

WHOSE RING? Shakespeare against "Shakespearianism"

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1. The puzzle. Consider the situation set up in *The Merchant of Venice*, act 4, scene 1: in the Court of Justice in Venice, the heiress Portia, disguised as young doctor Balthazar, asks of her husband Bassanio the ring he is wearing, which she herself had given him at her house in Belmont, in order to test his trustfulness. Bassanio, after some resistance, concedes the ring to doctor Balthazar. In this situation, (1) is true from the current doxastic perspective of Bassanio,¹ who does not realize that doctor Balthazar is actually his wife Portia:

(1) Bassanio gives Portia's ring to doctor Balthazar.

(1) is also true from the omniscient perspective of the spectator, who knows that doctor Balthazar is another guise of Portia the heiress (or from the perspective of her maid-servant Nerissa, for that matter).²

The sentence in (2) is clearly false from Bassanio's uninformed perspective:

(2) Bassanio gives Portia's ring to Portia herself.

Thus, from Bassanio's perspective the two proper names are not interchangeable, as in any familiar Frege-case. However, from the omniscient perspective (2) is as accurate a description of the situation as (1); thus, from this perspective the two proper names appear to be interchangeable, and satisfy Substitutivity (also occasionally dubbed Shakespearianism).³

Consider now (3) and (4):

(3) Bassanio is wearing Portia's ring.

* I am indebted to Gabriele Usberti for reading this paper and discussing it with me. All errors are my own.

¹ Or, to put it in different terms, Bassanio would be "disposed to assent" to (1) (modulo a shift to first person). By saying that (1) is true from Bassanio's (current) perspective, I simply mean that the proposition expressed by (1) is true in all the possible worlds that are doxastically accessible to Bassanio at that point of the plot. See Zimmermann (2005, 84 ff.) for a two-dimensional approach in which a speaker's doxastic perspective is a set of contexts; see also § 4 below.

² The proper name "doctor Balthazar" has a somewhat special status when (1) is interpreted from the omniscient perspective; I return to this problem below.

³ E.g. "Shakespearianism: the thesis that coreferential expressions are intersubstitutable *salva veritate*"; from aidanmcglynn.blogspot.com, date captured: 01/16/2007.

(4) Bassanio is wearing doctor Balthazar's ring.

(3) is unproblematic – it is true both from Bassanio's current perspective and from the omniscient perspective. But (4) is really odd. The phrase "doctor Balthazar's ring" doesn't seem to refer to anything, not only from Bassanio's uninformed perspective – as we would expect – but crucially, not even from the omniscient perspective: even though from this perspective doctor Balthazar is Portia, Portia's ring is *not* doctor Balthazar's ring – or this is my strong (anti-Millian?) intuition. Thus in (3)-(4), contrary to (1)-(2), the omniscient perspective does not guarantee that two proper names are interchangeable. This is another instance of the problem of failure of substitutivity in simple sentences, discovered by Saul (1997).⁴

Intuitively, the failure of substitutivity in (4) is due to the fact that the present guise of Portia has no relevant connection to the ring that she gave to Bassanio under the other guise (and now demands of him under her present guise).⁵ That's fine, but how can we formally capture the difference between (1)-(2) and (3)-(4)?

There seem to be two major strategies to deal with this substitutivity problem.⁶ The first one is to allow proper names to ambiguously denote either individuals or restrictions thereof. Saul (1997) suggests that apparently coreferential proper names that fail substitutivity may ambiguously denote either individuals or temporal phases of individuals. Zimmermann's (2005, 55-62) restricted names, viewed as second order properties, apply to a property and yield a true proposition iff the individual has that property during a certain phase (the temporal phase in which the restriction holds).⁷

The second strategy claims that two non-interchangeable names are 'indeed' coreferential - from the omniscient perspective, I would say - but they happen not to be coreferential in some idiolect and/or doxastic

⁴ I puzzled over the ring examples and sketched out the two solutions described below before I found out Saul's paper; thus, for a couple of weeks the ring puzzle existed on its own, before it turned out to be another instance of Saul's substitutivity puzzle.

⁵ Gabriele Usberti (p.c.) raised the question of whether this observation may suggest a pragmatic solution to the substitutivity problem. My view of the matter is the following: possessive phrases in general express some kind of relationship between their denotation and the 'possessee', where this relationship may be determined on pragmatic grounds (e.g. 'John's novel' may be John's favourite novel, or the novel that he has to review, etc.). The point here is that whatever relationship holds in the interpretation of the possessive phrase (3) does not equally hold in (4), not even from the omniscient perspective.

⁶ As Saul (1997) and Zimmermann (2005) note, substitutivity in attitude contexts might be a different question.

⁷ Both Saul and Zimmermann endorse the view that this solution is not general enough to cover all cases of failure of substitutivity.

perspective, which the carrier of an omniscient perspective temporarily adopts in order to interpret a sentence like (1). Zimmermann's (2005, 70 ff.) pragmatic approach is an instance of this second strategy.

In this paper I will briefly discuss two other instances of these strategies, the first one based on Landman's (1989) restricted individuals, the second one based on Bonomi's (2006) discommodation. I will conclude by highlighting two critical points in our understanding of the reference of proper names that emerge from the preceding discussion.

2. Individual concepts are not enough. Suppose, with Heim (1998), that we can formally define a guise as something like an individual concept, that is, a function from possible worlds to individuals. Let's dub H the guise "Portia the heiress", and B the guise "doctor Balthazar". These guises seem adequate to express Bassanio's uninformed perspective: for certainly, in all worlds w that are doxastically accessible to Bassanio at that point of the plot, $H(w) \neq B(w)$; thus, the propositions expressed by (1) and (3) are true in all of these worlds, and the propositions expressed by (2) and (4) are false. On the other hand, this conception of guises does not seem to be sufficient to express the spectator's omniscient perspective (or Nerissa's perspective): in all the worlds w' that are doxastically accessible to the spectator (or to Nerissa), $H(w') = B(w')$; the two guises yield the same individual, and hence (4) should be on a par with (2).⁸

3. Landman's (1989) restricted individuals. Landman (1989) argues in detail that we can ascribe extensionally contradictory properties to different aspects of one and the same individual, and that a certain aspect may have some property that the unrestricted individual does not have (e.g., Valentina is generally empathizing, but Valentina as a teacher is quite strict). Landman proposes to formalize these aspects as *restricted individuals*, that is, as sets of intensional properties: given an individual j and an intensional property J , $j \upharpoonright J$ is the set of properties that " j as a J " has. This set contains the property of self-identity ($\lambda x. x=j$) and the property J ; it is closed under conjunction and logical consequence, it is consistent,⁹ and

⁸ As Heim (1998) discusses, guises are also relevant to the interpretation of binding relations. Consider the following variations of (1):

(i) Bassanio gives Portia₁ her own₁ ring.

(ii) Bassanio gives Balthazar₂ his own₂ ring.

(i), like (2), is true from the omniscient perspective, though not from Bassanio's; (ii) seems inappropriate for the same reason that (4) is, although it does not contain the definite description "doctor Balthazar's ring", because the equivalent interpretation of the genitive arises through λ -conversion:

(ii') $[\lambda x. [\lambda y. y \text{ gives } x \text{ 's ring}]]$ (Bassanio) (Balthazar)

⁹ That is, a restricted individual cannot contain both an intensional property and its negation (although a restricted individual may contain a property, and the unrestricted

exhaustive (that is, for each property P , either $\lambda x. P(x)$ or $\lambda x. \neg P(x)$ is included in the set)¹⁰. Can the notion of restricted individual support a proper analysis of (1)-(4)?¹¹

We can try to define two restricted individuals based on the unrestricted individual named Portia (p): $p[H$ is Portia *qua* the heiress (a set of properties including being rich, being a female, being an orphan, being married to Bassanio etc.); $p[B$ is Portia *qua* doctor Balthazar, a set of different and extensionally contradictory properties (being a male, being from Rome, being a lawyer etc.). Note that by definition, property B must be a member of $p[B$: so what is property B ? Well, it must be something like "pretending to be doctor Balthazar". This does not contradict the property $\lambda x.x=p$ (which every restriction of p necessarily inherits from unrestricted p : Landman 1989, 732), because doctor Balthazar is a *fake* identity, hence compatible with the actual identity of Portia.

An account of (3)-(4) from the omniscient perspective might run as follows: giving *that* ring to Bassanio in the Belmont palace (Act 3, scene 2) is a property that $p[H$ (and p) has, but that $p[B$ has not; hence the genitive phrase in (3) is licit, but the one in (4) is not. This is intuitively satisfying; however, the very same line of reasoning seems to lead to a paradox in the case of (2) (again, considered from the omniscient perspective). Given the setting of Act 4, scene 1, the property of being given the ring from Bassanio in the Court of Justice is a property that $p[B$ has, but that $p[H$ has not (for the heiress guise is not involved in that situation). In order to account for the appropriateness of (2) from the omniscient perspective, we have to conclude that in (2) the omniscient perspective assigns to the phrase "Portia herself" not the guise $p[H$, but the unrestricted individual p which underlies the guise of doctor Balthazar, $p[B$. On the other hand, the name "doctor Balthazar" in (4) *cannot* denote the unrestricted individual p :

individual its negation). Landman's notion of "atemporal" intensionality is different from the notion of dependence on a world (and time) parameter (modeled via functions from possible worlds (and times) to appropriate extensions), on which see below.

¹⁰ As pointed out by Gabriele Usberti (p.c.), the exhaustiveness requirement does not seem quite appropriate for fictional individuals or 'fake identities' like doctor Balthazar.

¹¹ Fox (1993, §5) and Jäger (2001, §3.3) argue that Landman's restricted individuals should be replaced by property modifiers. Under this view, (i) would be represented as (ii):

- (i) John, as a judge, is strict.
- (ii) John is a strict judge. (from Fox 1993, 9)

So, "it is the act of predication that gives rise to intensionality" (ibidem). Fox admits that not all linguistic instances of guises can be analysed by means of property modifiers; one problematic case is nominal anaphora:

- (iii) There is a judge_i. She_i is strict.

It is unclear to me how the data in (1)-(4) could be analysed in terms of property modifiers. Hence, I stick to Landman's formulation (with a modification proposed by Fox (1993), and independently motivated in (5) below).

if it could, (4) would be acceptable; its denotation – from the omniscient perspective – appears to be exclusively the restricted individual $p[B]$.¹²

The general criterion would be, then, that in a given sentence a name denoting a restricted individual and a name denoting the 'source' unrestricted individual can be substituted only if the two denotations share the property that is being predicated in the sentence. This is the case for p and $p[B]$ in (1)-(2), but not in (3)-(4), as noted above.

We have come to the conclusion that from the omniscient perspective, "doctor Balthazar" in (2) and (4) denotes the restricted individual $p[B]$,¹³ and the phrase "Portia herself" in (2) must denote the unrestricted individual p . What about the other occurrences of the name "Portia" in the phrase "Portia's ring"? Do they uniformly denote p , or could they denote $p[H]$? As far as I can see, there is way to tell. Note that $p[H]$ and p yield the same truth conditions; in particular, *that* ring is both $p[H]$'s ring and p 's ring (though it is not $p[B]$'s ring).¹⁴ In order to tell apart $p[H]$ from p , it is necessary to find a property that $p[H]$ has, but p has not – and Shakespeare's story does not provide any plausible candidate. Be this as it may, we cannot exclude *a priori* that one and the same name might ambiguously denote either a restricted individual or the underlying unrestricted individual (cf. Saul 1997, 104-105).¹⁵

So far, it appears that Landman's restricted individuals may support a reasonable account of (1)-(4) from the omniscient perspective. On the other hand, it is much less clear how this approach could express Bassanio's uninformed perspective on (1)-(4). From Bassanio's perspective, doctor Balthazar is an unrestricted individual b different from p . But then, $p[B]$ is not a restricted version of p in *all* possible worlds where p exists: $p[B]$ can be a restricted version of p *only in certain possible worlds* – in those that are compatible with the omniscient perspective, but not in those that are compatible with Bassanio's perspective. The relation between unrestricted and restricted individuals is unstable across worlds: in a slightly different version of the story, Bassanio could mistakenly believe that doctor Balthazar is, say, his friend Gratiano (g) disguised as a young doctor; then, "doctor Balthazar" would denote $g[B]$ (Gratiano *qua* doctor Balthazar) in all

¹² A parallel conclusion is reached by Saul (1997) in her discussion of temporal stages of individuals, applied to her Superman examples, and by Zimmermann (2005, 59-62), who points out an asymmetry between restricted and neutral names.

¹³ This is why the name "doctor Balthazar" has a special status from the omniscient perspective, as noted above.

¹⁴ Conversely, being at the Court of Justice during the Shylock-Antonio trial is a property shared by p and $p[B]$, but not by $p[H]$.

¹⁵ Personal pronouns are not exempt from this kind of ambiguity either, as we can see from Portia's ironical words on taking leave of Bassanio: "I pray you, know *me* when *we* meet again." (Act 4, I, 415).

the worlds doxastically accessible to Bassanio. It seems reasonable to assume the following necessary condition:

- (5) For every unrestricted individual x , property P , and world w , the restriction operator \lceil maps x to the restricted individual $x\lceil P$ only if x has P in w .

This is actually implicit in Landman's discussion.¹⁶¹⁷ To elaborate on his example, only in those worlds in which John has the property of being a judge can we have the restricted individual "John as a judge". Similarly, only in those worlds in which p has property B (i.e., in which she assumes the fake identity of doctor Balthazar) can we have the restricted individual $p\lceil B$.

3. Bonomi's (2006) discommodation. An account of (1)-(4) based on individual concepts might be devised by having recourse to Bonomi's (2006) notion of discommodation (which is designed to deal with definite descriptions, and would have to be extended by assigning an individual concept to names like "doctor Balthazar"). In cases of misdescription, a speaker succeeds in conveying a proposition to the hearer even though the presuppositions on which his use of a definite descriptions are based are not shared by the hearer. Bonomi suggests that in this cases, it is necessary to distinguish the context *w.r.t.* which *reference* is fixed from the context *w.r.t.* which *truth* is assessed (the context set with which the proposition expressed is intersected). Specifically, the hearer opens a "presuppositional slot", i.e. creates a derived context incorporating the speaker's (presumed) presuppositions, in order to interpret the definite description; however, the proposition *as a whole* is evaluated *w.r.t.* the common ground that is shared by the speaker and the hearer. Formally, this is expressed by letting the definite description carry a context variable (a variable over sets of worlds), which in the default case is identified with the context set determined by the common ground, but in certain cases might be assigned a different value by the assignment function.¹⁸ In the following translation schema for definite descriptions (TRANS₂):

¹⁶ As remarked in note 5, the dependence on a world parameter is distinct from the "atemporal intensionality" which constitutes Landman's main concern (see his remarks on p. 727).

¹⁷ See Fox (1993) for a similar point.

¹⁸ Note that this solution, like Zimmermann's (2005) pragmatic account, requires a very local context shift – in fact, as local as the evaluation of a single noun phrase. This suggests that noun phrases, like clauses and sentences, are 'semantic phases' (in the minimalist sense of the term, i.e. independent sub-units of computation).

The P is Q $\Rightarrow \lambda C \lambda w [C(w) \wedge Q(w) [\text{the_P}(K)(w)]]$

K is a free variable over contexts, and the definite description is a function from contexts to individual concepts. The property P embedded in the definite description is evaluated w.r.t. the free parameter K, which may correspond to the speaker's presumed presuppositions (i.e., the relevant presuppositions that the hearer conjecturally attributes to the speaker in order to make sense of his use of the definite description).

Now (1), viewed from the omniscient perspective, could be analysed as a case of 'misnomination' akin to misdescription: the name "doctor Balthazar" too would denote a function from contexts (sets of propositions) to individual concepts. When applied to the context corresponding to the omniscient perspective, this function yields nothing at all; when applied to the context corresponding to Bassanio's uninformed perspective, it yields an individual concept which returns an individual b different from p (in all the possible worlds compatible with that perspective). Thus, the sentence (1) lacks a truth value from the omniscient perspective; however, the bearer of an omniscient perspective opens a presuppositional slot to evaluate the reference of "doctor Balthazar" from the uninformed perspective, and assesses that the sentence is true, *when viewed from the uninformed perspective*. In other terms, the relation expressed in (1) holds of the individual that "doctor Balthazar" denotes in the uninformed perspective, even though that individual does not exist in the worlds compatible with the omniscient perspective (it is akin to a fictional individual, in Bonomi's example (13)). The necessity of discommodation could well explain the special status of the name "doctor Balthazar" from the omniscient perspective.

Turning to (4), we note that here an omniscient hearer has no reason to discommodate the name "doctor Balthazar" contained in the phrase "doctor Balthazar's ring", because that phrase has no denotation in the uninformed perspective to begin with; hence discommodation would be of no use at all.

Note that in this approach, there is no real substitution relation between (1) and (2): the two names denote distinct individuals in different doxastic perspectives. It is only discommodation that allows an omniscient reader to make sense of sentence (1). In this approach, doctor Balthazar may exist as an individual on its own (from the uninformed perspective), or not exist (from the omniscient perspective), but he cannot exist as a restriction, or guise, of another individual.

4. The “source” problem. I believe that the data in (1)-(4), and the approaches I have sketched out, highlight two critical points in our understanding of the reference of proper names.

In the approach based on Landman (1989), at least certain proper names like “doctor Balthazar” would denote guises/restricted individuals¹⁹ rather than unrestricted individuals.²⁰ Since restricted individuals necessarily incorporate a property, which provides the restriction, we come to the conclusion that at least certain ‘improper’ proper names have a descriptive component to their meaning. In the misnomination approach too, such names are assimilated to definite descriptions in that they denote functions from contexts to individual concepts. The question remains whether at least *some* other proper names consistently denote unrestricted individuals,²¹ and maybe satisfy some version of Millianism.

The second point is that in both approaches, the reference of proper names depends on a specific doxastic perspective. Even if we can draw a distinction between improper and proper names, this distinction is relative to a specific perspective: “doctor Balthazar” is a proper name for Bassanio, and an improper name (requiring discommodation) for the omniscient spectator. Similarly, in the restricted individual approach the connection between a restricted individual and its “source” unrestricted individual²² seems to heavily depend on a specific doxastic perspective. All of this is unsurprising. However, the problematic step is the transfer of a restricted individual from one source to another. In our examples, Bassanio – and no doubt many other people in the Court of Justice – postulates the existence of an unrestricted doctor Balthazar as the source of the guise he is confronted with; and only later on he discovers that doctor Balthazar was actually a guise of his wife Portia. The point is that it is *my* cognitive step to postulate an unrestricted individual as the source of the restricted individual(s) that I have access to²³ Certain kinds of evidence may force me to revise an attribution of source I had initially

¹⁹ Heim (1998, 238-39) goes much further and claims that *all* referring expressions in an LF ϕ are equipped with an index, and the utterance context assigns a (distinct) guise to each index that is free ϕ : all reference to individuals is thus mediated by guises.

²⁰ Recall that from the omniscient perspective, doctor Balthazar does not exist as an unrestricted individual; he(?) only exists as a restriction of p .

²¹ In Fox’s (1993) formalization, the unrestricted individual x of a guise $x[P$ is not the set of properties that x has ($\lambda P.P(x)$), but rather the simple “underlying” individual x ; this is more consistent with a Millian view. In Landman’s formalization, both restricted and unrestricted individuals are sets of properties.

²² Corresponding to Fox’s (1993, 7-8) extension operator.

²³ This cognitive step may well precede, or be completely independent of, any act of nomination: as soon as Portia, disguised as a young lawyer, enters the Court of Justice, all the people attending (except for Nerissa) believe that they are confronted with a new (unrestricted) individual; by Zimmermann’s (2005, 71) Uniqueness Presumption, they expect to get a new name (which is given shortly after, by the reading of Bellario’s letter).

made, e.g. to attribute two different restrictions to one and the same source individual (in Heim's (1998) terms, two guises "collapse"); my use of proper names will then change.²⁴ The real question, then, is: what guides my acts of postulation and of revision, and how do these acts justify my use of proper names? If I understand it correctly, Usberti's (2002) internalist view of denotation is meant to deal precisely with these questions.

5. Shakespeare against "Shakespearianism". In concluding these notes, I wish to take issue with the label "Shakespearianism", sometimes used to refer to the substitutivity thesis.²⁵ The main reason for Landman's (1989) intentional theory of restricted individuals is the observation that two aspects of one and the same individual can have opposite properties (or one aspect can have a property that the unrestricted individual does not have). Now, this is the point of much of Shakespeare's drama: just think of Iago's "I am not what I am"²⁶ - which, on a Millian view, is a flat contradiction... Somehow, Millian substitutivity seems to clash with the complexity of Shakespeare's view of personal identity.

²⁴ Both schizophrenic personalities and the non-pathological Pavarotti examples offered by Chierchia (1989), based on Kaplan (1989), suggest that in certain cases the connection between a guise and its source may be cognitively problematic for the source individual him/herself.

²⁵ This label is allegedly based on Juliet's famous rose verses: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet." (*Romeo & Juliet* II, ii). In my opinion, these verses support Saussurean arbitrariness, but not (necessarily) Substitutivity: Juliet is not contemplating two distinct names referring to the same individual, but rather, *alternative* and mutually exclusive linguistic exponents (*signifiants*) that might be associated to an entity (*signifié*) ("O, be *some other* name!"). The "substitution" here concerns the association between *signifiant* and *signifié*, and not the substitution of one *signifiant* for another in otherwise identical sentences. T. Zimmermann correctly modifies Juliet's words in the title of his (2005) paper: "What's in *two* names?"

²⁶ *Othello* I, 1, 66. Iago states that he *is* (and not merely *seems*) "honest Iago", which makes us wonder about the semantics of *be*. As Saul (1997, 105) convincingly argues, the guise-individual ambiguity cannot be attributed exclusively to the verb *be*, and it has to be rooted in the meaning of proper names.

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