

Takashi Yagisawa

# Imagining Fictional Characters

**Abstract:** I defend an argument against the view that fictional objects are abstract objects manufactured by human beings. The key move in the argument is that since abstract objects are not subject to perception, they are not subject to imagination. I bolster the argument by defending the importance of imagination in our appreciation of fiction and by critically examining some attempts to skirt the key move. In doing so, I highlight the difference between imagination *de re* and imagination *de dicto* as crucial.

## 1 Introduction

Abstract Artifact Theory (AAT) is the metaphysical theory which says that all fictional objects are abstract objects, actually created artificially by authors and kept in existence by consumers of fiction.

I wish to object to AAT by pointing out a certain difficulty caused by the abstractness AAT attributes to fictional objects. The difficulty concerns the fact of our imaginative engagement with fictional objects in general, and fictional characters in particular. When we read a work of ordinary narrative fiction, we imagine the fictional characters that appear in the fiction. Our imagining the fictional characters is almost always vital to our full appreciation of the work as literature.

Such imaginative engagement with fictional characters may precede and even be required by genuine emotional response to the contents of the fictional story,<sup>1</sup> but it is important to keep them separate. Having an emotional response to the story's contents may raise some issues for the defenders of some theories about the nature of narrative fiction, but my argument against AAT is independent of such issues. For my argument against AAT, taking note of the metaphysical nature of fictional characters is enough, and considerations going beyond it are irrelevant.

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**1** See Walton (1978), pp. 195–204 and Ch. 7.

## 2 The argument

Here is my argument against AAT:

1. We sometimes imagine some fictional characters.
  2. We cannot imagine abstract artifacts of the kind postulated by AAT.
- Therefore,
3. Some fictional characters are not abstract artifacts of the kind postulated by AAT.<sup>2</sup>

The argument is valid, but the two premises are open to debate. The defender of AAT would undoubtedly deny one or both of them. Let us begin our consideration with premise 1.

### 2.1 Premise 1

Premise 1 is an understatement as an observation concerning proper literary experience. When reading narrative fiction, it is important that the reader exercise the ability of imagination to follow the story. Imaginative engagement with the fictional characters in the story is a vital part of the literary experience of reading a narrative fictional story and contributes to enhancement of the literary appreciation of the story.<sup>3</sup> It is possible to read a narrative fictional story without imagining its fictional characters, but doing so would almost certainly leave the reader without important aspects of literary experience. Not imagining Frankenstein's monster as grotesque, the hunchback of Notre Dame as visibly disfigured, and Anne of Green Gables as a spirited freckled redhead would rob the reader of the full experience of the respective stories in which these fictional characters appear.<sup>4</sup>

In order to experience a narrative fictional story fully as it should be experienced as literature, we should imagine all (key) fictional characters in the story. But we do not always do what we should, and we in fact imagine only some (key)

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<sup>2</sup> I sympathize with a similar line of objection against AAT in Sainsbury (2009), pp. 91–114.

<sup>3</sup> Let me emphasize that it is imagining fictional characters that my discussion focuses on, not imagining ourselves (along with fictional characters) in the fictional setup. I have nothing to say about imagining ourselves in any setup. Cf. Walton (1997).

<sup>4</sup> More good examples may be found in Isaac Asimov's novelette *Nightfall*. No particular fictional character (in the sense of a fictional person) needs to be the object of imagination, but the fictional planet Lagash and fictional goings-on near its surface need to be imagined vividly for the full appreciation of the novelette. For my purposes in this paper, the distinction between fictional characters and fictional objects (and goings-on) is unimportant.

fictional characters only some of the time. The above argument rests on what we do, instead of what we should do.

Premise 1 does not say that all of us imagine all fictional characters whenever we read the fictional stories which feature them. Some of us may lack sufficiently strong power of imagination of the adequate sort, and therefore may never imagine any fictional character. Those of us who possess sufficiently strong power of imagination of the adequate sort may sometimes fail, for whatever reason, to imagine some fictional characters appearing in fictional stories when we read the stories. But some of us do sometimes imagine some fictional characters when we read the fictional stories in which they appear. This is how premise 1 should be understood. This is good enough for my purposes against AAT, for AAT claims that all fictional characters are abstract (throughout their existence).

To focus our attention in deliberating the plausibility of premise 1, let us take a passage from an example work of fiction, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 1, Scene 5:

**JULIET**

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,  
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;  
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,  
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

**ROMEO**

Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

**JULIET**

Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

**ROMEO**

O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;  
They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

**JULIET**

Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

**ROMEO**

Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.

*Kisses her*

As we read this, we imagine, that is, picture a scene in which two fictional characters, Romeo and Juliet, interact with each other verbally and physically. The pictured scene includes in particular an occurrence of touching of their hands and

an occurrence of touching of their lips. Visually imagining such occurrences is important to the full appreciation of the play. Such visual imagining is imagining not just any occurrences but occurrences of touching of hands and touching of lips, and imagining not just any pair of entities but Romeo and Juliet. This is an example of imagining particular fictional characters as they appear in a fictional story engaging in spatiotemporal acts. Such imagining takes place typically as we read the relevant part of the fictional story, but it may also happen at other times, for example, when we think about what we read in the past.

The defender of AAT might deny premise 1 and claim that we never imagine fictional characters and that when we appear to imagine fictional characters, we are not really imagining anything at all, or else are really imagining some entities corresponding to the fictional characters, but never the fictional characters themselves.

It is true that those of us with sufficient imaginative power of the relevant kind may sometimes fail to exercise the power when reading a fictional story, either because we are distracted by other considerations concerning the story, or because we do not care enough about appreciating the story, or because of sheer imaginative laziness. But usually we do manage to imagine something as we read through the story, and typically our act of imagination involves imagining the fictional characters depicted in the story as they are depicted. In fact, in most narrative fiction it is hardly an exaggeration to say that one of the main functions of fictional characters is to be the objects of our imagination. To claim that we do imagine some things while reading a narrative fiction depicting fictional characters but what we imagine are some things other than the fictional characters would be to rob an important point of our speaking of fictional characters as existent entities. So the burden is on the defender of AAT to show what we are really imagining, or what we are really doing, when we seem to imagine the fictional characters.

The pretense theory of fiction<sup>5</sup> might prompt the defender of AAT to say that although we seem to imagine Romeo and Juliet, we really just pretend to imagine them. The problem of this line of thought is that the intelligibility of pretending to do *X* presupposes the intelligibility of doing *X* but that the intelligibility of imagining Romeo and Juliet as postulated by AAT is doubtful. Like imagining the number 17 or the Platonic Form of Beauty, imagining the artifactual abstract objects that are, according to AAT, Romeo and Juliet is hardly fathomable. (It may be noted here that in critiquing this move by the defender of AAT concerning Premise 1, I am touching on Premise 2, in effect defending a claim stronger than Premise 2 to the effect that imagining an abstract object is unfathomable.) Compare this with

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<sup>5</sup> See Evans (1982), Ch. 10; Kripke (2013); and Walton (1990).

clearly intelligible cases of pretending, e.g., pretending to serve a pie by pushing a wad of mud.

## 2.2 Premise 2

To see how plausible premise 2 is, we need to remember that imagining in the sense relevant to our discussion is primarily perceptual.

What distinguishes imagining from conceiving is that the former is essentially perceptual but the latter is not. Imagine a chimpanzee. Then imagine that the chimpanzee has a pipe. Now, where is the pipe? The answer is "In the chimpanzee's mouth", or perhaps "In the chimpanzee's hand". As we answer the question this way, we focus on the visual image of the pipe in the mouth or hand. If we are instead to conceive a chimpanzee having a pipe, we may well conceive a chimpanzee having a pipe in its mouth or hand, but we do not have to. We may just as well conceive a chimpanzee having a pipe without conceiving the chimpanzee having the pipe in any particular location or in any particular way. Conceiving is essentially only conceptual but imagining is essentially perceptual as well as conceptual.

In the case of the example of Romeo and Juliet, the imagination in question is auditory (hearing the words spoken by Juliet and Romeo), visual (seeing their bodily movements), and perhaps tactile (vicariously feeling the touching hand/lips).<sup>6</sup> If we are disallowed to use any perceptual mode of imagination, we will be unable to imagine Romeo or Juliet. Not only does perception take place in spacetime but perception is spatiotemporal by nature in the sense that it has to be of some thing or occurrence that is spatiotemporal if it is to be of anything at all. Because of this, imagining is spatiotemporal by nature in the same sense. That is, imagination (in the relevant sense) inherits spatiotemporal nature from perception.

Cast as an argument specifically about Romeo and Juliet in this Scene, the argument against AAT goes as follows:

4. We do imagine Romeo kissing Juliet, and when we do, we are imagining the fictional character Romeo kissing the fictional character Juliet.
5. It is impossible to imagine an abstract object kissing an abstract object.

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<sup>6</sup> Possibly also olfactory, and even gustatory.

Therefore,

6. The fictional characters Romeo and Juliet are not abstract objects.

Again, this argument is valid but its premises are open to debate. Take the second premise. Imagining in the pertinent sense is perceptual, and in particular visual. So, to imagine  $x$  kissing  $y$  is to visually imagine, that is, picture  $x$  as kissing  $y$ . But since abstract objects completely lack visually accessible characteristics, we cannot visually imagine (picture) abstract objects as doing anything spatiotemporal. So, we cannot imagine an abstract object kissing an abstract object.

Do not confuse this reasoning in support of the second premise with the following different reasoning in support of the second premise: (i) abstract objects are not spatiotemporal; so (ii) they cannot kiss anything (because kissing is a spatiotemporal activity); so, (iii) they cannot be imagined as kissing anything, including kissing an abstract object. (A similar argument may be given by speaking of being kissed instead of kissing.) The reasoning "(i), (ii), so (iii)" is vulnerable in a way the above reasoning is not. Someone might maintain that the impossibility of  $x$  kissing  $y$  does not entail the impossibility of our imagining  $x$  kissing  $y$ , for she might maintain that it is doubtful that we cannot imagine anything impossible. Such a person might say that it is possible for us to imagine Hesperus not being identical with Phosphorus, or water not being  $H_2O$ , or lightening not being a stream of electrons, all of which are impossible. It is true that Saul Kripke has a powerful response against the claim that we can conceive, let alone imagine, failures of these identities, by means of the celebrated idea of an "epistemic counterpart".<sup>7</sup>

But Kripke's position might not be inevitable, and the contrary position might be maintained consistently. My argument against AAT does not rest on the presumption that the position contrary to Kripke's could not be maintained consistently. In particular, my argument does not rely on the assumption that impossibilities are unimaginable. It only uses the assumption that non-spatiotemporal objects are unimaginable, or more narrowly, that non-spatiotemporal objects cannot be imagined to be kissing anything (or that non-spatiotemporal objects cannot be imagined to be being kissed by anything). This assumption is more plausible than the assumption that impossibilities are unimaginable.

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<sup>7</sup> Kripke (1980), pp. 97-105 and 116-143.

### 3 Two kinds of predication

The defender of AAT might resort to a well-known distinction concerning predication in order to object to my argument. According to AAT, Romeo and Juliet are abstract objects, hence they do not have any properties that require concreteness, like kissing someone and being kissed by someone. In this sense, it is incorrect to predicate kissing of Romeo or being kissed of Juliet. At the same time, in the play Romeo is depicted as kissing Juliet, and Juliet as being kissed by Romeo. So in this sense it is correct to predicate kissing of Romeo and being kissed of Juliet. The two leading contemporary theorists who postulate such a distinction of predication both leave the distinguished kinds of predication primitive.<sup>8</sup> Fortunately, one kind of predication is familiar enough and needs no definition or any kind of characterization beyond presentation of a few typical examples. This is the kind of predication such that Shakespeare was human, Eurasia is a continent, and Betelgeuse is a star. Also the predication of the property of being fictional of Juliet is of this kind. But when we say, "Juliet was kissed", and say something true, our predication of the property of being kissed is of the second kind. In this second sense, it is not truth that Shakespeare was human, that Eurasia is a continent, or that Betelgeuse is a star unless these entities are fictional entities depicted as being these respective ways in some fiction. Let us adopt van Inwagen's terminology and use "have" and "hold" corresponding to the first and second kinds of predication, respectively.

The defender of AAT might try to use this have/hold distinction to defend AAT by saying that we can imagine Romeo kissing Juliet not in the sense of imagining Romeo and Juliet having the relation of kissing but in the sense of imagining Romeo and Juliet holding the relation of kissing. This defense of AAT suffers from two defects.

First, it does not do justice to the phenomenology of our imagining Romeo kissing Juliet. When we are imaginatively engaged in the story of *Romeo and Juliet*, and imagining Romeo kissing Juliet, we are not imagining Romeo kissing Juliet according to the story. I am not denying that we could imagine Romeo kissing Juliet according to the story, but doing so would not be the same as imagining Romeo kissing Juliet, and it is the latter that enables us to imaginatively engage ourselves with the story. The former simply situates us outside the story as it were while we

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<sup>8</sup> See Van Inwagen (1977) (predicating vs. ascribing), Van Inwagen (1983) (having vs. holding), and Zalta (1983) (exemplifying vs. encoding).

do our imagining, and detaches us from imaginative engagement with the story in the sense relevant to our discussion.

Second, suppose that we interpret this defense of AAT charitably and understand it as saying that concerning the properties and relations Romeo and Juliet hold, we imagine Romeo and Juliet as having these properties and standing in these relations. That is, suppose in particular that we understand the defense of AAT as claiming that (i) concerning the property of kissing (which Romeo holds), we imagine Romeo as having it, (ii) concerning the property of being kissed (which Juliet holds), we imagine Juliet as having it, and (iii) concerning the relation of kissing (which the pair Romeo-Juliet holds), we imagine the pair Romeo-Juliet as having.

Even under such a charitable supposition, this defense of AAT misses the mark. My objection does not concern how we imagine Romeo and Juliet as being. It concerns what individuals we imagine when we imagine Romeo and Juliet. That is, my objection is not the contents of our imagination so much as the objects of our imagination. My contention against AAT is that Romeo and Juliet, as conceived by AAT, cannot be the *res* of our imagination *de re*. Since we cannot imagine them, we cannot imagine them as being anyway at all.

## 4 Social constructs

The defender of AAT might draw an analogy with socially constructed institutions. Take a sports team as an example, say, the Los Angeles Dodgers. It might be said that we can perceive the Dodgers play against the San Francisco Giants despite the fact that the team Dodgers is an abstract artifact (as is the team Giants). We perceive the team by perceiving its member players on the field. We perceive the players literally and are thereby said to perceive the team, as it were, by courtesy. The players are the objects of literal perception, whereas the team is the object of perception by courtesy. Likewise, the defender of AAT might claim that the fictional characters, Romeo and Juliet, are objects of perception by courtesy, hence they can be objects of imagination by courtesy. If Romeo and Juliet are indeed objects of perception by courtesy, then the question is: What are the objects of literal perception by means of which Romeo and Juliet are said to be objects of perception by courtesy?

At this point the defender of AAT might choose to shift our attention to theater. When we attend theater to see the play *Romeo and Juliet*, we perceive, among others, two actors as they play Romeo and Juliet on stage. Call them "Bobby" and "Betty". Bobby and Betty are not fictional characters. They are *playing* the fictional

characters, Romeo and Juliet. It is clear that we perceive Bobby and Betty. And via the relation of playing, our perceptual – hence imaginative – *rapport* might be said to somehow extend from the playing actors to the played characters.

This picture might be expanded to apply to the case of reading the written text of the play. As we read the text, we may imagine attending theater and perceiving Bobby and Betty on stage. The defender of AAT would then remove the stage and the entire theatrical setup, situate Bobby and Betty against the background depicted in the play, and invite us to imagine Bobby kissing Betty against that background. (If we wished to begin with more realistic background than stage set, we might speak of watching a motion-picture version of the play in a movie theater.) This imagining of Bobby and Betty would be as straightforwardly perceptual as perceiving Bobby and Betty. If we should accept the invitation and imagine them, we would succeed in imagining the individuals playing the fictional characters, and in doing so we would succeed in imagining the fictional characters themselves by courtesy. Or so the defender of AAT might say. Would this be satisfactory?

I am afraid not. The problem is that imagining by courtesy is not imagining. When we are genuinely engaged in the play, we imagine Romeo and Juliet, not Bobby and Betty, even though we may be perceiving Bobby and Betty. Of course, we need not imagine Romeo and Juliet by perceiving or imagining Bobby and Betty. Noting this fact, someone might suggest that perhaps we may imagine Romeo and Juliet not by imagining particular actors but by imagining arbitrary actors playing Romeo and Juliet. But if we followed this suggestion, we would lose the sense of imagining *de re*. Imagining arbitrary actors playing Romeo and Juliet is indistinguishable from imagining that an actor looking thus-and-so behaving toward an actress looking thus-and-so. Note that the notion of playing-Romeo that is relevant here is understandable without reference to any particular res, either an actor or a fictional character; it is a purely *de dicto* notion to the effect of moving thus-and-so and saying such-and-such words.

Here is a further thought on the relation of playing that may count against AAT. The relation of playing is holistic; Bobby cannot play Hamlet without Betty (or someone else) playing Juliet, and Bobby and Betty cannot play Romeo and Juliet without others playing the supporting characters and the surrounding setup.<sup>9</sup> In view of this, the relation of playing had better be replaced with the holistic two-

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<sup>9</sup> Except that Bobby may “air play” Romeo and Bobby and Betty may “air play” Romeo and Juliet in the sense analogous to the sense of “air guitar,” which is a guitar-playing movement without a guitar. But “air play”-ing a fictional character is not playing the fictional character any more than “air guitar”-ing is playing the guitar.

place relation of *bringing* or *presenting* between a theater troop and a world of fiction. This relation is *de dicto*; what the troop needs to do is purely *de dicto*, putting up a performance satisfying a certain purely qualitative description. If someone objects to this, let her compare one scenario in which some *de re* connections with abstract artifacts play a crucial role and another scenario in which no such connection exists; there would be no difference in what the troop members intentionally do.<sup>10</sup> So there is no *de re* basis to enable us to imagine *de re* about Romeo and Juliet by perceiving and/or imagining Bobby and Betty.

Back to the baseball analogy: Do Bobby and Betty stand in an analogous relation to Romeo and Juliet as the Dodgers players stand to the team Dodgers? No. Bobby and Betty do not make up Romeo and Juliet the way the players (along with the general manager, the coaches, and the owner) make up the baseball team. The relation between the actors and the fictional characters is not even relevantly analogous to the relation between the players and the team. In an important sense, there would be no team without players, but there would still be the fictional characters without actors. Nobody needs to "play" Romeo or Juliet in order for Romeo and Juliet to exist as abstract fictional characters. We may be said to be able to perceive by courtesy, or perhaps even literally, what Romeo and Juliet did according to Shakespeare's play by perceiving Bobby and Juliet enact the relevant scene. But that still does not imply that we thereby perceive the abstract fictional characters in the relevant *de re* sense. No perception, no imagination.

The defender of AAT might say that when we imagine Bobby and Betty play Romeo and Juliet, we are really directly (rather than by courtesy) imagining Romeo and Juliet as Bobby and Betty (or *as played by* Bobby and Betty). This move by the defender of AAT is supposed to transfer the obvious perceptual nature of our perceiving Bobby and Betty to our imagining Romeo and Juliet, thus assuring the imagining to be genuinely perceptual, and thereby giving us real imagining rather than imagining by courtesy. Actors play the fictional characters, and this is supposed to enable us to imagine the fictional characters as (*played by*) the actors. But this does not touch the fundamental problem that abstract objects are just not subject to imagining, which is perceptual by nature. We cannot imagine Romeo and Juliet, *a fortiori* cannot imagine Romeo and Juliet as (*played by*) Bobby and Betty.

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**10** It is possible for the defender of AAT to resort to an externalist conception of intention and argue that such a conception requires the troop members to have some *de re rapport* with the fictional characters in order to intend to play them. This will bring up important issues concerning *de re rapport* but they are topics to be discussed on other occasions.

## 5 Imagination *de re*

The defender of AAT might challenge the legitimacy of the notion of imagination *de re* as applied to appreciation of narrative fiction. She might say that even though we often imaginatively engage ourselves when reading a narrative fictional story, such imaginative engagement should not be understood in terms of imagination *de re*, where the *res* is a fictional character, even if it is understood in terms of imagining a fictional character. She might say that in imaginatively engaging ourselves, we may be said to imagine Romeo kissing Juliet, among other things, but that imagining Romeo kissing Juliet is not imagining any particular entity kissing any particular entity, even though Romeo and Juliet are particular entities.

But this would be a peculiar view, to say the least. According to AAT, Romeo and Juliet are actually existing particular entities, and yet imagining Romeo and Juliet is not imagining particular entities.

We cannot imagine information but can imagine the carrier, or the encoder, of information (by imagining written words, for example). Likewise, it might be proposed, we cannot imagine Romeo and Juliet but can imagine the encoders of Romeo and Juliet by imagining Bobby and Betty, and this is good enough for our imaginative engagement.

Is imagining the encoders of Romeo and Juliet really a good enough surrogate for imagining Romeo and Juliet? No. The encoders of Romeo and Juliet are nothing more than presenters or representations of Romeo and Juliet, not Romeo and Juliet. The presenter or representation (or encoder) of information is certainly not the information itself. Imagining a piece of paper and the ink marks deposited on it is a far cry from imagining the conveyed information.

## 6 Other kinds of engagement

It is important to distinguish imagining Romeo from empathizing with Romeo. It is not just imaginative engagement with fictional characters that is important in our appreciation of narrative fiction. Empathetic engagement is equally important. But the latter is free from the problem of the former, even though there is a close connection between the two.

We can empathize with *x* only if we can put ourselves in *x*'s shoes, as it were. But we cannot put ourselves in *x*'s shoes unless we can imagine ourselves as being *x* in some appropriate sense of "imagine ourselves as being *x*". Given this, one might be tempted to think that putting ourselves in Romeo's (or Juliet's) shoes is

no more possible than imagining Romeo kissing Juliet. It would be a mistake to yield to this temptation. The crucial difference between the two kinds of engagement is a difference between the *de re* and the *de dicto*. Imagining Romeo kissing Juliet is *de re* imagining, where the *res* are Romeo and Juliet, whereas putting oneself in Romeo's (or Juliet's) shoes is *de dicto* in the sense of imagining ourselves to have the properties (and bear the relations) Romeo (or Juliet) has (and bears) in the story.

It is easy to confuse these two kinds of engagement and conclude mistakenly that since putting oneself in the fictional character's shoes (*de dicto*) is possible, imagining the fictional character (*de re*) is possible.

A related kind of engagement that may also be conflated with imagining fictional characters is that which is performed by thinking counterfactually: e.g., "If I were Romeo, I would kiss Juliet in that situation"; "If Romeo kissed me in that situation, I would slap him". Such counterfactual engagement is no more *de re* than empathy by way of putting oneself in the shoes of Romeo or Juliet. We are using the properties had by the fictional characters in the story.

There may probably be other kinds of engagement with fictional characters that might be conflated with imagining them and might be thought to be usable to defend AAT.<sup>11</sup>

## 7 Positive outlook

Our discussion has so far been negative, consisting of a sustained attack on AAT. It is time to look for something positive. Consider the following claims concerning imaginative engagement:

7. Our imagining Romeo kissing is imagining *de re*, where the *res* is Romeo.
8. Our imagining Romeo kissing is imagining an arbitrary entity that has exactly the properties Romeo has in the story, kissing.

7 and 8 appear plausible separately but incompatible with each other. AAT has Romeo as abstract, hence it makes 7 implausible, given the perceptual nature of

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<sup>11</sup> Suppose (i) that we can dream an abstract artifact to be kissing another abstract artifact. Suppose also (ii) that whatever we can dream we can imagine. Then it follows that we can imagine an abstract artifact kissing another abstract artifact. I am skeptical about (i) but admit that it is not easy to refute it. I, however, reject (ii). Dreaming allows much more than perceptually driven modes of content entertainment. This footnote was inspired by remarks by Kris McDaniel and Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra.

imagining. This the objection to AAT we have been pursuing. But AAT could allow us to imagine Romeo in the sense of 8. 8 appears to abandon imagination *de re* in favor of imagination *de dicto*, so it appears to fail to honor an important function of fictional characters in our appreciation of narrative fiction. At the same time, 8 seems to be faithful to the phenomenology of our imagining Romeo kissing. This suggests a less negative attitude toward 8: We should try to simultaneously endorse 7 and save this phenomenology 8 highlights. That is, we should try to save both 7 and 8 in a coherent way.

One way to do so is to try to argue that an arbitrary entity having exactly the properties Romeo has in the story is Romeo. Of course, in order to do so, we need to do two things: (i) reject AAT and regard Romeo as being a kind of entity that can have – as opposed to hold, i.e., have in the story – those properties (being concrete, animate, human, male, etc.), and (ii) reject the somewhat intuitive view that Romeo is, if a human being, not just any old entity that has exactly the properties Romeo has in the story but one particular unique entity that has exactly those properties. The first of these two things is a natural thing to do for many who oppose AAT, especially for Meinongians (those who maintain that Romeo is a non-actually-existing human being). The second skirts the objection that Romeo is one, not many; for it implies that if two or more individuals had the properties in question, then none of them would be Romeo. Elaboration along the lines of (i) and (ii) is possible but unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For an attempt at such elaboration, see Yagisawa (2010), Chapter 6.

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