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Artifactualism and Inadvertent Authorial Creation[*]

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ABSTRACT. In a series of papers (two of them in previous *ESA Proceedings*), I have been defending a fictional artifactualist position according to which fictional characters (like Prince Bolkonsky in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* are non-concrete, human created objects (which are commonly labeled abstract artifacts). In this paper, I aim to bring together from my previous work two lines of defending fictional artifactualism: that (for the fictional artifactualist) making room for (i) authorial creation and for (ii) *inadvertent* authorial creation are tenable moves. Indeed, instances of authorial creation (intentional or inadvertent) are what we *expect* if we accept Saul Kripke's general view about what determines the reference of proper names, and this view's consequences for fictional names. Fictional artifactualism emerges as our best choice *if* we want to admit fictional characters in our ontology *and* are sympathetic to Kripke's general view about proper name reference. Fictional artifactualists having taken these two conditions on board need not worry about these features of their view: that authors sometimes create fictional characters and sometimes do so inadvertently.

1. Introduction

Last year, for the 2014 *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics*, I wrote a paper entitled "Artifactualism and Authorial Creation" (Zvolenszky 2014). The close parallel between the title of that paper and this one is intentional and runs deep. My overarching aim in this paper is to highlight the central role played by Saul Kripke's (1972/1980) influential claims in *Naming and Necessity* about the reference of proper names when it comes to explaining why authorial creation as well as *inadvertent* authorial creation are consequences that a theory about fictional characters can readily

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[*] This paper gives a summary of Sections 3 and 4 of a much longer paper (Zvolenszky 2016). A precursor to those sections appeared in Zvolenszky (2015a).

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endorse. Indeed, *if* we accept Kripke's general arguments, *then* we *expect* to encounter cases of authorial creation, moreover, we *expect* to encounter cases of an even more mysterious sort: authors *inadvertently* creating fictional characters. So a position committed to there being cases of inadvertent authorial creation—like artifactualism about fictional characters (the view I have been defending in a series of papers)[1]—is at no theoretical disadvantage compared to alternative accounts that don't make room for authors inadvertently creating fictional characters.

Artifactualism about fictional characters (fictional artifactualism, for short) is a form of *realism* about fictional characters: it maintains that the likes of Prince Andrei Bolkonsky in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* are part of an ontology we need in order to account for the semantics and metaphysics of fictional discourse. More specifically, according to *fictional artifactualism*, fictional characters are human-created objects (*artifacts*) brought into existence by the activities of authors writing novels, plays, and so on; further, these objects are *non-concrete* (they are not spatiotemporally located like chairs, trees and Saul Kripke are).[2] Fictional artifactualism is therefore committed to fictional characters being *created*, to taking authorial creation at face value. My aim in last year's *ESA Proceedings* paper was to respond to a challenge posed by several philosophers (for example, Brock 2010, Yagisawa 2001): what *argument* (beyond pretheoretic appeal) might be given (on behalf of the fictional artifactualist) to the effect that commitment to authorial creation is alright? In the present paper, my aim is to respond to a different but related challenge: what argument might be given (on behalf of the fictional artifactualist) to the effect that commitment to *inadvertent* authorial creation is alright?

To set the stage, in Section 2, I will outline Saul Kripke's (1972/1980) core claims about the reference of proper names that refer (or referred) to concrete individuals (like the names 'Tolstoy', 'Napoleon' and 'Saul Kripke'), and explore how these core claims can be straightforwardly extended to proper names (for example, 'Andrei Bolkonsky') that don't refer

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[1] For the most recent versions, see Zvolenszky (2013, 2015a, 2016).

[2] Influential proponents of such a view include Kripke (1973/2013), van Inwagen (1977) and Thomasson (1999). Fictional characters according to them are *abstract* artifacts; it is worth bearing in mind, however, that no details are filled in at this point about what an abstract artifact might be: all that is settled is that these are *non-concrete* artifacts.

to concrete individuals. Kripke didn't spell out this connection between his claims about names that refer to concrete individuals and names that don't. My aim in last year's *ESA Proceedings* paper was to fill this lacuna, by, among other things, formulating what I called the *inverse-Sinatra principle for proper names*: any proper name (fictional or nonfictional) is such that *if it can't make it here, it won't make it anywhere*.[3] If the name doesn't manage to refer to a concrete, spatiotemporal object here, in the actual world, it doesn't refer to such an object in other possible worlds either. In Section 3, I outline how a recently raised worry (voiced by Jeffrey Goodman 2014) about having to contend with instances of inadvertent authorial creation is supposed to stir trouble for fictional artifactualism, and will show why a commitment to inadvertent creation is, *pace* Goodman, a welcome result. Indeed, it's a result that we *expect* in the light of Kripke's arguments about error (and ignorance) among name users (Section 4). In Section 5, I will connect these Kripkean arguments with the core Kripkean claims in order to bring to the surface connections between the pair of conclusions I've been motivating: that fictional artifactualists need not worry about authorial creation, and that they need not worry about *inadvertent* authorial creation.

2. Kripke's Core Claims and Authorial Creation

The core of Kripke's position (from the second lecture of *Naming and Necessity* 1972/1980) about what does and doesn't determine the reference of proper names like 'Tolstoy' and 'Moscow' (which refer to concrete objects) can be summarized with the following two claims:

> *Qualitative fit is neither necessary nor sufficient for being the referent of a name*. Suppose individual speakers who competently use a name N associate various descriptions with N. Kripke's claim: to be the referent of N, it is neither necessary nor sufficient that the referent

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[3] Frank Sinatra sang about New York City: "If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere". In the inverse-Sinatra principle (to keep it parallel with the song), I use the modal auxiliary 'can', by which I mean (as the song's 'can' does) 'is able to'; I don't mean metaphysical possibility. Thanks to Nathan Wildman for discussion on this. I first formulated the inverse-Sinatra principle in Zvolenszky (2007).

be the unique individual fitting the associated descriptions (or fitting the weighted majority of the descriptions). Call this the *simple qualitative-fit claim*.

A causal-historical connection is necessary for reference. Competent *N* users refer to an object *o* by using *N* only if there is a causal-historical chain of uses of *N* in their linguistic community leading back to the introduction of *N* as a name for *o*. Call this the *simple historical connection requirement*.[4]

Recall the inverse-Sinatra principle ("if a name *N* can't make it here, it won't make it anywhere"). This principle, unlike the two core Kripkean claims, goes beyond imposing constraints on the referents of proper names in the actual world, constraining also their referents in merely possible worlds. So it is well to generalize, in the light of the inverse-Sinatra principle, the qualitative fit claim and the historical connection requirement to characterize the core tenets of a Kripkean stance:

In the case of concrete individuals (actual as well as merely possible) qualitative fit is neither necessary nor sufficient for being the referent of a name. Call this the *generalized qualitative-fit claim*.

A causal-historical connection is necessary for reference to a concrete object (actual as or merely possible. Call this the *generalized historical connection requirement*.[5]

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[4] I'm not including here the corresponding sufficiency claim: that a causal-historical chain of uses leading back to an object being given the name is *sufficient* for it to be the name's bearer. In the light of considerations about 'Santa Claus', and 'Napoleon' introduced as a name for a pet (and later, on, also examples like 'Madagascar') indicate that much more elaboration and complexity lies ahead before we get a *sufficient* condition for being the referent of a name. And the fact that Kripke (1972/1980, 93, 96–97) was pointing out such examples makes it clear that he was aware of the additional complexity required while he was delivering the lectures, so Evans' (1973) charge that Kripke's sufficiency claim is unwarranted is itself unwarranted.

[5] Kripke (1972/1980) did supply a further thesis that, together with the two original core claims, yields the generalized versions of the two core claims for proper names that refer to concrete objects. That thesis is a well known one, about proper names being rigid designators: according to one formulation, a rigid designator *r* is such that if it refers to

In what follows, I will omit the adjective 'generalized' and simply call the latter two claims the qualitative fit claim and the historical connection requirement.

In previous work,[6] I argued that of the prominent forms of realism about fictional characters (Meinongianism, among others), fictional artifactualism is the only view that accords with the inverse-Sinatra principle and the two generalized core claims by Kripke. So if—quite independently of fictional names—we accept (as many philosophers do) that proper names obey the inverse-Sinatra principle and the generalized core claims, then (i) we have reason to favor fictional artifactualism over its realist rivals, and (ii) it is *because fictional artifactualism features authorial creation* that it can be in accord with the generalized core claims and the inverse-Sinatra principle, so (iii) the generalized core claims, if we accept them, make authorial creation a *welcome* feature of fictional artifactualism rather than a worrisome one.

In the present paper, I will argue for a counterpart of (iii) with respect to cases of authors inadvertently creating fictional characters: the generalized core claims, if we accept them, make *inadvertent* authorial creation a welcome feature of fictional artifactualism rather than a worrisome one. Before exploring why such a feature might be thought worrisome, let us consider motivations for and against realism about fictional characters.

Why take on the metaphysical burden of a realist position in the first place? Fictional artifactualists like Saul Kripke (1973/2011, 1973/2013), Peter van Inwagen (1977), and Amie Thomasson (1999) first identify a special

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an object *o* in the actual world, then it refers to *o* in every world in which *o* exists, and in worlds in which *o* doesn't exist, *r* doesn't refer to an object other than *o*. But notice that the claim that proper names are rigid designators leaves open whether a proper name without an actual concrete referent does or doesn't refer to a concrete object in a merely possible world. It is the inverse-Sinatra principle that supplies the needed constraint for names like 'Andrei Bolkonsky': no concrete object to refer to here (in the actual world) means no concrete object to refer to in other possible worlds either. In this way, the rigid designation thesis about proper names and the inverse-Sinatra principle are two facets of an overarching theory about the reference of proper names across possible worlds. But the succinctness, generality and focus of the inverse-Sinatra principle makes for a more vivid and revealing summary of Kripke's claims than his own way of fitting together his various claims (the two original core claims plus the rigid designation thesis).

    [6] Zvolenszky (2015a), for an earlier, shorter version, see Zvolenszky (2014).

class of sentences in fictional discourse, which we might call *metatextual*[7] discourse—for example, 'Bolkonsky is a fictional character', 'Bolkonsky was created by Tolstoy', 'Bolkonsky is not the most tragic character created by Tolstoy, (Anna Karenina is)'. Second, these fictional artifactualists point out that such examples of metatextual discourse are true simpliciter (not just true in the world of the *War and Peace* fiction). Third, they argue that *analyzing these examples of metatextual discourse requires that we admit in our ontology entities that are fictional characters, best construed as non-concrete artifacts.*

The foregoing explains also how the generalized core claims, about the *reference* of proper names, can bear on views like fictional artifactualism, concerning the *metaphysics* of fictional characters. There is a crucial difference to be drawn here (see Braun 2005): even if one agrees with the artifactualist that Tolstoy created the abstract artifact that is Andrei Bolkonsky, from that it does not follow that *any* uses of the name 'Andrei Bolkonski' *refer* to that artifact. As we have seen, a common fictional artifactualist strategy is to home in on certain uses of proper names—metatextual uses like 'Andrei Bolkonsky is a fictional character'—arguing that only in those uses do fictional names refer to the non-concrete artifact that had been created (plausibly, on other uses, the name doesn't refer to anything).

The magnitude of the challenges associated with analyzing the full range of fictional discourse (including negative existential claims like the true 'Prince Bolkonsky doesn't exist') vary. For example, for fictional artifactualists, analyzing metatextual discourse like 'Bolkonsky is a fictional character' is an easy task, analyzing negative existential claims is a complex one. For those who steer away from realism—*irrealists about fictional characters*—it's the other way around. Also, most fictional artifactualists do not commit to the view that analyzing *every* type of fictional discourse involves appeal to the ontology of abstract artifacts posited: for example,

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[7] Bonomi (1999/2008)'s label, also favored by García-Carpintero 2014. Thomasson (2003) uses the label 'external discourse' Salmon's (1998) label 'meta-fictional discourse' corresponds to a broader category that includes instances of metatextual discourse as well as examples like 'According to the to the novel *War and Peace*, Andrei Bolkonsky fought against Napoleon'. Kroon–Voltolini (2011) label the former *external* metafictional discourse, and the latter, *internal* metafictional discourse.

analyzing *textual*[8] discourse (sentences from works of fiction) does not, according to Thomasson (2003), van Inwagen, and Kripke.[9] More generally, those philosophers are artifactualists who hold that analyzing *some* fictional discourse involves fictional characters as abstract artifacts. This existential formulation signifies a key feature of irrealist positions about fictional characters: according to them, *no* type of fictional discourse is such that its analysis requires an ontology that includes fictional characters.[10] This signifies that the irrealist has a hefty task cut out for her. Beyond making this point, my arguments in this paper are not directed against irrealist positions.[11] I'm claiming that *if* we opt for realism about fictional characters, then there are several reasons for choosing fictional artifactualism (various worries about authorial creation and inadvertent authorial creation notwithstanding).

3. Goodman about Inadvertent Creation

A recent challenge by Jeffrey Goodman (2014), which I will call the *inadvertent creation challenge*, 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 are *artifactualists about mythical objects* (*mythical artifactualists,* for short)[12] and think that astronomers like Le Verrier, in mistakenly hypothesizing the planet Vulcan, inadvertently created an

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[8] Thomasson (2003) labels this 'fictionalizing discourse'.

[9] Salmon (1998), another fictional artifactualist, disagrees. Plausibly, his view is that in creating works of fiction authors are already using names of fictional characters to refer to the abstract artifacts being created (see Braun 2005; 615–620, note, however, 627–628, fn. 38, 40).

[10] Indeed, Thomasson (2003, 208) characterizes one irrealist proposal, Kendall Walton's (1990) influential pretense-based account as one according to which "not just *some*, but *all* talk involving fictional names contains an element of pretense" (emphasis in the original).

[11] Elsewhere I formulated arguments aimed at unseating irrealist alternatives to fictional artifactualism (Zvolenszky 2013, 2016, Section 6).

[12] Considerations about the semantics and metaphysics of discourse about the posits of failed scientific theories (like Le Verrier's hypothesis about Vulcan), bring crucial considerations to the debate about the metaphysics and semantics of *fictional* discourse. I discuss these at length in two papers: Section 3 of Zvolenszky (2015a), and Sections 3 and 6 of Zvolenszky (2016).

abstract artifact, then the "inadvertent creation" element turns out to be inescapable yet theoretically unattractive.

In previous work,[13] based on considerations about actually existing concrete objects being featured in fictional works (as plausibly Napoleon and Moscow are in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*), I argued 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. Indeed, the inadvertent creation of some objects that can serve as the referents of certain uses of proper names is a phenomenon that we *expect* if we accept Saul Kripke's (1972/1980) influential arguments from error (and ignorance), which are based on the observation that competent users of a proper name N are often far more mistaken (and far more ignorant) about the referent of N than description theories of proper names allow. So inadvertent authorial creation is a welcome feature of fictional artifactualism rather than a worrisome one.

To sum up my points of disagreement with Goodman:

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

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

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

To motivate (a) and (b), I outlined the following (contrary to fact) Scenario *T*: while writing *War and Peace,* Tolstoy was under the mistaken impression that the protagonist, Prince Bolkonsky, like Napoleon (also featured in the novel), was a real person. Introducing the name 'Andrei Bolkonsky', Tolstoy intended to refer to a historical figure he thought existed quite independently of his novel. For fictional artifactualists, what follows from the fact that (in Scenario *T*) Tolstoy was wrong and his name 'Andrei

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[13] See Sections 3 and 4 of Zvolenszky (2016); for a previous version, see Zvolenszky (2015b).

Bolkonsky' doesn't refer to any real person? It is overwhelmingly plausible to think that *in Scenario* T, *Tolstoy created Bolkonsky as a non-concrete 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. Further, as a result of Tolstoy's writing the novel, the range of *actual fictional characters* plausibly came to include Bolkonsky also.[14]

There is a crucial (plausible) assumption behind the way I just now described Scenario *T*: the mode of introducing proper names in the context of writing a work of fiction varies: Tolstoy actually introduced the name 'Andrei Bolkonsky' and 'Natasha Rostova' intending them to refer to fictional characters; by contrast, he introduced 'Napoleon' and 'Moscow' intending them to refer to an already existing individual and city, respectively. Scenario *T* involves a counterfactual scenario in which Tolstoy erroneously takes the name 'Andrei Bolkonsky' to pattern with his use of names like 'Moscow' and 'Napoleon' (rather than names for fictional characters like 'Natasha Rostova'.[15]

To motivate (c), let us consider how Kripke's arguments about error (and ignorance) arise (Section 4), and how they fit together with the generalized core Kripkean claims (Section 5).

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[14] One potential alternative is to regard Bolkonsky of *T* as a created *mythical* artifact akin to Vulcan rather than a fictional character. I won't dwell on this alternative option as it will not make a significant difference to my dialectic: for example, a proponent of this alternative cannot then retain fictional artifactualism without mythical artifactualism because the two theories make a package deal (given that we want to leave room for the kind of error described in Scenario *T*), so the major points I have been making against Goodman, (a) and (b), would remain. Thanks to Guido Bacciagaluppi, David Braun and Stephan Torre for discussion on this point.

[15] Someone might argue that proper names featured in fictional works never refer to actual objects: 'Napoleon' in *War and Peace* refers to a fictional surrogate of the historical figure, an abstract artifact (Voltolini 2013 proposes such a view). I won't explore such accounts here except for noting two points. First, such views are difficult to argue for as they are plausibly committed to fictional surrogates for the referents of all proper names even in the case of slightly fictionalized biographies or documentary genres (Voltolini is silent on this issue). Second, accepting such a view doesn't unseat my claim that inadvertent creation phenomena are commonplace. To the contrary: we'd have to contend with a far wider range of cases of *inadvertent creation of fictional surrogates*, like the referent of (the actual) Tolstoy's 'Napoleon' in *War and Peace*.

4. Kripke's Argument about Error and Inadvertent Authorial Creation

In the second of his *Naming and Necessity* lectures (1972/1980), Saul Kripke convinced an overwhelming majority of philosophers that a certain view doesn't work; to wit, a view according to which descriptions that an individual speaker associates with a proper name *N* determine the reference of *N* as used by the speaker. And Kripke's main objection to this view appealed to the problem of error (and the problem of ignorance). Individual speakers' associated descriptions with *N* are often inadequate in various ways: they can contain mistaken information (and may fail to contain enough information to identify a unique individual), yet these epistemic foibles of speakers are very often no obstacle to their successful reference using *N*. These epistemic limitations of competent *N*-users call for an alternative picture about causal-historical chains of uses (leading back to the introduction of *N*) within the speakers' linguistic community, chains that determine to whom they refer on given occasions of using *N*. (Kripke 1972/1980, 71–97.)

These Kripkean lessons are familiar. And they are just one step away from the recognition of two key points.

First, (potentially profound) error may afflict the *originators* of proper names also: just think of perfectly plausible scenarios like the ancient astronomers successfully introducing the name 'Hesperus' intending it to refer to a *star* (of the same kind as the other shiny inhabitants of the night sky) that they are observing and succeed in naming a *planet*.[16]

Second, as much authority as we might think authors of fictional works have over how they develop their creations, we must realize that this authority is limited in a crucial way. We may well think it is plausible to hold the following principle:[17]

> Principle 1. "*Fictional intention makes it so*"
>
> For an arbitrary fictional work *F* featuring a proper name *N*,

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[16] Salmon (1998, 305). But see Braun (2005, 618–619) criticizing Salmon's interpretation of the 'Hesperus' example. Crucially, even if we agree with Braun's take on the example, his criticism doesn't carry over to Scenario *T*.

[17] "Fictional intention makes it so" is echoed by Goodman (2014, 39).

> IF an author creating *F* introduces *N* intending that *N* name a fictional object in *F*, THEN *N* names a fictional object in *F*.

But Scenario *T* makes us realize a certain kind of limitation on authors' authority, namely, that *Principle 1's inverse is untenable*:

> Principle 2. "*Nonfictional intention makes it so*" (the inverse of Principle 1)
>
> For an arbitrary fictional work *F* featuring a proper name *N,* IF NOT (an author creating *F* introduces *N* intending that *N* name a fictional object in *F*), THEN NOT (*N* names a fictional object in *F*)

That is to say, the rejection of Principle 2 makes it abundantly clear that Kripke's argument from error (and ignorance) afflicts even authors introducing names in the context of fiction-making. If we accept Principle 1, then there is *asymmetry* in authors' potential errors.[18] On the one hand, if they believe *c* is a fictional character they are creating, then they have the last word on the matter, no room for error. Yet on the other hand, if authors believe *c* is a nonfictional character they are describing for the first time, theirs is not the last word on the matter: they can be in error with *c* being a fictional character after all, one that they created inadvertently. In the light of this, it is not at all surprising that such authors can be in the wrong about whether the name they are introducing is for a fictional character rather than (as they had intended) for a concrete object. And for fictional artifactualists, this means that authors can be in the wrong about having created a fictional object: their creation can be inadvertent.

5. Connecting the Dots

Now, consider an example of an author inadvertently creating a fictional character, as in Scenario *T.* How does the foregoing line of argument about the possibility of authors being in error (and in its wake, the untenability of Principle 2) connect with the generalized core Kripkean claims?

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[18] I'm granting Principle 1 for argument's sake but my major points about inadvertent creation, (a)–(c), do not hinge on the fate of either Principle 1 or Principle 2.

In fact, the possibility of authors being in error about whether they are describing in their novel (short story, and so on) an already existing object (like Napoleon or the city of Moscow) or a fictional character that they are conjuring up (and that didn't hitherto exist) follows straightforwardly from the first core Kripkean claim: about qualitative fit being neither necessary nor sufficient for reference. Given that Tolstoy of (the counterfactual) Scenario *T* is in error about the world around him, his intention to refer to a historical figure when using the name 'Andrei Bolkonsky' does not bear out. But crucially, qualitative fit is not necessary for reference to an object; so just because Tolstoy of *T* erroneously thinks Bolkonsky is a concrete, spatiotemporal individual, does not thwart his bringing into existence a non-concrete fictional character, one that he inadvertently created.

At this stage, enter the other core Kripkean claim: about a historical connection being required. If, as realists about fictional characters, we want to posit a referent for certain uses of the name 'Andrei Bolkonsky' (for example, metatextual uses like 'Andrei Bolkonsky is a fictional character'), then, in the light of the argument summarized in Section 2, the way to secure the needed historical connection is by (i) making fictional characters *human-created* (artifacts created by authors' activities of writing novels), and by (ii) making these fictional characters non-concrete; none of the other prominent realist contenders (like Meinongianism) can accord with the core Kripkean claim about a historical connection being required.

In the end then the upshot of both lines of argument (about authorial creation being alright and about inadvertent authorial creation being alright) is that *if* we choose realism about fictional characters, and *if* we accept the core Kripkean claims for proper names across the board, then our best option is fictional artifactualism. And authorial creation as well as inadvertent authorial creation are consequences we can embrace, given their intimate ties to the core Kripkean claims that we have already taken on board.[19]

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