

Some Further Remarks on Hybrid View of Fictional Characters

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Abstract: In this short paper, I focus on several properties of the so-called Hybrid View of Fictional Characters. First, I present the theory to be discussed. Subsequently, I present several remarks on the consequences of the theory, mainly the problem of identifying fictional characters and the problem of modal properties of sentences containing fictional names.

Keywords: De dicto, de re, fictional character, fictional name, requisite.

1. Introduction

Hybrid View of Fictional Characters (HV) was now presented and defended by Glavaničová on several occasions (see mainly Glavaničová (2017), (2018)).¹ The theory was questioned by Kosterec in (2018). Glavaničová

¹ The ‘hybridity’ of the view stems from its sharing of particular features of theories on both sides of the discussion between realists and anti-realists about the fictional characters. More on this later.

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presented a response in (2020). This piece can be considered as another step within that discussion. First, let's present the theory in short.

The theory tries to pose itself within the field of discussion about the metaphysical (and semantical) properties of so called purely fictional characters. These are supposed entities that seem to stand for the proper-name-like terms of non-actual entities within the works of (literary) fiction.² The most prominent example in the discussions (still) seems to be *Sherlock Holmes*. HV is not (at least in its present state) yet applied to discussions about the properties of actual characters which take part in the works of fiction (e.g. *Napoleon* in *War and Peace*).³ The theory take stand between so called *realists*, who pose fictional characters as real (existent) entities and *anti-realists*, who are against such position. There are no fictional characters according to the position. HV presents its position from the outset of suppositions in which we use fictional names. HV is based on the assumption that the differences between proper names in normal non-fictional contexts and proper-name-like terms within (meta)fictional contexts are enough to enable us to consider their semantics and metaphysics as different (or at least not necessary identical).⁴

The fictional names (proper-name-like terms of characters within context of fiction), according to HV, are used in several different suppositions. HV prominently discusses two of them: supposition *de dicto* and *de re*. A

² We have to be careful here. Fictional names (or rather proper-name-like terms) are *not proper names* according to Glavaničová's theory (following Currie, Predelli and Zouhar, among others). Further, fictional characters (according to the Glavaničová's theory) are actual (albeit abstract) entities. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for urging me to clarify on these points.

³ Glavaničová did not discuss these cases much in her (2017) and (2018). The focus of those works is on purely fictional names only. The discussion about the applicability of the theory on these cases is yet to come. The theory seems to be at least *prima facie* applicable within that field. The application of the theory, however, depends on the position one takes (argues for) in the case of proper-names-like terms for actual individuals used in fiction. If these are not taken to be proper names, then HV is applicable. If these are to be taken as genuine proper names, HV does not seem to be applicable (according to the theory, genuine proper names are not fictional names). Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me on this point.

⁴ The theory makes no claims about proper names and their semantics, however.

fictional name is used in supposition de dicto when we speak about the sense of fictional name. The theory states we speak about some hyperintension, when we use the fictional name with supposition de dicto. This enables us to consider the sentences like *Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character* as true without the need to postulate any real individual. We use fictional names with supposition de re, when we (try to) speak about the individual it stands for, as it seems to be the case in *Sherlock Holmes is a detective* when considered within the context of fiction. According to HV, there is necessarily no such individual and the sentence is either denotationless or false, yet it is meaningful. In short, according to HV the fictional names have a hyperintension as its content. Presumably different fictional names stand for different hyperintensions. Each such hyperintension denotes necessarily empty intension and there is no extension for such names. The theory presupposes a semantic theory detailed enough to differ among hyperintensions, intensions and extensions of fictional names. The theory has realist facets in that it supposes there is something connected to fictional names, at least when we use fictional names de dicto, i.e. some sense, hyperintension. On the other hand, the theory is anti-realist when speaking about the use of fictional names de re. From this the ‘hybridity’, at least when posed within the discussion between realists and antirealists. From semantical point of view, there is no ‘hybridity’—fictional name has hyperintension, intension and lacks extension.⁵ The supposed ambiguity of fictional names when used in different context (fictional, meta-fictional, ...) stems from different supposition in which we use the same fictional name. It seems that we use fictional names in supposition de dicto in meta-fictional contexts and with supposition de re in fictional contexts.

2. The Problem of Identification

Kosterec (2018) criticized theory in state presented by Glavaničová (2017) mainly due to its supposed presupposition of use of Transparent Intensional Logic (TIL). Glavaničová (2018) and (2020) made it clear that

⁵ Therefore, according to the theory, fictional names always lack referent.

the theory does not presuppose TIL.⁶ The main problem seemed to be the individuation of fictional characters. Why is *Sherlock* different from *Watson*? According to the actual state of HV, it is because there are different hyperintensions for ‘Sherlock’ and ‘Watson’. Fair enough. But wait a moment, why are these hyperintensions different? For example, in TIL, the difference between hyperintensions stems from the inductive definition based on non-hyperintensional level. Also, HV does not *just presuppose* that there are different hyperintensions for ‘Sherlock’ and ‘Watson’. HV contains reasons, why these hyperintensions seem to differ. This in turn will provide some answer to the question of identifying and discerning among fictional characters. So, what is the root of the difference according to HV? In short, sets of requisites. The hyperintensions differ because there are different sets of requisites connected to them. For example, *Sherlock* is a detective, *Holmes* is a doctor. And because their sets of requisites are supposed to differ, they are different hyperintensions and consequently different fictional characters. HV, however, does not provide any mechanism or defined criteria for the sets of requisites, although there seems to be some work in progress (see Jespersen et al. 2020). HV in its actual state just presupposes that fictional characters differ because they have different sets of requisites.

This is my main problem with the theory in its actual state. As soon as we have fictions with more than just one fictional character (e.g. *Holmes* stories), the theory is in danger of circularity when it comes to explaining the difference among sets of requisites of fictional characters. According to Glavaničová, there is some sense, in which it is essential for *Sherlock* to be a detective. It is essential *for the story*.⁷ It seems to be essential for the story, that *Sherlock* is a detective. It also seems to be essential for the story, that *Watson* is a doctor. What else, however, seems to be essential for the story, is that *Sherlock* is a friend of *Watson* and that *Watson* is a friend of

⁶ Although she assumes HV can be stated *also* within TIL. I have yet to see such proper formulation, which either respects seeming simplicity of content of fictional names (And I have big doubts that it is feasible within TIL) or presents some complex hyperintensions as meanings of fictional names. From what I have seen during several conferences, the second option seems to be the assumed possibility.

⁷ See Glavaničová (2018, footnote 18). More on that later.

Holmes. Now, if we are to consider these relational properties to be requisites (and nothing blocks us in the actual state of HV), then we have a problem. In order to differentiate between fictional characters, we are to be able to discern between their correspondent sets of requisites. Ok, in order to do that, we have to be able to discern between those sets. The only identity criteria of sets (after all influences of interpretation, contexts and whatever are resolved) is given by its elements (if any). Now the elements of sets of requisites are requisites. Therefore, in order to distinguish between *Sherlock* and *Watson*, we have to be able to distinguish between the requisites within their requisite sets. But, then we shall be able to distinguish between the requisites *is a friend of Watson* and *is a friend of Sherlock*. But in order to do so, we have to be able to differ, once again, between *Sherlock* and *Watson*. That is a circle.⁸ A reply could be posed, that these relational properties are not essential for this story. That would probably miss the point. First, *Sherlock* and *Holmes* are *famous duo*. It would be strange to consider their friendliness (or other convenient relation) as *accidental for the story*. Second, the point can be stated more generally, the HV conditions for differentiating among fictional characters are circular for fictions for which it is essential that a fictional character is in some relation to some (other) fictional character. And, because these seem to be very much abound, the use of HV is problematic for analysis of great deal of fictions. The point could be even stronger, if there is some essential relation a fictional character must be in with itself. Then the theory would not be usable at all. Be that as it may, other worries by Kostelec, connected to the semantical model of fictional names in HV, still stand: e.g.:

Glavaničová seems to suggest the possibility of new criteria of identity of constructions. It can be done, but at the cost of leaving TIL (at least in its present forms). One way or the other, her proposal will still have problems in both intensional and extensional contexts, since the contexts respect the substitution of equivalent constructions *salva veritate*. (Kostelec 2018, 123)

⁸ The same point, in fact, was posed by Fine in (1982) for theories not dissimilar to HV.

3. The Modal Profile

The question, what is essential for the story (again after all the mumbo-jumbo about the influences of interpretations, context and whatever is resolved) leads me to my second remark. Kosterec (2018) states:

As far as “Sherlock Holmes need not be a detective” is true *within the fiction*, the proposal has bad results. According to it, properties are ascribed to individual offices as their requisites. That means, however, that a fictional character (denoted by the use of a fictional name) has all its properties necessarily. If Sherlock Holmes is a detective it is necessary that Sherlock Holmes is a detective. In short, as far as there is a nontrivial modality within fiction (i.e. characters have at least some properties merely possibly), Glavaničová’s proposal fails. (Kosterec 2018, 123)

Now, the last clause of the quotation is wrong. Glavaničová made it clear in (2018) that the sentences containing fictional names, when considered in the context *within the fiction* are not with supposition *de dicto*:

Still, it may be useful to apply the pretense theory in *de re* context. We could get into the context of the story and speak about Sherlock Holmes *as if* he was a real person (despite there being really no such person). (Glavaničová 2018, 71)

It is correct, that in supposition *de dicto* the sentence *Sherlock Holmes is a detective* is necessarily true as soon as *being a detective* is considered *Holmes’* requisite. But that seems to be mainly the feature of use of that sentence in *meta-fictional contexts*. It is not accurate to claim (or it is at least not the only possible option), however, as Kosterec presupposed in 2018), that HV assumes that the fictional name *within the fictional contexts* is used with the supposition *de dicto*. On the other hand, though, HV seems to be then dependent on some other theory (e.g. pretense) when dealing with the supposedly true readings of sentences *Sherlock Holmes is a detective* within the fictional contexts (and therefore presumably in supposition *de re*).⁹ HV

⁹ To be more precise, there are no such supposedly true readings according to the theory (for the fiction contexts)—so there is no such dependence, *once we agree with the assumption*, that these sentences are either false or truth-valueless. If we do not,

is to explain the truth conditions of sentences *simpliciter*. It does not contain or explains truth-in-fiction condition of investigated sentences, ... yet:

More should be said about the generation of requisites, and my suggestion is to employ some plausible account for the computing of truth in fiction and generate requisites in terms of it. But that is a very nontrivial task for another time. (Glavaničová 2018, 67)

In general, we should discern when speaking about *truth simpliciter* and *truth-in-fiction*. We should differ between *modal properties of stories* and *modal properties of sentences within the stories*. Glavaničová seems to consider stories analogous to axiomatic theories (see Glavaničová 2018, footnote 18). It seems possible, that Doyle could write different Holmes stories. What, on the other hand, seems to be a consequence of HV is that there are some essentials to the Holmes stories Doyle wrote in this possible world. That it is necessary for these stories, that *Sherlock is a detective*, however, shall not be care freely considered equivalent to the modality of that sentence *within the fiction*. These are in the end, *different* sentences according to HV.

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however, there is a need for something more. Again, I thank an anonymous reviewer for pressing me to clarify on this point.

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