Notions of Nothing

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You and I, like countless others, can use the name 'Genghis Khan' to talk about Genghis Khan (the same person): our uses of 'Genghis Khan' co-refer. Similarly, you and I, like countless others, can use the name 'Hamlet' to talk about Hamlet (the same character). But our uses of 'Hamlet' do not co-refer, because they do not *refer* at all; the name 'Hamlet' is empty. Let us introduce the term *identification* as a way of picking out the phenomenon of aboutness, or object-directedness, without ontological commitment. It seems as if our uses of 'Hamlet' identify the same character: they *co-identify*. How can this be if there is no Hamlet? Significantly, the puzzle is not restricted to uses of the same name. Just as we can use 'Mark Twain' and 'Samuel Clemens' to co-refer, we can use 'Odysseus' and 'Ulysses' to co-identify. How is this possible if neither name picks out an individual, let alone the same one?

One might take these judgements of co-identification at face value, arguing that they support realism about fictional and other apparently non-existent entities. In that case identification collapses into reference and co-identification into co-reference, though to special abstract or non-existent objects. For those who, like myself, reject the realist approach and maintain that names like 'Hamlet' and 'Ulysses' do not refer, the question is how to accommodate our judgements within an irrealist framework. I claim that we can explain identification and co-identification by appeal to the same mechanisms that explain ordinary reference.[1] Empty names, like referring names, are embedded in practices of communication that link uses of the names together, and it is natural to think that such communicative practices play a key role in accounting for identification and co-identification. Yet little attention has been devoted to understanding how. In this paper I argue that only an approach that takes information to be central to the practices that underpin our uses of names has the resources to explain co-identification.

After I have examined the intuitions about co-identification in more detail (§1), I contrast two ways of conceptualising our communicative practices of using names: a *name-centric* approach, inspired by Kripke's account of reference-fixing, and an alternative *information-centric*, or *info-centric*, approach, inspired by Evans's critique of Kripke (§2).

Taking Mark Sainsbury's account in *Reference without Referents* as illustrating a name-centric approach, I argue that this account, even when revised, cannot explain co-identification (§§3-4). In §5 I consider the sceptical reply that we should reject our intuitions of co-identification as too incoherent for theoretical treatment, arguing to the contrary that our judgements are context-sensitive and purpose-relative. In the final sections I develop an info-centric approach that has the resources to capture these and other central features of our judgements of co-identification.

1. Co-identification

There can be no doubt that quite a lot of ordinary communication presupposes the possibility of intersubjectively identifying what does not exist. Take discussions of fiction. When we disagree about Hamlet – is he prudently cautious or a hopeless procrastinator? – we assume that we are talking, not only about the same character as each other, but about the same character as Shakespeare describes in the play. Similarly, when Nabokov (1980) argues against other critics that Gregor Samsa metamorphoses into a beetle rather than a cockroach, he takes himself to identify the same character that Kafka invented and that his opponents misconstrue. If we did not presuppose the possibility of this kind of co-identification, our practices of engaging with works of literature would be radically different from the way they are now. The same is true for any number of other practices, from discussions of failed scientific posits (e.g., Le Verrier's Vulcan) to books about the creatures of myth (e.g., Zeus), not to mention descriptions of dreams, misperceptions and so forth.

Although these practices often involve uses of the same proper name, it seems obvious that they need not.[2] As a consequence, intuitions of co-identification by distinct names are also widespread. Anthony Everett, for example, invokes them in his critique of gappy proposition theories with the example of the following three utterances:

(1) Santa Claus does not exist.
(2) Father Christmas does not exist.
(3) Hamlet does not exist. (2003: 1)

Everett points out that we have a strong intuition that (1) and (2) are about the same thing whereas (3) is about something else (a fact that is difficult for gappy proposition theories to explain, since they hold that all three names contribute precisely nothing to the proposition expressed). Consider a related example. Suppose that Ethan, an American three-year-old, is

with his parents visiting their English cousins in Bristol for Christmas. It is Christmas Eve and Ethan says excitedly, 'Santa Claus is coming tonight'. His English cousin Kaitlin says excitedly, 'Father Christmas is coming tonight'. Plausibly, they are excited about the same thing. Suppose further that Ethan overhears Kaitlin and is confused. His father clarifies: '*Father Christmas* is the British name for Santa Claus, so Kaitlin is saying that Santa Claus is coming tonight'. This seems an accurate report of what Kaitlin said. Similarly, many people would agree that just as 'The Greeks worshipped Zeus' is true, so too is 'The Romans worshipped Zeus but they called him *Jupiter*'. Other cases involve fictional characters who have different names, either within the same work or across works. Philosophers of language typically assume without argument that 'Clark Kent' and 'Superman' co-identify when they discuss what to say about Lois's conflicting beliefs concerning the character's aeronautical abilities. And the eponymous character in Fielding's satire *Shamela* is identified with the title character of Richardson's *Pamela*.

Some may wonder how seriously to take these intuitions: if there is no Hamlet, then perhaps there is no real sense in which various people can talk about *him*. I will return to such sceptical concerns below, but for now I assume that judgements of identification and co-identification are genuine phenomena requiring explanation. At the same time I reject the conclusion drawn by some philosophers, that we should adopt realism about fictional characters and other non-existent entities: they argue that the explanation of why it *seems as if* we are talking 'about the same thing' is that we *are* talking about the same thing. But the mere postulation of a realm of abstract or non-existent objects does not by itself resolve the problem of determining which such object we are talking about when using a name. Given the myriad other problems facing realism, I will say no more about it here.[3]

I also reject the historically standard irrealist approach to empty names, which is descriptivist. According to traditional descriptivism, my use of a referring name such as 'Aristotle' designates Aristotle in virtue of his satisfying some associated qualitative descriptions in my mind or in the community, such as *Plato's most famous student*. Applying this to the empty case, the idea is to explain judgements of co-identification by appeal to shared descriptive content associated with proper names. We could then say that in cases where we take two names, or two uses of the same name, to identify the same character, this is because the speakers associate more or less the same descriptive content with the name(s). However, this proposal is problematic. For example, we can imagine a scenario in which Ethan's and Kaitlin's beliefs do not overlap apart from the reference to a propensity to arrive

on Christmas Eve; they each have only partial information about Father Christmas/Santa Claus. We are still inclined to say that they are excited about the same thing.

There are good reasons to think that no version of descriptivism can adequately handle empty names.[4] What is more decisive, in my view, is that opting for a descriptivist account of identification and co-identification entails denying that empty names function in discourse in the same way as referring names. For I take the objections levelled at descriptivism by Kripke, Evans and others to have shown persuasively that reference is not established by satisfaction. Ideally we would like a uniform account of the mechanisms by which names are used to talk about individuals, whether or not there are any such individuals. This is reason enough to try a different strategy.

2. Names and Practices

The lesson generally taken from the failure of descriptivism is that my use of 'Aristotle' designates Aristotle, not because Aristotle fits the way I think about him, but because it is linked in one way or another to Aristotle himself along a chain of communication. The relevant links are characterised by certain kinds of intentions, such as an intention to use the name in the same way as the person from whom I acquired it. Although early proponents of this kind of view, such as Kripke (1980) and Evans (1973), limited their accounts to chains that were grounded in real concrete individuals, it is obvious that there are similar practices of using names such as 'Santa Claus', 'Vulcan', 'Hamlet' and 'Emma Bovary'. So it is not surprising that other philosophers have appealed to these practices to explain phenomena associated with empty names. To take some examples:

- Keith Donnellan (1974) invokes the 'history of the uses of a name' to offer truth conditions for negative existential statements such as 'Santa Claus does not exist'. He claims that such a statement is true if and only if the history of uses of the name ends in a *block*, that is, an event precluding reference to a real individual.

- Ken Taylor (2003) takes different tokenings of the same name to be linked by 'chains of explicit co-reference'. Where there is no genuine reference, the same mechanisms explain the (false) impression of directing our imaginative activities at the same object on different occasions.

- Mark Sainsbury (2005) develops his concept of 'name-using practices' to explain the intelligibility of empty names while avoiding the pitfalls of either descriptivism or Millianism. It is in virtue of participating in name-using practices that speakers understand the reference conditions associated with a name and thus its meaning.

- John Perry (2001) appeals to 'intersubjective networks of notions' to provide reflexive truth conditions for certain statements containing empty names and to account for the intentionality of thought and discourse about the non-existent.[5]

- Anthony Everett (ms) argues that empty names, like referring names, are linked together by 'representation-networks'.[6] When we use empty names we do not genuinely talk about anything; rather, we speak in the context of the pretence that there are networks grounded in real individuals.

It is worth noting that some realists and descriptivists also invoke practices or networks to explain uses of (apparently) empty names, though not for the same reasons as the theorists just mentioned:

- Realists can take these practices to explain reference to non-existent or abstract entities. For example, Amie Thomasson (1999) argues that the introduction of the name of a fictional character within a work of fiction constitutes both the genuine creation of an abstract artefact and a Kripke-style baptism that inaugurates the practices upon which the character ontologically depends.

- Causal descriptivists take reference to be fixed by descriptions that invoke chains of communication, such as *'being the actual individual called "Aristotle" referred to by my informants' use of the name'* (Kroon 2004: 1). Kroon proposes that speakers who use empty names employ the pretence that such descriptions determine a reference.

Let us adopt a neutral title and call any of the practices or networks invoked in accounts of reference or identification *Practices Underpinning Names* or PUNs for short. Given the popularity of the appeal to PUNs, whether by those who discuss it explicitly or by those who simply assume its correctness, one might expect there to be an interest in comparing different ways of conceptualising PUNs; but such is not the case. This poses a

problem when it comes to explaining our uses of empty names because (as I will argue) the most common way of explicating PUNs fails to explain co-identification.

To see why, it is useful to distinguish two broad approaches to PUNs, which I call *name-centric* and *info-centric*. The name-centric approach is inspired by Kripke's (1980) classic account of reference-fixing and reference transmission. According to Kripke, a name is bestowed on an object in a baptism or dubbing, and later uses of the name refer to the same object so long as they are connected via a chain of communication to previous uses of the name, all the way back to the original baptism. The appropriate connection is created by a speaker's intention to use the name to refer to the same object as the person from whom she learned the name. On this account the referent is the individual at the causal origin of a chain of communication.

The info-centric approach derives from Evans's (1973) argument that Kripke's theory cannot explain reference shift. To take one of Evans's examples, although the name 'Madagascar' was (we are told) originally used to refer to a part of the African mainland, Marco Polo mistakenly used it for the island off the coast. The name came to refer to the island, even though Polo presumably used it with the intention to refer to the same thing as his native guide. So Evans argued that rather than identifying the referent of a name with the object baptised with that name, we should identify it with the *dominant source of information* associated with a name: roughly, with the individual who is the causal source of most of the most important information. Here Evans adverts to the now common assumption that we organise our beliefs about individuals in a kind of mental filing system, where names play the cognitive role of file labels, allowing us to access and transmit information about the individuals we associate with those names.[7] In the case of 'Madagascar', the information included in people's *mental files* or *dossiers* associated with the name came to be overwhelmingly derived from the island rather than the mainland, and that is why the reference shifted.[8] Evans described this as a 'hybrid' account since it recognises a role for descriptive information; however the referent is not defined as the individual who best fits most of the information, but the individual who is its dominant source.

For my purposes the key difference between these approaches concerns the reference-determining intentions of speakers who use a name. For Kripke, the relevant intention, at least for uses of a name downstream from a baptism, is essentially directed toward other uses of the name: I intend to use it in the same way, to refer to the same individual, as the person from whom I learned the name. For Evans, by contrast, the relevant intention concerns the information in the mental file associated with the name: when I use the name I intend to talk

about the individual my mental file represents (which on Evans's original proposal was the dominant source of information in the file).[9] Advocates of a name-centric approach to PUNs emphasise the first kind of intention, whereas advocates of an info-centric approach emphasise the second. This difference will have important implications for co-identification.

The name-centric approach may seem more attractive, for several reasons. First, it fits better with the standard reasons for rejecting descriptivism about reference-fixing, which typically goes hand in hand with the rejection of the claim that proper names have any senses or meanings and thus the denial of any role for associated information. Millians, for example, treat names as nothing more than tags for individuals. If this were right, it would seem that where there is no individual, there are only uses of names and the connections between them available for explaining phenomena like co-identification. Second, the name-centric approach is simpler. If the links in the PUN are between uses of names, we need not bring in any reference to mental representations or files. Similarly, the idea of a dominant source of information is obscure by comparison with the concept of a baptism, which is at least a familiar kind of event.[10] Third, the name-centric approach has fewer controversial commitments. When applied to empty names, participation in an info-centric PUN seems to assume not only that we can have singular thought about the non-existent – something those who assume an acquaintance condition on singular thought would deny[11] – but also that different people can have singular thoughts about the same non-existent individuals. The name-centric approach makes no such assumptions about singular thought. Finally, the name-centric approach fits nicely with the usual motivation of philosophers who invoke PUNs, to address issues concerning the semantics of names. Such philosophers may prefer to talk about language without having to invoke any psychological descriptions of speakers beyond reference to the kinds of intentions involved in using a name.

Despite these theoretical virtues, the name-centric approach to PUNs does not have the resources by itself to explain the possibility of co-identification by different empty names. To see why, it is helpful to look at a concrete example. I begin by describing the name-centric approach developed by Mark Sainsbury in *Reference without Referents*.

3. A Basic Name-centric Account

In *Reference without Referents* (henceforth: RWR) Sainsbury develops a version of Kripke's account designed to accommodate empty names (2005: 106-24). He argues that understanding a name – and thus knowing who or what the bearer is, if any – involves participating in a name-using practice. A name-using practice originates in a baptism, which

is a formal or informal, intentional or unwitting, bestowal of a name on a single object. Here Sainsbury follows those who deny that orthography individuates names:[12] for Sainsbury there are as many (specific) names 'Alexander' as there are baptisms that bestow the generic name-type 'Alexander'. Baptisms can depend on object-related intentions, as when a priest intends to name the baby in front of him, or descriptive intentions, as when the priest intends to name 'John's daughter'. An obvious question is what constitutes a baptism when there is no object baptised. The answer is suggested by the origin of 'Vulcan', in which Le Verrier's descriptive intentions – to designate the planet causing the perturbations in Mercury's orbit – successfully initiated a practice of using a name, even though they did not manage to secure a referent. According to Sainsbury, what matters to the existence of a name-using practice is whether or not the practice of using the name 'catches on' (2005: 109). If it does, then the baptism was successful whether or not there is a referent.

Presumably a person who is in a position to perform a baptism can use a name successfully before a full name-using practice gets underway, simply in virtue of her object-related or descriptive intentions.[13] But later instances of reference or identification require participation in the practice thereby inaugurated.[14] On Sainsbury's account propagation of a name from a baptism involves the intention to use a name *in the same way* (to refer to or identify the same thing), either as those from whom one has learned the name – for initiation into the practice – or as one has oneself on previous occasions, for continued participation.[15] Since previous uses of a name by a speaker must refer to the same thing as the initiating use, which itself must refer to the same thing as other people's uses all the way back to the baptism, the name-using intentions guarantee reference to the individual originally baptised with a name (if any). Thus the account excludes reference shift. Sainsbury would explain the Madagascar case by saying that Marco Polo's mistake constituted an unwitting baptism of the island, which generated a new name-using practice and thus a new name 'Madagascar'.[16]

By individuating name-using practices by baptism rather than object baptised, Sainsbury is able to handle many cases of intersubjective identification. Different people can use the name 'Vulcan' to talk about the same non-existent planet because their uses of the name are linked back to Le Verrier's baptism. Similarly, my use of 'Hamlet' and your use of 'Hamlet' identify the same character because they are both linked back, through Shakespeare's drama, to an original baptism, most likely by Thomas Kyd in an earlier play (Mabillard 2000). Following from the denial of reference shift, Sainsbury must also deny *identification shift*. For instance, the name 'Superman' first appeared in a short story by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, 'The Reign of the Superman', in which the title character was a bald,

telepathic villain bent on world domination.[17] But Siegel and Shuster gave up on this character before creating the Man of Steel. It seems as if Siegel and Shuster applied the same name to a new character, but according to Sainsbury the use of 'Superman' for the hero constitutes a baptism with a new name. This conclusion is not implausible, however, and does not undermine the sense in which our uses of 'Superman' all pick out the right character. As long as our uses of a name constitute participation in the same name-using practice, originating in the same baptism, we have an explanation of the sense in which we are talking about the same thing. Of course this explanation does not deliver any actual thing we are talking about: it is simply in virtue of the links between uses of a name that we count as co-identifying.

It should be obvious, however, that Sainsbury's basic account as so far adumbrated does not carry over to co-identification by different empty names (whether orthographically distinguished or not). It does not even explain why using the name 'Superman' allows one to identify the same character as using the name 'Clark Kent'. The fact that the names are bestowed in the same fiction is insufficient. On Sainsbury's view, where there are two names there are two baptisms and thus two distinct name-using practices, even if the names are conferred in a single utterance.[18] This is not to say there is no explanation of why the two names co-identify, only that the explanation is not part of the theory.

Similarly, someone who uses the name 'Santa Claus' and someone who uses the name 'Father Christmas' are using two different names and thus participating in two different practices. When Ethan uses 'Santa Claus', his intentions guarantee that he uses it to identify the same thing as the person from whom he learned the name, who in turn must identify the same thing as the person from whom she learned the name, and so on, all the way back to the original introduction of the name – apparently in an 1821 book published in the US, *Children's Friend*, about an imaginary version of the fourth-century bishop Saint Nicholas ('Saint Nicholas' 2011). The name 'Father Christmas' seems to have first appeared in English poetry in the fifteenth century to label a personification of Christmas who presided over adult feasting and revelries (Simpson and Roud 2000: 119-20). So intentions to use the name 'Father Christmas' will take one back to a different baptism altogether, and we have no explanation of how the two names co-identify. Notice that the same problem does not arise for co-reference. Two distinct baptisms, originating two distinct name-using practices, can nonetheless be baptisms *of* the same real individual, and this is sufficient to explain how different names can refer to the same thing. This explanation is unavailable in the empty case.

Perhaps there is a different explanation available, following up Sainsbury's suggestion that distinct name-using practices may be 'causally connected' (2005: 122). The causal connection must be one involving name-oriented intentions. Sainsbury (in conversation) takes the intentions of a translator to provide a paradigm instance: the translator performs a baptism with the descriptive intention of using a new name in the same way as a different name has been used in the past. Although a new name-using practice is inaugurated, the translator's intention guarantees that later uses of the new name will be used to identify the same thing as the translated name. For example, when we identify Virgil's Ulysses with Homer's Odysseus, we assume that Virgil intended to use the Latin name in the same way as Homer had used the Greek name.[19] And we assume that the translators of Homer's and Virgil's epics into English had similar kinds of intentions. The result is that anyone participating in any of these practices will count as identifying the same character. This solution applies neatly to the Superman/Clark Kent case, since Siegel and Shuster came up with the name 'Superman' first and later decided to use the name 'Clark Kent' (as well as the name 'Kal-El', Superman's name on Krypton) to identify the same character. Similarly, Fielding invented the name 'Shamela' with the explicit intention of using it to identify the same character as Richardson's name 'Pamela'.

There are, however, two difficulties with the solution. First, it does not apply where name-using practices have independent origins. No matter how we describe the baptisms that inaugurated the name-using practices for 'Santa Claus' and 'Father Christmas', it is clear that neither involves an intention to use one name in the same way as the other. Nor can we hold that somewhere along the line there was an unwitting baptism. Whether or not we accept this description of Marco Polo's mistaken use of 'Madagascar', no similar event is a plausible candidate for a new baptism with either 'Santa Claus' or 'Father Christmas'. So the solution still does not explain the intuition that the two names co-identify, since we have two distinct name-using practices that are not appropriately causally related. The relationship between the names and practices seems to be too loose to account for the possibility of co-identification in such cases.

The second problem is the reverse: where the appropriate causal connection between name-using practices does exist, we may end up with more cases of co-identification than we should. Thomas Kyd based his Hamlet on a Norse legend about the (possibly real) Prince Amleth of Denmark. Suppose that Amleth was real, and that Kyd intended to use 'Hamlet' to identify the same individual, if any, represented in the Norse legend; perhaps the English name is just a variation on the Norse one. And suppose (just for the sake of argument) that

Shakespeare, mistakenly assuming Hamlet to be invented or perhaps not caring one way or the other, intended to use the name 'Hamlet' to identify the same character as Kyd. Then it turns out that all this time we who talk about Hamlet are referring to a real individual. This looks like the wrong result. In this case the relationship between the names and practices seems to be too tight.

None of this constitutes a criticism of Sainsbury, whose introduction of name-using practices in RWR is designed to explain our capacity to understand proper names, rather than to account for judgements of co-identification. Presumably knowing who or what the referent of a name is (if any) does not require being aware of other names that might designate the same individual. Still, if our interest is in identification and co-identification, the RWR account will not do. And we can trace the problems of looseness and tightness to precisely the aspect of that account that rules out reference shift. The intentions with which we use a name guarantee that we will refer to whatever was originally baptised with that name (if anything), and to nothing else. Where there is a causal connection between name-using practices, our name-using intentions further guarantee that we will refer to whatever was originally baptised with a different name (if anything), and to nothing else. An account that accommodated reference shift might therefore be in a better position to handle such challenges. Evans proposed an info-centric approach to address reference shift. Is there a name-centric account that can handle the same phenomena?

4. Shifting Practices

Sainsbury has recently proposed a revision to his account that allows for shifts of reference.[20] Whereas in RWR Sainsbury assumed that reference-propagation followed name-propagation, he now distinguishes them. On his new account, there are two kinds of intention that together constitute participation in a name-using practice, the *repetition intention* and the *semantic intention*. The repetition intention is the intention to use *the same name*, either as someone from whom one has learned the name (when one is first initiated into the practice) or as oneself on previous occasions. The assumption is that there is some mechanism, acquired by learning a specific name, that allows us to remember and then produce instances of that name. The semantic intention presupposes repetition: it is the intention to use the same name to refer to or identify *the same thing* as do other people engaged in the practice. This involves deference to what Sainsbury calls the 'standardised or conventionalised speakers' reference' for a name at a given time. It is because the semantic intention can diverge from the repetition intention that reference shift is possible. A shift occurs when people engaged in

the practice come to use the same name for someone or something other than the individual originally baptised with that name. So Sainsbury can give a new explanation of the Madagascar example. Because of Polo's error people who use the name 'Madagascar' – the same name as originally applied to a part of the African coast – use it to refer to the island. Although there is only one name per name-using practice, the name can change referents.[21]

Applied to empty names, the revised theory yields better results for the problematic cases of co-identification. Sainsbury can accept that the name 'Superman' shifted from identifying a villain to identifying a superhero. With respect to the Hamlet/Amleth example, Sainsbury can say that whatever Kyd's (or Shakespeare's) original intentions, speakers now use the name 'Hamlet' to identify a fictional character, not to refer to a real Danish prince. Thus in deferring to the conventional use of 'Hamlet' I identify the character rather than the real person, just as we would expect. A case for identification shift within the 'Father Christmas' practice can also be made. For it was awareness of the American Santa Claus tradition in Victorian England that led to Father Christmas's being associated with gift-giving, until eventually, with help from a series of Coca-Cola advertisements in the 1920s and 1930s, Father Christmas took on Santa Claus's characteristics in the public's imagination and the names became more or less interchangeable. When I use 'Father Christmas' today, I repeat the same name as users of centuries past, all the way back to the baptism of the personification of Christmas as 'Father Christmas'. Yet insofar as people today who use the name 'Father Christmas' assume that it is just another name for Santa Claus, my deferential semantic intention means that I identify Santa Claus rather than the personification of Christmas. That seems like the right result.

So it would appear that Sainsbury's revised account accommodates even these challenging cases of co-identification within a name-centric conception of PUNs; after all, he makes no appeal to mental representations or associated information. But in fact this appearance is misleading. Although the new version of the theory tells us how an individual's use of a name comes to have a referent (if any) – by deference to 'conventionalised speakers' reference' – it provides no explanation of how the latter is determined, and thus no explanation of what ultimately determines either reference or identification. Contrast the theory in RWR. On that version, the fact that my use of 'Hamlet' co-identified with your use of 'Hamlet' was guaranteed by our use of the same name, in a chain of name-oriented intentions leading back to an original baptism. As long as I intended to use a name in the same way as those from whom I learned it, I would be sure to refer to or identify the same thing. This follows from the assumption that reference-propagation follows name-

propagation. If, however, we allow for shifts in reference or identification, then using the same name, participating in the same practice, is insufficient by itself to guarantee that we are referring to or identifying the same thing. We should welcome this consequence, since reference and identification shift are undoubtedly possible. But we may reasonably want an explanation of how they occur.

Sainsbury is not especially concerned to provide such an explanation, taking the intensional facts – such as that 'Madagascar' refers to Madagascar and that 'Hamlet' identifies Hamlet – as both fundamental and irreducible.[22] Those of us who are not happy to treat these as basic facts will want to know what determines them. In virtue of what does 'Hamlet' identify Hamlet rather than, say, Macbeth? For identification the answer surely requires an appeal to the information associated with a name. Consider this example of Sainsbury's. Suppose that a small group of Conan Doyle fans decides, as a joke, to call Holmes 'Watson' and Watson 'Holmes' among themselves. All the texts are destroyed and for whatever reason, over time the only people who use the names learned the stories from the group of fans, not realising that there has been, as Sainsbury puts it, a 'jocular inversion'. The only way to describe the resulting practice is as Sainsbury does: the name 'Holmes' comes to identify Watson (the side-kick) and the name 'Watson' comes to identify Holmes (the detective). In other words, what has happened is that the name 'Watson' has come to be associated with information about the detective, specifically Conan Doyle's descriptions of Holmes in the original stories. And the name 'Holmes' has come to be associated with information about the side-kick, specifically Conan Doyle's descriptions of Watson in the original stories.

Sainsbury agrees that explaining this case requires an appeal to the different bodies of information associated with the names 'Holmes' and 'Watson', but takes this appeal to merely epistemic.[23] I would claim, by contrast, that if identification shift is explained by a shift in the information associated with a name, this can only be because such information plays an essential role in determining identification in the first place. So even if we accept that there are PUNs individuated by uses of the same name in which participants defer to others on the objects of reference (if any), we still require an account of how associated information determines identification. I argue below (§6) that a full explanation of the shift in identification appeals to the origins of these bodies of information in Conan Doyle's mental representations of the characters. First, though, I consider a reply one might make on behalf of the name-centric approach.

5. Scepticism

I have claimed that the name-centric accounts developed by Sainsbury fail either to accommodate or to adequately explain certain intuitive judgements about co-identification. But this objection appears to assume that our intuitions concerning co-identification are clear and robust, and there are good reasons to be sceptical that they are. Indeed scepticism about identification and co-identification seems the natural corollary of irrealism. The irrealist claims that despite the way we talk, there are no such things as Hamlet, Vulcan, Santa Claus and their ilk. To insist that there is a fact of the matter as to whether or not two uses of a name, or of different names, identify 'the same thing', implies a commitment that may only make sense from a realist perspective.[24] In that case the name-centric approach cannot be criticised for the failure to explain something that should instead be explained away. We must therefore look more closely at the motivations for scepticism about co-identification.

Scepticism arises because judgements of co-identification are typically purpose-relative and sensitive to context.[25] The cases where we are most likely to take two different names to co-identify are those where a character, such as Superman, is given two names in a single fiction. But when we have different works or sources, our practices of identifying or distinguishing characters may turn on our aims. On the one hand, we say that Shamela just is Pamela: the conceit of the satire is that this is the 'true story' of the same character. But on the other hand, we might be heard to say that the conniving Shamela differs in many respects from the innocent Pamela. Similarly, there may be reasons to distinguish the Ulysses of Virgil or Dante from Homer's character. Notice that such reasons do not hinge on the difference in name in English: in French, where the name would be *Ulysse* in all three works, the same question can be raised. For certain interpretive purposes, we identify the characters: a reader who does not recognise that Virgil is writing about Homer's character may fail to grasp the background relevant to understanding his negative portrayal. For other interpretive purposes, we might not: the characters are depicted quite differently. Co-identification seems even looser with adaptations. Is Maria of *West Side Story* the same character as Shakespeare's Juliet? Surely it is a mistake to think (as realists seem committed to do) that there is a definite answer to this question.

The question can also be raised for fictions in which, as we say, a character is *modelled* on a real individual. Is the character Flimnap in *Gulliver's Travels* really Sir Robert Walpole in 6-inch Lilliputian disguise, or is the relationship more distant? I was taught in my Shakespeare course at university that while the so-called 'history plays' such as *Richard III* and *Henry V* were about the real individuals, fictionalised though they might be,

Shakespeare's use of more ancient figures such as Amleth or the Scottish king Macbeth was just a borrowing of information for creating a new character. Whatever one might think of the quality of my education, the point is that it is just not clear whether Hamlet is Amleth or Macbeth (the character) is Macbeth (the real person). Indeed there might not be any intention on Shakespeare's part that would settle the matter one way or the other.[26] Finally, consider yet again the case of Santa Claus and Father Christmas. Although current practice typically identifies them, there are contexts in which we recognise a distinction, as when contrasting the very different histories of the myths. For instance, after detailing the history of Father Christmas from the fifteenth century on, the *Oxford Dictionary of English Folklore* says this:

> Nowadays Father Christmas is almost always associated with children's presents rather than adult feasting. His authentic dress is a loose, hooded red gown edged with white; however, he now often wears a red belted jacket and tasselled floppy cap imitated from Santa Claus, and has acquired Santa's reindeer sledge and nocturnal habits. (Simpson and Roud 2000: 120)

The implication is that although Father Christmas is now represented very similarly to Santa Claus, they are distinct.

A sceptic takes these observations as a reason to ignore our intuitions of co-identification. If our judgements vary so dramatically, if our intuitions are so messy, we cannot expect any coherent theory to accommodate them. If this is right, one could argue that it is no objection to a name-centric account that it has trouble dealing with co-identification. Unfortunately for the name-centric approach, however, these variations in judgements of co-identification pose a serious problem. In particular, both versions of Sainsbury's account seem to rule them out altogether.

Where we take the causal connection between name-using practices to determine co-identification, it looks as if there is no possibility of denying that 'Odysseus' and 'Ulysses' co-identify in any context. In virtue of the intentions that constitute participation in the 'Ulysses' practice, going back to a translator intending to use the Latin name in the same way as the Greek, speakers cannot fail to identify the same character as speakers participating in the 'Odysseus' practice. This is so even if they wish explicitly to distinguish the characters, as might a literary critic who argues that Virgil's character is merely modelled on Homer's. If this critic is wrong, it is not simply because he uses the names 'Ulysses' and 'Odysseus' with the appropriate name-using intentions. The revised version of the theory, appealing to

conventionalised speakers' reference, creates the same problem with Father Christmas and Santa Claus. If the convention in my linguistic community is to use 'Father Christmas' for Santa Claus, and I defer to this convention in using 'Father Christmas', then I cannot but identify Santa. Perhaps Sainsbury could say that in these difficult cases there simply is no clear convention: the identification of Santa Claus with Father Christmas, while common, does not amount to standardised speakers' reference/identification. Even if this is a plausible reply (I have my doubts), there are many cases in which the same move would be clearly wrong. There are contexts in which we contrast Laurence Olivier's Hamlet with Kevin Kline's, but this does not mean that there is no convention for using the name 'Hamlet' for the protagonist of different productions of Shakespeare's play.

In short, the messiness of our intuitions does not help the name-centric approach; if anything it constitutes an additional objection. So should we join the sceptic and simply reject any attempt to explain those intuitions? In fact I do not think that the variations in judgements of co-identification constitute a reason for scepticism at all. I suggest instead that we have reasonably clear intuitions of genuinely complex phenomena. There is a difference between accepting that judgements of co-identification are purpose-relative and sensitive to context, and claiming that there is nothing to say about what grounds these judgements. I will argue that an info-centric account provides the appropriate grounding.

6. An Info-centric Account

In developing an info-centric explanation of co-identification, I take as my starting point John Perry's invocation of intersubjective networks of notions, or *notion networks* for short, in *Reference and Reflexivity* (2001: Ch. 7-8).[27] Notion networks are essentially networks of content flow about an individual. In Perry's terminology (originating with Crimmins & Perry 1989), a *notion* is a mental representation of an individual – sometimes also called an *individual* or *singular concept* – associated with a mental file.[28] Notions can arise in a variety of ways, such as through perception, as when meeting a person for the first time; or the perception of reference, as when reading a person's name for the first time. There are also empty notions, which may arise from errors, such as thinking the rustling in the tree is due to a monster; or through free creation, as when an author invents a fictional character by opening a new file and deciding on the content to include. Notion networks originate with a notion or notions of an object, whether or not that object exists, and develop through the transmission of information – or, more accurately, descriptive content – about the same object in communication.[29] Suppose that you have a notion of Alexander the Great, of whom

I've never heard. You tell me about him, causing me to create a new Alexander-notion, with which I associate the information you give me. This is one connection within a much larger network transmitting information about Alexander.

Because there can there be notions associated with multiple names and notions not associated with any name at all, participation in a notion network is not tied to the use of a particular name or even to linguistic expressions. Nonetheless, notion networks provide the mechanism by which uses of names secure reference or identification. Perry assumes that there is only one name 'Alexander', and many *permissive conventions* that enable us to use that name to refer to or identify different individuals (2001: 103). Notion networks *support* these naming conventions by transmitting the information that a particular name can be used for a particular individual (if any). Because an individual can have more than one name, a notion network may support many different naming conventions for the same thing. If we are aware of a particular naming convention – for instance, if we know that the name 'Alexander' can be used for a particular Macedonian conqueror or that the name 'Hamlet' can be used for a particular Shakespearean character – then we will associate the name with our notion of the individual. So in using the name, our intention is to exploit the convention in order to talk about whatever our notion is of; in this sense, our notion *guides* our use of the name. The referent of a name (if any) will then be the referent of the relevant notion.[30]

By taking the reference of notions as primary, the info-centric approach has a clear advantage over a name-centric account with respect to identific4ation and co-identification. For these phenomena are not restricted to language. There is some sense in which I have the ability to think about Hamlet, the same Hamlet that you think about; our imaginative responses to fiction would be hard to understand otherwise. Indeed the capacity to share information about the same non-existents is essential to literary and other practices. It is plausible that an explanation of these phenomena will invoke the same apparatus that underpins our capacity to think about the same real individual, such as Alexander the Great. And it is improbable that this capacity for object-directed thought turns on the ability to use proper names. An info-centric approach assumes that the explanation goes the other way round: our ability to use proper names depends on a prior capacity for intersubjective, object-directed thought, even when there are no objects.[31]

However, we face a problem in applying Evans's original approach to empty names and empty notions. We cannot simply take the referent of a notion network to be the dominant source of information flowing through the network. In the empty case, either there is no dominant source of information – no individual from which information in the network

derives – or, worse, there *is* a dominant source, but it is the wrong kind of thing. After all there is a perfectly ordinary sense in which Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* is the dominant source of information associated with my notion of Emma Bovary. But this does not make the *novel* the referent of my uses of the name 'Emma', any more than Boswell's *Life of Johnson* constitutes the referent of my thoughts about Samuel Johnson. We must be careful to distinguish between a *source of information* and a *representation* that carries the information: the real Samuel Johnson was the dominant causal source of the information for Boswell's biographical representation. Or more accurately, the real Johnson was the dominant source of the information associated with Boswell's notion of Johnson, the one that guided Boswell's references to Johnson in the biography. In the case of Emma Bovary there simply is no dominant source in the relevant sense.[32] Instead the notion network originates with Flaubert's freely created notion, associated with invented information, which guides Flaubert's identification of Emma in the novel. Flaubert's notion and novel constitute representations rather than sources of information.

We have ruled out the possibility that thought and discourse about Emma Bovary refers to Flaubert's notion or novel. We have not, however, explained in virtue of what a particular individual's thoughts or discourse identify Emma (that particular character), or how different individuals are able to co-identify Emma. To address these questions we must add some complexity to our account of notion networks. Here I borrow from Evans's revised account of reference for names in *The Varieties of Reference*, where he draws a distinction between *producers* and *consumers* in a practice of using a name NN.[33] (I shall, however, explain his account in terms of a more general practice that does not rely on the use of a particular name.) The producers are the 'core group of speakers who regularly and reliably recognise an individual, *x,* as NN' (Evans 1982: 388). Producers acquire information about *x* through their interactions with *x* and transmit this information to others. Only producers can 'inject new information into the practice' (1982: 377). A producer refers to *x* so long as *x* is the dominant source of information in her mental file. Consumers are those introduced into the practice of talking about *x* without knowing *x.* By contrast with producers, a consumer refers to *x* so long as her mental file contains information dominantly derived *from the relevant files of producers*. Dickie points out that there is a further contrast between 'participating' consumers, subject to the reference condition just mentioned, and 'parasitic' consumers, who have little or no information about *x* and refer to *x* simply in virtue of intending to use a name or other device the way it is used in the practice (2011: 52-53).

Evans's account of consumers applies equally well whether or not a network has a referent. Participating consumers who learn about Johnson by reading Boswell's biography, or from those who have read the biography, refer to Johnson insofar as their information dominantly derives from Boswell's mental file. Participating consumers who learn about Emma Bovary by reading *Madame Bovary*, or from those who have read the novel, identify Emma so long as the information associated with their Emma-notions is dominantly derived from Flaubert's mental file. And parasitic consumers simply refer to or identify whatever others in the practice refer to or identify. Notice that it is the referential activity of parasitic consumers that Sainsbury's revised account captures. But parasitic consumers only refer or identify in virtue of deference to the practice of producers and participating consumers, and here information is central.

By contrast with the concept of consumers, Evans defines *producers* in a way that rules out any application to the empty case; no one could possibly belong to a 'core group' of individuals who interact with Hamlet or Santa Claus and thereby acquire information about them. There is, however, a way to understand the producer role so that it encompasses notion networks that have referents as well as those that do not. I propose that we take the defining feature of producers to be their capacity legitimately to introduce new information into the network. What constitutes 'legitimacy' – that is, what makes it the case that someone has the right to introduce new information – will be heavily context-dependent.[34] If Evans is right, the only producers in a referring network will be those who have known an individual.[35] Boswell is a producer in the Johnson-network because his information comes directly from interactions with Johnson, and he refers to Johnson because Johnson is the dominant source of information associated with his Johnson-notion. In some non-referring networks, the producers will be those who are in an authoritative position, for example with respect to a literary practice. Flaubert is a producer in the Emma Bovary-network because he freely created a notion and communicated associated information through a work of fiction, within a practice that recognises this process as 'inventing a character'. When it comes to a popular icon such as Santa Claus, the only constraint on legitimacy may be what catches on with the public. This explains the influence of the Coca-Cola Company. In the empty case the conditions for identification will also vary, depending on whether a producer originates a notion network or participates in one that is already established. Flaubert identifies Emma Bovary insofar as his freely created notion guides his use of the name 'Emma', whereas the Coca-Cola advertisements identify Santa Claus because their creators' notions of the

character are associated with information transmitted through an existing Santa Claus-network.

On this account, the reason that 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' identify the same character is that the creators of that character were guided by a single notion in introducing (or re-introducing) those names. The appeal to notion networks also provides a straightforward explanation of Sainsbury's hypothetical practice in which participants have come to use the name 'Watson' for Sherlock Holmes and 'Holmes' for Dr Watson. Sainsbury could not describe the shift without adverting to associated information: specifically, that 'Watson' was now being used for *the detective* and 'Holmes' for *the side-kick*. The account explains the role of associated information in terms of derivation from a producer's notions. The reason that participants in that practice identify Holmes (the detective) in using the name 'Watson' is that the information they associate with the name derives ultimately from Conan Doyle's notion of Holmes – that is, the notion that guided his use of the name 'Holmes' in the original stories. They identify Watson (the side-kick) in using the name 'Holmes' because the information they associate with the name derives ultimately from Conan Doyle's notion of Watson. In the Holmes/Watson case, we have no better practical way of distinguishing between Conan Doyle's two notions other than by appeal to associated information, but this does not undermine the general point that identification by consumers depends on the flow of information from producers.

The Holmes/Watson example, perhaps because of its artificiality, is relatively straightforward. The real test for the info-centric approach to PUNs is in more complex cases of co-identification, particularly those in which our judgements seem to be purpose-relative and context-sensitive. In the next section I argue that the appeal to notion networks explains our varying intuitions about co-identification.

7. Complex cases

Begin with differing judgements about the identification of Odysseus with Ulysses. Suppose that we are students in a world literature class who do not read everything we are assigned. I have read Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* but not Dante's *Inferno*. You have read the latter but not the former. I tell you about Odysseus and you tell me about Ulysses, and we agree that these are two very interesting characters. The lecturer overhears and corrects us: they are the same character. Dante drew from Virgil's and others' depiction of Homer's character, condemning him to his circle of Hell partly for his role in defeating Troy (alluded to, but not fully explained, in the *Inferno* itself). Assume that the evidence is sufficient that

Dante intended to import Homer's character into his poem, rather than to create a new character. In that case, the same notion formed in response to reading Virgil was the one guiding his identifications of Ulysses in the *Inferno*. In this context, the lecturer is right; we are simply ignorant of the connections between the works. But these connections do not preclude our distinguishing the characters in other settings, for example when contrasting Homer's character development with Virgil's or Dante's. We might then be perfectly in the right to declare that Dante's Ulysses lacked the devotion to Ithaca and Penelope that motivated Homer's Odysseus to return home (albeit circuitously).

We can explain these judgements of sameness and difference as a function of the ways in which information flows between the authors' notions. Dante possessed a notion of Homer's character associated with information from Virgil and others, and this notion not only guided his use of the name 'Ulysses' in the *Inferno* but also influenced the way he described the character. These observations ground judgements of identity. But as is typical when writers borrow characters, Dante did not restrict himself to information from other authors, inventing an entirely new finale to his character's life in which he pursues further adventure rather than returning to Penelope. This is why it makes sense in certain contexts to distinguish Dante's Ulysses from Homer's. Which bodies of information, originating in which author's notions, are the ones we privilege for purposes of identification can turn on our aims within a given context.

What underlies this complexity is the fact that there are multiple producers who can legitimately introduce new information into the Odysseus-network.[36] Up to the point at which Dante had simply read or otherwise learned about Odysseus, he could have been described merely as a consumer in the Odysseus-network. But by importing the character into a new work within a literary practice that accords this kind of creative adaptation an authoritative status, Dante became a producer. Thus although there is only one notion network supporting uses of the various names for Odysseus, representing the flow of information ultimately derived from Homer, it has branched in different directions.[37] As a result of the interventions of new producers, there are different though overlapping bodies of information transmitted through the network. This complex structure underpins judgements of both identity and distinctness, depending on whether we focus on the shared information across the whole network – in the present case, information that originates with Homer and is carried into other works – or privilege divergent bodies of information within branches, such as information originating in Dante's *Inferno*.

Notice that this represents a sharp contrast with the referring case. In a referring network there are typically many producers, and often distinct branches carrying different bodies of information: think of the different groups of people, from family to colleagues to friends, who communicate with others about you. While this may present epistemic challenges – as when those familiar with Chomsky's radical politics do not realise that he is the same person as the famous linguist – it does not suggest that reference varies with aims or context. People who think there are two Chomskys are just wrong. And if I contrast 'Chomsky the linguist' with 'Chomsky the rabble-rouser' for certain purposes, I do not thereby deny Chomsky's self-identity. It is only because there is no Odysseus that variations in judgements of co-identification can be equally correct.

Of course I have mentioned only the three most famous producers associated with Homer's character. We should expect that the opportunities for divergent judgements of co-identification will increase if more producers are recognised. In fact, even where there is a single producer whom we take to be most authoritative, as with Flaubert in the Emma-network, the existence of film or television adaptations multiplies the possible number of producers dramatically. The situation is even more complicated where the production of an original work with new characters is already a corporate affair (as with film), or there are different creators of different works in a series (as with television). Sometimes there is a story without any clear origin (as with myths or legends), so that it is impossible to trace the branches of a network to a limited number of identifiable producers. In these cases we are likely to rely on shared representations conveying shared bodies of information.[38] We still assume that the information ultimately derives from the notions of producers – whoever they may be, and however their status as producers is determined.

Apply this to the Santa Claus/Father Christmas example. Until relatively recently there were two distinct notion networks: one concerning a character based on the real Saint Nicholas that originated in the United States in the nineteenth century, and another concerning a personification of Christmas that originated in fifteenth-century England. In the early stages of each network it was probably fairly easy to single out the relevant producers: certain authors and poets. But as with other myths, the characters took on a 'life of their own'. Once Santa Claus became a popular icon (a development usually traced to Thomas Nast's cover of the Christmas edition of *Harper's Weekly* in 1862), it became possible for additional producers, such as the Coca-Cola Company, to inject new information into the networks along the way. Eventually most of the information that came to be associated with people's notions of 'Father Christmas' could be traced back to the Santa Claus network.

Insofar as notion networks are networks of content flow, once this happened the networks effectively merged. For this reason Ethan's father is correct to identify Santa Claus and Father Christmas in a context in which the merged body of information is prioritised: Ethan and Kaitlin are both expecting presents to be delivered by the same fellow on Christmas Eve. In the context of explaining the different histories of the Santa Claus and Father Christmas stories, though, the *Oxford Dictionary of Folklore* draws an appropriate distinction. This distinction is grounded in the fact that there were once two distinct notion networks transmitting unrelated bodies of information.

A more challenging case is one where a fictional character is based on a real individual. Suppose that the causal source of much of the information that Shakespeare associated with Hamlet was the real Danish prince. Are we not then committed to saying that Shakespeare – and by extension consumers who defer to him –was referring to Amleth, with no possibility of variation in judgements? The short answer is no. Even if Shakespeare's descriptions of Hamlet overlap to a large extent with his information about Amleth, this does not automatically mean that the descriptions of Hamlet are dominantly derived from the notions of producers in the Amleth-network. Leaving aside Thomas Kyd's role, assume that Shakespeare had intended to invent a fictional character. In that case he would have created a new notion, labelled it with the name 'Hamlet', and begun associating information with it. By hypothesis much of this information would consist in descriptions also associated with his Amleth-notion. However, it is not clear that the mere copying of descriptive content in this way constitutes the kind of information flow that transmits identification through a network.[39] Furthermore, dominance is not a matter of mere quantity of information, but turns rather on the weight of *important* information. Shakespeare's Hamlet-notion would include a crucial item absent from his Amleth-notion: the fact that Hamlet was a fictional character that he invented. Most consumers in the Hamlet-network associate fictionality with Shakespeare's character, and we could argue that this feature is sufficiently important to offset other descriptive similarities between Hamlet and Amleth.[40] We might also think that it is just a fact about the relevant artistic and entertainment practices that an author's intention usually suffices to establish that a character is based on, rather than identical to, a real individual. So there is nothing in the notion network account that precludes the possibility of drawing on information about a real individual in creating a fictional character.

At the same time, the notion network account can explain those instances where we do not take the intention to create a new character as decisive. Such judgements are typically motivated by the weight of information derived ultimately from a real individual. When the

overlap is substantial in significant ways, we may doubt the success of the author in inventing a new character. A writer who intends to create a fictional character merely modelled on his mother might depart so little from the truth that anyone with the necessary background would identify them; in that case it seems he would have failed to fulfil his intention. The opposite case is also telling. Even if Flaubert's famous declaration, 'Madame Bovary, c'est moi', were meant as a statement of the intention to self-refer, we would likely reject the identification of Emma with her creator. Although we can see ways in which the character is based on Flaubert, the obvious differences in certain central properties render it difficult to identify them. Descriptive overlap is a matter of degree, and the importance of any particular set of descriptions a matter of debate. Moreover there are likely to be other factors to consider in determining reference in fiction, such as the extent to which information about the real individual is relevant to understanding a work, or the likelihood of recognition among the intended audience (cf. Walton 1990: 110-12). In general the distinction between inventing a new fictional character based on a real individual, and fictionalising that real individual, is not perfectly sharp. The ways in which information flows through notion networks allow us to explain this fuzziness.

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My goal in the foregoing has been to show that the info-centric approach to PUNs has the resources to explain the context-sensitive and purpose-relative nature of our judgements across a range of cases: from fictional characters imported into one work from another or based on real individuals, to legends that merge into popular icons, to hypothetical cases of identification inversion. We have seen that the name-centric approach fails to provide an equally satisfactory explanation of the same phenomena. Admittedly I have done little more than sketch the ways in which an appeal to notion networks can accommodate our intuitions of identification and co-identification. Many details of the account remain to be worked out, particularly concerning the application of the producer/consumer framework to the empty case. Still, I conclude that we have no reason to succumb to scepticism about co-identification, as if there were no facts that ground intuitions about when we are talking or thinking about the same thing. If the account I have proposed is at least roughly correct, our judgements track genuine facts, *not* about real individuals who are the referents of our notions – there are none in these cases – but instead about the notion networks through which we share information.[41]

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[1] I focus here on the mechanisms of reference-fixing and reference-transmission, not on the
semantics of proper names. On the contrast see Dickie (2011: 43-46) and Braun (2005: 12-
13).

[2] There is debate over the best way to individuate proper names, to which I return. For
present purposes I assume that names are individuated orthographically.

[3] For arguments against fictional realism see, e.g., Everett (2005), Friend (2007) and
Sainsbury (2009).

[4] See Brock (2004).

[5] I have elsewhere adapted Perry's account to provide truth conditions for statements about
fictional characters (Friend 2011).

[6] See also Everett's (2000) discussion of 'referential frameworks'.

[7] On mental files see Perry (2001, 2002), Recanati (1993, 2010, 2011), Lawlor (2001),
Sainsbury (2005: Ch. 7) and Jeshion (2010).

[8] *Dossier* is Evans's term, borrowed from Grice (1969).

[9] Evans (1982) revises this part of the account. See §6 below.

[10] See Dickie (2011) for a thorough analysis of problems associated with the concept of a
dominant source.

[11] On the issue of acquaintance and singular thought, see Jeshion (2010), Recanati (2010),
Crane (2011) and Azzouni (2011).

[12] E.g., Kaplan (1990) and Justice (2001).

[13] This point is made by Textor (2010, §4), who uses it to argue that name-using practices play no essential explanatory role in Sainsbury's framework.

[14] Sainsbury does not distinguish between reference and identification, using the term 'reference' in either case. I explain his view using both terms for clarity.

[15] In RWR Sainsbury characterises continued participation in terms of a speaker's associated information (2005: 117-118). However, because he has since rejected this view (see §4 below), and because it is not in the spirit of the name-centric approach, I ignore it here.

[16] Sainsbury suggests this approach for a related example of Evans's (2005: 119-122).

[17] Assuming Wikipedia is to be believed ('Superman' 2011).

[18] Sainsbury (2011) makes this explicit in replying to an objection in Textor (2010).

[19] I assume for the sake of argument that there was a single author Homer, even though this is unlikely.

[20] The proposal is contained in a presentation (Sainsbury 2011), which Sainsbury was kind enough to send to me and to permit me to discuss in this paper. My description of the proposal comes from the presentation, accompanying notes and email discussion, which occurred in August 2011.

[21] Perry makes essentially the same suggestion as an alternative to Evans's explanation (2001: 146).

[22] Sainsbury also suggests we treat the determination of semantic reference on an analogy with grammar, where what counts as grammatical for a language is a function of what most normal speakers would do at a given time. Perhaps the implication is that no further explanation of *why* speakers do what they do, for either grammar or speaker reference, is necessary. It is not clear that Sainsbury means to make this claim. But it is worth noting that grammaticality turns not only on performance but competence, and distinguishing these does require knowing how and why speakers make their judgements. Thanks to Anthony Everett for drawing my attention to this issue.

[23] In personal communication. Cf. Sainsbury (2005: 106).

[24] Thanks to Lee Walters for pressing me on this point. Sainsbury (in conversation) has suggested the same reply.

[25] For discussion of the problem this poses for realism, see Everett (2005) and Friend (2007).

[26] As Anthony Everett pointed out to me.

[27] In more recent work with Kepa Korta (Korta and Perry 2011), Perry advocates a different account of co-identification (called *conditional co-reference*). This account is, however, more name-centric than Perry's earlier theory.

[28] On individual concepts in this sense see the works cited in n.7. Although I follow Perry in construing notions as mental particulars associated with mental files, nothing I say turns on whether one identifies notions with files.

[29] I use the term 'information' as including any sort of content that can be contained in a mental file, including false descriptions or descriptions of non-existents.

[30] There are also cases where we do not yet have a notion of an individual, and merely use a name to co-refer with others, as noted by Perry (2001: 136). See §6 below on 'parasitic consumers'.

[31] Here I assume that this kind of thought does not require acquaintance (see n.11 above). There may also be a phenomenon of shared empty demonstrative thought, as when two people seem to see the same oasis; however I leave this issue aside here.

[32] Note that this allows a fictional character to be a composite drawn from various sources, so long as none is the dominant source. I take up the question of how to understand cases where there is a single real model for a character below (§7).

[33] I do not, however, follow Evans (1982: Ch. 10) in appealing to pretence to explain the identification of fictional characters and the like (cf. Walton 1990). In Friend (2011) I argue that the invocation of pretence requires a prior account of identification.

[34] Thanks to Tim Button for suggesting this way of thinking about producer legitimacy. See also §7 below.

[35] Of course we might question Evans's restriction of producers in a referring network to those who are capable of recognising an individual perceptually. Perhaps Johnson's correspondents should be construed as producers even if they never met him in person, and by extension anyone who reads his writings. I do not aim to settle the question of how to delineate the class of producers for referring networks here.

[36] This is typically also the case for referring networks. A popular, well-travelled, long-living person is likely to be the source of a network with many producers; extended to famous objects and places, we could have networks with thousands or even millions of producers.

[37] Cf. Everett (2000) on 'branches' and Perry (2001: 159) on 'subnetworks'.

[38] The same may be true even when a producer is easily identifiable. Arguably it is part of our literary tradition to privilege the information contained in *Madame Bovary* over any further

descriptions Flaubert may have associated with the Emma in his own mind. The relevance of, say, correspondence or authorial statements concerning the interpretation of a work or of particular characters is subject to dispute.

[39] Thanks to Anthony Everett for suggesting this reply.

[40] Although descriptivists about empty names usually take the information associated with the name of a fictional character to be restricted to the content of a story, I assume no such constraint. (See, e.g., Currie 1990 and Lamarque and Olsen 1994, who defend descriptivism for certain statements containing empty names.) Our mental files on Emma Bovary contains not only content such as 'is French' and 'is unfaithful', but also 'is a fictional character' and 'was created by Flaubert'.