest account of fictional characters: for any text of fictional narration the characters spoken about in it are those persons whose existence in the actual world we have to assume (in the *as if* mode) in order to allow the text to fulfill its literary functions. In *War and Peace* we have to assume, in this sense, among others, Andrei Bolkonsky [a fictional character] and Napoleon [a historical figure featured in the novel] as inhabitants of the actual world. (Koťátko 2013, Section 8)

Meanwhile, in my talk (Zvolenszky 2013), I was giving new arguments for an *artifactualist position about fictional characters* (*artifactualism* for short)—made popular by Saul Kripke, Peter van Inwagen and Amie Thomasson—according to which our ontology for fictional discourse should make room for fictional characters as abstract artifacts: Andrei Bolkonsky is an actually existing abstract object whose existence is due to Tolstoy's having written *War and Peace*. My position certainly isn't one philosophers would call ontologically modest.

My aims in this paper are threefold. First, I will argue that on closer inspection, Petr Koťátko's position about the metaphysics of fictional characters is not nearly as distant from mine as it might first seem (Section 2). Indeed, an ontology that includes Bolkonsky as an abstract—in the sense of nonconcrete—actual object offers a nice fit with Petr's proposal about narrative fiction, one that, on balance, fares better than an alternative theory that doesn't posit Bolkonsky as an abstract artifact. Second, I will explore a recent challenge by Jeffrey Goodman (2014)—which I will call the *inadvertent creation challenge*—that is originally posed for those who hold that fictional characters and mythical objects alike are abstract artifacts (Section 3 and 4). The crux of the challenge is this: if we think that astronomers

like Le Verrier, in mistakenly hypothesizing the planet Vulcan, inadvertently create an abstract artifact, then the "inadvertent creation" element turns out to be inescapable yet theoretically unattractive. Third, based on considerations about actually existing concrete objects being featured in fictional works (as Napoleon is in *War and Peace*), I argue that regardless of where one stands on mythical objects, admitting fictional characters as abstract artifacts is enough to give rise to Goodman's challenge; yet this very set of considerations serves to undermine the challenge, indicating that inadvertent creation is not nearly as worrisome after all as Goodman is suggesting (Section 5).

So taking fictional characters (and mythical objects) to be abstract artifacts remains a viable option in the end, pending a certain worry I will raise but leave unanswered. Whether artifactualism about fictional characters is an option Petr Koťátko would consider adopting is an issue I would love to discuss with him. But first things first: happy birthday, Petr.

2. Why regard fictional characters as abstract artifacts?

Proper names of fictional characters, like the name 'Andrei Bolkonsky' appear in various kinds of discourse:

(1)   "Just then another visitor entered the drawing room: Prince Andrei Bolkonsky.... He was a very handsome young man, of medium height, with firm, clear-cut features."
(2)   Andrei Bolkonsky was a proud man who has come to despise everything fake, shallow, or merely conventional.
(3)   Among the book's fictional characters, the reader's attention is first focused on Prince Andrei Bolkonsky.
(4)   Andrei Bolkonsky doesn't exist.

Here are some fairly uncontroversial observations about (1)–(4). (1) is quoted from Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. By writing (1), Tolstoy didn't aim to assert anything, and did not aim to refer at anything or anyone by means of the proper name; he merely *pretended* to make an assertion and *pretended* to refer to someone. (2) and (3) are sentences about *War and Peace* based on the Encyclopaedia Britannica's Bolkonsky-entry; both are assertions that feature the proper name as purporting to refer to whoever or whatever Andrei Bolkonsky is. While (2) is true within the fictional world of *War*

and Peace, it isn't true simpliciter. By contrast, (3) is true simpliciter. The same goes for (4).

Attaching labels to these four types of discourse will be helpful. In the table below, I list Amie Thomasson's labels which are more widely used than a more recent alternative set of labels that I myself prefer, by Bonomi (2008) (also favored by García-Carpintero 2014). Throughout the paper, I will be using the latter labels (in boldface).

According to Thomasson (2003)	Thomasson's labels	Bonomi's labels
(1) exemplifies discourse within works of fiction like *War and Peace.*	Fictionalizing discourse	**Textual** use
(2) exemplifies discourse by readers about the content of works of fiction.	Internal discourse	**Paratextual** use
(3) exemplifies discourse by readers and critics about the characters *as* fictional characters, the circumstances of their crea-tion, their historical relation to other literary figures, etc.	External discourse	**Metatextual** use
(4) exemplifies nonexistence claims.	**Nonexistence Claims**	–

Saul Kripke (1973/2013; 1973/2011) and Peter van Inwagen (1977) fa-mously argued that it is sentences like (3), metatextual uses, that motivate positing in our ontology fictional characters as objects that are nonconcrete (not located in space and time), that is to say, they are abstract. According to these philosophers, objects like Bolkonsky don't exist timelessly; rather, their existence is conditional upon natural languages like English featuring true assertions like (3) that purport to quantify over fictional characters. Clearly, on this view, what facilitates metatextual assertions is the existence of works of fiction, whose existence in turn is due to authors' creating those works. In this framework it is natural to think that the abstract ob-ject Andrei Bolkonsky's existence is due to Tolstoy's having written *War and Peace.* Those philosophers are artifactualist who hold that analyzing *some* of the discourse exemplified in (1)–(4) involves fictional characters as

abstract artifacts. Kripke and van Inwagen are both artifactualists then, as is Thomasson (1999); all three of them hold that metatextual uses require us to include fictional characters as abstract artifacts in our ontology.

How might we resist positing fictional characters as abstract artifacts? Kendall Walton (1990) developed an influential pretense-based account according to which "not just *some*, but *all* talk involving fictional names contains an element of pretense" (Thomasson 2003, 208). Call proponents of such views *pretense purist*. For textual uses like (1), the pretense is about the work of fiction, *War and Peace*, being true. For paratextual uses like (2), the same pretense is operative. For a metatextual use like "Bolkonsky is a fictional character", an *ad hoc* game of pretense is at play, a pretense according to which people come in two types: real people and fictional characters.

Thomasson, an artifactualist, provides two arguments against extending Walton's pretense-based proposal to metatextual uses (2003, 208-209).

First, such a proposal involves far more revision than what is minimally needed to resolve an apparent conflict like that involved in saying, under the same breath, (5) and (6):

(5)   Bolkonsky is a prince.
(6)   Bolkonsky is a fictional character.

According to van Inwagen and Kripke, and also Thomasson (1999), (5) (an instance of paratextual use) involves pretense, but (6) doesn't; instead it is a true assertion about an abstract artifact. This treatment of (6) takes the utterance at face value: (6) seems like a true assertion predicating something of Bolkonsky, and that is exactly what artifactualism delivers. By contrast, a pretense purist like Walton analyzes (6) in a way that involves a departure from face value appearance.

Moreover, for the pretense purist, the departure involves analyzing (6) as involving an *ad hoc* game of pretense or make-believe. This brings us to Thomasson's second argument: such analyses are at odds with how we view metatextual uses like (6). Thomasson illustrate this on an example:

> If two police officers discussing a case say "This is such a tough one, we need Sherlock Holmes to help us solve it", they do indeed seem engaged in a pretense that Holmes is a real detective who could be called upon in times of need. But the point of a humorless colleague's remark "There's no such person as Holmes, it's just a fictional character",

seems to be precisely to step *outside* of these forms of pretense and assert the real truth about Holmes. (Thomasson 2003, 209, emphasis in the original)

She then adds the following to drive home the point that appeal to pretense is generally at odds with our intuitions about what goes on in metatextual uses (see especially the underlined passage):

Indeed, a pure pretense theorist must take all literary historians' and critics' apparently serious claims about fictional characters, their origins, history, development, etc., to involve new, *ad hoc*, games of make-believe—whether these are claims that Shakespeare's character Hamlet was modeled on the 13th century character Amleth of Saxo Grammaticus' *Historia Danica*, that the play *Waiting for Godot* has five characters, or that if Arthur Conan Doyle's medical practice had been busier, the character of Sherlock Holmes might have never been created. Yet none of these seem, pre-theoretically, to involve pretense or games of make-believe, and such additional revisions are not necessary to prevent speakers from saying something self-contradictory or blatantly false, nor could the speakers normally be brought to recognize that they were invoking a pretense—so those grounds for attributing pretense to a piece of discourse do not apply here. (Thomasson 2003, 209, underlining added)

Of course, the strength of these two arguments depends on how artifactualists manage to analyze nonexistence claims like (4), how much revision their proposal requires. After all, Thomasson's two arguments hinge on the observation that when it comes to textual and paratextual uses, artifactualists can do just as well as pretense purists; meanwhile, when it comes to metatextual uses, artifactualists have the upper hand. But what if the advantage they gain there gets lost on nonexistence claims like (4)? Thomasson elsewhere (2009, 15) acknowledges this point: "The greatest difficulty for [artifactualist] views arises in handling ... nonexistence claims". She continues by summarizing some of the response strategies artifactualists have proposed:

denials that Sherlock Holmes exists may be read as denials that there is any such person (Thomasson 1999, 112), or any object answering the descriptions in the stories (van Inwagen 2003, 146). Alternatively, these nonexistence claims may be read as noting that past users of the name

mistakenly supposed that the name-use chain led back to a baptism rather than a work of fiction (van Inwagen 2003, 146-7; cf. Thomasson 2003). If some such solution to the problem of nonexistence claims can be shown to be plausible and non *ad hoc*, [artifactualist] theories may offer the best overall way to handle fictional discourse—a way which does require positing fictional entities. (Thomasson 2009, 15)

It is well to note also that it is far from obvious that for pretense purists, handling nonexistence claims is a breeze. Thomasson (2003, 210, n6) seems to have doubts about Walton's prospects in particular:

pretense theorists also owe us an account of how [nonexistence claims] can be true, given that the name involved fails to refer. Walton's method is to treat sentences [such as (4)] as first invoking a pretense to refer, and then (with 'doesn't exist') betraying that pretense. (Walton 1990, 422)

Beyond these remarks, I will not compare how well (with how little revision) artifactualists versus pretense purists can handle nonexistence claims. Instead, I would like to focus on metatextual uses, and what an optimal way to analyze them would be in the context of Petr Koťátko's (2010, 2013) proposals about fictional characters. I will argue that he would do well to analyze metatextual uses as involving reference to abstract artifacts. But beforehand, let us consider briefly why, if someone contemplates being a *realist about fictional characters*—making room for fictional characters in her ontology—then her best choice is becoming an artifactualist rather than subscribing to some other -ism. Two motivations are worth noting.

The first consideration for favoring artifactualism over its realist counterparts: apart from artifactualist theories, all realist alternatives (for example, Meinongianism, according to which fictional characters don't exist but are concrete things that have being; and nonactualism, according to which fictional characters are concrete existents that are nonactual) have trouble accounting for the truth of metatextual uses like (3) and (6) (Thomasson 2009, 13).

The second consideration for favoring artifactualism over its realist counterparts: according to Sainsbury (2010, 61–63, 82–85), the real advantage of artifactualism concerns its ability to respond to the so-called *selection problem*: upon introducing the name 'Andrei Bolkonsky' in his novel, how does Tolstoy manage to select one rather than another among the

countless candidate objects? According to Meinongianism, there are count-
less nonexistent candidates; according to nonactualism, there are countless
merely possible, nonactual candidates. Sainsbury (2010, 63) doesn't see
"how a Meinongian can offer any sensible account of how an author's or
reader's thoughts are supposed to engage with one rather than another
nonexistent entity".[1]

We are now in a position to see why Petr's views about fiction and my
artifactualism aren't incompatible; his work concerns textual uses only; it is
in this context that he calls for an "ontologically modest account of fiction-
al characters". His (2010) paper aims to show that "singular terms used in
texts of fiction may even there fulfill the referential functions they have ac-
quired in 'ordinary' communication" (89, emphasis added). Accordingly,
Petr's focus is on the phenomenon of actual-world individuals, like Na-
poleon being featured in texts of fiction, that is, in textual uses. His (2013)
presentation explores what interpreting a text of narrative fiction requires.
His thesis /F/ (Section 4, emphasis in the original) is that "The literary
functions of a text of narrative fiction require from the interpreter that she
approaches, in the *as if* mode, its sentences as records of utterances of an
inhabitant of the *actual world*: the narrator, who tells us what happened *in
this world*". Again, what is at issue is interpreting texts of narrative fiction,
that is to say, textual discourse.

Meanwhile, artifactualists like Kripke, van Inwagen, Thomasson and
myself concede that as far as the ontological needs of *textual* discourse are
concerned, we could do without recourse to fictional characters as abstract
artifacts; it is *metatextual* discourse that makes commitment to such enti-
ties inescapable. Further, in the light of considerations in this section about
the prospects of handling metafictional uses like (3), Petr could do worse
than become an artifactualist (by becoming a pretense purist instead). If he
opted for artifactualism, he, like I, would have to confront a challenge
about inadvertent creation in the context of mythical artifactualism, a topic
to which we'll now turn.

---

[1] Elsewhere (Zvolenszky 2012, Section 2) I argue that a more decisive objection
emerges against the Meinongian once we consider the difficulties that the *nonactualist*
encounters when it comes to the selection problem and other problems.

3. Why resist mythical artifactualism?

In a recent paper Goodman (2014) poses a challenge for proponents of a view I'll call *mythical artifactualism*, according to which some objects ('mythical objects') that figure in false theories (or 'myths') are abstract artifacts like artifactualists' fictional characters. Commonly cited examples of mythical objects are phlogiston (which in a now-discarded theory was featured as accounting for rusting and burning) and Le Verrier's Vulcan (a hypothetical planet that in a now-discarded theory was featured as causing perturbations in Mercury's orbit) (Goodman 2014, 35).

Van Inwagen's (1977) influential argument for realism about fictional characters has it that metatextual sentences like (3) and (6) ("Bolkonsky is a fictional character") are straightforwardly true, a phenomenon whose accommodation requires including Bolkonsky in our ontology; and the best we can do is make him a nonconcrete (that is, abstract) object.

Mythical artifactualists (like Braun 2005; Kripke 1973/2013; and Salmon 1998) can readily appeal to a parallel argument based on (7) or (8):

(7)   Vulcan is a mythical planet.
(8)   Vulcan is a hypothetical planet.

Given that both (7) and (8) are straightforwardly true, a phenomenon whose accommodation requires including Vulcan in our ontology, the best we can do is make it a nonconcrete (that is, abstract) object. So the argument goes for mythical artifactualism.

Goodman (2014, 36) points out that the above argument doesn't yet establish that Tolstoy's fiction-writing brought the abstract object Bolkonsky into existence or that Le Verrier's theorizing brought the abstract object Vulcan into existence. After all, the *intentions* of Tolstoy and Le Verrier were markedly different: the first (according to artifactualism) aimed at creating Bolkonsky and didn't aim at describing reality, while the second aimed at describing reality and a mind-independently existing celestial body (but failed) and didn't aim at describing an abstract object. Why believe in inadvertent creation then, as mythical artifactualists do? Here is why: despite the differences is in some of Le Verrier's and Tolstoy's intentions,

> each had intentions and performed activities that were sufficient to bring about an abstract object; Le Verrier *inadvertently* brought about Vulcan given his particular sort of intentions and activities, while [Tols-

toy] in some sense aimed to create [Bolkonsky]. (Goodman 2014, 30, emphasis in the original)

Goodman quotes Braun (2005, 615) making this point:

> The activities that occur during mistaken theorizing, such as le Verrier's, are importantly similar to those that occur during storytelling. In both, names are used and predicative sentences containing them are formulated. Reasoning and other mental processes occur. Texts that are seemingly susceptible to evaluation for truth are produced. Thus, if story-tellers' activities create fictional characters, then mistaken theorizers' activities create abstract objects of a similar sort. So I grant that Le Verrier's mistaken theorizing creates an abstract artifact.

We are now in a position to appreciate Goodman's (2014, 37-38) *argument against mythical artifactualism* (he acknowledges Phillips 2001 as his key inspiration):

Premise 1: If Vulcan is a created abstractum (like Bolkonsky), then Vulcan is created by Le Verrier in every possible world where Le Verrier performs relevantly similar activities to those he actually performed.

Premise 2: There is a possible world where Le Verrier performs relevantly similar activities to those he actually performed and yet fails to create Vulcan.

Conclusion (by *modus tollens*): Vulcan is not a created abstractum (like Bolkonsky).

The argument is valid; its conclusion is true if its premises are.

To support Premise 1, Goodman invites us to consider intention-identical possible worlds in which the intentional, authorial activities of Tolstoy and Le Verrier are the same as in the actual world. Plausibly, if Tolstoy's actual authorial activities suffice to create Bolkonsky in the actual world, they also suffice to create Bolkonsky in intention-identical worlds that are nonactual. And since the mythical artifactualist maintains an analogy between fictional objects and mythical ones, she would find Premise 1 similarly plausible, Goodman argues.

To support Premise 2, Goodman singles out among the intention-identical possible worlds those that contain both of these individuals: a flesh-and-blood person qualitatively identical to *War and Peace*'s Bolkonsky on the one hand, and a planet fitting the description of the hypothetical pla-

net Vulcan on the other hand. Call these X-worlds. With respect to X-worlds, our intuitions about object creation come apart in the fictional and mythical cases; here is why. Kripke's (1972/1980) arguments in the "Addenda" to *Naming and Necessity* are considered overwhelmingly convincing: if Tolstoy's intention in using the name 'Bolkonsky' was not to write about a real person but a fictional one, then he didn't accidentally, inadvertently write about a concrete, flesh-and-blood individual who happens to be a dead ringer for the Bolkonsky of the novel.[2] This way, the Tolstoy of X-worlds still creates a fictional character, Bolkonsky, if the actual Tolstoy does. But an intuitive assessment of X-worlds with respect to the status of an abstract artifact Vulcan are markedly different: the Le Verrier of an X-world, in formulating (what in the X-world is) a true scientific theory, manages to name the concrete planet that is a dead ringer for Vulcan; it seems outlandish to think that the X-world-inhabiting Le Verrier has created anything abstract. Such an X-world suffices to make Premise 2 true.

If we accept Premise 1 and Premise 2, then in the light of the arguments against mythical artifactualism, we have reason to give up on that theory, even if we maintain our sympathies with artifactualism about fictional characters, a view that does not at this point seem affected by Goodman's argument. In what follows, I will show that appearances are misleading: artifactualism about fictional characters is affected by Goodman's argument after all (Section 5), but this very fact casts doubt on a worry (discussed in Section 4) that Goodman formulated against the following move: denying Premise 1.

4. Why worry about the inadvertent creation challenge?

Goodman (2014, 39) considers and then rejects one strategy for resisting his anti-mythical-artifactualism argument: denying Premise 1. And the reason for his rejection is the inadvertent creation challenge. Let's explore the denying-Premise-1 strategy and the challenge.

The denying-Premise-1 strategy hinges on the observation that there is something special to mythical object creation even if we think there is a tight analogy between Le Verrier's creating Vulcan and Tolstoy's creating

---

[2]   I gave a detailed analysis of this argument of Kripke's as well as related ones in Section 2 of Zvolenszky (2012).

Bolkonsky. After all, when it comes to mythical objects (but not fictional ones)…

> …[i]t is more than the author's intentions and social/historical context that counts in the abstractum-creation process; the mind-independent physical world must have its say as well. Whether or not one succeeds in creating a mythological object depends on whether the world obliges by providing the relevant entity (in which case, no creation occurs) or fails to oblige (in which case, creation occurs). (Goodman 2014, 39)

According to the denying-Premise-1 strategy, there is a difference between these two processes:

- *the fictional form of creation* "that is dependent solely on authorial intentions and historical/social contexts", and
- *the mythical form of creation* that is "dependent on these factors plus the non-cooperation of the world to provide the relevant entity". (Goodman 2014, 39)

But the denying-Premise-1 strategy, Goodman argues, creates a problem: the *inadvertent creation challenge*, underlined in the passage below.

> [The denying-Premise-1] move simply serves to shine the spotlight on what is so theoretically unattractive about the [second, mythical form of creation] sort of process: it requires that the creation of mythical objects be *inadvertent*. Unlike the situation with [Tolstoy] and his aims, Le Verrier wished to be the discoverer of a planet; according to mythical [artifactualism], he wound up creating Vulcan instead. Now, while it's common to find cases of inadvertent discovery, it's at least unusual to find cases of inadvertent creation. Creation normally involves having a goal that one aims to achieve. … <u>it is odd to think that there are objects that are produced via a process of scientific theorizing that utterly divorces their production from the desires of the theorist to *not* be creative.</u> **If there were a view that would provide the same theoretical benefits … as mythical [artifactualism] yet avoid this theoretical oddness, it would be clearly preferable** (Goodman, 2014, 39; italics in the original, underlining and boldfacing have been added)

I agree with Goodman that the denying-Premise-1 strategy brings on the phenomenon of inadvertent creation. But I disagree with the boldfaced excerpt on two counts:

(A)   The inadvertent creation *phenomenon* (as I prefer to call it) is not specific to mythical artifactualism; we have to contend with it even if we are artifactualists about fictional characters who don't take a stand on the ontological status of mythical objects.

(B)   The very ubiquity of the inadvertent creation phenomenon calls into question just how worrisome it is. In fact, it is not at all clear that avoiding the phenomenon is theoretically preferable to not avoiding it.

In the remainder of this paper, I will give reasons for (A) and (B).

5. Why resist worrying about the inadvertent creation phenomenon?

We'll see that Napoleon-related details highlight the plausibility of (A) and (B). At the beginning of this paper, I quoted Petr Koťátko discussing a case in which a text of narrative fiction mentions a fictional character like Bolkonsky and also a historical figure like Napoleon. Petr goes on to say that in the latter case, interpreters of the text are not only called upon to assume, within the scope of the *as if* operator, that Napoleon is an inhabitant of the actual world, but are also called upon to assume...

> ... the existence of [Napoleon] outside the scope of the *as if* operator and ... this assumption as well as my ability to exploit my (rather limited) knowledge about Napoleon's career may belong to the capacities required from the reader by the literary functions of the text. (Koťátko 2013, Section 8)

In earlier work, Petr subscribed to the plausible view (also held by Thomasson 1999) that names like 'Napoleon' in their textual uses (as in *War and Peace*) be interpreted as referring to the historical figure (Koťátko 2010, 96). I suggest we take this view on board and see what it reveals with respect to (A).

Imagine the following scenario T: while writing *War and Peace,* Tolstoy was under the mistaken impression that Bolkonsky, like Napoleon, was a real person. Introducing the name 'Andrei Bolkonsky' he intended to refer to a historical figure he thought existed. For the artifactualist about fictional characters, what follows from the fact that (in the imagined scenario)

Tolstoy was wrong? Quite independently of what the artifactualist thinks about the status of objects of myth, it is overwhelmingly plausible to think that in the imagined scenario, Tolstoy created Bolkonsky as an abstract artifact, and did so inadvertently. And the reason why he did so is because of the non-cooperation of the world to provide the relevant entity.

This way, if we think about it, the kind of creation process that Goodman considers odd because of the inadvertent creation detail is one that is plausibly very common among those who create works of fiction: to give a sense of how ordinary such a scenario is, imagine a little boy, Sam, who is convinced that the Disney castle (the Magic Kingdom) depicted in a poster that hangs on his wall houses a mouse who steps out of the castle at bedtime. Sam tells a story (a work of fiction) about the mouse, intending to refer to a real mouse that he thinks steps out of the poster at night and embarks on some fictional adventures during which it encounters fictional characters. In fact, the mouse doesn't exist. It's a creature of Sam's imagination, we might say. But an artifactualist about fictional characters who remains noncommittal about the status of creatures of the imagination[3] would find it extremely plausible that the mouse is an abstract artifact—a fictional character—who is Sam's creation; crucially, the mouse was *inadvertently* created by Sam. If we were to study his intentions with respect to developing his story, we would find that with respect to the mouse, his desire is not to be creative: he aims to tell a story that features what he thinks is a real, concrete mouse the same way Tolstoy, in writing *War and Peace*, aimed to tell a story that featured someone he thought was and who in fact was a historical figure called Napoleon.

Scenario T and the Sam example demonstrate that:

(a)   the inadvertent creation phenomenon is not specific to mythical artifactualism;

(b)   the phenomenon is already present if we assume artifactualism about fictional characters;

(c)   moreover, the phenomenon is rather commonplace, due to mundane instances of error on the part of the creator of the work of fiction.

---

[3]   On creatures of the imagination and some of the issues that parallel those about creatures of myth, see Salmon (1998) and Caplan (2004).

(b) already shows that the strategy Goodman is converging on—in slogan form: "let's avoid the inadvertent creation challenge by steering clear of mythical artifactualism"—cannot work. After all, artifactualism about fictional characters by itself invites the challenge already (inasmuch as it is a challenge). (a) and (b) together demonstrate (A). And (c), about the phenomenon being commonplace, questions just how worrisome it is to be confronted by the inadvertent creation phenomenon, providing reason to accept (B).

I realize that my observations (a)–(c) can be readily turned upside down and construed as a new set of reasons for resisting artifactualism about fictional characters—a view that I favor and that I recommended for Petr Kot'átko in Section 2 above—and for adopting an alternative account like the pretense purist theory instead. Responding to this turning of the tables is a task that I hope one of us—Petr or I—will tackle in the near future. I have an idea about how to go about it, but will leave it as a surprise for another (not too distant) birthday of Petr's. But quite independently of such an argument, the Sam example (and similar examples) featuring inadvertent creation in the context of fiction telling already indicate that probably, a widespread conception echoed by Goodman (2014, 39)—namely, "creation-by-fiction-telling... is dependent solely on authorial intentions and historical/social contexts"—is a myth.[4]

References

BONOMI, A. (2008): Fictional Contexts. In: Bouquest, P. – Serafini, L. – Thomason, R. (eds.): *Perspectives on Context.* Stanford: CSLI Publications, 213-248.

BRAUN, D. (2005): Empty Names, Fictional Names, Mythical Names. *Noûs* 39, 596-631.

CAPLAN, B. (2004): Creatures of Fiction, Myth, and Imagination. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 41, 331-337.

GARCÍA-CARPINTERO, M. (2014): Introduction: The Problem of Empty Representations. In: García-Carpintero, M. – Martí, G. (eds.): *Empty Representations: Reference and Non-Existence.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1-24.

GOODMAN, J. (2014): Creatures of Fiction, Objects of Myth. *Analysis* 74, 35-40.

KOŤÁTKO, P. (2010): Who is Who in the Fictional World. In: Koťátko, P. – Pokorný, M. – Sabatés, M. (eds.): *Fictionality – Possibility – Reality*. Bratislava: aleph, 89-100.

KOŤÁTKO, P. (2013): Fiction, Reality and Radical Narration (in Czech). *Organon F* 20, 72-96.

KRIPKE, S. (1972/1980): Addenda to "Naming and Necessity". In: *Naming and Necessity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 156-164.

KRIPKE, S. (1973/2011): Vacuous Names and Fictional Entities. In: *Philosophical Troubles: Collected Papers, Volume 1*. New York: Oxford University Press, 52-74.

KRIPKE, S. (1973/2013): *Reference and Existence: The John Locke Lectures for 1973*. New York: Oxford University Press.

PHILLIPS, M. (2001): What a Solution to the Problem of Empty Names Cannot Be. Presented at the 2001 Pacific Division meeting of the American Philosophical Association.

SAINSBURY, M. (2010): *Fiction and Fictionalism*. London: Routledge.

SALMON, N. (1998): Nonexistence. *Noûs* 32, 277-319.

THOMASSON, A.L. (1999): *Fiction and Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

THOMASSON, A.L. (2003): Speaking of Fictional Characters. *Dialectica* 57, 205-223.

THOMASSON, A.L. (2009): Fictional Entities. In: Kim, J. – Sosa, E. – Rosenkrantz, G. (eds.): *A Companion to Metaphysics*, 2nd edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 10-18.

VAN INWAGEN, P. (1977): Creatures of Fiction. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14, 299-308.

VAN INWAGEN, P. (2003): Existence, Ontological Commitment, and Fictional Entities. In: Loux, M. – Zimmerman, D. (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

WALTON, K.L. (1990): *Mimesis as Make-Believe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

ZVOLENSZKY, Z. (2012): Against Sainsbury's Irrealism about Fictional Characters: Harry Potter as an Abstract Artifact. *Hungarian Philosophical Review (Magyar Filozófiai Szemle)*, No. 4, special issue: Realism (ed. by Bács, G., Kovács, D.M., Tőzsér, J.), 83-109.

ZVOLENSZKY, Z. (2013). Abstract Artifact Theory about Fictional Characters Defended —Why Sainsbury's Category-Mistake Objection is Mistaken. In: Dorsch, F. – Ratiu, D.-E. (eds.): *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics* 5, 597-612.