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Iago Mello Batistela

Fiction-making as a speech act

Fazer ficção como um ato de fala

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Orientador: Marco Antonio Caron Ruffino

Este exemplar corresponde à versão final da tese defendida pelo aluno Iago Mello Batistela, e orientada pelo Prof. Dr. Marco Antonio Caron Ruffino.

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- ORCID do autor: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9986-5287
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Resumo

Neste trabalho, proponho uma defesa da tese de que escrever uma obra de ficção consiste na performance de um ato de fala sui generis. Inspirado em Grice, caracterizo esse ato de fala em um modelo expressivista de força ilocucionária. De acordo com essa proposta, realizar um ato de fala consiste na expressão de uma intenção comunicativa explícita, racionalmente restrita, e auto-referencial, que é direcionada a uma audiência. Neste modelo, proponho que no processo de escrever uma obra de ficção, o autor realiza um ato de fala sui generis que consiste na expressão de sua imaginação. Na sequência, proponho um modelo dinâmico para atos de fazer ficção. A contribuição realizada por um ato de fazer ficção, de acordo com esse modelo, é sempre dada por um outro ato de fala. Essa caracterização acomoda a uniformidade dinâmica apresentada por atos de fala ficcionais como um resultado natural da natureza representativa de obras de ficção. Depois, trato das diferenças entre minha proposta e teorias do solo comum não-oficial. Argumento que modelos completamente dinâmicos não são capazes de caracterizar precisamente forças ilocucionárias. Subsequentemente, discuto o lugar de asserções em obras de ficção. Enquanto concedo o fato de que há partes de obras ficcionais que parecem ser asseridas, argumento que esse fenômeno é mais restrito do que a literatura acerca do assunto estima. Posteriormente, discuto o lugar do ato de fazer ficção em uma taxonomia de forças ilocucionárias. Inicialmente, discuto o problema com teses que assumem que a caracterização intencional de fazer ficção é comprometida com uma leitura diretiva desta força ilocucionária. Em seguida, discuto a possibilidade de tomar ficção como um ato de fala declarativo. Finalmente, proponho uma caracterização da classe de constativos como composta por forças ilocucionárias com o mesmo tipo de condições de correção. Assumo que fazer ficção naturalmente se encaixa nessa categoria, dado que o tipo de imaginação exigido pela ficção tem um comportamento similar ao comportamento de crenças.

Palavras-chave: Ficção; Atos de fala; Imaginação.

Abstract

In this work, I propose a defense of the claim that writing a work of fiction consists of a sui generis speech act. I frame the speech act in a Grice-inspired expressivist account of illocutionary force, where, in order to perform a speech act, the speaker expresses an audience-directed, overt, rationally constrained, and self-referential communicative intention. I propose that, in the process of writing a work of fiction, the author of that work performs an act that expresses imagination. I follow this account with a dynamic proposal for fiction-related speech acts, where the content an act of fiction-making adds to the context is always a speech act. This framework, I argue, accommodates the dynamic uniformity raised by fiction-related speech acts as a natural product of the representative nature of fiction. I discuss the differences between my proposal and unofficial common ground theories of fiction and argue that, without a static counterpart, a dynamic account cannot properly characterize illocutionary forces. Moving forward, I analyze the place of speech acts of assertion in works of fiction. I conclude that assertions can be a part of fictional works, but the phenomenon is less widespread than the literature around the subject assumes. In conclusion, I discuss the place that fiction-making occupies in a taxonomy of speech acts. First, I explain away the claim that intentionalist accounts of fiction-making are committed to a directive reading of illocutionary force. Moving forward, I investigate declarative accounts of fiction-making and argue that the illocutionary force seems better classified as a communicative, rather than institutional, speech act. Instead, I propose a norm-based account of the constative class as composed of illocutionary forces with similar correctness conditions. I take fiction-making to be a good fit for the class, as the kind of imagination raised by fiction seems to share some important similarities with belief.

Keywords: Fiction; Speech Acts; Mental Imagery.

Contents

Chapter 1

Fiction-making as a speech act

In this work, I intend to propose an account of the act of writing a work of fiction as a *sui generis* speech act. Building upon the classical works of Currie (1990) and Walton (1990), I aim to put forward an account of fiction-making as an act of expressing imagination. My discussion rests on a broad interpretation of Grice's (1989b) account of meaning as an expression of a communicative intention. Additionally, I aim to propose a dynamic model that accounts for fictional discourse.

In Chapter 2, I start my proposal with a discussion of Searle's (1979c) seminal argument against speech act theories of fiction. The discussion provides some background assumptions regarding my favored account of illocutionary force. Searle's argument centers around a controversial principle that states that the illocutionary force expressed by an utterance is a function of the meaning of an illocutionary force indicating device that composes the uttered sentence. I present an overview of some pitfalls of Searle's brand of linguistic conventionalism. I propose that the process of decoding the meaning of an utterance consists of a complex activity that involves more than just meaning conventions.

As an alternative to conventionalism, following Bach and Harnish (1979), I propose an account of illocutionary force as an expression of a communicative intention. Unlike Bach and Harnish, however, I take the expected effect a speech act is intended to have on its target audience to be a part of the speaker's perlocutionary intentions. The result is what I call a mild expressivist account of illocutionary force. I adapt Currie's (1990) effect-oriented account of fiction-making to this framework. Fiction-making, as a result, is characterized by an expression of the author's imagination. Currie's expected effect – i.e. that the reader make-believes the content of the speech act – is taken as a primary perlocutionary intention. My account of make-believe follows Walton's (1990) proposal: make-believe is a kind of imagination whose content is informed by an external source that guides the reader's imaginative activity. I believe, however, that the kind of

imagination that constitutes the expressive clause of fiction-making to be broader than just make-believe. The speech act schema I propose for fiction-making, as such, allows for creative and recreative kinds of imagination.

In Chapter 3, I answer an objection to speech act theories of fiction raised by Predelli (2019). Predelli claims that proposing a *sui generis* speech act for fiction-related discourse raises an unwanted uniformity between any pair of fiction-related speech acts and their regular counterparts. I frame Predelli's uniformity as a result of the constraints that contextual information exerts on communication. The uniformity, as such, can be explained as a feature of speech act dynamics. In order to explain away Predelli's worries, I propose a dynamic account of fiction-making. An act of fiction-making, I argue, is a proposal to add an additional speech act to a contextual region that tracks shared imagination. This contextual region, the common imaginary, is structured much like the context itself, allowing fiction-related utterances to display the dynamic behavior of their regular counterparts. To conclude, I tackle Predelli's claim that a pretense account of fiction-making amounts to the best explanation for fictional discourse. I argue that fictional discourse, at least in written form, lacks the proper kind of action to be considered an actual act of pretending.

In Chapter 4, I explore problems raised by my dynamic account of fiction-making. First, I compare my view with a similar alternative, proposed by Stokke (2023). Stokke proposes that an act of fiction-making can be characterized by a proposal to update a contextual region called the fictional record. The fictional record tracks information the reader takes to be true according to the narrator. Stokke's view shares some important similarities with mine. A central difference, however, hinges on the way Stokke structures the fictional record. Stokke takes the fictional record to be updated in a similar way to the common ground; the common imaginary, however, is structured like the context itself, allowing the dynamic behavior of fiction-related utterances to function like their regular counterparts.

Additionally, Stokke adopts a distinct background assumption regarding illocutionary force. While I am committed to a static picture that takes an illocutionary force to be characterized by the expression of a complex set of intentions, Stokke proposes that illocutionary forces can be characterized in relation to their dynamic behavior. Against this, I argue that a proper theory of speech acts requires a static counterpart. Following Harris (2020), I claim that dynamic accounts of illocutionary force can account for only a narrow set of communicative exchanges. A problem can be raised in publicly averse situations, where utterances cannot be taken as shared by the participants of a conversation.

Pressing the matter, written forms of literary fiction – the target of Stokke's discussion – seem to be an example of a publicly averse form of communication.

Moving forward, I discuss some consequences of taking the content of an act of fiction-making to be a speech act. My discussion centers around the figure of the narrator or storyteller. My proposal assumes that the speech act that constitutes the content of an act of fiction-making is always performed by a fictional character. As a consequence, there is a sharp division between the author and the storyteller. The author never figures in the common imaginary. The narrator, however, is a ubiquitous character in fictional narratives. I discuss some situations that explore our intuitions about such a distinction. I argue that maintaining it provides a theoretical gain. To conclude, I discuss whether some sentences that compose a fictional work can be genuine assertions performed by the author. I argue that, while assertions can have a place in works of fiction, the phenomenon is less widespread than is usually accepted.

In Chapter 5, I try to find a place for fiction-making in a taxonomy of speech acts. First, I discuss the claim that intentionalist accounts of fiction-making are committed to a directive reading. I argue that this claim is misguided, stemming from a problematic reading of Walton's characterization of props or Grice's effect-oriented account of meaning. Moving forward, I tackle a re-framing of the directive class proposed by García-Carpintero (2013). García-Carpintero adopts a norm-based account of illocutionary force in order to argue that acts of fiction-making are prescriptions of conditional obligations. I take such a characterization, however, to be at odds with my expressivist intuitions.

In sequence, I discuss the possibility of classifying fiction-making as a declarative speech act. Declarative speech acts are the means by which we create and interact with institutional reality. I argue that, despite its intuitive appeal, a naïve theory of intuitions cannot account for the gap between fictional and institutional reality. As an alternative, I discuss Abell's (2020) broadening of the set of institutions in order to include any conventional set of actions that aim to solve a coordination problem. I argue, however, that Abell's fiction-related institutions are better taken as tools that are explored in the process of expressing and recognizing a communicative intention.

To conclude, I propose a novel account of the class of constatives. I assume a norm-based criterion of classification. This assumption, however, is not intended to be a part of a theory of speech acts, but a tool that allows for a more ecumenical way to construct a taxonomy of illocutionary forces. Constative speech acts, I argue, share a similar kind of correctness conditions. Just as a correct assertion raises a true belief, I argue that a correct act of fiction-making raises a make-believe whose content is the same

as the author's imagination.

Much of what I propose here further develops what I (BATISTELA, 2024) discussed in an initial attempt to argue in favor of speech act theories of fiction. Notably, the paper presents parts of the discussion regarding the speech act schema for fiction-making, my answer to the uniformity argument, part of my discussion about pretense, and my remarks regarding the role the narrator plays in my account of the content of an act of fiction-making.

Chapter 2

The logical status of fictional discourse

Setting itself apart from the broad discourse of literary studies, Searle (1979c) investigates the production of fictional discourse as an object that ought to be explained by a robust theory of language use. Searle's worries diverge from some of the central problems of philosophy of fiction such as the nature of fiction and concepts such as *mimesis* or suspension of disbelief, focusing instead on the linguistic aspects of fictional works. To write a work of fiction is to make use of linguistic expressions in order to communicate a certain content to an audience. Couched in his account of speech acts, Searle intends to investigate where the production of fiction-related sentences fits in his broader account of communication.

Intuitively, to perform a speech act is to perform an act that is brought about by the communicative function carried out by the linguistic expressions that are explored in an utterance. At the core of a theory of speech acts is the notion of illocutionary action. The performance of a speech act implies the accomplishment of a set of actions that includes, but is not restricted to, the very act of uttering a set of words, uttering the words in a certain order, performing the utterance in a certain manner, communicating a certain set of information, and achieving a set of objectives. A theory of speech acts intends to explain how performing this set of actions brings about an array of distinct ways through which we communicate: how it is that by uttering the words 'it', 'is', 'raining', and 'outside' we can assert that it is raining outside.

The act of writing a work of fiction seems a natural part of the array of actions that are achievable by the utterance of a certain kind of linguistic expression. Works of fiction are composed of words that are arranged in a specific way in order to comply with the rules of a certain language. More importantly, the very act of writing a work of fiction seems to bring about an action that plays an important, and rather unique, communicative function. This action – call it storytelling – fulfills the role of bringing

about a set of fictional facts that can be explored by a reader in order to give them access to a fictional story. Much like asserting, ordering and asking, uttering a sentence in order to tell a story seems to count as the performance of a *sui generis* speech act that is responsible for conveying information about a fictional world.

In his investigation, however, Searle points to a problem with this picture. The linguistic mechanisms explored in order to produce works of fiction are the same mechanisms explored in day-to-day conversations. Couched in his own account of speech acts, Searle argues that, if storytelling were considered a *sui generis* speech act, for every expression responsible for accounting for illocutionary force, an unnecessary ambiguity would need to be posited. The position, Searle concludes, poses "an impossible view since if it were true it would be impossible for anyone to understand a work of fiction without learning a new set of meanings for all the words and other elements contained in the work of fiction" (1979c, p. 64). The correct explanation, Searle proposes, is to take the author, while deploying an utterance during the process of writing a work of fiction, to be pretending to perform the speech acts depicted in the fictional work.

Searle's pretense account can be independently motivated by his argument about speech act theories of fiction and has remained a popular option in the current debate. Here, I engage with Searle's claims against speech act theories of fiction. The argument is presented as dependent on Searle's controversial brand of conventionalism, hinging on the plausibility of Searle's determination principle. First, I present a short introduction to Searle's conventionalism about speech acts, focusing on the relation between sentential form and illocutionary force. The determination principle assures that the speech act performed in an utterance is fixed by the meaning of the illocutionary force device that composes the uttered sentence. Next, I present Searle's reasons for rejecting speech act theories of fiction and argue that Searle's objection can be sidestepped by adopting a non-conventionalist account of illocutionary force. In conclusion, I present some of the reasons why Searle's reliance on the determination principle has fallen out of favor, even in Searle's own later work.

Moving forward, I present an intentionalist account of illocutionary force, inspired by Grice's (1989b) account of meaning. This account of speech acts will guide the discussion for the rest of this work. My preferred account borrows heavily from Bach and Harnish's (1979) popular treatment of speech acts as the expression of a complex audience-directed reflexive-intention. Further refining it, I tackle a common objection regarding the perlocutionary flavor that seems to be a part of the two-part speech act schema. As a result, I adopt a mild expressivist account of illocutionary force, taking the

prescriptive and response-reliant characterization of the second clause of the speech act schema to be an important, albeit unnecessary, perlocutionary intention expressed in an utterance.

To conclude, I propose a characterization of the act of writing a work of fiction as an expression of imagination. I compare my view with the classical intentionalist account proposed by Currie (1990). Following Grice's original proposal, Currie builds his account upon an effect-oriented account of illocutionary force. As a consequence, Currie's account lacks a proper treatment of the expressive clause I take to be the essential part of a speech act. I further develop Currie's account in the framework of the mild expressivist account of illocutionary force. Moving forward, I discuss the kinds of imagination that are related to the communication of fictional content. The distinct clauses that compose the fiction-making schema, I argue, can be characterized by different kinds of creative and recreative imagination.

2.1 Force and convention

In his foundational work on speech acts, Austin (1962) made it clear that an investigation of language use could be divided into two subjects: force and content. While content would be given by linguistic meaning, Austin emphasized the role that social conventions play in fixing the illocutionary force of an utterance.

Take the following scenario:

A boss calls an employee to their office and tells them:

– You are fired!

In their utterance, the speaker is not merely describing the state of affairs as it occurs. The statement 'You are fired' does not point to the target of the utterance that they no longer have a job, but makes it the case that the target of the utterance no longer has a job. It is by virtue of their utterance of 'You are fired!' that the speaker fires the employee. The utterance does not simply state a fact, but creates a new state of affairs. In Austin's words, it has the force of a performative. The contents of the declaration are given by the linguistic conventions that govern the use of 'you', 'are', and 'fired'. The force is fixed by the social conventions that regulate the relationship between a boss and their employee: it is the fact that the boss occupies a certain hierarchical position in a certain work environment that makes their utterance of 'You are fired!' count as an act of firing.

A major point of contention in Austin's work is the extent to which we could specify the kind of convention that would fix the illocutionary force of certain utterances. While it is simple to identify which social conventions would make an utterance of 'you are fired!' count as an act of firing, once we move away from highly institutional situations, the social convention that fixes the illocutionary force of an utterance becomes less clear. Take, for example, the following sentence:

(1) It is raining outside.

The content expressed by an utterance of (1) is fixed by the linguistic meaning of the expressions employed in the utterance. That is, it is in virtue of the linguistic meaning of the words 'it', 'is', 'raining', and 'outside' that, in an utterance of 'it is raining outside', we can convey the information that it is raining outside. The force expressed by an utterance of (1), in the absence of some contextual complication, would be that of an assertion. The fact that an utterance of (1) counts as an assertion is fixed by social conventions which are tacitly accepted by the participants of a conversation. It is not easy to see which set of social non-linguistic conventions can make an utterance of (1) an act of asserting. Sentence (1) could be uttered in a great variety of contexts, some hardly sharing any non-linguistic characteristics. The fact that an utterance is an assertion, as it stands, does not seem to hinge on the social conventions that are present in the highly conventionalized examples that prompted Austin to view illocutionary force as fixed by social conventions. There seems to be no non-linguistic set of conventions that can explain every instance of where (1) is uttered as an assertion. The problem, moreover, easily generalizes to every non-institutionalized linguistic action, such as questions and requests.

Austin's observation that illocutionary force is fixed by social conventions is, at best, too vague. Setting aside some highly regimented settings – some of which are the actual target of Austin's investigations – we could hardly fix the set of contextual, non-linguistic, conventional parameters that would fix the illocutionary force of most utterances. Strawson (1964), following this line of argumentation, suggests that we move from conventions to intentions. Searle (1965, 1969), however, bites the conventionalist bullet, arguing that while social conventions still play an important role, the illocutionary force of an utterance is fixed by linguistic conventions:

> The speech act or acts performed in the utterance of a sentence are in general a function of the meaning of the sentence. (SEARLE, 1969, p. 18)

As a result, Searle proposes that a sentence is composed of at least two functionally distinct parts: a set of expressions that fix meaning and a set of expressions that fix force. Moreover, the core of Austin's insight is preserved: social conventions are neatly accommodated in Searle's doctrine of infelicities, playing an important role in determining the conditions of success of a speech act. Searle recognizes that just as certain words can fail to properly bring about their meaning, an utterance can fail to express an illocutionary force. That is, the performance of a speech act can be defective.

Take, for example, sentence (1). Just as the words 'it', 'is', 'raining', and 'outside' have their meaning fixed by linguistic convention, the illocutionary force of an utterance of the sentence is fixed by a linguistic particle that is part of the sentence: the illocutionary force indicating device. In a vacuous context, it is natural to take an utterance of (1) as an assertion. Part of the reason why we take an utterance of (1) to be an assertion is that the sentence is in the declarative mood. The use of the declarative mood may be inappropriate: Searle's proposal includes a set of social rules for the use of an illocutionary force indicating device that settles the conditions of success of the utterance. The utterance counts as a non-defective assertion if, and only if, the correct set of social norms related to assertions is followed – i.e. the speaker has evidence of the truth of (1) and the truth of (1) is not obvious to the speaker's interlocutors, the speaker believes that (1), and (1) has the adequate illocutionary force indicating device in order to count as an assertion[1].

The distinction between force and content can be made explicit by a distinction between content-bearing expressions and illocutionary force indicator devices. Take a sentence *s*. For any *s*, *s* has a sentential structure *f(c)*, where the meaning of *c* fixes the content expressed by an utterance of *s* and the meaning of *f* fixes the illocutionary force of that utterance. That is, *c* is a content-bearing string of words, and *f* is an illocutionary force indicating device. For any speech act *F(C)*, where *F* is an illocutionary force and *C* is a content, *F(C)* is the product of an utterance of *f(c)*, where the illocutionary force *F* is a function of the meaning of *f*, and the content *C* is a function of the meaning of *c*.

As a result, Searle's proposal shifts the investigation regarding what fixes illocutionary force from an investigation about social norms that regulate communication to an investigation about the meaning of illocutionary force indicating devices. Taking the subject to less murky waters, Searle sidesteps the problems that impaired Austin's program without casting away the core of its intuitions. To know the proper set of social

[1]Following Searle (1969), we have, respectively, preparatory, sincerity, and essential conditions. However, the set of conditions has not remained constant throughout Searle's subsequent work.

rules that regulate the proper use of an illocutionary force indicating device is to know where a set of linguistic expressions could be correctly uttered. The social norms that regulate illocutionary force indicating devices are the constitutive rules that give rise to illocutionary force.

2.1.1 Linguistic convention and fiction-making

Searle starts his criticism of speech act theories of fiction by claiming that the same language that we use to report facts is used to write fiction. I take this observation to be the starting point of any serious investigation regarding the relationship between language and fiction. Works of fiction are composed of sentences with the same words, the same meanings, and the same structures that compose non-fictional works. To master a certain language does not require knowledge about a set of distinct linguistic rules for fact and for fiction.

There is, nonetheless, a difference between reporting facts and creating fiction. In order to report a fact, a speaker presents themselves as communicating information about the real world. The information exchange presumes that the speaker believes what they are saying, and the speaker seems to expect that their audience does the same. Given a set of generally accepted norms that regulate most communicative exchanges, the speaker seems to intend their audience to identify their belief in what is said, and, given some reasonable expectation regarding the justification for the content of what was communicated, acquire the belief themselves. Fiction, however, provides a scenario where what is said is false, not believed to be true, and not intended to be believed to be true. The report of fictional information, moreover, is not taken to be asserted. The hearer does not take the speaker to be providing them with misleading information. That is, the speaker does not present themselves as saying something they believe but know to be false, nor does the hearer take the speaker to be claiming that what they report is the case.

Advancing the idea that fiction is a non-serious use of language, Searle argues that, in the process of writing a work of fiction, the author breaks with the usual norms that regulate language use, pretending to perform a speech act rather than actually bringing about an illocutionary force. According to speech act theories of fiction, the difference between reporting facts and making fiction is located at the level of force. In order to report fact, we assert what we say; in order to report fiction, we fiction-make what we say. For Searle, however, the difference is located at a previous stage where the tacit

agreement regarding the rules of communication is negotiated. Locating the difference at the illocutionary level, moreover, gives rise to an unwarranted ambiguity that goes against the solid assumption that the same language that we use to report facts is used to write fiction.

To make matters clear, take Searle's example, an excerpt from Iris Murdoch's *The Red and the Green*:

> Ten more glorious days without horses! So thought Second Lieutenant Andrew Chase-White recently commissioned in the distinguished regiment of King Edward's Horse, as he pottered contentedly in a garden on the outskirts of Dublin on a sunny Sunday afternoon in April nineteen-sixteen.

The passage reports what Second Lieutenant Andrew Chase-White was thinking, who Andrew Chase-White was, and what he was doing on a Sunday afternoon in April nineteen-sixteen. As it stands, the excerpt could be taken to be part of either a factual report or a fictional work. There is nothing that imparts a fiction-related impression on it. Moreover, whether the passage reports fact or fiction, the words that compose it would have stayed the same, and, more importantly, their meaning would have remained unchanged. Were they different, we would not consider it to be the same passage. As a consequence, we could take that the rules that support the usage of the expressions that compose the passage are the same rules that would govern it if it were a fact. This, however, seems to present a problem for speech act theories of fiction:

> If, as I have claimed, the meaning of the sentence uttered by Miss Murdoch is determined by the linguistic rules that attach the elements of the sentence, and if those rules determine that the literal utterance of the sentence is an assertion [...] then it surely it must be an assertion. (SEARLE, 1979c, p. 60)

The problem stems from the fact that Searle assumes that illocutionary force is fixed by sentential structure. The same sentential structure *f(c)* is used in reporting fact and creating fiction. Moreover, *f(c)* is composed of an illocutionary force indicator f and a content-bearing string of words c. It is the same f and the same c that are part of both fact and fiction. Just as c yields the same content C in both cases, f yields the same illocutionary force F.

That is, Searle's argument begins with an indisputable claim about literary practices. This claim is readily accepted as a starting point in any discussion around language and fiction and serves as a safeguard against *ad hoc* elements that would take

fiction apart from our day-to-day communicative practices. Following it, we have an observation that is particular to Searle's own account of illocutionary force:

> **Determination Principle (DP):** For any sentential structure *f(c)*, an utterance of *f(c)* yields, at most, one speech act *F(C)*, where the illocutionary force *F* is fixed by a convention on the meaning of *f*.

It is a foundational assumption of Searle's theory of speech acts that illocutionary force is fixed by linguistic meaning. More importantly, DP states a fact about Searle's own account of linguistic communication, and as such it is advanced independently of a conception of fiction. Fiction does not provide any deviation in the meaning of the expression that composes it. DP is operational in both situations: the same linguistic rules that govern reports about facts apply to talk about fiction. If two utterances of *f(c)* express two speech acts *F(C)* and *F'(C)*, where *F* and *F'* are two distinct illocutionary forces, then *f* is ambiguous between *F* and *F'*. There is, however, no evidence to raise such ambiguity. Thus, Searle concludes, the very idea of a fiction-related illocutionary force is precluded by his own independently motivated account of illocutionary force. Iris Murdoch's utterance could, at most, be an assertion.

Conceding to Searle, if the argument holds, the prospects of a speech acts theory of fiction are meager. The argument, however, is clearly theory-motivated: if DP does not hold – that is, if the illocutionary force is not fixed by a convention related to *f* – the argument falls apart. Searle's theory of speech acts has its shortcomings and DP is a controversial tenet of his treatment.

2.1.2 A problem about linguistic conventions

A first problem arises with the task of defining what an illocutionary force indicating device is. A non-circular definition – one that does not rest on the very idea of illocutionary force – is hard to come by. Searle makes the subject less obscure by presenting a brief list of examples:

> Illocutionary force indicating devices in English include at least: word order, stress, intonation contour, punctuation, the mood of the verb, and the so-called performative verbs.(SEARLE, 1969, p. 30)

This list, however, seems to raise some questions. First, illocutionary force indicating devices are supposed to be the linguistic expressions whose meanings are illocutionary forces. It is far from clear, however, how "the meaning of a certain stress" could

be related to one, and only one, speech act. It is not exactly clear whether each example should be taken as co-dependent or as independent parameters. While verbal mood and performative verbs seem to be individually capable of fixing illocutionary force in Searle's conception, the aforementioned stress and intonation contour do not. Mood, at least in English, seems to be closely related to word order. It is not clear if the meaning of a mood is the same as the "meaning" raised by word order. Performative sentences seem to express the illocutionary force related to the verb only in what Austin calls the canonical form. In such cases, it seems that the meaning of a performative verb takes precedence over the meaning of the indicative mood. This seems to indicate that in such cases we should look at the list as individual parameters that could be arranged in a hierarchical form. Finding a plausible hierarchy, however, does not seem to be a simple task.

Here, I take the easy route and focus on one of the usual components of Searle's own examples: sentential mood in non-performative phrases[2]. The criticism I present against Searle's account explores the fact that convention alone cannot easily provide an account of communication. Echoing a point made by Davidson (1979), I take that, during the communicative process, the participants can always explore any set of information – including linguistic conventions – in new and creative ways, often resulting in novel ways to get a message delivered to an audience.

To make things easier, take the following sentence:

(2) John will drive.

The sentence is in the declarative mood, which is often associated with acts of assertion. To be more precise, the declarative mood is often associated with a class of illocutionary acts Searle (1979d) calls assertives. This includes suggesting, hypothesizing, and, of course, asserting. The defining characteristic of assertives is the fact that issuing an assertive commits the speaker – to varying degrees, depending on the act performed – to the truth of what is said. According to DP, an utterance of (2) is, at most, an assertive speech act. It is a function of the meaning of the declarative mood that composes the sentence that fixes an utterance of it as an assertive. The utterance, again, may be infelicitous: if the speaker does not comply with the set of rules that constitute the class of assertives, the utterance fails to be a successful act of assertion.

An utterance of (2), however, seems to be a natural candidate for more than one illocutionary force[3]. Take the following situation:

[2]For an in-depth criticism of Searle's treatment of mood as an illocutionary force indicating device, see Starr (2014).

[3]A similar case is made by Currie (1990) in his defense of speech act theories of fiction.

After a few drinks, someone asks:
– Who will drive us back home?
to which Mary responds:
– John will drive. He did not drink.

The fact that John did not drink seems to imply that he is able to safely drive Mary and her friends back home. Mary, in accordance, is stating the fact that John will drive. The assertion complies with most of Searle's felicity conditions: Mary has evidence that John will drive, the truth of (2) may not be obvious to Mary's interlocutors, and Mary believes that John will drive.

An utterance of (2), however, can easily be taken to be a request:

After much debate about who will drive, Mary says:
– John will drive.
Defeated, John orders a bottle of water.

Requests and orders are directives. The class of directives does not overlap with the class of assertives. Mary, in this situation, had no justification to express the belief that John would drive. In fact, Mary had no reason to think that John would drive: there was, after all, a debate about who would do so. Mary, however, occupied a certain position that would allow her to request that John drive. Moreover, Mary's utterance seems to naturally comply with most of Searle's conditions for a successful directive: John is able to drive, but it is not expected that he will do so; Mary wants John to drive; moreover, Mary's utterance poses a future action for John.

The tension between taking (2) as a directive, as opposed to an assertive, stems from Searle's essential condition. The essential condition requires that for an utterance of sentence *f(c)* to count as the performance of a speech act *F(C)*, the illocutionary force indicating device *f* has to be related to *F*. DP, however, precludes the same *f* to be associated with two distinct illocutionary forces *F* and *F'*. Additionally, just as in the case of fiction, there seems to be no evidence that the indicative mood is ambiguous between a directive and an assertive interpretation.

As a workaround, it could be argued that a directive reading of (2) is a result of indirect communication, and can only be brought up in the presence of some contextual information:

> It is possible to perform the act without invoking an explicit illocutionary force indicating device where the context and the utterance

> make it clear that the essential condition is satisfied. (SEARLE, 1969, p. 68)

That is, a directive reading of (2) would only be raised as an indirect speech act. Mary, in the second situation, first asserts that John will drive, and, as a result of this assertion, indirectly requests John to drive. Finding a proper account of indirect speech acts, however, has been a major problem for Searle's account. The phenomenon is often raised as the knockdown argument that brought Searle's linguistic conventionalism out of the mainstream. Searle's (1979b) treatment expands his early suggestion, baking a set of conditions related to his own account of illocutionary force into Grice's (1989a) theory of conversation[4]. To make matters clear, take the following example:

(3) Can you pass the salt?

Searle takes interrogative sentences like (3) to be a common example of an indirect speech act trigger. Just as with (2), there are two natural readings of (3): as a question about the hearer's ability to pass the salt, or as a request for the salt to be passed. Searle takes the first to be the prevalent one. Sentence (3) is in the interrogative mood, an illocutionary force indicating device whose meaning is associated with questions. Questions are a special subclass of directives, and bear some important distinctions from regular requests. The request for the target of the utterance to pass the salt is taken by Searle to be an indirect speech act.

Searle's proposal primarily focuses on the relation between direct assertions or questions and indirect requests or orders, but the proposal is supposed to generalize in order to account for the phenomenon of indirect speech acts as a whole. As a starting point, Searle presents a list of six manners of indirectly issuing an order or request by means of directly questioning or asserting. This list, in turn, yields a list of generalizations that are set to be explained by a proper account of indirect speech acts. The indirect speech act resulting from an utterance of (3) is related to (S1), which yields the generalization (G1):

S1. Sentences concerning the hearer's ability to perform the order or request.

G1. The speaker can issue an indirect directive by either asking or stating the preparatory condition.

Searle takes the proper explanation of an indirect speech act to be explained by the constitutive rules that govern illocutionary forces. The class of directives is composed of the following rules:

[4]For an in-depth criticism of Searle's account of indirect speech acts, see Harnish (1984).

Preparatory condition of directives:

The hearer is able to perform the content of the utterance.

Sincerity condition of directives:

The speaker wants the hearer to perform the content of the utterance.

Propositional content condition of directives:

The speaker predicates the content of the utterance as a future action of the hearer.

Essential condition of directives:

The utterance counts as an attempt by the speaker to get the hearer to perform the content of the utterance.

Indirect speech acts are speech acts that come to the forefront as a result of the uptake of some other speech act. First, the speaker asks a question; as a result of understanding the question, the hearer implicates the request. The indirect speech act yielded by an utterance of (3) is the result of a conversational implicature. The reasoning process takes into account that asking a question about the hearer's capabilities seems to break a conversational maxim: it is obvious that the hearer is able to pass the salt. Conversations, moreover, are cooperative endeavors, and in order to bring the utterance back into conformity with what is expected, the hearer takes the speaker to be saying something else, i.e., the hearer takes the speaker to be requesting the salt to be handed over to them.

Searle sustains that the rational process by which the implicature is calculated takes into account the constitutive rules that characterize directives. (G1) arises as a consequence of his theory of speech acts: the reason why we can issue an indirect directive by asking about the capabilities of our interlocutor is given by the preparatory conditions that govern the use of directive speech acts. As the preparatory conditions are readily available to the participants of a conversation, asking whether (3) is the case triggers a conversational implicature.

The reasoning process, in turn, takes into consideration the fact that a preparatory condition of the indirect speech act was brought up by the speaker (1979b, p. 47):

> Step 6: A preparatory condition for any directive illocutionary act is the ability of H to perform the act predicated in the propositional content condition (theory of speech acts).

From step 6, the hearer reasons that, in their utterance of (3), the speaker intended to request that the salt was passed to them.

The process described by Searle, however, presents some gaps. It is not made clear why the hearer takes into consideration preparatory, but not, for example, sincerity conditions, given that both will figure in some explanations to the same phenomena. Bringing about Searle's own theory of speech acts runs the risk of sounding *ad hoc*. Searle's theory is not ingrained into our cognitive machinery. His account of speech acts intends to explain what illocutionary forces are, not to explain the principles that guide conversational exchanges. Something more than just a "theory of speech acts" is needed in order to explain step 6. Bringing about the generalizations would, again, raise circularity: the rational process described in Searle's calculation process is an explanation of his generalizations, not conversational maxims.

Moreover, the calculus Searle proposes for indirect speech acts is, at best, a tentative formulation that outlines a possible pattern of inference. Grice (1989a) posits that the process of calculating a conversational implicature hinges on understanding the speaker's communicative intention. As Harris (2016)[5] points out, there is no fixed set of contextual information that can be explored in order to calculate an implicature; every piece of information that is contextually available can be explored by both the speaker and their audience. That is, calculating an implicature, just like any form of indirect communication, is an isotropic process:

> By saying that confirmation is isotropic, I mean that the facts relevant to the confirmation of a scientific hypothesis may be drawn from anywhere in the field of previously established empirical (or, of course, demonstrative) truths. Crudely: everything that the scientist knows is, in principle, relevant to determining what else he ought to believe. (FODOR, 1983, p. 105)

Moreover, cases such as the one presented by (3) do not seem to be easily explained as a conversational implicature. As Searle himself observes, interrogative forms are the standard for requests[6]. Be it for politeness or for some other reason, questions are conventionalized as a form of request. Whether it was the case that the implicature was, at one time, calculated as Searle demands, the reasoning that was previously used to calculate it has been shortcut. In any case or form, it is hardly the case that we first compute the question, and then, provided that we take the question as out of line with a conversational maxim, we take the speaker to be making an implicature for the request. We seem to go straight for the request; there is no conversational implicature to

[5]Harris, in fact, is not concerned with Searle's account. His criticism is aimed at an alternative form of conventionalism proposed by Lepore and Stone (2014).

[6]Bertolet (1994) makes a similar point, arguing that only the interrogative reading suffices.

be calculated. At worst, an utterance of (3) seems to have two natural readings. In any case, I take (3) to be closer to (2) than to (4):

(4) This coffee smells good.

I take (4) to have only one readily available reading: it is an assertion that the coffee smells good. Now, in order to bring an indirect speech act to the picture, take the following situation:

Looking miserable, John enters the coffee room and says:
– This coffee smells good.
To which Mary responds:
– Get some! You seem to need it.

John's utterance of (4) can be taken as an indirect speech act trigger. It states a piece of information readily available to Mary. Mary, noticing that John seems tired, takes the utterance to trigger a conversational implicature: John said something obvious to me; he may want some coffee. Being a polite person, Mary, in return, says that John can get a cup of coffee for himself. John's utterance of (4) conveyed something beyond what was uttered, something like 'Could I have some coffee?'. Here, the resulting speech act seems to be, in fact, a conversational implicature: the assertion of (4) seems to break some conversational maxim and the uptake of the assertion of (4) seems to be necessary in order to arrive at John's intended result. Such a case, however, does not seem to require the machinery that includes Searle's generalizations about speech acts for its explanation. There is nothing that sets this case apart from Grice's initial examples. An explanation relying only on Grice's own machinery seems to suffice.

Searle, nonetheless, seems to adopt a different strategy in his later works, taking illocutionary force indicating devices to be indexical-like:

> In each of those examples [of sentences with distinct illocutionary forces], there is some syntactical feature which, given the rest of the sentence and a certain context of utterance, expresses an illocutionary force F, and some syntactical feature p which, given the rest of the sentence and a context of utterance, expresses a propositional content P. (SEARLE; VANDERVEKEN, 1985, p. 2)

That is, take a sentential structure *f(c)*, whose *f* is related to the illocutionary force *F*. An utterance of *f(c)* can express an illocutionary force *F'(C)*, where *F'* is distinct

from *F*, if the context includes a parameter that, in tandem with *f(c)*, makes it clear that the utterance of *f(c)* counts as a performance of *F'(C)*.

The change entails a weaker DP, in which contextual information may impact the expression of a direct speech act; just like indexical expressions, the meaning of an illocutionary force indicating device would be given by a feature of the context. That is, just like we need to know who the target of an utterance is in order to get the meaning of 'you', we would need some kind of background information in order to get the meaning of the declarative mood. Just as the meaning 'you' can change from Mary to John, the meaning of the declarative mood could change from assertion to order.

In short, indexical expressions such as 'you', 'now', and 'here' work in the following way: the meaning of 'you', 'now', and 'here' hinges on certain features of the context of an utterance. For any context of utterance $\mathfrak{C}$, $\mathfrak{C}$ is expressible as a set of parameters that includes, at least, a person x, a time t, and a place p. The meaning of an indexical expression is a function from context to the value of a parameter: the meaning of 'you' takes the value of x, the meaning of 'now' takes the value of t, and the meaning of 'here' takes the value of p.

There is no answer to the question regarding what set of contextual parameters an illocutionary force indicating device can take in order to express a certain illocutionary force. A contextual parameter that would change Mary's utterance of (2) from an assertion to a request can hardly be identified. Take, for example, a third situation, where the information that John is not drinking is never made explicit:

> After much debate about who will drive, Mary, who secretly knows that John is not drinking, says:
> – John will drive.
> John nods and heads to the car.

In such a case Mary does not seem to be requesting John to drive. Just like the first situation, Mary seems to be asserting it. The assertion, again, complies with most of Searle's felicity conditions. The same sentential structure *f(c)* is made available for the participants of the conversation. There is no information that can provide a justification for a change in the interpretation of *f* – i.e., the indicative mood – to that of a non-assertive.

In any case, we could hardly find a set of parameters that would fix the declarative mood in (2) to mean that the utterance is a candidate assertion or a candidate request. The addition or subtraction of any information may be enough to change the

illocutionary force we associate with the utterance; there seems to be no criterion that can specify what changes the interpretation of an illocutionary force indicating device. No specific parameter seems enough to make (2) a directive or an assertive. Furthermore, distinct from indexical expressions, there is no single set of contextual information that can be used in order to infer illocutionary force. No formula that takes any set of parameters k will satisfy our needs. Again, echoing Harris's criticism, the expression and recognition of an illocutionary force is an isotropic process that is, at least partially, inferential.

Concluding, I take that Searle's brand of conventionalism shows some serious flaws. The inferential nature of communication, and especially of indirect communication, makes it evident that a principle as strong as DP has no place in an account of illocutionary force. The acceptance of DP, however, was a crucial part of Searle's argument against speech act theories of fiction. Given its problems, Searle's argument against speech act theories of fiction falls apart. In what follows, I propose an alternative to Searle's conventionalism: an intention-based account of illocutionary force.

2.2 Force and communicative intentions

An account of illocutionary force ought to explain the different ways communication works as a coordination device. A theory of speech acts should aim to explain the different manners in which a speaker expresses themselves and the mechanisms that are in place in order for the audience to grasp what was said. A proper treatment of illocutionary force aims to answer two questions:

> Where α is a communicative act with a property ϕ such that α's addressee would have to interpret α as having ϕ in order for communication to succeed:
>
> (MQ) **THE METAPHYSICAL QUESTION**
> In virtue of what does α have ϕ?
>
> (EQ) **THE EPISTEMIC QUESTION**
> How can a hearer come to recognize that α has ϕ? (HARRIS, 2016)

MQ centers around an utterance. It raises the question about the reasons an utterance counts as an expression of an illocutionary force. A proper answer ought to be composed of a set of necessary tools that are exploited by the speaker in the process of performing an utterance. EQ centers around the hearer. It relates to the reasons the hearer takes the speaker's act of uttering a sentence as a performance of a speech act. A proper answer to EQ should bring up the tools the hearer can avail themselves of in order to properly grasp the illocutionary force expressed by the speaker.

Searle's answer to both questions rests on linguistic conventions. The speaker exploits a set of linguistic conventions that are related to the expressions that compose a sentence. An utterance, as such, conveys an illocutionary force that is fixed by the linguistic conventions related to the illocutionary force indicating device that composes the uttered sentence. The hearer, assumed to be a competent speaker of the explored language, recognizes that the uttered sentence contains a certain illocutionary force indicating device and, knowing the proper set of linguistic conventions that regulate the use of that set of expressions, promptly recognizes the illocutionary force.

Following Bach and Harnish (1979), I take another route, arguing in favor of an intentionalist account of illocutionary force. Inspired by Grice's (1989b) account of speaker – or non-natural – meaning, intentionalist theories of speech acts propose that illocutionary force can be accounted for by the expression of a communicative intention. The process of grasping the speaker's intention – i.e., the process of recognizing the illocutionary force expressed by the utterance – is taken to be a partly inferential process where the hearer identifies a set of readily available information that is explored by the speaker in their utterance. Communicative intentions have the following characteristics:

Audience-directedness: communicative intentions are audience-directed.

The characterization of communicative intentions borrows from Grice's effect-oriented account of meaning. To express a communicative intention – or, in Grice's terms, to mean$_{NN}$ something – is to intend your utterance "to produce some effect in an audience by means of recognition of this intention" (1989b, p. 220). Communication enables coordination. For communication to happen, the speaker needs to intend the hearer to grasp what was said. As a result of their audience-directedness, we can say that:

Overtness: communicative intentions are intended to be grasped.

As a consequence, communicative acts are always overt. The speaker believes that they are making apparent that they are communicating something, and believes that their audience is able to infer that they are doing so. As such, communicative acts are acts of expression. To express something is to put oneself in a position by which one could be recognized as holding the content of what was expressed. In communicative terms, by uttering a sentence a speaker puts themselves in a position where the hearer can easily grasp what was intended to be communicated.

Moving forward, we assume that:

Rationality: communicative intentions are rationally constrained.

Communication hinges on some putative facts that perpetrate any cooperative process. For communication to occur, the participants of the conversation make an active effort in order to coordinate around a set of information. The speaker cannot intend for their intention not to be recognized by their target audience; if the speaker does not believe their intention to be recognizable, or does not take their audience to be capable of recognizing it, communication fails. Additionally, we have that:

Self-referentiality: communicative intentions are reflexive[7].

The defining characteristic of communicative intention is that it expresses the intention for itself to be recognized. Its fulfillment is accomplished by its mere recognition. In sum, to express a speech act is to express a complex set of intentions that are overt, audience-directed, intended to be grasped, rationally constrained, and fulfilled by their mere recognition.

My characterization of the complex set of intentions focuses on two aspects that are emphasized by Grice's (1989d) later work. Both aspects highlight the role mental states play in Grice's effect-oriented characterization of meaning. The first aspect regards the characterization of communicative intentions as an expression of the speaker's mental states. Assuming it provides a uniform treatment to different kinds of communicative intentions, stressing the expressive nature that is pervasive in a communication exchange. To perform a speech act is to put oneself in a position where the information conveyed by the utterance can be recognized by the audience. The second aspect regards the characterization of the effect intended by the expression of a communicative intention as the generation of a propositional attitude.

Communicative intentions, as such, can be characterized by the following schema:

> Speaker S expresses something by uttering p if, and only if, for some audience H, S uttered p reflexive-intending:

[7]Grice (1989e) forgoes the reflexive clause in his later account of communicative intentions. As a result, his analysis seems to fall prey to an indefinite regress of inter-dependent clauses that compose the set of complex intentions expressed by the speaker: for each clause, an additional clause is posited in order to account for the fulfillment of the previous clause based on the recognition of the speaker's own intention. For a discussion of such problems, see Schiffer (1972) ch. 2, and Recanati (1986). Schiffer argues that a solution to Grice's indefinite set of inter-dependent intentions can be provided by assuming that communication relies on mutual knowledge, where mutual knowledge is defined as a "harmless" iteration of knowledge towards a piece of information. There is no clear advantage of taking mutual knowledge over reflexive-intention. For a criticism of Schiffer's view, see Harman (1974), and Bach and Harnish (1979) ch. 8.

i. to express an attitude A regarding P;

ii. that H assumes an attitude B regarding P.

Where p is a sentence, P is a proposition, and A and B are attitudes towards P. Distinct illocutionary forces can be accounted for in relation to the different attitudes that are expressed by the speaker. Clause (i) makes explicit the attitude the speaker maintains towards the content of what they are saying. Clause (ii) expresses the speaker's primary intended effect. The effect expressed in clause (ii) is intrinsically related to the recognition of the expressed attitude represented in clause (i). It concerns the speaker's expectations towards the hearer.

Departing from the analysis proposed by Bach and Harnish, I take clause (ii) to express the speaker's a perlocutionary intention[8]. The speaker's beliefs regarding the possibility of the fulfillment of clause (ii) are not necessary for the success of the speech act. The fact that communication is a cooperative endeavor does not imply that the speaker and the hearer necessarily share the same set of attitudes towards a piece of information. Coordination is permissive of disagreement; both are natural parts of the communicative process.

Illocutionary force is fixed in relation to clause (i). It is because the speaker expresses a belief that their utterance counts as an assertion, it is because the speaker expresses a doubt that their utterance counts as a question, and it is because the speaker expresses a desire that their utterance counts as a request. Clause (ii) accounts for an important, albeit unnecessary, aim of our communicative process. The result is what I call mildly expressivist account of communicative intentions, where the effect-oriented aspect raised by clause (ii) is effaced in order to highlight the expressive nature of an illocutionary act.

As such, we can provide the following answer to MQ:

(MT) **THE METAPHYSICAL THESIS**

α has ϕ in virtue of the speaker's communicative intentions.

In order to illustrate how the schema can be applied, take sentence (1). Assertions are characterized by the following schema:

The speaker S asserts P by uttering p if, and only if, for some audience H, S uttered p reflexive-intending:

[8]The conflation between illocutionary and perlocutionary intentions in Gricean theories has been raised by many authors, including Searle (1969), Carr (1980), and Recanati (1986). For a thorough discussion, see Bach (1980, 1987).

i. to express that S believes that P;
ii. that H believes that P.

That is, to assert is to utter a certain sentence with the intention of expressing a belief about the content of what was said and with the intention that the hearer acquires the same belief. The intention is reflexive: the recognition by the target audience that the speaker has expressed the complex set of intentions is enough for the assertion to be successful.

To assert that (1) is to express the following intention:

> The speaker S asserts that it is raining outside by uttering (1) if, and only if, for some audience H, S uttered (1) reflexive-intending:
>
> i. to express that S believes that it is raining outside;
> ii. that H believes that it is raining outside.

That is, the speaker says that it is raining outside by means of uttering a sentence that can be taken to mean that it is raining outside. The fact that the utterance is an assertion is fixed by the fact that the speaker's act of expression puts themselves in a position from which the audience can securely infer that they believe that it is raining outside. Moreover, the speaker intends the uptake of their utterance to provide a reason for the hearer to acquire the belief that it is raining outside.

Now, as stated, the speaker's belief in the possibility of the fulfillment of clause (ii) is not necessary. To make this clear, take the following scenario:

> Despite knowing John's opinion, Mary states:
> – It is raining outside. We'd better go by car.
> To which John adamantly responds:
> – We can walk! A light drizzle is not the same as rain.

In the situation described, Mary knew that John would not acquire the belief that it is raining outside. Despite that, Mary insisted on expressing her belief: Mary takes it to be a fact that a light drizzle is a kind of rain; how could it not be? John, however, vehemently disagrees. No middle-ground can be reached. Mary never expected John to acquire the belief that it is raining outside. Despite that, Mary's utterance is still an assertion: she, by means of uttering (1), expressed her belief that it is raining outside.

To sum up, I take that, in order to perform a speech act, the speaker expresses a reflexive, audience-directed, overt, and rationally constrained set of intentions that

express an attitude towards the information they intend to communicate. The expression of this attitude commonly entails that the speaker is providing reasons for the hearer to act, or to adopt a certain attitude, in relation to the content of what was said. My account of the complex set of intentions that characterize a speech act falls in line with the account proposed by Bach and Harnish, but has an expressive twist, de-emphasizing the role played by the prescription put forward by the second clause.

Moving to EQ, an intentionalist answer relies on the rationality constraints that regulate the expression of communicative intentions. Communicative intentions are always intended to be grasped: the speaker cannot intend to communicate something if they do not believe the hearer is able to grasp it. Communication is a cooperative endeavor. The communicative process cannot take hold if the speaker and the hearer do not intend to communicate with each other. The process of formulating a communicative intention requires the belief that it could be correctly grasped by its target. Similarly, the process of grasping communicative intentions involves the belief that the speaker overtly expressed their intention in a way that what was said could be easily understood. The speaker, moreover, has a limited set of tools by which they can make explicit what they intend to express. The construction of communicative intention, as such, is rationally constrained by the tools which the speaker uses in order to formulate a communicative plan that makes their intention explicit. In sum:

> What U meant by uttering X is determined solely by U's communicative intentions; but of course the formation of genuine communicative intentions by U is constrained by U's expectations: U cannot be said to utter X m-intending A to ϕ if U thinks that there is very little or no hope that U's production of X will result in A ϕ-ing. (NEALE, 1992)

In an idealized scenario, the speaker overtly explores a set of information that they take to be shared in a process that can be retraced by the hearer in order to take a hold of what the speaker meant. In practice, the communication process is mostly automatic: we neither formulate an explicit plan in order to communicate what we mean, nor do we take our time in order to retrace the speaker's steps in order to arrive at their initial communicative intention.

The automatic aspect of the communication process is partially granted by linguistic conventions. While linguistic conventions do not constrain what is said, they provide one of the means by which communicative intentions can be easily made explicit. Usually, the easiest device a speaker of a language can avail themselves of in order to communicate a piece of information is the expressions that compose that language. Moreover,

while linguistic conventions do not constrain what is said, they can provide constraints to the plans by which the speaker makes their communicative intentions explicit. That is, the speaker cannot intend to communicate a piece of information if there is no rational means by which their intention will be recognized. One cannot say that it is raining outside by exploring only the linguistic conventions that fix the meaning of 'it is sunny outside'. Communication, as such, is couched in a set of tacit principles whose job is to facilitate this coordination process. Linguistic conventions figure as a first step. In a communicative exchange it is expected that all participants share the same language:

> **Linguistic Presumption (LP):** The mutual belief in the linguistic community C_l that **i.** the members of C_l share [a language] L, and **ii.** that whenever any member S utters any [expression] e in L to any other member H, H can identify what S is saying, given that H knows the meaning(s) of e in L and is aware of the appropriate background information. (BACH; HARNISH, 1979, p. 7)

That is, linguistic communication can hardly get off the ground if the participants do not share a language. We do not negotiate the meaning of every word beforehand. Sharing a language means sharing the conventional meaning of its expressions. It is tacitly assumed that every competent speaker of a language will know at least what most of its expressions mean. That is not to say that misunderstandings and malapropisms cannot occur; in such occasions, meaning can be negotiated on the fly. The tacit assumption of cooperation allows for much leeway regarding what can and what cannot be meant by a certain sentence. This tacit assumption can be formulated as a communicative principle:

> **Communicative Presumption (CP):** The mutual belief in C_l that whenever a member S says something in L to another member H, he is doing so with some recognizable illocutionary intent. (BACH; HARNISH, 1979, p. 7)

Without the assumption that the participants of a conversation are engaged in a collaborative activity, there is no cooperation. In order for communication to ensue, both the speaker and their audience need to believe that they intend to be a part of a functional communicative exchange. The speaker intends to be understood by the hearer, and the hearer intends to understand the speaker. To perform a speech act is to overtly express a complex set of reflexive-intentions which are meant to be recognized; to assert is to show a belief, to ask is to show a desire, and so forth. That does not preclude insincerity or false misinterpretations. The speaker can show themselves as having a belief they do not actually hold, and the hearer can show themselves as attributing to the speaker a

belief they did not express. In any shape or form, for information to be exchanged, some resemblance of an ideal communicative situation has to be maintained. While communication does not need to be truthful, it only thrives in a cooperative environment. Even in a situation where the speaker intends to express a false belief, they are required to do so in a way their counterparts can recognize what was said as an expression of a belief. Even bald-faced lies are acts of assertion.

Back to linguistic convention, we also assume that communication is, most of the time, a straightforward endeavor:

> **Presumption of Literalness (PL):** The mutual belief in the linguistic community C_l to the effect that if in uttering e, S could (under the circumstances) be speaking literally, then S is speaking literally. (BACH; HARNISH, 1979, p. 12)

The easiest way to express the fact that it is raining outside is to say that it is raining outside. In the absence of some contextual clue that points to the contrary, there is no need to go beyond literal meaning. Linguistic rules are, above all else, taken to be mutually shared between the participants of a conversation. They provide a secure and straightforward way for the speaker to express what they mean. More importantly, PL does not preclude non-literal or indirect communication: sometimes the easiest way to communicate a complex message is to rely on information that is not conventionally established.

Concluding, we arrive at the following answer to EQ:

(ET) **THE EPISTEMIC THESIS**
A hearer recognizes that α has ϕ in virtue of it being the outcome of a rational process couched in tacitly accepted conversational principles.

In order to see how communicative intentions are grasped, take both situations involving (2). In situation one, Mary asserted that, given the fact that John is not drinking, he would be driving that day:

After a few drinks, someone asks:
– Who will drive us back home?
to which Mary responds:
– John will drive. He did not drink.

Mary's communicative intentions can be expressed as follows:

Mary issues an assertion by uttering (2) if, and only if, for some audience *H*, Mary uttered (2) reflexive-intending:

i. to express the belief that John will drive;
ii. that *H* believes that John will drive.

Mary uttered (2) with the belief that both she and her audience intended communication to occur. It is assumed that both Mary and her audience shared a language and were willing to cooperate so that the message would get across. Her utterance could be readily understood as saying that John will drive, mainly given the fact that 'John', 'will', and 'drive' mean what they mean. The fact that Mary intended her utterance to be an assertion is made overt by what Mary takes to be shared information. In the example, Mary is exploring the fact that if John is not drinking, he is likely to drive. This intention is highlighted by the fact that Mary follows her assertion with the information that John is not drinking, making it readily available to her audience.

In the second situation, Mary requested John to drive:

After much debate about who will drive, Mary says:
– John will drive.
Defeated, John orders a bottle of water.

Mary's communicative intentions can be expressed as follows:

Mary issues a request by uttering (2) if, and only if, for some audience *H* (that includes John), Mary uttered (2) reflexive-intending:

i. to express that she desires that John will drive;
ii. that John will drive as a result of Mary's desire.

In the described situation, John was looking for something to drink. Mary takes issue with the fact that they need someone to drive, and steps up to ask John to do so. Mary takes this fact to be shared information and to be readily available to her intended audience. It is clear that this was not John's initial intention: he was, after all, looking for a drink. Mary's utterance was not a statement about a certain future course of action; it was an expression of Mary's own desire for John to drive. John understood this: he believed Mary perceived that he intended to ask for a drink. Moreover, John perceived that a driver was needed, and that Mary occupied a certain position that allowed her to

comfortably make the request. As a result, John understood that Mary was requesting him to drive.

I believe that the intentionalist picture put forward can provide a satisfactory answer to MQ and EQ. Both the speaker and the speaker's audience are built within this framework. The rational process considers how the information is constrained by a rational plan, and how this rationality constraint is taken into account during the uptake of information. Furthermore, the rational process is taken to be an isotropic process, providing both the speaker and the hearer with the necessary malleability that communication requires. Additionally, this account provides a few principles that view communication as a part of a broader cooperative endeavor.

Moving forward, I propose an account of fiction-making within this mild-expressivist framework. Fiction-making, I argue, consists of a *sui generis* speech act where the author expresses an imagining whose content is taken to be true-in-fiction. Additionally, the primary perlocutionary intention expressed by the speech act prescribes that the content of a work of fiction be imagined by the reader.

2.2.1 Fiction-making as expression of imagination

Building on an intentionalist model, Currie (1990) proposes that the speech act of fiction-making be construed in relation to imagination. According to him, the act of writing a work of fiction consists of a series of speech acts with a *sui generis* illocutionary force. The illocutionary force is characterized by an expression of a certain content that should be regarded as true according to the world of fiction and an expression of the intention that the reader imagines it.

Currie proposes the following characterization[9]:

> *U*'s utterance of *S* is fictive iff there is a ϕ and there is a χ such that *U* utters *S* intending that anyone who has χ would
> (1) recognize that *S* has ϕ;
> (2) recognize that *S* is intended by *U* to have ϕ;
> (3) recognize that *U* intends them (the possessors of χ) to make-believe that *P*, for some proposition *P*; (CURRIE, 1990, p. 33)

Where *U* is a speaker, *S* is a sentence, *P* is a proposition, ϕ is a variable ranging over features of utterances, and χ is a variable ranging over characteristics of possible hearers. Having a certain ϕ secures overtness of what is said for a target group

[9]Currie's account was intended to function as the basis for a necessary and sufficient set of conditions for a work to be classified as fictional. I do not intend to pursue the same task.

that has χ. According to the schema, writing a work of fiction consists in prescribing for, a target audience, that they make-believe the content of what is said. The schema, at least on its surface, proposes that fiction-making is much like Grice's (1989b) account of assertion, modulo a substitution of belief for make-belief. Just as the expression of belief is what fixes an utterance of a sentence as an assertion, what characterizes Currie's proposal as an act of fiction-making is the presence of make-belief.

Originally proposed by Walton (1990), make-belief is a variety of imagination that explains our engagement with representational arts. In order to make-believe that P, an agent entertains that P is true according to F, where F is a fictional world. It is by reading the sentences written in a book that the reader engages in an imaginative process. Walton takes the sentences that compose a work of fiction to be props. That is, the reader of a work of fiction explores the sentences that compose that work in order to imagine the correct content. Engagement with fiction, as such, is prop-oriented. Make-believe composes the intended answer to a speech act of fiction-making. It is the prop-oriented nature of works of fiction that enables coordination.

Currie's characterization can be modified in order to fit my account of illocutionary force. Notably, Currie's schema lacks the expressive clause that is characteristic of Grice's (1989d) later work. Given the ever-present comparisons between Currie's schema and assertion, I suggest that, like assertions, a complete description of the act of fiction-making includes a clause responsible for the author's own attitude towards P. The author, presumably, also takes P as true-in-fiction. The illocutionary force of fiction-making, I propose, can be characterized by the following schema:

(FM) The author S fiction-makes by writing a sentence p if, and only if, for some reader H, S uttered p reflexive-intending:

i. to express that S imagines a proposition P;
ii. that H make-believe that P.

That is, in writing the sentence p, the author of a work of fiction expresses that they imagine that P, i.e., that they take the proposition P as true according to the story. (FM) is a schema that characterizes a *sui generis* illocutionary force as genuine as assertions, questions, and orders. While assertions are expressions of belief, and questions and orders are expressions of desires, fiction-making is the expression of imagination. As a defining characteristic of reflexive-intentions, the recognition of an utterance as an act of fiction-making is enough for the success of the speech act. Fiction-making, moreover, just

as any other illocutionary force, is always overt. If the author does not believe that the utterance can be recognized as an act of fiction-making, i.e., in the absence of a contextual clue that relates the utterance to a fictional story, the speech act cannot be successful.

This characterization restricts acts of fiction-making to a rather narrow set of utterances that are intended to be imagined, and are intended to be recognized as intended to be imagined, and the means to their recognition are perceived as achievable by a particular audience for whoever performs the speech act. The set of utterances that fulfill these requirements probably does not encompass all literary works usually regarded as fiction – such as old mythological works – and certainly encompasses utterances that are not part of works of fiction – such as, arguably, thought experiments. This is as intended. I do not claim that a successful speech act theory of fiction can settle what ought to be and what ought not to be regarded as fiction. (FM) aims to elucidate that the communication of fictional information is made possible by the same means used for the communication of beliefs and desires.

Currie's schema emphasizes the effect-oriented nature of fiction-making. For Currie, to fiction-make that P is to elicit in the reader an imagining that P. The schema presented by (FM) emphasizes the expressive clause characteristic of a mild expressionist account of illocutionary force. My account, however, does not stray from Currie's original proposal: it preserves the original intent of presenting an imagination-centered illocutionary force in a similar way that Grice's account of assertion is belief-centered. The expressive clause aims to convey the fact that the author of a work of fiction is, during the process of writing that work, putting forward – or creating – a set of imaginary facts. I assume that, in order to fiction-make that P, the author expresses their own imagining that P. The effect-oriented nature that is characteristic of Currie's proposal is accounted for by the prescriptive clause. In an ideal scenario, if the communicative process if successful, the reader imagines that P. Just as in any communicative process, the sentences that compose a work of fiction function as coordination devices: it is by recognizing that the author imagines that P is true-in-fiction that the reader engages in an imaginative process that takes P as true-in-fiction.

The different kinds of imagination that compose (FM), moreover, can be refined. First, the kind of imagination that composes the expressive clause is not always prop-oriented. Different from the reader, the author of a work of fiction does not imagine what they do as a result of reading a sentence that composes that work. Unlike the reader's imaginative endeavor, the author's imaginative activity is not constrained by the content of the set of sentences that compose the fictional work. The author plays a

creative role in the construction of their own fictional world. Moving forward, I explore the differences between the kinds of imagination that constitute the expressive and the prescriptive clauses of the (FM) schema.

2.2.2 On imagination

Walton (1990) explains the process by which the content of a work of fiction is generated through a comparison with children's games of make-believe. Games of make-believe are distinct from other kinds of imagining due to their use of props and the presence of principles of generation. A principle of generation is a set of rules that can be tacitly or explicitly accepted and allows for the creation of fictional facts. A prop is a mechanism that allows coordination towards what is to be imagined.

Take the following situation:

> Mary and John are playing a game of make-believe where the objective is to hide from bears. In the game, stumps count as bears.
> John sees a big stump and shouts:
> – There's a big bear over there. Quickly, Mary, hide!
> Seeing the stump, both Mary and John run away from it.

Both Mary and John are playing a game that explores their capacity to represent and engage with the world beyond belief. There are no actual bears, and neither Mary nor John believes that there are. It is true according to the game, however, that there are bears. Mary and John imagine that stumps are bears. Mary and John, moreover, can coordinate on what they believe: both take it that where there is a stump, there is a bear. If John imagines that there is a bear over there, Mary ought to imagine the same. Stumps, in this situation, are props that can be used to generate game-restricted truths. The generation of truths, moreover, is not restricted to Mary's or John's own creative capabilities: in a situation where neither Mary nor John would assume that there is a bear, a stump would still count as a bear. For there to be a bear in front of Mary or John, it suffices for a stump to be in front of either of them.

Props, according to Walton, broaden our imaginative horizons: they "induce us to imagine what otherwise we might not be imaginative enough to think of" (1990, p. 22). Most importantly, props generate fictional truths. In order to do so, however, Walton takes games of make-believe to make use of principles of generation. In Mary and John's game, the principle of generation is explicitly accepted and takes the form of the rule that

states that stumps are bears. The transition from a children's game of make-believe to the engagement with a work of fiction is fairly straightforward: while reading a book, we engage in a game of make-believe where the sentences written in the book are used as props that prompt our imagination. The author intends for their utterances to serve as a prop in the reader's engagement with fiction.

Currie and Ravenscroft (2002) divides imagination into two kinds: creative and recreative imagination. Recreative imagination involves putting oneself in someone else's shoes. Recreative imagination is perspective-shifting: it involves thinking like someone else, restricting our own imaginative process to a set of constraints that are set up by someone else's imaginative capabilities. The prop-oriented nature of make-believe classifies the process of engaging with a fictional work as a kind of recreative imagination. In order to make-believe something, the reader cannot freely generate a set of fictional truths; the imaginative activity required in order to make-believe something is constrained by the content of the props that coordinate the imaginative process. The reader's imaginative activity is restricted in order to coordinate with the author's imagination towards the content of their own fictional work.

The act of expressing that a piece of information ought to be make-believed is also an expression of what the author takes to be true-in-fiction. The author's act of imagination, however, is a kind of creative – rather than recreative – imagination. The author's imagination towards the content of their own work is not prop-oriented. There is no make-believe involved. The world of a work of fiction, unlike the world of children's games of make-believe, is not brought about by an explicit set of rules that interact with environmental features. A book is not made of naturally occurring stumps. It is the author's decision to make something true-in-fiction that makes it so. The author's imaginative horizon is not constrained by someone else's perspective. What is true according to a work of fiction is what the author intends to be true. That is, works of fiction are subject to what Berto and Badura (2019) calls the Principle of Authorial Authority: given the authoritative status of the author regarding their own work, the author's avowal to an act of imagination is enough to make the case that P should be taken as true-in-fiction. Recognizing that the author takes P to be true-in-fiction provides enough reason for the reader to do the same. The reader's act of imagining, however, is prompted by the author's utterance and is an instance of recreative imagination.

In most cases, but not always, it is creative imagination that is a part of the expressive clause of the (FM) schema. I take creative imagination to be a part of every process that results in the production of original literary works. Fiction-making, however,

goes beyond this. The expressive clause can consist of the expression of a different kind of imagination in different kinds of storytelling. Take, for example, the act of retelling a story. An act of retelling occurs when the content of an act of fiction-making is fixed by a previously established act of fiction-making. Retellings are prop-oriented. As such, retellings are expressions of make-believe. To retell a story is, nonetheless, to express imagination towards a certain content, expecting that the target audience does the same. To engage in retelling, as such, is to engage in a series of acts of fiction-making.

Nonetheless, the role that creative imagination can play in the construction of the communicative intentions that compose (FM) makes the core difference between fiction-making and asserting explicit. An assertion that P entails that, in uttering p, the speaker expresses that they believe that P and expects the audience to do the same. The parallel with (FM) is reasonably straightforward: fiction-making substitutes belief for imagination. This parallel, however, does not take into account the creative role that comes with authorial authority. Clause (i) has strictly distinct functions in assertions and fiction-making. In assertions, clause (i) is merely a description of what the speaker believes to be the case; in fiction-making, clause (i) fixes what is adequate to be imagined, i.e., it makes P true-in-fiction. The author's testimony that they imagine that P is enough for the reader to be secure about the fact that P is true-in-fiction; recognizing the author's expression of imagination prompts the reader to imagine that same piece of information, fulfilling the utterance's primary perlocutionary intention. This is certainly not the case for assertions and beliefs: a speaker expressing the belief that P is not enough for P to be true. Likewise, the testimony that the speaker believes that P does not guarantee that if the hearer acquires the belief that P the belief has achieved its normative aim for truth.

Belief and make-belief, moreover, share some characteristics. Like belief, the kind of imagination relevant to (FM) is propositional: to make-believe that P is simply to entertain P to be true-in-fiction. While the engagement with a work of fiction may bring about some mental imagery, the presence of mental imagery is not required by our engagement with fiction. Similarly to belief, make-belief aims for a certain kind of truth: while belief aims at truth *tout court*, imagination, in this case, aims for truth according to a particular work of fiction. Truth-in-fiction and truth, just as imagination and belief, are compatible: what is true in the world of fiction can be true in the actual world, and what is to be imagined can also be believed.

However, there are many ways in which imagination or make-belief differs from belief. Beliefs are different from imaginings in how we bring them about: while one can be proactive in their acts of imagining, a belief is brought about as a result of our interaction

with the environment. You do not choose to believe something, you believe something as a result of some external factor. Belief requires some sort of justification, while imagination can be brought up at will. Borrowing Gendler's (2003) terminology, belief is a receptive attitude, while imagination is a productive attitude.

Beliefs are different from imaginings in relation to the role they play in guiding our actions. While beliefs are connected to actions, imaginings are not. It is a result of a belief that the desire that prompts action is formed; beliefs are action-guiding. That is, it is by believing that the ball will hit me that I choose to move; it is by believing that water will quench my thirst that I choose to drink it. Imagination, however, is mostly offline. That is, imagining that a ball will hit me does not prompt me to move, and imagining that a cup is full of water does not prompt me to drink it.

Beliefs are different from imaginings in certain aspects of their normative behavior. Beliefs are truth-directed. An adequate set of beliefs is complete: in an ideal situation, for every P, P is either believed or disbelieved. An adequate set of beliefs is coherent: a competent believer does not believe that P and that $\neg P$ at the same time. Imagination and make-believe are not normatively constrained in the same way. While imagination is directed at truth-in-fiction, it can be both incomplete and incoherent. It can be true that a fictional character is both alive and not alive at the same time; it can be neither true nor false that a fictional forest has an even number of trees.

More importantly, a key difference between a set of imaginings and a set of beliefs is their dispositional behavior. While we are disposed to conjoin beliefs only with other beliefs, we are disposed to conjoin imaginings with beliefs and non-beliefs:

> Necessarily, where a thinker T imagines that p at time t, either T does not believe that p or T is disposed to connect her thought that p is the case to some further proposition(s) about what is the case, whose content is not replicated by any belief of hers at t. (STOCK, 2011)

As it stands, I take it that (FM) comfortably accommodates the insights presented by Currie's proposal. Intentionalist accounts of fiction-making assume that while reading we engage with fiction through the author's acts of fiction-making. The mild expressivist account I present, however, emphasizes the creative aspect of the author's imaginative process. The prescriptive aspect of fiction-making, as such, is taken as a result of a proper uptake of the author's expression of imagination.

2.3 Partial conclusions

In this chapter, I propose an account of fiction-making as an expression of imagination. My investigation starts with a discussion of some foundational issues regarding the proper characterization of illocutionary force. I argue that a traditional objection to speech act theories of fiction, put forward by Searle (1979a), rests on a misguided principle that takes illocutionary force to be a function of the meaning of an illocutionary force indicating device.

As an alternative to Searle's account, I propose an intentionalist account of illocutionary force. Guided by Bach and Harnish's (1979) developments of Grice's account of meaning, I propose a characterization of communicative intentions as the expression of an audience-directed, overt, rationally constrained, and self-referential intention. Unlike Bach and Harnish, however, I assume a more modest expressivist view emphasizing the role of the expressive clause of a speech act schema in fixing the illocutionary force that is conveyed by an utterance. The prescriptive clause accounts for the expected effect of an utterance and is better construed as a primary perlocutionary intention that is often associated with standard performances of speech acts.

Building upon Currie's (1990) paradigmatic account of fiction-making as a prescription to imagine. I propose an account of fiction-making as an expression of imagination. My account takes that, in the act of writing a work of fiction, the author performs a series of utterances that express what they imagine to be true according to the story. Additionally, the primary perlocutionary intention expressed by an act of fiction-making is the intention that a target audience engages in an imaginative endeavor whose content matches the content of the author's imagination.

Following Walton's (1990) seminal account of fiction as an object that elicits imaginings, I take that a successful act of fiction-making produces a sentence that can be securely explored as a prop that guides the reader's imaginative process. Following Walton, I take the imagination prompted by a work of fiction as make-believe. Make-believe is a form of recreative imagination that is normatively constrained by the content of a fictional work. Make-believe is the attitude that is characterizes the prescriptive clause of fiction-making's speech act schema. The expressive clause, however, allows for a kind of creative imagination. Creative imagination, contrary to make-believe, is not constrained by the bounds of an external regulative principle.

In what follows, I engage with an objection, put forward by Predelli (2019),

that extends Searle's argument beyond a conventionalist account of illocutionary force. Predelli puts forward a scenario where any pair of fiction-related speech acts seem to mirror the dynamic behavior of their regular counterparts. Such uniformity seems to put speech act theories of fiction at a theoretical disadvantage in relation to pretense accounts of fictional discourse. I argue that Predelli's uniformity is a feature that is brought about by the representational nature of fictional discourse. To conclude, I argue against the claim that pretense amounts to the best explanation of fictional discourse. Writing a work of fiction does not prompt the right kind of action to be considered a pretense performance of a speech act.

Chapter 3

Uniformity in the dynamics of fiction-making

Predelli (2019, 2020) argues that Searle's (1979c) argument against speech act theories of fiction has important consequences that are not dependent on the acceptance of Searle's version of conventionalism. An often overlooked point of Searle's argument is that the speech acts that compose the work of fiction often are, at a superficial level, subject to the same norms that govern utterances that are not fiction-related. Exploring this normative space of Searle's argument, Predelli claims that proposing a *sui generis* speech act for fiction-making raises an unnatural uniformity between any two speech acts performed with fictive intent and any two speech acts performed without fictive intent. This uniformity, moreover, is naturally accounted for in a pretense account, rendering it the best explanation for the process of writing fiction.

I take it that Predelli's argument explores an empirical datum of language use that should be accounted for in any proper speech act theory of fiction. I disagree, however, with an important premise of Predelli's argument. Predelli's characterization of speech act theories of fiction attributes the distinct effects of speech acts to distinct fiction-related illocutionary forces. A consequence of doing so is that speech act theories of fiction need to multiply fiction-related illocutionary forces beyond what I believe to be necessary, resulting in the unwanted uniformity outcome. This move, I argue, is unwarranted. A single illocutionary force of fiction-making can account for all seemingly distinct fiction-related speech acts.

The strategy I pursue in order to answer Predelli's worries explores the fact that the similarities between fiction-related speech acts and their regular counterparts are only present at a surface level. In order to do so, first, I present Predelli's uniformity argument and frame it in a dynamic representation of the relevant illocutionary force at play. Next, I propose a dynamic account of fiction-making. I claim that providing an answer to the uniformity argument requires a proper characterization of the content of

fiction-making and how such content is put forward in a dynamic representation of the context. In answering Predelli's worries, I highlight how this characterization cleans up the apparent uniformity between fiction-related speech acts and their regular counterparts. To conclude, I present an analysis of pretense and argue that pretense mischaracterizes the process of fiction-making.

3.1 The uniformity argument

Predelli (2019) challenges speech acts theories of fiction by considering the relation between two speech acts. In order to make the argument clear, consider the following sentences:

(1) Can John run the mile?

(2) John can run the mile.

Take two literal utterances of (1) and (2) with their usual illocutionary forces. An utterance of (1) is usually regarded as a question, while an utterance of (2) is usually regarded as an assertion. Their communicative intentions can be constructed as follows:

Speaker S questions by uttering (1) if, and only if, for some audience H, S uttered (1) reflexive-intending:

i. to express the desire that H tell S if John can run the mile;
ii. that H tell S if John can run the mile.

Similarly:

Speaker S asserts by uttering (2) if, and only if, for some audience H, S uttered (2) reflexive-intending:

i. to express the belief that John can run the mile;
ii. that H believe that John can run the mile.

In a usual situation, we can identify that if the utterance of (1) is made before the utterance of (2), the utterance of (2) is a direct response to the utterance of (1). That is, the performance of the second utterance fulfills the intended primary perlocutionary intention of the first utterance: uttering (1) asks a question and following this utterance with an utterance of (2) answers it. Similarly, if an utterance of (2) is performed before an

utterance of (1), the second utterance would probably be taken as a signal that something went wrong in the communicative process: it would ask for something that, given the first utterance, should be taken as shared information.

Generalizing, we have the assumption that for any two utterances *U* and *U'* with the same content and any two illocutionary forces *F* and *F'*, if *U* was uttered before *U'*, a relation between $< F, F' >$ can be identified. In the case of <question, assertion> we have the relation of answering; in the case of <assertion, question> we have a signal that something went wrong in the communicative exchange.

The upshot of Predelli's argument rests on the assumption that fiction-making cannot function as a blanket illocutionary force that covers every situation where an utterance puts forward a sentence in a work of fiction:

> Of course, on any decent version of [speech act theories of fiction], this storytelling result may not indiscriminately be applied across the board: at least some occurrences of, say, 'can John run the mile?' must be associated with a force of a type other than *F*, lest they inappropriately be interpreted as attaching storytelling force to the content that John can run the mile. Let then F^* be the force which the [speech act theory of fiction] takes to be appropriate on these occasions, say, some kind of 'fiction-wondering' illocutionary outcome. (PREDELLI, 2019)

According to Predelli, any decent speech act theory of fiction would not assume that storytelling – or fiction-making – covers every exchange of fiction-related information. Take two utterances of (1) and (2) performed by an author during the process of writing a work of fiction. If we take an utterance of (2) made by the author during the process of writing a work of fiction to be an act of fiction-making, it is natural to assume that an utterance of (1) made by the author during the same process would be the performance of some other speech act – in Predelli's words, some kind of fiction-wondering. Given that (1) and (2) seem to put forward different kinds of information, they are assumed to account for different kinds of speech acts. Were this not the case, speech act theories of fiction would run the risk of misattributing to an utterance of (1) the same effects attributed to an utterance of (2).

Just as fiction-making is a *sui generis* speech act, it is reasonable to assume that speech act theories of fiction would also take the acts of fiction-wondering to be *sui generis* speech acts. That being the case, given the assumed intentionalist background, the distinct fiction-related illocutionary forces would be raised by distinct imagination-related attitudes expressed by the author of a particular work. The case of fiction-asserting is

accounted for by fiction-making – an illocutionary force construed similarly to Grice's account of assertion, modulo a substitution of belief for imagination. The case of fiction-wondering would be accounted for by some variation of the fiction-making schema with the proper imagination-related attitude distinct from the one that characterizes fiction-making. In sum, I take Predelli to be pointing out that, to account for distinct speech acts that seem to occur in works of fiction – e.g., acts of asserting-in-fiction, acts of ordering-in-fiction, and acts of questioning-in-fiction – speech act theories of fiction would need not only a single illocutionary force but at least one fiction-related illocutionary force for each regular kind of speech act.

That being the case, Predelli points out that:

> [T]he situation [with (1) and (2)] is reproducible, *mutatis mutandis*, in the case of fictional discourse. This is so because occurrences of those sentences in a fictional narrative initially engender a sense of illocutionary tension parallel to that ensuing in everyday conversation. (PREDELLI, 2019)

That is, the relation between asking and asserting that John can run the mile is the same as the relation between fiction-wondering and fiction-making that John can run the mile. It is strange, or perhaps a violation of some norm of conversation, to fiction-wonder if John can run the mile after an utterance fiction-made or fiction-asserted that John can run the mile. Weirdly, the same occurs with the completely distinct pair of illocutionary forces of asking and asserting. Similarly, to fiction-make that John can run the mile after an utterance fiction-wondered if John can run the mile is to directly tackle the "wondering" in the first utterance, again weirdly mirroring the completely unrelated relation between asserting and asking.

I propose that we can generalize the outcome of this argument as follows: take any two sentences p and q with the same content-bearing string of words. Take two regular utterances of p and q to produce the speech acts P and Q with the same content and different illocutionary forces. Now, take two utterances of p and q performed by the author of a work of fiction in the process of writing a novel. Both utterances express the fiction-related speech acts P^f and Q^f, where P^f is an illocutionary force distinct from P, and Q^f is distinct from Q. Given an utterance of p expressing P followed by an utterance of q expressing Q, a certain relation between both utterances can be identified. Given an utterance of p expressing P^f followed by an utterance of q expressing Q^f, the same relation raised between P and Q is raised for P^f and Q^f.

Given that the pairs P and Q and P^f and Q^f of illocutionary forces are com-

pletely unrelated, speech acts theories of fiction need to either account for or explain away this uniformity. More interestingly, Predelli points out that the phenomenon exposed by his example are raised independently of any characterization of illocutionary force:

> What matters is that, regardless of one's sympathy for Searle-style regularities or Gricean reflexive intentions, any decent analysis will be in the position of coping with the indisputable explanandum that saying, asking, ordering, or expressing achieves different communicative results. By the same token, regardless of one's commitments to dedicated illocutionary forces or to specific recognition and responses, it is an equally indisputable fact that a plurality of outcomes must be recognizable in the fictional domain. (PREDELLI, 2019)

The fact that the illocutionary relations are mirrored by fictional discourse, *prima facie*, seems to imply the Austinian idea that the difference between fictional and non-fictional discourse is that the latter is a serious use of language, while the former is not. Pretense aims to represent an actual discourse that follows actual discourse expectations: any relation between illocutionary forces ought to be the same in either case. Thus, Predelli concludes, a pretense account is the best explanation for the process of writing a work of fiction and is preferable to any speech acts theory of fiction.

Predelli's argument explores a normative aspect of Searle's argument that often goes overlooked. The argument, moreover, extends the reach of Searle's criticism in order to show that the superficial dynamics of fiction-making are, in some sense, similar to the dynamics of regular speech acts. The normative aspect that is put forward by the uniformity argument, however, can be pushed back: García-Carpintero (2022) argues that Predelli's uniformity does not generalize as much as it seems. García-Carpintero points out that not all aspects that govern speech acts are mirrored in fictional contexts. Take, for example, an assertion of (2). In a non-fictional context, an utterance of (2) places the speaker in a position where they could be the target of a pushback regarding what they were asserting. That is, asserting in non-fictional contexts opens the speaker up for concern regarding the justification of what they just asserted. This fact is not mirrored in fiction: when faced with conflicting information, we are not instantly compelled to deny the uptake of new information. Unreliability in fictional contexts does not affect fiction-making in the same way that unreliability affects assertions in regular contexts. That is, some of the norms that govern illocutionary forces in fiction and non-fiction are only the same if we assume that the utterance was performed under "regular" contextual circumstances.

While such observations may be enough to explain away some of the normative similarities shared between fiction-making and regular speech acts, the dynamic aspect persists. I follow Predelli in assuming that the dynamic uniformity presented is a basic datum – an empirical feature of our linguistic or communicative practices – straightforwardly explained by pretense theory, and is not accounted for by a superficial exposition of speech acts theories of fiction. I argue, however, that speech acts theories of fiction can provide a proper account for this uniformity. While it seems clear that Predelli's conclusion ought to be generalized to all regular illocutionary forces, I will focus on acts of asserting and asking. I disagree with Predelli's appeal to distinct illocutionary forces in order to explain speech acts of fiction-asserting and fiction-wondering. I will argue that fiction-making does not need to be multiplied to account for the effects of distinct illocutionary forces that permeate fiction and everyday conversations.

To sustain my points, I frame the relation between illocutionary forces identified by Predelli as a result of the essential effects that speech acts exert on the context. To account for the effect of an assertion, I make use of Stalnaker's (1978) proposal, where a successful act of asserting adds information to the common ground. To account for the effects of a question, I explore Roberts' (2012) account, where a successful act of questioning updates the question under discussion (QUD). The particular norms that regulate the dynamics of QUD and the common ground, I believe, properly characterize the phenomena made explicit by Predelli's example.

My solution relies on the assumption that fiction-making can be characterized as an illocutionary force designed to represent key features of regular speech acts. Predelli's uniformity is a feature of fiction-related discourse. Assuming that imagination is the proper response to fiction, in order to explain Predelli's uniformity, we need not to modify the attitude that fixes fiction-making, but to provide a proper characterization of the content that is intended to be imagined. I propose that the content of acts of fiction-making, in a way similar to speech reports, is speech acts. Different from speech reports, however, fiction-making is a *sui generis* speech act characterized by an expression of imagination. The content of fiction-making, in accordance with the representational aspect of fictional works, is to be imagined as performed in the same manner as a regular speech act with a regular illocutionary force associated with the appropriate attitude.

3.1.1 Uniformity in speech act dynamics

Stalnaker (1978) proposes a model to represent the dynamics of a conversation as an abstraction from contextual changes. Context, on Stalnaker's proposal, reflects the information shared between discourse participants. The proposal takes the context to provide a space for coordination. Context models information that the participants of a conversation can reliably coordinate on. To account for the distinct kinds of information, the context can be divided into different regions, each responsible for representing a certain kind of shared attitude. Communication – or the moves that are possible within a communicative exchange – are ways to modify the context, either subtracting or adding new information to the context. That is, different speech acts, as the story goes, are distinct ways to interact with distinct contextual regions.

Take Stalnaker's account of the effect of assertions. To assert something is to propose that a contextual region, the common ground, changes according to the content of the utterance. Stalnaker (2002) characterizes the common ground as the shared set of accepted information. In order for information to be shared – i.e., to be a part of the common ground – the participants of a conversation need to accept that P, believe that everyone accepts that P, believe that everyone believes that everyone accepts that P, and so forth. A successful assertion is a proposal for the set of accepted information to be broadened. As a dynamic model, once a new piece of information is added to the common ground, it becomes available to the participants in later stages of the conversation.

The common ground goes beyond explicit information that is communicated by linguistic means. It encompasses any kind of mutually accepted information, including, but not limited to, conversational presuppositions and visual and auditory information. Moreover, the common ground is constantly updated by manifest events. A manifest event is a change to the conversational environment that is perceived as relevant to the participants of a conversation. That includes the performance of a conversational move. That is, any conversational move that is mutually perceived by the participants of a conversation entails an update to the common ground with the information that a conversational move was performed. That is, to assert that P is to propose that P be included in the common ground; additionally, asserting that P entails an update to the common ground with the information that the speaker has asserted that P.

It is important to note that this characterization of assertion, as Stalnaker stresses, is not supposed to be a definition of the illocutionary force but a representation

of its effects[1]. This representation illustrates some constraints the context exerts on the speech acts. I take Predelli's illocutionary relations to be a subset of these constraints. Before exploring this, however, I turn to questions and their treatment within a dynamic framework.

Distinct from assertions, the essential effect of questions is to set a topic to be discussed. Questions are not direct modifications to the common ground, instead, they modify a distinct contextual region, the question under discussion (QUD). Following Roberts (2012), a successful question puts on top of the QUD a new stack of alternatives related to the content of the utterance. The content of a question q is the set *q-alt(q)* of possible alternatives compatible with a complete answer to that question. Take, for example, sentence (1):

(1) Can John run the mile?

An utterance of (1) issues a yes-or-no question. Uttering (1) adds *q-alt(1)* to the QUD. The set of alternatives that compose *q-alt(1)* includes the information that John can run the mile and the information that John cannot run the mile. Questions, moreover, can be partially or completely answered:

> a. A partial answer to a question q is a proposition which contextually entails the evaluation – either true or false -— of at least one element of q-alt(q).
>
> b. A complete answer is a proposition which contextually entails an evaluation for each element of q-alt(q). (ROBERTS, 2012)

That is, each alternative that is part of the stack of alternatives present in the QUD can be evaluated as true or false according to the information available on the common ground. If P is true according to the information available on the common ground, then the alternative that P is evaluated as 'true' on the QUD; if P is false according to the information available on the common ground, then the alternative that P is evaluated as 'false' on the QUD. A stack of alternatives that has every alternative evaluated has its question answered.

This model explores the close relationship between the target of the inquiry and the information that is available to the participants of a conversation. The information that is available on the common ground constrains the stack of alternatives that compose

[1]See, for example, Stalnaker (1999), pp. 87, and Stalnaker (2014), pp. 88. Additionally, Clapp (2020) presents a thorough discussion of Stalnaker's account of assertions that cannot be contemplated here.

the QUD. If a piece of information is valued on the common ground, i.e., if there is shared acceptance towards the truth or falsity of P, then the equivalent alternative cannot be part of the QUD. The dynamics between the QUD and the common ground model the relationship between the static representation of asserting and asking a question: to ask a question is to request a piece of information; to assert is to provide information. Tackling the content of a question with an assertion means providing an answer – be it complete or partial – to it.

Now, take an utterance of (2):

(2) John can run the mile.

Asserting (2), if successful, adds to the common ground the information that John can run the mile. The update made to the common ground entails an evaluation of every alternative that is part of the QUD that was set up by an utterance (1): it evaluates the information that John can run the mile as true, which entails that the information that John cannot run the mile is false. As such, uttering (2) in a context where the QUD was updated with q-alt*(1)* completely answers the question set up by an utterance of (1). Predelli's (2019) example inverts the set-up/payoff order of questions and answers. The situation is constructed as follows:

(2, 1) John can run the mile. Can John run the mile?

Predelli points out that the question in (2, 1) seems to require reinterpretation. The strangeness identified by Predelli can be explained by the dynamics of assertions and questions: the first part of the utterance, the assertion, adds the information that John can run the mile to the common ground; the second part, the question, updates the QUD with a set of alternatives that are already completely evaluated. The strangeness is a consequence of the fact that we usually do not ask a question whose answer is already shared between the participants of a conversation. To bring the exchange back to conformity with the usual norms of conversation, a reinterpretation is triggered.

In order to explain this, we can propose a constraint exerted by context on the content of questions, something along the lines of 'Do not ask a question whose answer is mutually known'[2]. This constraint functions as a sort of Gricean maxim whose violation triggers reinterpretation. It is important to note that speech acts are constrained by the context not simply in relation to other illocutionary forces but rather in relation to the

[2]Stalnaker (1978), in fact, introduces three reinterpretation triggers for assertions.

effect they aim to exert and what information is currently available in it. In a dynamic account, each speech act provides a contextual change to the context in which it was first performed. The interpretation of each subsequent speech act is constrained by the characteristics of the context in which it is performed, including the changes provided by previous utterances.

I believe this model provides the proper characterization for the phenomena Predelli identified in his examples. An integral consequence I take to be part of Predelli's uniformity argument is that speech acts theories of fiction have to propose a multitude of illocutionary forces to account for distinct attitudes of fiction-related speech acts. As I hope to have demonstrated, these illocutionary forces are subject to the same contextual constraints that regulate their regular counterparts. The problem can be solved, I argue, by providing a proper characterization of the content of an act of fiction-making. This not only avoids the *ad hocism* of the multiple forces approach but provides a better explanation for the relation between fiction-related and regular illocutionary forces.

In an effort to answer Predelli's uniformity argument, I propose a dynamic model where the author's act of fiction-making does not consist of updates to their regular contextual region. I suggest that, instead of updates to the common ground or the QUD, acts of fiction-making update what I call the common imaginary. The common imaginary tracks shared imagination. A similar strategy has been pursued under the guise of *unofficial common ground theories* proposed by Stokke (2013, 2023) and Eckardt (2014), and has been further developed by Semeijn (2021), Maier and Semeijn (2021), and Zucchi (2021). Distinct from them, I still maintain a strong and overt commitment to a static account of speech acts. In line with Stalnaker, I do not take an analysis of the effects that speech acts exert on the context to be a full account of speech acts themselves.

3.2 Dynamics for fiction-making

According to speech act theories of fiction, to perform an act of fiction-making is to express. In a manner similar to assertions, fiction-making aims to bring about a consensus in an attitude regarding a particular piece of information: the author of a work of fiction informs the reader that P is true-in-fiction; the reader, knowing that the author is the authority who sets what is or is not the case in the fictional world, imagines that P.

Take the following sentences:

(3) For Guy Montag, it was a pleasure to burn.

(4) For Guy Montag, was it a pleasure to burn?

Take an utterance of (3) as an assertion. The utterance updates the common ground with the information that Guy Montag took pleasure in burning. Take an utterance of (4) as a question. The utterance updates the QUD with a stack of alternatives that answer whether Guy Montag took pleasure in burning.

Now take the two utterances (3) and (4) as performed by Ray Bradbury in the process of writing *Fahrenheit 451*. Utterances performed with fictive intent, I argue, are updates to the common imaginary. The common imaginary is a contextual region that tracks the imagination shared between author and reader. The author is the one who performs the utterances that set what is to be imagined; the reader, upon grasping the author's intentions, imagines it. In order to distinguish between the effects of Bradbury's utterances of (3) and (4), Predelli assumes that speech act theories of fiction must posit at least two distinct *sui generis* illocutionary forces. In a straightforward mirroring between fiction and non-fiction, given the fact that we have two distinct *sui generis* speech acts, (3) would update a region of the context which represents the shared set of information that is intended to be imagined, and (4) would update a region of the context which represents the shared set of information that is to be fiction-wondered. Constructed as such, I take the uniformity outcome to be unavoidable – it is clear that pretense-theories provide the best explanation.

This account misses the point regarding the scope of fiction-making. If fiction-making is treated as an illocutionary force parallel to assertion, and if we need to posit a myriad of fiction-mirrored versions of regular speech acts in order to account for fiction-related communication, then uniformity between fiction-related and regular speech acts is a necessary feature of any speech act theory of fiction. I believe this entails an unnecessary multiplication of fiction-related illocutionary forces. Furthermore, there is no need for a myriad of distinct imagination-related propositional attitudes like fiction-wondering: imagination alone should suffice. I take that, in order to explain away Predelli's worries, speech act theories of fiction need, instead, a proper characterization of the contents of an act of fiction-making.

Fiction-making is not a speech act parallel to assertion and should not be taken as such. The content of an act of fiction-making, distinct from the content of a regular act of assertion, should always be characterized as a speech act. In this sense, fiction-making is much more akin to speech reports than to regular assertions. The speech act expressed

– or reported – in the act of fiction-making, however, is not performed by anyone but prescribed to be imagined as if performed by a character in the work of fiction. I take the characterization of the content of an act of fiction-making as a speech act to explain how to account for the seemingly distinct acts of fiction-making such as fiction-asserting and fiction-asking. The perceived similarities between fiction-asserting and fiction-asking are not a problem for speech acts theories of fiction but a consequence of the representational features of fiction itself. Predelli's uniformity is not a relation between two acts of fiction-making but a relation between the acts that are the content of the acts of fiction-making.

It is important to stress that acts of fiction-making, while being speech report-like, are not speech reports. To take fiction-making as such would be to incur the same mistake as treating fiction-making as assertions. Fiction-making is report-like in the sense that the uptake of both speech acts implies the attribution of a certain utterance to someone else. In the case of speech reports, such attribution commits the speaker to the fact that there is a certain person who is capable of performing a certain speech act with the same content communicated by the speech report. This is not the case for fiction-making. Speech reports are assertions, and fiction-making is not. Fiction-making does not aim to represent the world as it is. The author does not report that someone said such and such but creates a fictional state of affairs where a certain character said such and such. There is no intention to represent reality, and there is no commitment to the fact that there is someone who, in fact, said such and such.

The common imaginary is structured much like context itself, and is divided into a series of subpartitions that are updated by distinct fictional speech acts that are performed by fictional characters. While the author's utterance prompts updates to the common imaginary, the speech act that is the content of the author's utterances is what sets how the common imaginary is updated. That is, if the reported utterance is an assertion, the common ground of the common imaginary is updated with the content of that assertion, and if the reported utterance is a question, the QUD of the common imaginary is updated with a stack of alternatives, and so forth. To make things clear, take the following sentence:

(5) "It was a pleasure to burn", asserted Guy Montag.

Take an utterance of (5) to be performed by Bradbury. The proper account of (5), I propose, is that Bradbury expresses that he takes it to be true-in-fiction – i.e., that he imagines – that Guy Montag asserted that "It was a pleasure to burn". Bradbury intends his intention to be recognized by the reader, who will imagine that Guy Montag said that

"It was a pleasure to burn". Bradbury's utterance prompts an update to the common imaginary. Guy Montag's utterance, contrary to Bradbury's, is not an act of fiction-making, but an assertion.. As an assertion, Guy Montag's utterance prompts an update to the common ground of the common imaginary. Setting aside some nuances brought about by the use of literary devices, the common ground of the common imaginary is updated with the information that for Guy Montag it was a pleasure to burn.

The proper characterization of Bradbury's utterance is the following:

> Bradbury fiction-makes by writing (5) if, and only if, for some reader *H*, Bradbury uttered (5) reflexive-intending:
>
> i. to express that he imagines that (5);
> ii. that *H* imagines that (5).

Guy Montag's communicative intentions can be represented as follows:

> Guy Montag asserted that it was a pleasure to burn by uttering 'It was a pleasure to burn' if, and only if, for some audience *H*, Guy Montag uttered 'It was a pleasure to burn' reflexive-intending:
>
> i. to express that he believes that it was a pleasure to burn;
> ii. that *H* believes that Guy Montag found pleasure in burning.

Both Bradbury's and Guy Montag's utterances trigger additional effects. The fact that Bradbury fiction-made that (5) updates the (non-fictional) common ground with the information that Bradbury fiction-made that (5). The fact that Guy Montag asserted that it was a pleasure to burn updates the common ground of the common imaginary with the information that Guy Montag asserted that it was a pleasure to burn. Such secondary effects can play an important role in literary narratives, as what is true-in-fiction may not align with the beliefs of a character in that fictional work.

Moving to questions, take the following sentence:

(6) "Was it a pleasure to burn?", asked Guy Montag.

Take an utterance of (6) to be performed by Bradbury. Bradbury, in his utterance, fiction-made that Guy Montag asked a question. The proper response to an act of fiction-making is imagination, prompting an update to the common imaginary. Bradbury intends the reader to imagine that Guy Montag asked a question. Guy Montag,

in turn, asked whether it was a pleasure to burn. As a result, a region of the common imaginary, the QUD of the common imaginary, is updated with a stack of alternatives that answer whether Guy Montag took pleasure in burning.

Bradbury's communicative intentions are the following:

> Bradbury fiction-makes by writing (6) if, and only if, for some reader *H*, Bradbury uttered (6) reflexive-intending:
>
> i. to express that he imagines that (6);
> ii. that *H* imagines that (6).

Guy Montag's communicative intentions can be represented as follows:

> Guy Montag asked whether it was a pleasure to burn by uttering 'Was it a pleasure to burn?' if, and only if, for some audience *H*, Guy Montag uttered 'Was it a pleasure to burn?' reflexive-intending:
>
> i. to express the desire that *H* tells him whether it was a pleasure to burn;
> ii. that *H* tells him whether it was a pleasure to burn.

Guy Montag's question updates the QUD of the common imaginary with a stack of questions that are answered in relation to the content of the common ground of the common imaginary. Additionally, both Bradbury's and Guy Montag's utterances trigger secondary effects: the common ground is updated with the information that Bradbury fiction-made that (6), and the common ground of the common imaginary is updated with the information that Guy Montag asked whether it was a pleasure to burn.

Notice that there can be – and in most cases, there will be – a mismatch between the target of the author's communicative intentions and the target of a character's communicative intentions. Following Predelli (2020), I take a fictional narrative to be divided between the storyworld and the narrative periphery. The story unfolds in the storyworld; the process of storytelling occurs in the narrative periphery.

Bradbury is not a part of the storyworld. Unlike Guy Montag, Bradbury cannot interact with other fictional characters. The target of Bradbury's utterances is always the reader. Speech acts performed by inhabitants of the storyworld, in the vast majority, have other fictional characters as their target[3]. Fictional characters undeniably communicate with each other.

[3]Literary works are complex means of communicating information. I assume that the vast majority of literary works function within conventional bounds put forward by the periphery-storyworld dichotomy. I do not deny, however, that such conventions can be exploited in non-conventional forms.

Bradbury's utterances involving (5) and (6) directly relate the speech act performed in the fictional world to Guy Montag, an overt character of the novel. Not all utterances, however, are related to inhabitants of the storyworld. The narrator – or the storyteller – is a part of the narrative periphery. Bradbury, in addition to not being a part of the storyworld, is also not a part of the narrative periphery. The narrator is not the author. The narrative periphery is where the storytelling occurs. Utterances that are put forward in the narrative periphery express facts about the storyworld. The narrator, moreover, is not restricted to the narrative periphery, and may also be a part of the storyworld. Utterances made in the narrative periphery have the reader as a target.

Take sentences (3) and (4) to be uttered by Bradbury. My account takes it to be a mistake to purport utterances that are part of *Fahrenheit 451* to involve no fictional figure or to associate them with Bradbury himself beyond the (report-like) act of fiction-making. The author, again, does not figure inside the common imaginary. Expressed by Bradbury's act of fiction-making, I take that the narrator performs an utterance with a regular illocutionary force whose content is fixed by (3) and (4). That is, it is not Bradbury but the narrator who asserts that Guy Montag took pleasure in burning and asks whether Guy Montag took pleasure in such activity.

The proper effect of Bradbury fiction-making that (3) is to update the common imaginary. Bradbury's utterance reports that the narrator asserted that, for Guy Montag, it was a pleasure to burn. Accordingly, in the absence of some literary device that may preclude the direct update, the common ground of the common imaginary will be updated with the information that for Guy Montag it was a pleasure to burn. Likewise, the proper effect of Bradbury fiction-making (4) prompts an update to the common imaginary with the fact that the narrator asked a question. The narrator's act of questioning, as such, updates the QUD with a stack of alternatives that provide an answer to the question of whether Guy Montag took pleasure in burning. Additionally, the secondary effects of both Bradbury's and the narrator's speech acts are accounted for in an adequate manner.

A sharp distinction between the author and the narrator allows for a sharp distinction between the different aims that can be associated with the author's and the narrator's utterances. Bradbury's process of fiction-making puts forward a storyworld that is intended to be imagined. Fiction-making intends to communicate how a fictional world should be construed. A successful act of fiction-making provides the reader with enough information in order to construe a set of facts that will guide and constrain the actions that are carried out in the storyworld. The narrator's aims, however, may not necessarily align with the author's communicative intentions. The narrator is a fictional character

and may be exploited as such. The narrator may mislead, lie, or hide information from the reader. The complex process of construing the fictional world may require the reader to infer information not only from what is provided by the narrator's explicit utterances, but also from the actions that are carried out by other characters. That is, there can be a difference between the fictional truths and the information that is communicated by the narrator as truths.

The common ground of the common imaginary reflects what the reader takes to be the content of the fictional work. The common ground of the common imaginary, moreover, may fail to be updated with the content of an assertion performed by a fictional character. In a regular conversation, when faced with an assertion of P, the audience may fail to incorporate P into the common ground. The justification for not incorporating P may vary: the speaker may have no evidence that P, P may clash with information that is readily available in the common ground, it may be evidently more likely for the participants of a conversation that P is not the case, and so forth. Similarly, an assertion that P performed by a character may clash with the reader's expectation. In the case of an assertion performed in the storyworld, the fictional character may, for example, be ignorant about some information available to the reader that entails $\neg P$. In the case of an assertion performed in the narrative periphery, the narrator may be lying or attempting to mislead the reader about a piece of information. In any case, secondary effects of the speech acts performed still occur: the reader may update the common imaginary with the information that the narrator asserted that P without updating the common ground with the information that P. To the same effect, information may also be removed from the common imaginary. A character in the storyworld may misrepresent the facts in order to compel the reader to update the common ground of the common imaginary with a piece of information that is false; similarly, an unreliable narrator may assert false information. In any case, upon realizing the correct truth value of a piece of information, the reader may adjust the common ground in order to represent what they take to be true-in-fiction.

We may construe the way information is tracked in the common imaginary as follows: for a piece of information to be part of the common imaginary, the reader has to track whether the author conveys it as true-in-fiction. The author, however, never figures inside the common imaginary. For a piece of information uttered by a fictional character to be part of a region of the common imaginary, the reader has to track whether the characters of a work of fiction are represented as having expressed adequate communicative intentions towards a piece of information.

In sum, take a piece of information P, a reader R, an author A, and a character

C:

For P to be part of the common imaginary, R has to:

i. take A to imagine that P;

ii. imagine that P.

If P is an assertion, in order to accommodate it into the common ground of the common imaginary, R has to:

iii. imagine that C expressed their belief that q.

Where q is the content of P.

Moving to questions, if P is a question, for P to be accommodated into the QUD of the common imaginary, R has to:

iii. imagine that C expressed their desire to know whether q.

Additionally, the common ground of the common imaginary can be updated by fiction-related manifest events. In any case, it is important to notice that the third condition is susceptible to the usual moves that constitute the dynamics of communication and, as such, may fail to update the common imaginary with their content.

In sum, I take that the uptake of a fiction-related utterance can be explained in two steps. First, the reader recognizes that the utterance is part of a work of fiction and that the proper attitude towards the communicated information is imagination. This signals that the update of the information should prompt an update to the common imaginary. The reader then identifies how the author is communicating that kind of information, i.e., what kind of communicative intention the author is associating with a certain character. The kind of communicative intention informs which region of the common imaginary will be updated by the character's speech act.

Back to the uniformity argument, Predelli puts forward a scenario where a pair of fiction-related utterances seem to share the same dynamic relations as their regular counterparts. Additionally, Predelli's assumes that speech act theories of fiction require two distinct fiction-related illocutionary forces in order to account for the distinct effects that are purported by any two distinct regular speech acts. A fiction-related question is an act of fiction-wondering, while a fiction-related assertion is an act of fiction-asserting. This assumption, I argue, is wrong: speech act theories of fiction can account for the differences

between fiction-related utterances without multiplying fiction-related illocutionary forces. A proper account of the content of an act of fiction-making can explain away the worries raised by the uniformity argument.

The content of an act of fiction-making is always a speech act. The effect of an act of fiction-making is to propose an update to the common imaginary. There is only one fiction-related illocutionary force with a single fiction-related dynamic effect. The uniformity raised by Predelli's example is not a feature of acts of fiction-making, but a feature of the content of the author's speech acts. The dynamics presented by the speech acts that compose the author's acts of fiction-making are, and are intended to be, the same as the dynamics of regular non-fictional utterances.

This characterization explores the intrinsic representative aspect of fiction-making. The content of the author's acts is nothing more than depictions of real-life communication. There is nothing special about the speech acts that compose acts of fiction-making. What is *sui generis* about fiction-making is not what it depicts, but how it does so. The relations between questions in the QUD of the common imaginary and assertions in the common ground of the common imaginary are, and are intended to be, equal to the relations between assertions and questions in the actual QUD and the actual common ground. Were they different, the reader would not take the characters of a fictional work to be asserting, asking, or in the case of fiction within fiction, fiction-making what they are saying. If this were the case, interactions depicted in works of fiction would be alien, and we, perhaps, would need to relearn not only the meaning of every illocutionary force indicating device but also the effects that every speech act exerts on the context.

In what follows, I engage with the claim that pretense amounts to the best explanation for fictional discourse. First, I argue that pretense fails to present enough reasons why an utterance that involves the expression of an attitude should not be taken to be a genuine illocutionary force. Appealing to pretense gives rise to an utterance that expresses an attitude completely unrelated to the attitude explored by the serious counterpart of the speech act we pretend-utter. Furthermore, pretense, by definition, requires action. There is no sense in which literary fiction requires acting upon new information, nor do I see a reason to presume that the action of writing a novel amounts to any kind of pretense by the author of a fictional work.

3.2.1 On pretense

Predelli's argument in favor of a pretense-based account of fiction-making is an inference to the best explanation. The uniformity raised by fictional discourse presents a *prima facie* argument against speech act theories of fiction-making; the uniformity, moreover, is readily explained by a pretense account. Predelli, however, does not present an account of fiction-making or a positive characterization of pretense. Pretense, nonetheless, comes to the forefront in his Radical Fictionalist (2020) approach to the semantics of fictional discourse.

The Radical Fictionalism project assumes a series of tools that were either part of a broader account of fictional narratives or were put forward by Predelli himself. The set of tools explored in Predelli's explanation regarding the generation of the content of a sentence that is part of a fictional work is similar to the set of tools I explore in order to provide the content of an act of fiction-making. Just like Predelli, I make extensive use of fictional characters in my explanation of how the author of a work of fiction conveys the correct kind of information. I take a fictional storyteller to play an important role in the way we organize fictional information. Moreover, the distinction between the narrative periphery and the storyworld – a notion I take to be crucial to the way we sort the information that is part of the common imaginary – is put forward by Predelli as a tool that is explored by the author in order to correctly fix the content of empty terms.

Radical Fictionalism, however, is a thesis about semantics. It engages with a problem raised by a direct-referential account of referential expressions and the claim that fictional terms have no reference. The project provides an explanation for the fact that we can engage with works of fiction despite the lack of semantic content that is inherent in the sentences that compose that work. According to Radical Fictionalism, the author of a fictional work pretends to make use of language in order to put forward fiction-related information. Fictional names, Predelli claims, are not names. Names are referring expressions. A name is a linguistic expression that directly refers to an object. The name-type expressions that are put forward in the process of writing a work of fiction do not refer. The author of a work of fiction, moreover, does not intend for the name-type expressions to refer to an object. The resemblance between fictional names and actual names is only superficial[4]. The distinction extends to sentences. The names that are part of a work of fiction are not names, but are name-type expressions; the sentences that are

[4]An in-depth discussion of the semantics of fictional names falls outside of the scope of this work. For a more focused discussion concerning the Radical Fictionalist treatment of fictional terms, as well as some criticism of Predelli's position, see García-Carpintero (2022) and Solodkoff (2022).

part of a work of fiction are not sentences, but are sentence-type linguistic structures. That is, works of fiction are not composed of actual names and actual sentences, but only of name-type expressions and sentence-type linguistic structures. Predelli, moreover, follows Walton in assuming that fictional narratives have a representative nature. That is, fictional works intend to depict actual situations. There are, according to the fictional world, actual acts of referring and utterances of actual sentences. They are, however, performed by a fictional character.

A pretense account of fiction-making provides a pragmatic counterpart for the Radical Fictionalist semantic assumption. Just as there is no actual use of linguistic expressions, adopting a pretense account of fiction-making provides the grounds to sustain that no actual speech act is performed. While the author of a work of fiction does, in fact, utter, or better yet, write such expressions, the utterance is performed without its regular illocutionary force. The outcome of the picture I provide and this construction of a pretense-oriented approach are fairly similar. My account takes the author's act of fiction-making to be an expression of imagination, whose standard effect is to bring about to the reader an imagination whose content is the performance of a regular speech act by a fictional character. Predelli, however, takes the author to pretend to perform a regular speech act whose standard effect is to bring about to the reader an imagination that an actual speech act is performed by a fictional character. Both cases involve the utterance of a fiction-related sentence (or sentence-type) whose uptake results in the reader imagining that a speech act is performed by a fictional character.

Pretense and imagination express closely related concepts that are sometimes used interchangeably. To pretend to do something is, in some sense, to imagine that one is doing so. In order to distinguish between imagination and pretense, I assume a common but theoretically loaded characterization of them. Imagination is a propositional attitude that is, in some aspects, belief-like. Pretense, however, involves imagination plus action[5]. That is, to imagine is to be in a mental state in relation to a proposition; to pretend is to imagine performing a set of actions that resemble the performance of a certain action, while not in fact performing the said action.

The imagination that is involved in an act of pretense, moreover, is *de se*. To pretend to perform an action is to imagine oneself performing that action. Additionally, the normative aspect of a pretense activity is defined by what Gendler (2003) calls

[5]See, for example, Stich and Nichols (2000), Liao and Gendler (2011), and Kind (2013). There are, however, dissidents: Currie and Ravenscroft (2002) assumes that there can be pretense without imagination; Langland-Hassan (2012) argues that imagination can be reduced to a kind of belief. Neither Currie nor Langland-Hassan dispense with action as an important concept in order to characterize pretense.

mirroring and quarantining. Mirroring occurs when a set of beliefs is brought about in order to regulate the imaginative activity. Quarantining is the ability to quarantine the experience that is brought about by imaginative activity from the world outside it. Take, for example, an imaginative activity that takes a cup to be full of water. Mirroring is brought up when the participants of the imaginative activity take the act of turning the cup upside-down to cause it to be empty. Quarantining is brought up by the fact that the participants of the imaginative activity do not take the fact that the cup was turned upside down to actually cause water to be spilled.

Pretense is action-oriented. In order to engage in pretense, the participants of an imaginative activity are required to perform a set of actions that, according to the imaginative activity, count as the performance of the pretended action. Pretense, moreover, requires an adequate level of mirroring. Performing a pretend action is supposed to trigger a set of responses that are similar to the set of responses that would be triggered by the performance of that action outside the imaginative activity. That is, taking the act of turning a cup upside-down to empty the cup is a good indication that, according to the imaginative activity, the cup was full of water. Pretending to do something, moreover, is not the same as doing it. Pretense requires an adequate level of quarantining. In order to engage in pretense the participants of an imaginative activity are required to perform a set of actions that are distinct from the set of actions that they intend to pretend to perform. That is, pretending to empty a cup of water while actually emptying a cup of water is not pretense.

The fulfillment of the requirements for an action to count as pretense seems to be a part of the Radical Fictionalist picture. The author imagines that a certain piece of information is true-in-fiction and goes through the motions of performing an utterance of a set of expressions that resemble the performance of a speech act. The reader, as a result of the uptake of the author's utterance, imagines what was said. The author performed a pretense counterpart to an actual speech act by means of uttering a set of words; the utterance was not an actual performance, as the author did not express the correct communicative intentions for an actual performance of that speech act. I take this picture as problematic.

First, I do not take the author to be holding the correct kind of imagination towards their actions. The author does not seem to be imagining themselves to be performing something that resembles an act of issuing a serious speech act. The act of uttering a sentence in a work of fiction does not seem to require the imagining of oneself as performing a set of actions. The author's imagining is not *de se*. Both Predelli's ac-

count and the account I put forward assume that the serious speech act is not performed by the author, but by a fictional character. It is not required that the author imagines themselves to be that fictional character.

Additionally, I take pretense accounts of fiction-making to have a problem in relation to the proper way to frame the uptake of information from fiction-related utterances – especially in the case of literary fiction. The act does not present the correct kind of mirroring. The appeal to pretense – at least in relation to speech acts – seems to be unmotivated.

Take Bradbury's utterance of (3). Bradbury's utterance is a prop to be used in a game of make-believe. That is, the proper uptake of Bradbury's utterance would raise imagination. According to a pretense account of fiction-making, Bradbury is performing a non-serious use of language. That is, the author pretend-asserts that, for Guy Montag, it was a pleasure to burn. The target of Bradbury's utterances – i.e., the reader – imagines that Bradbury asserted that (3). Pretend-assertions, according to the imaginative activity, are assertions. An assertion that (3) would express and prescribe a belief. That is, according to the imaginative activity, Bradbury expressed a belief that, for Guy Montag, it was a pleasure to burn, and intended that his audience acquire a belief with the same content. An uptake of Bradbury's assertion entails that the reader acquires a pretend-belief. Belief entails a disposition to act. In order to pretend to have a belief that P, both Bradbury and the reader would need to be at least inclined to act upon P. A successful uptake of Bradbury's pretend-assertion would entail that the reader, within the limits of their pretense-game, has the disposition to act upon the fact that someone takes pleasure in burning. There is, however, no such disposition. The reader does not make as if fictional information is true, nor do they act as if fictional information is true while knowing that it is not. The uptake of Bradbury's pretend-assertion does not resemble the uptake of an actual assertion.

This description that seems to arise from a pretense account of fiction-making does not seem in line with a description of either writing or reading a piece of literary fiction. There is no sense in which we assume that the author is acting as if they were issuing an assertion. While Bradbury goes through the motions of uttering (3), he does not seem to take himself to be expressing a belief, nor does he expect his utterance of (3) to have any effect similar to an assertion. Accordingly, the reader does not act as if fictional information is true in the actual world while knowing that it is not, and the reader certainly does not have a disposition to act upon fictional information, even if within the limits of the imaginative activity. Pretending to have a belief is not the expected response to

fiction. The reader knows that the fictional information is not intended to prompt action. Imagination pulls all the weight. Pretending to have a belief is not the same as imagining it. Bradbury's act of fiction-making does not bear any relation to belief; consequently, the utterance has nothing to do with assertions.

I believe, nonetheless, that pretense can have a place in a theory of fiction. This place, however, is not in literary fiction – at least in written form. Pretense perfectly describes the interaction between two actors on a stage. One pretends to assert that P; the other, upon the uptake of the first actor's pretend-assertion, acts upon it. Similarly, I believe that pretense may have a place in some forms of oral storytelling: the storyteller may act as if they were a certain character; when faced with a certain dialogue, the storyteller may change their voice, act frightened, and may even act as if they were playing the character on a stage. Furthermore, the line between pretense and storytelling may be blurred in some pen-and-paper role-playing games: it is more common than not to encounter situations where some player assumes – within the bounds of the present – the personality of the character they are playing. In such cases, the action is prompted by *de se* imagination, and the imaginative process prompts the adequate kind of mirroring.

In all cases, the straightforward answer to what is expressed and prescribed by an act of fiction-making is imagination. Pretense-approaches maintain that, in the process of writing a work of fiction, the author of said work pretends to perform a speech act and intends that the reader, when recognizing that the speech act was not, in fact, performed, pretends that it was. The recognition of pretense, in turn, would trigger imagination. The imaginative activity does not involve an act that resembles in any shape or form the serious counterpart of that speech act. Construed as such, I do not take the appeal to pretense to be well motivated.

3.3 Partial conclusions

In this chapter, I proposed a dynamic account of fiction-making. In order to do so, I engaged with Predelli's (2019) uniformity argument against speech act theories of fiction. Predelli's uniformity, I assumed, is natural as a result of the dynamics of a communicative exchange. I take that a proper characterization of the dynamics of fiction-making can explain away Predelli's worries, taking the uniformity as an expected result brought about by the representative nature of fictional works.

I proposed that the effect an act of fiction-making exerts on the context consists of the proposal for a speech act that is performed by a fictional character to be added

to the common imaginary. The content of act of fiction-making is always a speech act that is performed by a fictional character. Speech acts that are communicated by acts of fiction-making display a similar dynamic behavior to their regular counterparts. As a result, the common imaginary, much like the context itself, is composed of different contextual regions, each responsible for accounting for the dynamics of the speech acts that are communicated by the author's initial utterance. The uniformity pointed out by Predelli is an expected consequence of the fact that the content of acts of fiction-making has the same dynamic profile as their regular counterparts.

To conclude, I tackled the assumption that pretense amounts to the best explanation for the process of writing a fictional work. I take this claim to be unfounded. I assumed a common characterization of pretense, taking it to be composed of imagination plus action. The act of writing fiction, I argued, seems to lack the defining characteristics of performances of regular speech acts. The author's act of pretending to assert shares no relevant similarities with regular acts of assertion. Without action there is no pretense, only imagination. As a result, pretense has no place in the characterization of literary discourse.

In what follows, I tie some loose ends that result from my dynamic characterization of fiction-making. First, I compare my proposal with a prominent version of unofficial common ground accounts of fiction, put forward by Stokke (2023). While Stokke shares my intuition that the content of an act of fiction-making is always a speech act, we disagree on how the contextual region that accounts for imagination is structured. Moreover, I disagree with Stokke's assumption that fiction-making can be characterized in relation to its dynamic profile. A model for the dynamics of a communicative exchange, I argue, are built upon highly idealized scenarios that do not amount to a proper account of our communicative practices.

Moving forward, I provide some remarks on how my account deals with different kinds of narratives. I discuss the place the narrator occupies in my proposal and how the dynamics of fiction-making can be explored in order to explain first person narratives and unreliable narrators. To conclude, I engage with the claim that some utterances that seem to be put forward by a fictional narrator are in fact regular assertions that are performed by the author of that work. While I concede that it seems that assertions can be part of works of fiction, the phenomenon is less widespread than the discourse around the subject seems to assume.

Chapter 4

Loose ends in the common imaginary

The information that composes a work of fiction is stored in a contextual region I call the common imaginary. The dynamic effect of an act of fiction-making is on this contextual region. This characterization builds upon Stalnaker's (1978, 2014) speech act dynamics in order to account for speech acts that convey imagination.

In this chapter, I tackle some problems regarding the structure of this contextual region, as well as the possibility of taking the dynamics of fiction-making as an account of illocutionary force. In Section 1, I discuss the differences between my account and Stokke's (2023) unofficial common ground theory. Stokke assumes that to perform an act of fiction-making is to propose an update to the fictional record. The fictional record, different from the common imaginary, is a repository of information that the reader takes as true according to the narrator of that story.

There are some notable differences between the common imaginary and the fictional record. Similar to my account, Stokke takes the content conveyed by an act of fiction-making to be like a speech report. The fictional record is structured much like the common ground, tracking information the reader assumes is part of the set of beliefs conveyed by the narrator. The common imaginary, however, resembles a full picture of the context, being divided into different regions each responsible for representing a different kind of information. My account, I argue, is preferable, allowing for a uniform treatment between fictional and regular discourse. Additionally, I take the content that composes the fictional record to be accounted for in the common ground of the common imaginary.

A crucial distinction between my account and Stokke's proposal stems from different background assumptions regarding a proper characterization of illocutionary force. Supported by Stalnaker's (2014) assumptions, I take a dynamic model to account for the standard effects that a speech act exerts on the context. An account of the dynamic behavior of a speech act does not amount to an account of its illocutionary force. Stokke,

however, claims that it is possible to characterize an illocutionary force in relation to its communicative footprint. Following Harris (2020), I present an argument against a dynamic characterization of illocutionary force. A key feature of Stalnaker's account of the context is its public status: every piece of information that is part of the context is shared – or publicly available – to all participants of a communicative exchange. A problem with this picture can be raised by what Harris calls publicly averse scenarios. A publicly averse scenario provides a situation where information cannot be taken as shared, but information exchange still occurs. Pressing the matter, written literary works are a common example of a publicly averse discourse.

In Section 2, I discuss some issues related to the figure of the narrator or storyteller. First, I tackle a common objection raised against proposals that take every fiction-related speech act to have an in-fiction counterpart that is performed by a fictional character. While not shunning the figure of the narrator, Kania (2005) argues that in some narratives – especially third-person narratives with an omniscient narrator – a fictional figure of the storyteller is superfluous. In many cases, the actual author can be taken to directly provide the reader with fictional information. Following Wilson (2007) and Predelli (2020), I take Kania's argument to be inconclusive. It seems that the same kind of intuitions that can sustain the fact that the author can be taken as a narrator can be reframed in order to sustain the fact that we need a fictional character to occupy the storyteller's role. I assume, however, that a sharp distinction between author and storyteller can provide a theoretical gain. Moving forward, I discuss four different cases related to our intuition about who can be taken to convey fictional information to the reader.

To conclude, I discuss the relationship between fictional works and assertions. It is commonly accepted that the author of a work of fiction, in the process of writing, can perform a genuine act of assertion. Such assertions, moreover, are part of the set of sentences that compose the fictional text, but are not necessarily put forward as acts of fiction-making. This phenomenon, I argue, is less widespread than is commonly assumed. While assertions can be part of a work of fiction, I take the set of sentences that are candidates to be asserted to be a small set of trivial information.

4.1 Unofficial common-ground

The dynamic account I propose assumes that, just as a successful assertion prompts an update to the common ground and a successful question prompts an update

to the QUD, a successful act of fiction-making entails an update to a *sui generis* contextual region. That contextual region – i.e., the common imaginary – tracks the content of the reader's imaginative endeavor. A fairly similar strategy has been pursued under the guise of unofficial common ground theories proposed by Stokke (2013, 2023) and Eckardt (2014), and has been further developed by Semeijn (2021), Maier and Semeijn (2021), and Zucchi (2021).

In this discussion, I focus on Stokke's (2023) account of the dynamics of fiction-making. While the analysis put forward by Maier and Semeijn and Zucchi focuses on the content of a fictional work and the notion of truth-in-fiction, Stokke puts forward a proposal that is intended to characterize the illocutionary force associated with the production of a fictional work. According to Stokke, to perform an act of fiction-making is to perform an utterance with the intent to change a contextual region that is responsible for tracking fictional information:

> a utters S with fictional force if and only if there is a fictional record F such that, by uttering S, a intends to update F with $[[S]]^c$. (STOKKE, 2023)

Where a is the author, S is a sentence, $[[S]]^c$ is the meaning of the sentence in relation to a context, and F is a fictional record. The fictional record is Stokke's version of the common imaginary. Similar to the common imaginary, the information that composes the fictional record is intended to represent the content that composes the reader's engagement with the fictional work. The fictional record, as such, is individuated in relation to a fictional work and its target audience. Similar to my proposal, moreover, Stokke relies on the figure of the narrator – or the storyteller – in order to account for the contribution an act of fiction-making provides to the context. Stokke, as a consequence, takes fiction-making to be report-like. Similar to the dynamic account I proposed, Stokke assumes that the content of an act of fiction-making informs the reader of how the story ought to be imagined from the point of view of a fictional character.

There are, however, two key differences between the common imaginary and the fictional record. Distinct from the common imaginary, however, the fictional record is intended to represent the set of information that the reader expects to be true according to the narrator. That is, the fictional record does not track truth-in-fiction, but truth according to the storyteller. What is true-in-fiction, moreover, can be different from what is conveyed as true by the storyteller. Stokke's account does not extend to every fictional character, but focuses on the single figure of the narrator. Additionally, the dynamic behavior of acts of fiction-making that is proposed by Stokke, moreover, differs from

the dynamic behavior I take to characterize the different kinds of information that are conveyed in fiction. In what follows, I argue in favor of my account.

Accounting for different kinds of information

Take the following sentence:

(1) The sky was the color of television tuned to a dead channel.

Take (1) to be uttered by William Gibson, the author of *Neuromancer*. Stokke and I agree on how to characterize the dynamic effects of Gibson's utterance. The utterance puts forward the information that the sky was the color of television tuned to a dead channel. The information, moreover, is conveyed by a fictional storyteller. The reader takes the narrator to be expressing that, according to them, the sky was the color of television tuned to a dead channel. Both the common imaginary and the fictional record are updated in the same way. Stokke, however, takes a different approach to non-declarative sentences:

(2) What was the sky's color?

Take (2) to be uttered by William Gibson. Stokke takes Gibson's utterance to update the fictional record with the same information that an utterance of (2) would prompt to the common ground. That is, a non-declarative utterance updates the fictional record with a secondary effect of the equivalent speech act. An utterance of (2) updates the fictional record with the information that the narrator wishes to know what the color of the sky was. Unlike the common imaginary, Stokke's fictional record does not allow for different kinds of information. Stokke takes the fictional record to be structured like the common ground; I take the common imaginary to be structured similarly to the context. The common imaginary can represent the essential – or the primary – effect of non-assertive speech acts that are performed by fictional characters. I take this to be a significant advantage.

It is a widely accepted assumption that the linguistic features of fiction-related utterances are the same as the linguistic features of their regular counterparts. Moreover, as Matravers (2014)[1] points out, the fact that a sentence is a part of a work of fiction does not affect how we unload the communicated information. The cognitive machinery

[1]Matravers would certainly have a problem with the picture I put forward. Our disagreement, however, would probably rest on the proper characterization of imagination, and not the phenomenology of the reading process.

that is required in order to properly understand a factual report is the same as the cognitive machinery that is required in order to properly understand fiction. The difference between fiction and non-fiction does not rest on the resources that are explored in order for information to be unpacked. The differences are not linguistic. Thus, I take it to be reasonable to assume that the dynamic behavior of a fiction-related speech act would be similar to the dynamic behavior of a speech act that is not fiction-related.

Stokke's account provides a uniform account for every fiction-related speech act. To use Predelli's (2019) words, Stokke does not differentiate between an act of fiction-asserting and an act of fiction-wondering. According to Stokke, the reading experience prompted by fiction-related utterances assumes that an utterance of a sentence like (1) and an utterance of a sentence like (2) convey the same kind of information. As a result, the process of decoding fiction-related information is considerably different from the process of decoding factual information. This result, I take, is unfounded. Stokke's proposal lacks an explanation as to why the dynamic behavior of fiction-related utterances ought to be different from their regular counterparts.

In favor of truth-in-fiction

Stokke's characterization of the fictional record gives a central role to the storyteller. The storyteller's expressed mental states are taken to provide the conditions by which the content that composes the fictional record is to be evaluated as correct or incorrect. An adequate fictional record contains exactly the same set of information the narrator puts forward as a part of their beliefs. The common imaginary, however, is built upon the author's imagination. An adequate common imaginary contains exactly the same set of information the author expressed as true-in-fiction. Stokke claims that any account that centers on truth-in-fiction cannot straightforwardly account for different kinds of narratives. A proposal centered around truth-in-fiction, for example, would not be able to account for unreliable narratives. To make things clear, take the following scenario:

> The first sentence of John's novel says:
> – The sky is gray.
> After some time, however, Mary realizes the narrative is unreliable.

Stokke's proposal straightforwardly accounts for such cases. An utterance performed by an unreliable narrator updates the fictional record with its content. The

fictional record tracks truth according to the narrator. Unlike an account centered around truth-in-fiction, Stokke argues, the author's utterance that the sky was gray does not entail that, according to the fictional world, the sky is gray.

I believe the common imaginary can rely on a strategy similar to Stokke's without giving up the notion of truth-in-fiction. An ideal reading process is a dynamic activity. Any information that is taken to be a part of the common imaginary can be revised in order to properly account for new information. This dynamic process includes a revision that can adjust the truth-value of previously accommodated information. In the presented scenario, Mary would, at first, update the common ground of the common imaginary with the information that the sky was gray. This information will, at first, be assumed to be true-in-fiction. John's initial act of fiction-making, after all, seems to communicate truthful information; the narrator, at first, could not be safely taken to be unreliable. This information, however, is taken out of the common ground of the common imaginary as soon as Mary has enough evidence to conclude that the narrative was unreliable. Flagging the information as false-in-fiction, moreover, would not imply that John's act of fiction-making had no effect on the common ground of the common imaginary: the common imaginary still contains the information that the narrator asserted that the sky was gray.

Moving forward, I take issue with the key difference between my proposal and Stokke's dynamic account. Stokke takes his dynamic account of fiction-making to be a characterization of the illocutionary force of fiction-making. I do not consider this task to be feasible. My issue, however, is not related to Stokke's account of fiction, but centers around issues with a broader characterization of illocutionary force as a product of an utterance's dynamic behavior.

4.1.1 Speech act dynamics

Stokke puts forward his characterization of the dynamics of storytelling as an account of the illocutionary force of fiction-making. Contrary to what is suggested by Stalnaker (2014), Stokke claims his proposal is an effect-oriented, context-centered account of speech acts:

> I propose to focus on the communicative effects of fictional discourse. In particular, I want to suggest a way of understanding fictional force based on the general view that the force of an utterance is, at least partly, a matter of its intended communicative footprint. (STOKKE, 2023)

I believe this to be a mistake. Unless Stokke is prepared to put forward a major revision of traditional accounts of contexts, I take that a dynamic characterization of illocutionary force can, at best, be an idealized model of standard communicative situations. A theory of speech acts, I argue, should assume a more general view, putting forward an account of the necessary and sufficient conditions by which an utterance counts as an expression of an illocutionary force.

A dynamic conversational model, such as the one proposed by Stalnaker (2014), aims to characterize the essential effects that a speech act exerts on the context. Different illocutionary forces represent the different ways through which we communicate. The model represents the exchange of information as a series of contextual changes. The context is divided into different regions, each responsible for mapping a different kind of information that is taken to be shared between the participants of a conversation. A context is a shared body of information that can be exploited by the participants of the conversation in order to ensure coordination. A communicative exchange can be taken as a series of actions that modify the information that is contextually available. Different illocutionary forces are different ways of interacting with different contextual partitions. A speech act is a kind of action that prompts such a contextual change. A successful speech act changes a contextual region in order to account for the content of what is said. As a result, the information communicated becomes available to the participants of the conversation, and it can be exploited as the conversation evolves.

Contextual regions are individuated in relation to propositional attitudes that the participants of the communicative exchange take towards available information. A background assumption takes different speech acts are means to express different attitudes towards certain information. A speech act, as such, puts forward a piece of information to be updated to a contextual region by making explicit that the speaker holds a certain attitude towards what is said. The context, as such, is reduced to a representation of the psychological states of the participants in a conversation:

> **CONTEXT REDUCIBILITY**
> Facts about context reduce to facts about the psychological states of the participants in a conversation. (HARRIS, 2020)

That is, for a piece of information P to be updated to the context, it is assumed that the participants of the communicative exchange share the same attitude towards P. This picture takes a speech act as a proposal to make a piece of information public. To perform a successful speech act is to make a piece of information available to all the

participants of an information exchange. Contexts, as such, are repositories of public information:

> **CONTEXT PUBLICITY**
> Contexts are public: the information in the context is equally available to all interlocutors. (HARRIS, 2020)

Take a piece of information P and a propositional attitude ϕ. The attitude ϕ fixes which contextual region is updated by a successful speech act that expressed P. For P to be a part of the context, every participant of the communicative exchange must hold ϕ towards P. Additionally, every participant of the communicative exchange believes that every other participant of the conversation holds ϕ towards P, believes that every other participant of the conversation believes that every other participant of the conversation holds ϕ towards P, and so forth. A piece of information P that is part of the context is considered shared information.

Context reducibility provides a straightforward way to compare this proposal with the mild-expressivist account I proposed. Take the following speech act schema:

> Speaker S expresses something by uttering p if, and only if, for some audience H, S uttered p reflexive-intending:
>
> i. to express an attitude A regarding P;
> ii. that H assumes an attitude B regarding P.

The mild-expressivist account I propose assumes that a successful speech act consists of the expression of an overt, rationally constrained, audience-directed, self-referential intention. That is, to perform a successful speech act is to utter a sentence p intending to fulfill clause (i) of the speech act schema. Clause (ii) provides the primary perlocutionary intention that is expressed in a standard performance of a speech act.

Like the mild-expressivist proposal, a dynamic account of illocutionary force requires a speech act to be an overt, rationally constrained, act of self-expression. In order to update a contextual region, the speaker ought to provide an explicit reason for the hearer to assume that they hold ϕ towards P. In order to do so, the speaker's intention that they hold ϕ towards P has to be overt, otherwise P would not be a candidate to achieve shared status. Intending for an intention to be made overt implies that the act of expression is rationally constrained. As an act of self-expression, moreover, the dynamic picture takes clause (i) as an essential part of the successful performance of a speech act.

Unlike the mild-expressivist proposal, however, the dynamic account is effect-oriented. While the intention can still be construed as reflexive, a successful performance of a speech act is not fulfilled by the mere recognition of the expressed intention. The aim of a speech act is to update the context. In order for the context to be updated with information that P all the participants of the communicative exchange are required to hold ϕ towards P. That is, in order to update the context with P, the speaker's act of expressing that they hold ϕ towards P is required to entail a change in the hearer's overt mental states in order to make it explicit that the hearer holds ϕ towards P. As such, clause (ii) is an essential component of a dynamic account of illocutionary force.

Unlike an audience-directed account, speech act dynamics are context-directed. To successfully perform a speech act is to perform an illocutionary force-related contextual change:

> **CONTEXT DIRECTEDNESS**
> The essential aim of a communicative act is to change the context in a particular way. (HARRIS, 2020)

Harris (2020) takes context directedness to mischaracterize communication as necessarily a public endeavour. Context directedness requires a change regarding the mental states that are overtly held by the participants of a conversation towards a piece of information P. The overt fulfillment of clause (ii) is a necessary step for the successful performance of a speech act. Unlike an audience-directed account, a context-directed account, moreover, requires awareness regarding each participant's mental states. Communication, argues Harris, can occur in publicity-averse situations. A publicity averse situation presents a scenario where the information communicated never achieves shared status, but communication still occurs. Context publicity, as such, poses a constraint on the kind of information that is assumed to be communicated that is too strong in order to properly characterize illocutionary forces. An audience-directed account, however, provides a broader characterization that can accommodate such situations.

In order to exemplify what a publicity-averse scenario is, take the coordinated-attack problem[2]:

> General A and B have cornered their opponent. They can win the battle if they attack at the same time. General A sends the following message to General B:
> – We will attack at dawn.

[2]For a general discussion of this problem see Fagin et al. (1999), Jankovic (2014), Harris (2020), and Semeijn (2024).

> In order to proceed with the attack, however, General A needs confirmation that General B received the message. General B, upon receiving the message, issues the following answer to General A:
> – Message received. We will attack with you.
>
> In order to proceed with the attack, however, General B needs confirmation that General A received the message.

In this situation, the information that General A is planning to attack at dawn is successfully communicated to General B. The information, however, cannot achieve shared status: General A has no means of knowing whether General B has received the message. General B, moreover, successfully communicates to General A that they have received the message, but the information that the message was received cannot achieve shared status: General B has no means of knowing whether General A has received the message. As a result, the attack can never happen: neither General A nor General B can coordinate on the information that they will simultaneously attack.

A publicity-averse scenario puts forward a situation where the participants cannot be aware of the other participants' mental states. Confirming that a participant holds a mental state towards a piece of information, moreover, is not enough for coordination to be achieved: any new piece of information would pose a new coordination problem. Putting forward that you are aware of your interlocutor's mental state just shifts the awareness problem to a new piece of information.

While most communicative endeavors are, or at least are expected to be, a collaborative and publicly available exchange of information, the vast majority of the discussion around fictional works is related to a piece of written media where the information is conveyed without the speaker and their audience having secure access to each other's mental states. That is, the object of investigation of the vast majority of the discussions around fiction and language is a publicity averse scenario. The author can never be aware of the reader's mental states. In other words, the common imaginary cannot track shared information. Neither the reader nor the author can iterate on each other's mental states. There cannot be a dynamic account of fiction-related speech acts without a revision of the way we structure context itself.

I take that a dynamic model provides a highly idealized scenario that can be explored in order to make explicit the standard effects that a communicative exchange is expected to achieve. The effect-oriented nature of the model thrives as an explanation of stable situations, making explicit how we explore and represent the information flow

in standard, cooperative, and face-to-face conversations. The picture, as Clapp (2020) stresses, does not provide an account of illocutionary force, but provides a characterization of the standard effects a speech act is expected to exert in the context.

For this reason, I assume that a complete account of fiction-making requires a static counterpart. The common imaginary, as a contextual region, puts forward a highly idealized account of the effects that an act of fiction-making exerts on the ideal reader. Such an ideal reader grasps the content of a work of fiction at a pace that matches the author's expected dynamics of the reading process. This idealization, however, hardly ever comes to fruition. The actual reading process can involve a lack of uptake of important information, educated guesses performed by an expert reader, misreadings and, as a consequence, faulty inferences that are performed by the reader. Moreover, the author of a fictional work may fail to provide enough information in order to prompt the expected imaginative activity.

Moving forward, I wish to clarify some issues around the figure of the narrator. The narrator, or the storyteller, plays a major role in the way I structure the common imaginary. First, I discuss to what extent my account is open to a common objection that is often raised against Predelli's proposal: the commitment to a ubiquitous narrator. In order to make the discussion more palpable, I discuss a series of examples of different kinds of narratives that explore the figure of the narrator in different ways. To conclude, I tackle a related problem about the possibility of taking the author to be asserting some of the content that composes a work of fiction.

4.2 The narrator

The author is not a part of the common imaginary. An utterance that is performed as an act of fiction-making conveys a speech act that is performed by a fictional character. Every act of fiction-making requires the existence of a fictional character. Fictional narratives are told as facts by a fictional character that occupies the role of a narrator or storyteller. Kania (2005) calls the assumption that, for every narrative, that narrative contains a fictional figure that acts as the storyteller the ubiquity thesis.

Authors such as Kania (2005), Currie (2010), and more recently, García-Carpintero (2022), however, take such ubiquity to be unfounded. The function of a narrator is to put forward the content of a narrative from a certain point of view. There is no denying that, for every narrative, someone presents its content to the reader. From this fact, however, we may not imply that there is a fictional character that carries out

these actions:

> All it says is that there is an agent who is responsible for the narrative. This is compatible with the view that there are no fictional narrators. For authors would seem to be *prima facie* candidates for the agents responsible for their narratives. They do things that result in the stories we read. (KANIA, 2005)

In relation to the common imaginary, the issue rests on the restriction of the contextual region to fictional characters. Kania proposes that, if there is no explicit reason for a fictional figure to occupy the role of the narrator, then the narrative can do without it. The author, in such cases, would put forward the content of their utterances directly to the reader. There would be no middleman who asserts that something is the case while inhabiting the fictional world.

I take Kania's observations to be inconclusive. Kania proposes that a fictional figure for the storyteller can be brought up when the narrative requires it. It is not clear, however, what the necessary requirements are. Being part of the narrative periphery, I believe, is enough reason to assume the speech act requires a fictional character. I do not believe this claim, however, to present a conclusive argument in favor of the ubiquity thesis. Akin to Predelli and Wilson, I believe the philosophical debate around this proposal to be fairly inconclusive, with an extensive appeal, on both sides, to conflicting intuitions regarding the interpretation of literary works. As Wilson argues, it is not clear how the issue can be settled:

> As I said earlier, these considerations rest finally on claims about the phenomenology of our imaginative engagement with novels and kindred works of literary fiction. Unfortunately, it is not clear to me how these disputes can be properly resolved. No purely *a priori* or conceptual reflections are likely to establish whatever facts might be in question here. (WILSON, 2007)

I think, however, that preserving a sharp distinction between author and narrator preserves the characterization of a robust narrative periphery while not resulting in any theoretical loss. Sectioning what is a fact about the real world from what is a fact according to the story preserves what I see as a fertile ground for theoretical work, precluding, for example, dubious authorial intrusions and non-canonical accounts. Furthermore, the existence of a ubiquitous narrator provides an easy solution to issues related to unreliable narratives without requiring a substantial revision of the content of the common imaginary[3].

[3]For a dynamic approach to truth-in-fiction that adopts a similar strategy to the one presented here,

I believe, however, that narratives composed only of dialogue presented directly through character interaction have no need to appeal to an opinionated point of view that conveys the story's content. In such cases, the common imaginary will be free of the presence of a storyteller. Take the following example:

(3) "The sky was the color of television tuned to a dead channel.", asserted Case.

The common imaginary does not need to be updated with the redundant information that, according to the story, the narrator asserted that Case asserted that the sky was the color of television tuned to a dead channel. The necessity of allocating the report to a fictional narrator depends crucially on information that becomes available to the reader during the reading process. If a new set of information suggests that (3) reported false information, the utterance can be allocated to a narrator. Such allocation would be similar to a situation where, at first, an audience takes a speech act to be performed by the speaker, but later acquires a new piece of information implying the original speech act is actually a speech report.

Now, take a situation explicitly involving a discussion of an unreliable narrative:

> Discussing *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, John claims that:
> – According to Mark Twain, Hamlet says 'To be or not to be, that is the bare bodkin'.
> Realizing John's mistake, Mary replies:
> – It was Huckleberry Finn who said so. The narrative is unreliable.

Huckleberry Finn, the protagonist of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, is the narrator of the novel. The narrative, moreover, is unreliable: not all information communicated by Huckleberry is true-in-F. In such cases, the common ground of the common imaginary will be updated only with the secondary effects of Huckleberry Finn's assertions. Similar to the target of an assertion in a regular conversation, the reader can opt not to accept the suggestion to change the common ground as proposed by the speaker. In any case, the process of asserting brings about a manifest event that entails a change to the common ground with the information that an assertion was performed by someone.

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see the aforementioned Maier and Semeijn (2021) and Zucchi (2021). In addition to unreliable narratives, Maier and Semeijn argue that the same strategy can be used in order to explain our intuitions regarding truth-in-fiction and the problem of imaginative resistance.

It is important to notice that the process of revising the common imaginary does not need to be automatic. The reader can, at first glance, assume Huckleberry Finn to be trustworthy and update the common ground of the common imaginary with the fact that Hamlet says 'To be or not to be, that is the bare bodkin'. Upon gathering additional information that sustains the fact that Huckleberry Finn is unreliable, the reader can shun from the common ground of the common imaginary the content of Huckleberry Finn's assertion, leaving only the fact that Huckleberry Finn asserted something. In any case, there is no authorial intrusion: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is a first-person narrative, in which Huckleberry Finn himself presents the facts that happen in the fictional world. A sharp distinction between narrator and author helps us understand why Mary's observation is a good reply to John's assertion.

For a similar case, take the following conversation about *A Study in Scarlet*:

Mary, trying to point out the obvious, claims that:
– Conan Doyle said that Sherlock Holmes is a detective.
John, trying to sound smart, replies:
– No! It was Watson who said that.

John's assertion is a strange response to Mary's claim. The information communicated by John, however, is not wrong. *A Study in Scarlet* is a first-person narrative and Conan Doyle is not a character in the novel; Watson is the actual narrator of *A Study in Scarlet*. In the same way that *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is told from Huckleberry Finn's point of view, *A Study in Scarlet* is told from Watson's point of view. Watson, however, is a reliable source of information. The facts described by Watson in *A Study in Scarlet* are true-in-fiction. That is, the world of *A Study in Scarlet* is such that everything that Watson asserts counts as a fact. This, however, does not entail that Watson is Conan Doyle, nor that Watson is the subject of a principle such as the Principle of Authorial Authority. Reliability – or unreliability, for that matter – is a narrative device that should bear no weight in how we grasp who is the source of the information that is being communicated. John's statement was pedantic, but John was not wrong.

Moving on to the next case, we have:

While discussing *The Lord of the Rings*, Mary asks:
– Is Frodo a hobbit?
John, who thinks too highly of himself, answers:
– I don't know that. The narrator of *The Lord of the Rings* says that he is a hobbit.

John's assertion is, at best, a bad answer to Mary's question. *The Lord of the Rings* is a third-person narrative with an omniscient narrator. The narrator of *The Lord of the Rings* is reliable and is not an inhabitant of the fictional world. Just like Watson in *A Study in Scarlet*, all information communicated by the narrator of *The Lord of the Rings* can be taken as fact. John, as such, has a trustworthy source of information that says that, according to *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo is a hobbit. Distinct from Watson, however, the narrator of *The Lord of the Rings* inhabits only the narrative periphery. That is, even though the narrator's beliefs about what is true in the world of *The Lord of the Rings* are the same as Tolkien's beliefs about the matter, it does not mean that they should be taken as the same. *The Lord of the Rings* is still a narrative; the facts are still being presented from a certain point of view.

I take that the choice of exploring a narrative device such as first or third-person narratives, and reliable or unreliable narrators, should not instill or dislodge the figure of a fictional teller. Eliminating the narrator only from reliable third-person narratives raises a uniformity regarding how the facts are presented to the reader. At the first sign that the narrator's beliefs do not align with the author's, the reader would be required to rearrange all speech acts the narrator has put forward.

There are, however, tricky cases:

> Knowing nothing about *Anna Karenina*, John asks:
> – Is it true that Tolstoy asserted that all happy families are alike?
> To which Mary answers:
> – I don't think so. I know that he fiction-made it.

I take it to be undeniable that utterances such as the first line of *Anna Karenina* provide information about the real world. I also take it to be fairly clear that, while writing *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy uttered the sentence intending it to convey something about the storyworld. The philosophical discourse around utterances such as the first sentence of *Anna Karenina* seems to take it as a genuine case of assertion performed by Tolstoy. I believe, however, that the discussion around this issue takes the phenomenon to be more widespread than it actually is. In what follows, I discuss the extent to which I take assertions to be present in fictional works. I believe that sentences present in works of fiction that can be candidate-assertions are restricted to a small set of trivial information.

4.2.1 *Anna Karenina*-cases

Most discussions about fiction-making are usually concerned with more than an account of writing fiction. Part of the debate focuses on the prospects in which a speech act theory of fiction can serve as the basis for a theory about the nature of fiction. That is, under which conditions, if any, a speech act theory of fiction can present a definition for fiction. This project has been the target of a notable objection: it is widely accepted that, besides fiction-making, most works of fiction seem to contain assertions[4]. In light of this objection, the prospects of defining fiction in relation to fiction-making, Currie (2014) concedes, seem dire.

I am partial to the idea that an account that relies on fiction-making is likely to fail as an account of the nature of fiction. Fiction-making, nonetheless, seems to be broad enough to be part of works of non-fiction. Our concept of fiction seems to encompass works that were not produced as fiction in the first place. I do believe, however, that the presence of assertions in works of fiction is less widespread than expected. Shifting the focus of my discussion from fiction-making to assertions, I intend to assess the extent to which works of fiction can include acts of assertion. Following Marsili (2022) and Stokke (2024), my proposal explores a common theme in accounts that take assertions to have little to no place in works of fiction: works of fiction are a bad place for acquiring belief via testimony. Different from Marsili and Stokke, however, my argument hinges on the rationality constraints that are put forward by an intentionalist account of communication.

In order to make clear what is commonly accepted to be an example of an assertion in fiction, take the first two sentences from Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*:

(4) Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

(5) Everything was in confusion in the Oblonskys' house.

Both utterances, according to intentionalist approaches to illocutionary force, are expressions of a communicative intention. The illocutionary force conveyed by each utterance varies according to the propositional attitudes expressed by Tolstoy in the act of uttering (4) and (5). Both sentences can be uttered in order to express an assertion and an act of fiction-making.

Tolstoy's utterance of (5) seems to be an uncontroversial act of expressing an imagining. Undoubtedly, Tolstoy did not believe nor want his readers to believe the

[4]See Friend (2008) and Matravers (2014). This objection, however, is accepted even among proponents of speech act-based accounts of the nature of fiction.

content of (5). The mention of the fictional family, the Oblonskys, explicitly indicates that we are to imagine the content of what is said as being part of the content of the whole work of fiction. The speech act Tolstoy performs with his utterance of (4), however, is not easily settled. While (4) is a part of the work of fiction and was uttered in the process of writing *Anna Karenina*, the standard assessment is to take it to be an expression of a belief. The assumption usually states that Tolstoy's utterance of (4) states a generality about the world, which is also true – or believed to be true – in the fictional world.

While the utterance of sentence (5) is clearly a case of fiction-making, authors such as Friend (2008) argue that a statement like (4) complies with every condition for a sincere act of assertion, and we have no reason not to classify it as such. The content of the utterance is believed by the author and the author intends the reader to acquire this belief.

Criteria for identifying what counts as an assertion and what counts as an act of fiction-making are hard to come by. In order to distinguish between which utterances warrant belief and which utterances warrant imagination, Davies (2015) proposes that fictional narratives are to be divided into two distinct parts, each related to the author's beliefs. The real setting is composed of a set of information believed by the author of the work of fiction, and functions as the foundation over which the imaginative endeavor occurs. The fictive content is composed of a set of information that the author takes to be true only in the world of fiction.

It is important to notice that the distinction between real setting and fictive content, however, is not a matter of linguistic information. Real setting and fictive content are "tools of the trade" that can be explored by the author in the process of writing a work of fiction. The content that composes the real setting or the fictive content of a work of fiction need not be made explicit by the author's utterances. The distinction divides the content of a work of fiction in relation to the author's beliefs and imaginings: if a piece of information P is part of a work of fiction F, and P is believed by the author of that work, P is part of the real setting; if P is not believed by the author of F, then P is part of the fictive content of that work.

A good example of what composes the real setting is gravity. Aside from works of science-fiction where this phenomenon may not be operative, little is said about gravity in works of fiction. It is, however, something taken for granted in a broad range of fictional narratives, from *Anna Karenina* to *The Lord of the Rings*. Neither Tolstoy nor Tolkien needed to establish that, in their respective worlds, gravity was operating in a similar fashion to the real world. As much as it can be implicit, the construction of the

real setting can also be explicit.

Take for example a passage from Ian Fleming's *Thunderball*:

> (6) New Providence, the island containing Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas, is a drab sandy slab of land fringed with some of the most beautiful beaches in the world.

Utterances are the main source of information about the content of a work of fiction. If, in the process of writing a work of fiction, the author expresses a piece of information that should be taken as part of the real setting, then the utterance is an expression of the author's belief. If, in the process of writing a work of fiction, the author expresses a piece of information that should be taken as part of the fictional content, then the author performs an act of fiction-making. Fleming, presumably, knew that the information expressed was true in the real world and, if so, believed it. The information, accordingly, belongs to the real setting. Davies, as such, seems to assume that explicit information that belongs to the real setting is asserted and, conversely, explicit information that composes the fictive content is fiction-made:

> This also speaks to cases like Friend's *Thunderball* example because it can be granted that we are indeed prescribed to believe, not to mere-make-believe, the opening sentence of the book, as part of the 'real setting' for the fictional narrative. (DAVIES, 2015, pg. 6)

The Bahamas, as described by Fleming, functions as the ground on which *Thunderball*'s fictional setting will be constructed. The contents of the fictional setting, as such, are products of Fleming's acts of fiction-making. A similar reasoning can be applied to *Anna Karenina*: while more ephemeral than Fleming's mostly geographical statement, the book's opening line is a construction of the real setting – an expression of Tolstoy's beliefs – in which the Oblonskys' story unfolds. Accordingly, the content of (4) is asserted, while the content of (5) is fiction-made.

Davies' distinction seems to provide criteria that are in line with the consensus of what counts and does not count as assertions in fiction. I believe, however, that this account of the real setting is broader than what we could reliably assume as assertions in works of fiction. It is not clear whether believed-to-be-factual criteria, such as the distinction between real and fictional settings, can have an effect on the author's communicative intentions. Communicative intentions are grounded in a rational process: the speaker cannot intend to communicate something that they do not believe the hearer is capable of grasping. To assert is to perform an overt act whose successful performance is rationally

constrained by the expectation that the very act of expression can be recognized as such. In sum, one cannot assert what they believe cannot be recognized as an assertion. The question regarding whether assertions are part of works of fiction, as such, is a question of whether one can reasonably expect that an expression of a belief will be recognized as such by the reader of a work of fiction.

Davies' distinction is not linguistically encoded and thus cannot be expected to serve as the basis for the audience's recognition of the speaker's communicative intentions. There is nothing in (4) that informs that it is part of the real setting, and there is nothing in (5) that informs that it is part of the fictional setting. Davies motivates his distinction by pointing to Friend's (2000) argument that the reference to non-fictional individuals is maintained even in fictional contexts. Fleming's utterance of (6) can be recognized as an assertion as it conveys information about New Providence, a place that exists outside of the fictional world. While references to real entities can be useful signals, they do not suffice as a condition for the distinction between fictive content and real setting. It is clear that we can express and prescribe imagination by uttering a sentence with a "real name":

(7) The Big Ben exploded on November 5th, 1998.

Take the utterance to be performed by Alan Moore in the process of writing *V for Vendetta*. Alan Moore's utterance is still a prescription to imagine, even if 'Big Ben' refers to the actual bell. Membership in either category, as stated, is settled by the author's beliefs. Moore certainly did not believe his story to be factual. The reader of *V for Vendetta*, moreover, could hardly appeal to the existence of the actual Big Ben to infer that Moore's utterance was an assertion.

The key problem raised by Moore's utterance of (7) stems from the fact that it conveys false information. The set of utterances that can be taken as assertions, as such, can be reduced to sentences that can be taken to convey true information about the world. That would suffice for taking Fleming's utterance of (6) as an assertion. The utterance is an assertion given the fact that not only does it convey information about New Providence – a place that exists outside of the fictional world – but it conveys truthful information about it. Given the fact that the fictional world of *Thunderball* is expected to mirror some aspects of the actual world, Fleming's utterance of (6) is an assertion.

Works of fiction, however, are not good sources of truthful information: information P presented in a work of fiction is more likely to be false than to be true. That is, the reader, when presented with an utterance that is part of a work of fiction, is likely to

assume that the information is not truthful. That is, fiction is a defeater for testimonial knowledge:

> For any a statement S within a fictional work w such that S communicates that p: S's occurring in w is a defeater for justifiably believing that p on the basis of S. (STOKKE, 2024)

As such, in order for the author to securely appeal to truthful information, the information conveyed would need to be shared between the author and the reader prior to the utterance. That is, an utterance that P which is part of a work of fiction cannot be taken to convey truthful information about the real world solely on the basis that P was uttered in that work. As a consequence, in order to assert that P the author has to assume that P can be justifiably taken as true by their audience by means other than the fact that the author intended to assert that P.

That is, Fleming's utterance of (6) can be taken as an assertion only if we have a reasonable expectation that Fleming expected the reader of *Thunderball* to know that New Providence, the island containing Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas, is a drab sandy slab of land fringed with some of the most beautiful beaches in the world. Assuming this to be the case greatly constrains the information that can be asserted, and, consequently, constrains what can be taken as part of the real setting. While we may expect a sentence such as "there is gravity on Earth" to be part of the shared assumptions between the author and the reader, it seems unlikely that information such as (4), and to some extent, information such as (6), was shared prior to the utterance.

While this restricts asserted information to a non-informative set of facts, it does not, nonetheless, preclude the author from asserting something in the process of writing. There is, however, a further problem that may be taken as enough grounds to reject the view that there are successful assertions in works of fiction. The consensus around assertions in fiction only applies to sincere assertions; compliance with sincerity conditions in the usual examples is taken for granted. There is no discussion regarding the fact that the author genuinely believes what they are prescribing the reader to believe. This is not without warrant: the view that there are insincere assertions in works of fiction seems to contradict a commonplace assumption about fictional discourse. Insincere assertions are lies, and there are no lies in a fictional work[5].

[5]Additional requirements, certainly, can be added to one's definition of lies. This simple view, however, may be preferred. Stokke (2018) persuasively argued that the debate around lies is a debate about the characterization of insincerity and insincere assertions. Stokke also points to the fact that the claim that lies are insincere assertions is taken as a starting point of vastly distinct positions on the proper definition of lies.

Sincerity conditions are not an overt aspect of speech acts. Compliance with sincerity conditions is not made explicit by the speaker in the expression of a communicative intention. As an act of expression, the performance of an utterance is an act of showing oneself as holding a certain propositional attitude towards a certain piece of information. The speaker, however, could be expressing themselves in a manner that does not comply with their actual mental state. That is, the speaker could express something that they believe is not the case. The speaker could put themselves in a situation where they are perceived as holding a certain attitude towards P, while not actually holding that attitude. The constraints that are in place in relation to an act of expression require only that the information that is intended to be communicated can be grasped by the audience. Sincerity about what is expressed is not required.

In an act of assertion, the speaker puts themselves in a position where their audience can reliably infer that they hold a belief in relation to what was said. In performing an insincere assertion, the speaker's communicative intentions remain the same: the speaker knows that, given a usual set of contextual information and the operative linguistic conventions, their utterances will be understood as an expression of a belief. Nothing signals that the speaker is at fault regarding sincerity conditions. Excluding insincere assertions from fiction gives rise to a seemingly impossible task to be completed by the reader: the recognition – and fulfillment – of the speech act can only be carried out if the reader is certain of the author's beliefs. If the sentence expresses a belief that the author does not actually hold, the sentence should be taken as an act of fiction-making, and not an assertion.

An utterance is an assertion if, and only if, it is a sincere assertion. If it is not a sincere assertion, the author is conveying their imaginings, and not their beliefs. For (4) to be a sincere assertion, Tolstoy has to hold the belief that happy families are all alike, and every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. There is no space for insincere assertions. Readers, in their turn, would need to have secure access to Tolstoy's beliefs in order to be able to recognize the utterance as an assertion. If the reader is unsure about Tolstoy's beliefs, it is best to infer that the utterance is not an assertion, but an act of fiction-making. The same holds for virtually all other possible acts of assertion in a work of fiction: readers are better off betting that any assertion-candidates are acts of fiction-making, unless they have secure access to the author's beliefs.

Arguing for secure access to the author's beliefs does not seem feasible. This is a direct consequence of excluding insincere performances of a communicative act from a certain environment. Doing so places the burden of recognition not on linguistically or

contextually encoded information, but on the possibility of secure knowledge of someone's cognitive attitudes. Taking the author and the reader to be distinct individuals, achieving such knowledge would not be an easy – or even a possible – task. Precluding insincere assertions from works of fiction would also preclude sincere assertions from being successfully made in these environments: for any utterance, taking it as an assertion would at best be an educated guess; taking the utterance as an act of fiction-making would always be the safer option. Communicative intentions – and the speech acts related to them – are not, after all, to be guessed, but to be recognized. There is no place to guarantee an uptake by luck.

As a result, works of fiction are to be composed completely of acts of fiction-making. A better outcome would, perhaps, allow for some insincere assertions to be part of works of fiction. In any case, I believe that the range of utterances that can be taken as assertions in fiction is narrower than what was first assumed. We have, at best, the performance of non-informative assertions. Excluding assertions from works of fiction, however, is not the same as arguing that the author cannot communicate beliefs, or that assertions are excluded from every environment in which acts of fiction-making are present.

The problem of assertions in fictional works is not raised by the presence of the speech act of fiction-making, but by the medium in which these acts are performed. Assertions in fiction are problematic because works of fiction are ultimately an unreliable source of justification and testimony. Communicative intentions, as a consequence, are constrained by the limits of the medium. Not only that, but taking so-called "assertions" as acts of fiction-making provides a uniform and straightforward account of fiction. Take the following characterization of Tolstoy's utterance of (4):

> The literary function of the sentence has little or nothing to do with trying to induce a belief in a reader about happy and unhappy families; it has far more to do with an initial characterization of a theme which gives focus and interest to the fictional content. (LAMARQUE; OLSEN, 1994, pg. 66)

The characterization puts forward a less cognitively charged scenario, and its conclusion seems trivially correct. It is obvious that Tolstoy was "painting the scene" in which *Anna Karenina* would unravel. It is a display of literary prowess, it is simple, impactful, and informs the overarching theme of the narrative. Tolstoy's beliefs are irrelevant to the successful achievement of this function. This does not preclude Tolstoy from believing the content of his speech act, nor from intending that his audience come to be-

lieve it. Those, however, are not part of Tolstoy's communicative intentions. In uttering (4), Tolstoy successfully informs the reader of something that is true in the fictional world, and what is true in the fictional world can also be true in the real world: imagination often provides grounds for belief. In failing to raise a belief in (4), however, Tolstoy may not achieve one of the desirable effects of his utterance; in failing to raise imagination, Tolstoy's utterance fails to engage the reader with the information he provided. In the former situation, Tolstoy did not achieve a certain perlocutionary intent; in the latter, Tolstoy's utterance failed to achieve its communicative ends.

Uncovering such perlocutionary intent is not a job for the philosophy of language, but for literary theory. Here, Davies' distinction finds its proper place. I argue that, while prescriptions to imagine uniformly compose a work of fiction, the author's non-communicative intentions do not. Unveiling such intentions can be a trivial task, but it often involves arduous research on the author's beliefs – both the commonly known and the rarely shared –, social upbringing, cultural background, literary style, and many other characteristics. Contrary to the task of identifying the author's communicative intentions, conclusions about the author's perlocutionary intents can hardly be set in stone, as any new information regarding the author's life can change what we take to be the (non-linguistic) meaning of a certain passage. It is a difficult but important task to sharpen our understanding of fiction, but it goes beyond linguistic aspects of the literary work.

Fiction-making, nonetheless, is not a speech act reserved just for works of fiction. Given the provided characterization, any utterance that expresses and prescribes imagination is an act of fiction-making. There can be acts of fiction-making in academic journals – in the form of thought experiments, or in newspapers – in the characterization of a counterfactual situation. Take the following example, provided by Friend (2011), published in the *New York Times*:

> "**JAN. 18** The South declares that 91 percent of voters have chosen secession. The North denounces the vote, saying it was illegal, tainted by violence and fraud, and invalid because the turnout fell below the 60 percent threshold required.
>
> **JAN. 20** The South issues a unilateral declaration of independence.
>
> **JAN. 25** Tribal militias from the North sweep through South Sudan villages, killing and raping inhabitants and driving them south. The governor of a border state in the North, Ahmad Haroun, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes and

> organizing the janjaweed militia in Darfur, denies that he is now doing the same thing in the South." [6]

The passage describes a possible situation regarding the result of the referendum on the independence of South Sudan. The imagery is presented in a similar fashion to a fictional narrative, where the author expresses and prescribes that we imagine the situation. It is, in this sense, an act of fiction-making despite the fact that the author is not writing a work of fiction, but an opinion piece for a newspaper. Here, assertions may co-exist with acts of fiction-making. Unlike works of fiction, nothing precludes insincere assertions from being present in newspapers. There are other contextual information sources that can be used by the author in the construction of their communicative intentions.

In the situation above, the author knows that even if they communicate believed information next to the sentence that states that "the South issues a unilateral declaration of independence", the information will be taken to be a part of the counterfactual situation they are describing, and consequently understood as conveying information to be imagined. The author also knows that the statement about the status of the referendum and the political instability of the region presented before or after their counterfactual reasoning will probably be better understood as assertions. The medium provides grounds for both illocutionary forces to co-exist, and for the author to securely rely on contextual clues in order to express their communicative intentions.

4.3 Partial Conclusions

In this chapter I compared my dynamic account of fiction-making with Stokke's (2013) unofficial common ground theory of the dynamics of fiction. Additionally, I discussed some issues around the figure of the narrator or storyteller, as well as proposed some remarks regarding the way we construe such a figure in different kinds of narratives. To conclude, I analyzed the claim that works of fiction include genuine assertion, arguing that, while plausible, the phenomenon encompasses a more restricted set of utterances.

Different from my proposal, Stokke takes his version of the common imaginary – the fictional record – to be fairly similar to the common ground, tracking information the reader takes as true according to the narrator. In order to account for the effect that a non-declarative utterance exerts on the fictional record, Stokke appeals to the

[6] N. Kristof, "Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold", *New York Times*, 29 September 2010.

secondary effects a speech act exerts on the common ground. I argued that the common imaginary seems to put forward a better picture that can be applied either to fictional or non-fictional discourse. Additionally, I presented an argument against Stokke's claim that a dynamic account of fiction can be taken as a characterization of the illocutionary force of fiction-making. Written forms of literary fiction, I argue, are a kind of publicity-averse discourse that cannot be properly accounted for in a dynamic model.

Following, I discuss the presence of an ubiquitous figure of the storyteller that seems to be raised by my account. I assume that the content of every act of fiction-making consists of a speech act. As a consequence, even utterances that do not report the speech act of an explicit character seem to require the existence of a fictional figure. Following Predelli (2020) and Wilson (2007), I assume that the debate around this issue seems to be built upon conflicting intuitions. I argue, however, that keeping a sharp distinction between author and narrator can be considered a theoretical advantage. Following, I propose an analysis of our intuitions about the relationship between the author and the narrator in four different situations. To conclude, I discuss the claim that works of fiction can contain performances of genuine assertions. I argue that the rationality constraints that are put forward by my background assumptions about communication seem to entail that the phenomenon is less widespread than initially assumed.

Moving forward, I discuss the place acts of fiction-making occupy in a taxonomy of speech acts. Taxonomies are a messy subject usually construed as corollaries of a complete account of illocutionary forces. I engage with the classes of directives, declaratives, and constatives. While I take directive accounts of fiction-making to rest on a mistake, both declaratives and constatives seem to provide a good fit for the illocutionary force.

Chapter 5

A taxonomy for fiction-making

In his classical formulation, Austin (1962) collapses the distinction between assertives and performatives into the single class of illocutionary acts. Along with the idea that, in usual conditions, every successful utterance counts as the performance of an act that goes beyond just the act of speech, Austin proposes a taxonomy of illocutionary forces. Austin's taxonomy is confusing and incomplete. He makes extensive use of English verbs, and divides them into distinct categories that are neither exclusive nor exhaustive. The project, however, has its merits. It builds upon an intuitive assessment of the social regularities that govern a set of actions. While confusing, Austin's taxonomy feel like an independent project separate from his own requisites regarding what it takes to perform a speech act.

In this chapter I discuss the place of fiction-making in such a taxonomy. After Austin's work, the construction of a taxonomy became an afterthought in an account of illocutionary forces. Taxonomies were mostly framed as a corollary of the necessary and sufficient conditions that fix the illocutionary force expressed by an utterance. As a result, there is little to no agreement on what principles should guide an initial division of illocutionary classes. The prospects of a unified taxonomy of illocutionary forces – one built upon a shared assumption about our communicative practices – are dim. In the current landscape, we seem to be fated to have as many taxonomies as there are theories of speech acts. As a result, I assume that any discussion about a taxonomic place for a set of speech acts is set to be built on unstable grounds.

In order to move the discussion forward I opt to point to piecemeal definitions of illocutionary classes when needed. Aiming to keep in line with my intentionalist background, I rely mainly on Grice's (1989d, 1989e) effect-oriented characterization of illocutionary forces, and Bach and Harnish's (1987) taxonomy of illocutionary forces. The investigation proposed here, however, intends to go beyond the discussion carried out in

both projects. Neither Grice nor Bach and Harnish took an expression of imagination to consist of a *sui generis* speech act.

My discussion is built on three possible classes that can accommodate fiction-making: directives, declaratives, and constatives. First, I engage with the claim that intentionalist accounts are committed to a directive reading of fiction-making. Acts of fiction-making, the hypothesis goes, are prescriptions to the reader to imagine. The utterances that compose a work of fiction, as such, are instructions that suggest the content that should be part of the reader's imaginative process. I believe this reading to be faulty. Currie's (1990) account – the main target of this misconception – does not seem to fit into the directive class. I assume this problematic interpretation arises from two sources: a confusing account of the nature of Walton's (1990) account of props, and a misguided reading of Grice's (1989b) effect-oriented account of speech acts. Following Walton's own observation, I argue that props are not sets of instructions. Similarly, Grice's prescription clause – a core feature of effect-oriented accounts of illocutionary force – is not the kind of prescriptions that defines the class of directives.

Moving forward, I engage with an actual account of fiction-making as a directive speech act. Assuming a distinct background account of illocutionary force, García-Carpintero (2013) proposes that acts of fiction-making are characterized by prescriptions of conditional obligations to a reader. I compare my account of fiction-making with García-Carpintero's proposal, pointing to a significant difference in the way I frame the kind of imagination that is raised during the process of reading a fictional work. My account, I assume, is closer to an assertion than to García-Carpintero's conditional obligations.

Following, I tackle a popular alternative that classifies fiction-making as a declarative speech act. Declarative speech acts, however, are not part of the array of illocutionary forces proposed by either Grice or Bach and Harnish. Accordingly, I assume a characterization proposed by Searle (1979d), where a declarative speech act changes the truth-value of a proposition. Furthermore, the illocutionary forces that compose Searle's class of declaratives are strictly related to our social reality, relying on institutions in order to be successful.

Despite its intuitive appeal, I argue that there is a gap between institutional facts and institutional truths and fictional facts and fictional truths. As an alternative, I engage with a distinct account of the declarative class proposed by Abell (2020). Abell argues that the intuitive account of the institution – one that seems to underlie Searle's proposal – is too strict. A better option, Abell claims, assumes a broader, less restrictive

characterization. Following Guala (2016), Abell proposes that any arbitrary mechanism of coordination between two individuals that aims to solve a coordination problem can be taken as an institution. This account broadens the reach of what counts as a part of the institutional reality, allowing for the process of reading a work of fiction to be framed as subsumed under an institution.

I take Abell's proposal to be promising. Her account of institutions, however, allows for a myriad of fiction-related institutions that are better taken as being a part of the communicative toolkit explored by a speaker in order to express their communicative intentions. Following Davidson (1979), I point out that any conventional means of communication can be exploited by a speaker in a non-conventional way. The possibility of taking fiction-making as a declarative hinges on the possibility of proposing a communicative account for this illocutionary class.

Concluding, I engage with a seldom-explored alternative that takes fiction-making to be a constative speech act, similar to assertions. In order to do so, I sketch a tentative account of constatives as a class of speech acts with a certain normative profile. The content of a constative utterance puts forward a content that can be taken as correct or incorrect according to a guiding principle that can vary among the illocutionary forces that constitute this class. Acts of fiction-making, I argue, can be taken as constatives since the uptake prompted by an act of fiction-making brings about an attitude that aims at the author's imagination.

5.1 Directives

Bergman and Franzen (2022) claim that the account presented by intentionalist theories of fiction-making – such as the ones proposed by Currie (1990, 2020), Davies (2008), and Stock (2017) – misrepresents the act of writing a work of fiction as a mandate to imagine. According to Bergman and Franzen, the illocutionary force proposed by intentionalist approaches to fiction-making is the same as a prescription. My proposal is supposedly in line with the aforementioned accounts. I take Bergman and Franzen's account, however, to rest on a misconception of some background assumptions that are part of intentionalist accounts.

Bergman and Franzen correctly assume that intentionalist accounts of fiction-making can be taken, in their vast majority, under the umbrella of make-believe theories of fiction. Taking into consideration Walton's (1990) project, intentionalist accounts of fiction-making are committed to a broader characterization of works of art, assuming

that "what characterizes fictional representations is that they mandate imaginings (or make-believe)" (BERGMAN; FRANZEN, 2022). The core assumption sustained by a make-believe account of fiction is that the content of works of fiction – i.e., the sentences that compose that work – can be used as props that regulate the imaginative process. Following Walton's account, an intentionalist account assumes that, in the process of writing a work of fiction, the author creates a prop whose function is to guide the reader's imaginative engagement with the fictional world.

A first problem arises from the fact that the production of a prop seems to be assumed by Bergman and Franzen to be the same as the production of a prescription to follow a set of instructions. I take this reading to rest on a mistake. Walton maintains that props are not to be confused with simple sets of instructions. The imaginative activity is not raised by a mandate, but as a result of fiction's representative nature:

> [E]ven if one does manage to say what one wants to say, the instructions may not be readily understood. It may be easier to communicate precisely what one wants others to imagine by constructing a "likeness" of some sort than by issuing explicit verbal instructions. (WALTON, 1990, p. 22)

That is, it is by depicting compelling situations that a work of art prompts imagination. Works of literature compel the reader to imagine what is depicted by describing interesting scenarios. The process of reading requires that the reader, not knowing what happens in the story, constrain their imaginative process to the sentences that are put forward by the author's acts of fiction-making. While props are guides to the reader's imaginative response, a prop is neither a mandate nor a suggestion. It is by engaging with a compelling depiction of facts that the reader's imaginative activity matches what the author intended to communicate. Fiction-making is akin to a descriptive – rather than prescriptive – activity.

In any case, intentionalist accounts of fiction-making assume that the imagination that is brought about during the process of reading a work of fiction is a result of a successful act of communication. The nature of Walton's props can hardly settle the illocutionary class of a speech act. Whether an utterance is a directive hinges on the kind of communicative intention that constitutes its expression. In order to properly assess the taxonomic category for an illocutionary force, we need to settle on which parameter places that illocutionary force in a certain taxonomic category. Grice has no explicit taxonomy of illocutionary acts. He, nonetheless, distinguishes between utterances that are indicative-type and utterances that are imperative-type:

> Indicative and quasi-indicative utterances are connected with the generation of beliefs, imperatives and quasi-imperative utterances are connected with the generation of actions. (GRICE, 1989e, p. 105)

> I wish to represent the M-intended effect of imperative-type utterances as being that the hearer should intend to do something (with of course the ulterior intention on the part of the utterer that the hearer should go on to do the act in question). (GRICE, 1989d, p. 123)

The taxonomy proposed by Bach and Harnish (1979) does not stray away from Grice's characterization. According to Bach, the class of directives encompasses speech acts that express the speaker's desires toward a course of action to be taken by the hearer as a result of the uptake of the speaker's utterance.

Take Currie's original formulation:

> *U*'s utterance of *S* is fictive *iff* there is a ϕ and there is a χ such that *U* utters *S* intending that anyone who has χ would
> (1) recognize that *S* has ϕ;
> (2) recognize that *S* is intended by *U* to have ϕ;
> (3) recognize that *U* intends them (the possessors of χ) to make-believe that *P*, for some proposition *P*; (CURRIE, 1990, p. 33)

Grice's account attempts to frame an investigation of meaning as an investigation of mental states that are made overt in the course of a communicative exchange. To perform a speech act, according to Grice, is to express an intention that the hearer's mental states change in relation to what is expressed in the speaker's communicative act. Grice's distinction between indicative-type and imperative-type utterances rests on the kind of effects the utterance intends to prompt in the hearer. Imperative-type utterances are direct attempts to prompt the hearer to carry out a course of action. Indicative-type utterances are attempts to change the hearer's beliefs. Changing a belief does not necessarily prompt a set of actions to be carried out in virtue of the uptake of the speech act. In many situations, however, an action will be carried out.

Currie's formulation does not fit either category. Fiction-making is not an attempt to change a belief; fiction-making is not an indicative-type utterance. Currie's fiction-making, moreover, is as much of a directive as Grice's assertion. Currie's account of fiction-making is the expression of an intention that the reader's mental state changes in accordance with the content of the speech act. To imagine the content of the author's act of fiction-making is not the same as carrying out a course of action; fiction-making is

not a directive. To prescribe that the target of an utterance assume an attitude towards a piece of information is not the same as to prescribe that the target of that utterance performs – or intends to perform – a course of action. To imagine that P does not require, at least in the relevant sense, that a set of actions be carried out. Equating a change of a mental state to the performance of a set of actions entails a collapse of every illocutionary force that is part of Grice's effect-oriented analysis into the single category of directives.

Moving forward, I tackle the possibility of actually framing fiction-making as a directive. In order to do so it is necessary to propose a new characterization of the class of directives. García-Carpintero (2013, 2019a, 2019b), couched in a normative account of illocutionary force, proposes such a characterization and frames his own account of fiction-making as a part of the directive class. First, I explore García-Carpintero's account, focusing on his characterization of fiction-making as the prescription of a conditional obligation. Concluding, I compare my own account with García-Carpintero's proposed norms for fiction-making.

5.1.1 From actions to obligations

There are two changes that can be made in order to include fiction-making in the class of directives. The first requires a rearrangement of the kind of imagination that is prompted by fictional works. Walton's theory of make-believe takes imagination to be a propositional attitude, similar to belief or desire. To imagine that P requires only mentally entertaining that P in a certain way. Imagination, however, can be reworked in order to resemble a voluntary action. As a voluntary action, imagination would be subsumed under a series of higher-order mental states that could vary according to one's preferred theory of action.

A second, less laborious, option requires a broadening of the class of directives to include more than action and action-related mental states. This option is pursued, in a series of papers, by García-Carpintero (2013, 2019a, 2019b). Similar to Currie's account, García-Carpintero develops his proposal against the familiar Waltonian background. Different from intentionalist proposals, following Williamson, (1996, 2000), García-Carpintero adopts a norm-based account of illocutionary force.

A norm-based account of illocutionary force takes a speech act to consist of an utterance that is assumed to conform to a set of norms that are a constitutive part of a communicative action. The proposal provides a normative – rather than descriptive – criterion to characterize illocutionary force. To perform a speech act is to produce

an utterance that is taken to comply with its constitutive norms. Not every speech act, however, is norm-complying. Distinct from a descriptive account, a norm-based proposal does not put forward necessary and sufficient conditions that would characterize an utterance as the expression of an illocutionary force.

Take, for example, assertions. Williamson takes the following norm to be constitutive of assertions:

(KR) One must assert that P only if one knows that P.

That is, to perform an assertion is to perform an utterance that is taken to conform to (KR). While the vast majority of assertions are not expressions of actual knowledge, to assert is to perform an utterance while observing (KR). In other words, the normative account proposes a criterion for correctness and not a criterion for performance. To assert is to put forward content as knowledge; a good assertion is an assertion of known content.

Moving to directives, García-Carpintero starts with an initial characterization that is proposed by Alston (1999). Alston proposes that directives are normatively characterized as an endowment of an obligation. Orders, as such, are subject to the following rule:

(DR_s) One must order A to P only if one endows A with an obligation to P.

García-Carpintero, however, takes (DR_s) to classify only the set of strong directives. The illocutionary class can be broadened in order to encompass weak directives. A weak directive raises a conditional obligation whose attribution is related to a contextually available presumption regarding the hearer's preferences. Directives are better characterized by the following rule:

(DR) One must order/prescribe/suggest A to P only if one endows A (given one's authority, or conditionally on A's presumed good will towards one's wishes, or on A's presumed wishes, etc.) with an obligation to P.

Acts of fiction-making, according to García-Carpintero, are utterances that endow a weak obligation on a target audience. As a weak directive, the act assumes that the reader is disposed to comply with the obligation that is endowed by the author. The obligation, moreover, is the obligation to imagine the content of the author's utterance. The following norm characterizes fiction-making:

> (FM_n) For one to fiction-make p is correct if and only if one's audience must imagine p, on the assumption that they have the relevant desires and dispositions. (GARCíA-CARPINTERO, 2013)

To engage with a work of fiction is to engage in a series of obligations prescribed by the author's utterances to imagine the content of that work. I believe García-Carpintero's account to provide a well-built account of fiction-making as a directive. Unlike Currie's, García-Carpintero trades intentions for norms. On the taxonomic front, the proposal diverges from Grice's characterization of imperative-type utterances by substituting actions for obligations.

Beyond García-Carpintero's aims, I take the account to provide a fair assessment of Currie's proposal in a norm-based framework. The effect-oriented nature of Currie's account is easily encompassed by García-Carpintero's audience-directed endowment of conditional obligations. Unlike Currie, however, the illocutionary force characterized by my account of fiction-making does not follow Grice's (1989c) effect-oriented formulation. My account emphasizes the expressive aspect of communication, taking the effect-oriented nature of Grice's account to be a good, albeit unnecessary, account of a speech act's perlocutionary intentions.

Currie (2014) seems to expect a development regarding his own account that is in line with my proposal[1]. His initial account, however, stems from Grice's account of communicative intentions in "Utterer's Meaning and Intentions":

> "U meant something by uttering x" is true *iff*, for some audience A, U uttered x intending:
> (1) A to produce a particular response r
> (2) A to think (recognize) that U intends (1)
> (3) A to fulfill (1) on the basis of his fulfillment of (2).
> (GRICE, 1989c, p. 92)

Such a formulation, however, shows some notable differences from Bach and Harnish's account. Grice characterizes communicative intentions with a series of subintentions that are intended to guarantee that the achievement of the previous intention is based on the recognition of the speaker's utterances. Following Bach and Harnish, my account characterizes communicative intentions as reflexive. Furthermore, adopting a suggestion proposed by Grice's later formulation, Bach and Harnish adopt a clause that accommodates the expressive dimension of a speech act:

[1] See footnote 9, from Currie (2014): "See, for example, Grice, "Utterer's Meaning and Intentions," in Studies in the Way of Words, pp. 86–116. I based the account in *The Nature of Fiction* on a version of the Gricean condition due to Kent Bach and Robert M. Harnish, *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts* (MIT Press, 1979).".

> I wish to regard the M-intended effect common to indicative-type utterances as being, not that the hearer should believe something (though there is frequently an ulterior intention to that effect), but that the hearer should *think that the utterer believes something.* (GRICE, 1989d, p. 123)

This dimension plays the defining role in my characterization of illocutionary force. Currie's schema, just as Grice's initial account, provides no counterpart for (FM)'s clause (i):

(FM) The author S fiction-makes by writing p if, and only if, for some reader H, S uttered p reflexive-intending:

i. to express that S imagines P;
ii. that H make-believe that P.

I take (FM) to be closer to Grice's indicative-types utterances than to imperative-types utterances. Fiction-making is, after all, structurally similar to assertion. Just like assertions, fiction-making is the expression of a propositional attitude towards a content. A successful performance of (FM), however, seems to require a different set of illocutionary norms than Currie's account.

A successful act of fiction-making is achieved by the recognition of the utterance as an expression of imagination. To fulfill the illocutionary intention expressed means recognizing the speech act as an expression of clause (i) of the (FM) schema. Achieving (FM)'s primary perlocutionary intention – i.e., getting the audience to imagine the content of what was said – is not a necessary feature of a speech act related to this illocutionary force. Contrary to García-Carpintero, I do not take the imaginative activity to be prompted by an illocutionary feature of the speech act. The reader imagines the content of the speech act as a result of recognizing that the speaker – or the author of the fictional work – holds a position where what is expressed by their utterance counts as truth-in-fiction. Prompting imagination is a perlocutionary effect. García-Carpintero's norms do not regulate an illocutionary aspect of my account.

My account requires no reason to take the imaginative activity to be conditionally prescribed. I do not take the perlocutionary intention to target only to a predisposed set of readers. Any reader that has the ability to grasp the author's speech act is a candidate to imagine its content. The success conditions of an act of fiction-making are set by the rationality constraints that are put forward in relation to the kind of communicative intention the author intends to express. The felicity conditions of fiction-making

are restricted by the rational process of recognizing the correct kind of communicative intentions.

In a norm-based account, I assume that the rule that characterizes fiction-making could be stated similarly to Willianson's rule for assertion. To correctly perform an act of fiction-making is to take oneself as producing a series of fictional facts that are not constrained by one's belief. As a result, I propose the following norm for fiction-making:

(FR) One must fiction-make that P only if one imagines that P.

For expressions of creative imagination, such as most literary fictions, a rule like (FR) is self-fulfilling. The author's act of expressing that P counts as the correct kind of imagination to make P true in the fictional world. Expressions of recreative imaginings, such as retellings, however, do not automatically fulfill the rule. Unlike the act of making up a new set of fictional facts, retelling a story can be taken as being correct or incorrect.

This characterization, moreover, puts fiction-making closer to assertions than to prescriptions. I take this to be the correct conclusion. Works of fiction are not manuals of instruction about how to correctly engage in a certain activity. Moving forward, I engage with a promising proposal: the possibility of taking fiction-making to be a declarative speech act.

5.2 Declaratives

A popular alternative to directives takes fiction-making to be a part of the declaratives class of illocutionary forces. Intuitively, fiction-making puts forward a proposition that brings about a new fictional fact into existence. The author of a work of fiction, during the process of writing that work, creates, by linguistic means, a fictional world. The declarative class is composed of utterances whose performance brings about a change in the truth-value of its content. A successful act of fiction-making changes the truth-value of P from false to true-in-fiction.

Most, if not all, declaratives require the existence of extra-linguistic elements. Declarative utterances provide the foundational aspect that we make use of in order to regulate our social institutions. This entanglement between a speech act theory and social conventions or institutions stems from Austin's original account of illocutionary forces. Austin's brand of conventionalism stems from an observation of the fact that some utterances entail a change that goes beyond mere communication. A wedding officiant that utters 'by the powers vested in me, I hereby declare you married' is not providing a piece

of information, but prompting a change to the civil status of the target of their utterance. The performance of such actions requires a set of pre-established social conventions. The class of declaratives is built upon this insight. A declarative speech act is successful if, and only if, its performance complies with a set of institutional conditions that determine who can successfully perform the speech act, who can be the target of it, and where and when it can be performed.

At the core of Strawson's (1964) critique of Austin's theory of speech acts is the fact that regular cases of asserting, requesting and questioning do not seem to require an extra-linguistic convention. Asserting, asking, and requesting are features of linguistic communication. Linguistic communication, moreover, can be accounted for by meaning-conventions and some general principles of cooperation. Within the bounds of linguistic communication, a theory of speech acts can be taken to be part of the broader project of understanding the way we communicate with each other.

Austin's brand of conventionalism leaned too much into well-established non-linguistic practices. Strawson, however, does not deny the existence of institutional acts. Such acts, however, seem to operate on a different axis from linguistic communication. Following Bach and Harnish, in order to make sense of this discrepancy, I assume a distinction between communicative speech acts and conventional – or institutional – speech acts. The core characteristic of communicative speech acts is the fact that they can be produced and sustained by appealing to principles that guide our communicative practices. Institutional speech acts, on the other hand, are highly conventionalized. Their defining characteristic is the requirement of extra-linguistic conventions that regulate and guarantee their success.

Bach and Harnish provide no taxonomy for institutional speech acts. Searle's taxonomy, however, includes the class of declaratives:

> It is the defining characteristic of this class that the successful performance of one of its members brings about the correspondence between the propositional content and reality, the successful performance guarantees that the propositional content corresponds to the world. (SEARLE, 1979d, p. 17)

Declarative speech acts are related to institutional facts. The changes brought about by successful declarations are changes to our social or institutional reality. The change in truth value that is entailed by a successful declarative speech act is secured by the institutions that regulate the speech act's conditions of felicity. The changes that are prompted by declarative acts require the existence of an external non-linguistic convention.

The existence of the facts that are brought about by successful declarative utterances is sustained by the existence of the social institution that regulates that institutional practice. Without an institution, there is no social reality to be changed or sustained.

The interface between the social world and linguistic practices provides an explanation for the kind of changes that are brought about by successful declaratives. Declaratives hold no special powers that can change the (non-social) ontology of the world. A declarative cannot bring a change to the status of a proposition outside the reach of the institution that regulates its successful performance. The class of declaratives, as such, consists of the tools that provide the means by which we change and create institutional facts:

> Typically, a non-performative declarative act presupposes, as a preparatory condition, the existence of a previous institutional fact (e.g., some form of hierarchy and a particular position or authority of the speaker in it) and generates, if successful, another institutional fact. (RUFFINO, 2022, p. 171)

The core characteristic of the class of declaratives is the fact that the successful performance of a declarative speech act brings about a correspondence between the propositional content and the institutional reality. The successful performance guarantees that, within the limits of that institution, the content of what is said can be taken as true. To take fiction-making as a declarative is to assume that an act of fiction-making engenders a change in the social or institutional reality that regulates fiction. To fiction-make that P is to change, within the bounds of the institution that regulates fiction, the truth-value of P from false to true. A successful act of fiction-making brings about a new institutional fact as a part of fiction's institutional reality.

This position, however, has some glaring problems. There is a mismatch between the fictional and the institutional reality. The social world permeates every aspect of our lives. Institutional facts have causal powers within the institutions that compose our social lives. Any change regarding the status of an institutional fact can impact our behavior within the limits of that institution. After being fired, for example, one cannot simply choose to go back to work. Fictional facts and fictional truths, however, lack the robustness that are characteristic of institutional facts and institutional truths. Fictional facts, moreover, lack any form of regulatory powers that are part of the nature of institutional facts. The fictional reality, unlike the social reality, can be opted out of.

I believe this lack of robustness of a fictional fact to be a defining feature of fiction. If fictional facts were robust, we would not call them fictional. A fictional fact,

one could say, is as much of a fact as a rubber duck is a duck. In order to properly understand a work of fiction, it is necessary to understand that the facts that compose it are not meant to be part of our reality. Truth-in-fiction is not truth. That is not to say that fiction cannot represent natural or social facts, nor that the social or natural facts that are part of the fictional world cannot enrich our knowledge about the actual world. That, however, is not a necessary property of a work of fiction. Bad fiction is still fiction. The facts that are brought up by an act of fiction-making are not meant to be the target of our beliefs or to regulate our social or natural behavior.

Additionally, the intuitive appeal of declarations has some difficulty getting off the ground. There is no clear way of conceiving an institution that encompasses fiction as a whole. The practice of telling fictional stories is a staple of human culture. Different cultures seem to have independently developed the same methods of conveying fictional information. Fiction can be found in cave paintings, oral practices of storytelling, and even in children's play. Children, as young as two years old, engage in pretend play that seems to involve the communication of imagined information[2]. It is not reasonable to take fiction-making as an act that is sustained by an institution that regulates the communication of fictional information as a whole. Such a claim entails that every culture has independently developed the same kind of institution to regulate the same kind of institutional practice with the same set of conventional rules. Moreover, it would imply that children as young as two years old can already understand and interact with this facet of our institutional reality.

I agree, however, with the fact that storytelling practices such as written literature are well-behaved and can be highly institutionalized. Fiction, however, transcends literature. The regulatory role that is brought about by the institution of literature regulates a small branch of storytelling practices. The practice of telling a fictional story can exist independently of the institutionalized practice of writing a literary work.

Recently, Abell (2020) put forward an account of fiction-making as a declaration that seems to share some of my worries:

> While there are explicit rules that determine what it takes to be a prime minister, vice-chancellor, CEO, judge, or cardinal, there are no rules that determine what it takes to be an author of fiction. Anyone can pick up a pen and write fiction. If such rules and processes were essential to institutions, there would be no institution of fiction, because one does not require any special institutional status to produce or to consume fiction. (ABELL, 2020, p. 8)

[2]See Leslie (1987) and Gendler (2003).

The problem with this account of declaratives, Abell claims, stems from a misguided characterization of institutions. The institutional reality that regulates fiction oversteps the strictly hierarchical, highly conventionalized, social institutions that regulate our social lives. In what follows, I engage with Abell's account. First, I explore Abell's account of our institutional reality as guiding principles that allow for better coordination between agents. Then, I propose a critical analysis of her proposal to take such institutions to be regulating devices that are necessarily tied to our engagement with fictional works.

5.2.1 Thin institutions

A naive account of institutions takes institutions to be a complex, well-established, and highly hierarchical social practices whose existence is sustained by a kind of bureaucratic behavior. Common examples are mostly related to governmental, economic, or socially rigid practices: currency, weddings, and universities are among the often discussed list of social entities. Abell, however, takes the institutional world to encompass less robust objects. The institution of fiction is an example of such simpler aspect of our social lives.

Abell proposes that institutions are systems of regulative rules for coordination problems. Following Guala (2016), Abell characterizes an institution as a set of means by which two or more agents can coordinate their actions. Participating in an institution involves engaging in a coordination problem that requires performing a set of mutually agreed upon actions in order to achieve a common goal. To be a part of an institution is to behave according to an established set of rules that entail the solution to a coordination problem. Coordination rules are a prescriptive set of actions stated in conditional form: when faced with a problem c, participants are expected to perform a conventionally accepted set of actions A. The conventional nature of the solution entails arbitrariness. That is, for any problem c there can be more than one set of actions that would entail a solution to it; any solution could be stated as a set of rules capable of solving c. Convention, however, fixes A as the standard solution, which entails that A is the optimal way to solve it.

Guala's account allows for a thinner set of conventions to constitute the institutional reality, enabling institutions to have a fairly minimal structure that presupposes neither hierarchical division nor bureaucratic practices. Fiction, Abell argues, is such a thin set of practices. Reading a fictional work is a coordination problem. The set of regulative rules that compose the institution of fiction prescribes that, for an audience,

the content of a fictional work is to be imagined.

Abell proposes two kinds of fiction-related rules. Reference-fixing rules state that:

> If an author produces a fictive utterance of a specific representation R without using R to speaker-refer to an existing entity, fictional entity f exists, and f is to be taken to fix the reference of R. (ABELL, 2020, p. 128)

I have little interest in reference-fixing rules, at least at this stage. I am ambivalent towards any ontological account regarding fictional characters. The account I am pursuing does not consider reference — or the lack of referents — as a problem. I believe that the account proposed here is compatible with Abell's reference-fixing rules, as well as other realist accounts of fictional characters. My proposal, however, can also fit an anti-realist view of such objects. If reference is absent from fiction-related communication, I believe that a proper account of communication should consider that reference is not a necessary requisite for communication to ensue.

More importantly, Abell identifies content-determining rules:

> If an agent produces an utterance of type Z, imagine X. (ABELL, 2020, p. 35)

Content-determining rules feature in communication. The reader is supposed to imagine a certain scenario as a result of interacting with an utterance that is put forward by the author of a work of fiction. Communication – and communicative acts – fit within Guala's characterization of thin institutions. A conversation is a coordination problem. A problem to be solved by a communicative exchange involves securing the uptake of information. As a cooperative endeavor, the participants of a conversation share this common goal.

It is fair to assume that, in order to prompt the imaginative process, the author of a work of fiction, in the process of writing that work, explores a set of features that overtly inform the reader that the content of the work is to be imagined. The process of prompting an imagining is, moreover, rationally constrained by the author's expectations regarding the reader's capabilities to grasp the content of what is said. This closely resembles an account of communication as an expression and recognition of communicative intentions. Intentionalist accounts of communication take the communicative process as a coordination problem in which the participants make use of readily available information, including linguistic conventions, in order to make their intentions recognizable to a

target audience. The expression of an intention requires both parties to engage in the communicative process in a cooperative manner.

The difference between Abell's proposal and an intentionalist account of fiction-making rests on the process of recognizing that an utterance ought to be imagined:

> [T]hese rational constraints depend on the existence of the content-determining rules. Consequently, they do not support the claim that audiences identify the contents of fictive utterances by drawing inferences about authors' intentions based on the assumption that they are rational. The rules determine the contents of fictive utterances. (ABELL, 2020, p. 10)

Abell's account does not appeal to the recognition of a communicative intention. Fiction-related communication hinges on the recognition that a set of actions ought to be applied to the author's utterances in order to elicit the correct imaginative response. Abell believes the process of decoding fiction-related information to be conventional. The solution assumes that for any fiction-related utterance, there is a set of contextually available information conventionally exploited in order to bring about the correct imagining of what is said. Intentionalist accounts of fiction-making, on the other hand, take this process to be isotropic, allowing for a non-fixed set of information to generate the right kind of imaginative process.

Thin institutions are conventions. As conventions, the set of rules that constitute the established solution to a coordination problem is arbitrary. As such, I take for granted that, in order to explain different kinds of fiction-related practices, there can be no single institution that regulates the production of all fictional works. Abell accepts a similar position, claiming that distinct fiction-related institutions make use of similar, but still distinct, content-determining rules in order to communicate imaginings:

> Different fiction institutions at different times and places are united in consisting in rules that represent equilibrium solutions to coordination problems of communicating imaginings. (ABELL, 2020, p. 29)

While every work of fiction is regulated by a rule that states that given an utterance of type s, imagine P, the content that is produced by the utterance may vary from work to work. It is not feasible to take distinct works of fiction from different cultures and different time periods to make use of the same set of conventionally accepted set of rules in order to regulate the content of their imaginings. Given the conventional nature of regulative rules, there are, evidently, regularities. Content-determining rules can range

over a series of features that we consider important to our fiction-related practices. Such features include, at least, the time and place where the work was produced, the genre of the work, and the medium through which the work is supposed to be consumed.

Take, for example, the following content-determining rules that range over works of the same genre:

> If an author utters representation R in the production of a work belonging to genre G, imagine X. (ABELL, 2020, p. 81)

Genre conventions, however, are especially problematic. A common characterization of genre takes it as a cluster of non-essential conditions[3]. The set of conditions that constitute a genre may, and most of the time will, vary as the genre develops. Assuming that different genre conventions can result in different content-determining rules leaves room for an array of genre-related conventions that are individuated in relation to the time and place the work was written. As a result, imagining the content of a fictional work implies knowledge of the appropriate genre-related conventions, as well as the time and place of the work's production. Such a task, while plausible for a specialized audience, seems impractical to the common reader.

Additional problems can stem from the fact that genre membership can change or overlap. A work of fiction may fit the criteria for membership in more than one genre. In the same way, it is not uncommon for a literary work to be bundled with works of a different genre as new literary genres develop or old boundaries are redrawn.

I do not deny that there could be acts of fiction-making whose target audience is restricted to a small set of highly specialized individuals. I accept the fact that a conventionalized procedure – e.g., a procedure that assumes a high degree of knowledge about genre-conventions – can be required in order to properly grasp the content of some fictional works. Few works, however, can fit into this category. Furthermore, problems may arise from boundary-pushing works that highly specialized audiences tend to seek out. A work of fiction that is constrained by its genre boundaries is often shunned as boring or stale. Praise comes to authors who can explore established conventions in order to subvert their audience's expectations, conveying information that is highly contra-standard in relation to other works that are part of a genre. Without a place for intention-recognition, I take such a task to be impossible.

I believe this criticism to be in line with Davidson's (1979) critique of conventionalism. Producing a work of fiction, as an artistic practice, often involves breaking

[3]See, for example, Walton (1970) and Friend (2012).

conventional rules in order to distinguish itself from traditional works. As literature pushes the boundaries of what counts as fiction, conventional rules cannot be applied in a broad sense. If a convention fixes the content of a work of fiction leaving no place for intention-recognition, such changes are left out.

I do not take Abell's account of institutions to be incompatible with the view that fiction-making is a communicative speech act. I do believe that some kinds of structured means of storytelling avail themselves of conventionally established principles of generation in order to facilitate the reading process. The institution of fiction can provide a set of rules that facilitate coordination between the reader and the author regarding the content of a work of fiction. There is no single rule, however, that generates content, but a myriad of rules that can be exploited by the author in order to prompt the appropriate set of imaginings they intend to communicate. Understanding which rule is exploited by an utterance means grasping the speaker's communicative intentions. As a broad category, the set of skills required to engage with a fictional work is the same set of skills required by our communicative practices.

Abell argues that the communication of fictional content is incompatible with Grice's rationality constraints. The kind of imagination that is required by fiction, Abell claims, cannot be prompted by the same mechanisms that are explored to communicate beliefs. In the following section, I tackle Abell's argument, which I believe has two points of contention. First, Abell's version of the rationality constraint seems to be too strong to be compatible with the claim that expressing and recognizing a communicative intention is an isotropic process. Moreover, Abell's aversion to belief as a guiding principle for our engagement with fictional works goes against most well-established investigations of the principles that fix what is true-in-fiction.

5.2.2 The uptake of fictional information

The characterization I present takes fiction-making to be a communicative speech act. The performance of a speech act consists of the expression of a communicative intention. Communicative intentions are a complex, audience-oriented, set of intentions that are intended to be recognized. The uptake of a communicative intention requires that a target audience identifies a set of relevant information that is exploited by the speaker in their utterance. Grasping a speech act involves identifying both the attitude expressed and the content conveyed by the speaker.

The expression and recognition of an act of fiction-making require the audience

to explore information assumed to be available both to the reader and the author. The process is similar to that of recognizing an assertion, a question, or an order. The process of identifying the illocutionary force of an utterance is achieved by exploiting contextual information and social norms. This process, moreover, is isotropic, meaning that there is no fixed set of information that is required to be explored in order to communicate or recognize a speech act. Any information that is taken to be relevant may be exploited by either the speaker or their target audience.

Abell (2020) takes this reasoning to be flawed. Fiction-making, she argues, is intrinsically distinct from other speech acts in relation to how it is construed and recognized. The main concern is related to the role belief plays in our uptake of fictional information. Belief provides the cornerstone of intention-recognition. The process of expressing and recognizing a communicative intention is sustained by an expectation of rationality. Recognizing a communicative intention involves putting yourself in someone's shoes in order to reconstruct the rational process that resulted in the act of expression. Belief, Abell claims, is too rigid to provide the foundations on which the imaginative process will be built. Unlike an assertion, the process of producing and recognizing the content of an act of fiction-making cannot be inferred by the participants of a communicative exchange based on their knowledge of the world. Fictional information, nonetheless, is not constrained by how we believe the world is. As a result, Abell assumes that the process of generating fictional truths requires an external regulative principle.

The external regulative principles that fiction requires are institutions. Fiction-related institutions are regulative principles that enable the author of a work of fiction to elicit from the reader a particular imagining:

> These are regulative rules that prescribe audiences to engage in certain types of imaginings in response to utterances with certain features. By doing so, they establish relations between utterances with certain features and contents of certain types. (ABELL, 2020, p. 10)

Abell's argument starts with the sensible observation that knowledge about the way the world is imposes constraints on our beliefs. Beliefs aim to reflect the way the world is. The set of tools that the speaker can avail themselves of in order to express a communicative intention seems to be restricted by their beliefs. The way the world is constrains our communicative plans. It is by knowing the way the world is that the speaker can securely assume that their target audience will be able to grasp what is said. Additionally, the way the world is constrains our uptake of information. A communicative

plan is constrained by the speaker's beliefs about the world, and their beliefs about the beliefs that are held by their target audience.

Grasping a communicative intention involves identifying the information exploited by the speaker in order to reconstruct the rational process that prompted the intention's production. Abell assumes that imagination, and, more importantly, the process of expressing imagination, is unconstrained by belief. Imagination neither represents the way the world is nor expects the world to comply with the content of what is imagined. In other words, imagination has no direction of fit. In the communication of imaginings, the audience's knowledge about the way the world is cannot enable them to secure the uptake of the speaker's communicative intentions. The way the world is, argues Abell, affords no purchase on the contents of others' imaginings.

I believe Abell assumes an account of the process of recognizing communicative intentions – including the process of recognizing the content of an assertion – that is too rigid. While the way the world is can constrain communicative intentions, the process of expressing a speech act may exploit any kind of information that the speaker deems available. This set of information includes, but is not restricted to, beliefs, known desires, contingent information, overt disagreements, and conventionally accepted information. The process that regiments the construction of a communicative intention, as well as the process of recognizing that intention, is, nonetheless, isotropic.

In addition, Abell seems to downplay the role that knowledge regarding the actual world plays in a theory of truth-in-fiction:

> Audiences can identify the intentions that determine the context-sensitive contents of assertions by appealing to their knowledge of how the world is, together with the assumption that speakers intend their assertions accurately to reflect the way things are. However, this strategy does not work for fiction, because we do not expect the content of a fiction to reflect how things are in reality. (ABELL, 2020, p. 4)

Traditional accounts of truth-in-fiction – from Lewis (1978) to Walton (1990) and Friend (2017) – agree that the fictional world is composed of at least some truths inferred from their resemblance to facts about the actual world. Lewis, in fact, proposes two analyses in which the way the world is, or is perceived to be, shapes the way we construe the fictional world. Lewis' Analysis 1 takes actual facts as true-in-fiction unless textual information points to the contrary:

> A sentence of the form "In the fiction f, ϕ" is non-vacuously true *iff* some world where $f$told as known fact and ϕ is true differs less

> from our actual world, on balance, than does any world where f is told as known fact and ϕ is not true. (LEWIS, 1978)

Lewis' Analysis 2 takes collective beliefs about the way the world is that are prevalent when the fictional work was produced as true-in-fiction unless textual information points to the contrary:

> A sentence of the form "In the fiction f, ϕ" is non-vacuously true *iff*, whenever W is one of the collective belief worlds of the community of origin of f, then some world where f is told as known fact and ϕ is true differs less from the world W, on balance, than does any world where f is told as known fact and ϕ is not true. (LEWIS, 1978)

Friend, more recently, argues that the reader's narrative comprehension is couched in the assumption that, unless information is explicitly excluded by the fictional work, everything that is actually true is fictionally the case. Even explicit fictional information requires some knowledge about the way the world is in order to be decoded.

Most fiction-related communication relies on conventional means. The author can securely rely on linguistic knowledge in order to convey what they mean. A principle such as the presumption of literalness ensures that, if the reader can infer that the author's utterance can be taken at face value, it is taken at face value. Without an external source of information, the reader is unable to infer a communicative intention beyond literal information. Crucially, the reader may avail themselves of information that is previously communicated by the author. Beyond such scenarios, a principle raised by, for example, Lewis' Analysis 1 or 2 can be brought about. Works of fiction are not read in a vacuum.

Imagination is an attitude characterized by its disposition to be conjoined with non-believed information. Conjoining what is imagined with what is not believed does not free the communicative process from expectation. The way the fictional world is construed can provide the reader with important clues that may inform the way the fictional world can be construed in relation to the actual world. Possible fictional truths can be exploited in order to sustain educated inferences that may help in grasping the author's communicative intentions. As narratives are considered representative works of art, any form of depicted behavior – be it from the author or from a fictional character – can provide the reader with information that can be used in order to infer non-conventional meanings.

Additionally, nothing precludes a specialized reader from making use of established non-linguistic conventions in order to infer fictional truths that are often ignored by

an uninformed reader. Unlike the communication of beliefs, however, the communication of imaginings has to allow for a broader set of expectations to be broken. The explanation of fictional phenomena is often left incomplete and may rely on conflicting information.

In any form, as a process of information exchange, it could hardly be said that a single set of conventions can fix the meaning of non-literal utterances in fiction-related environments. A good interpretation relies on a reasonable reader, not on a fixed set of non-linguistic rules that can be exploited in order to decode information:

> Often it just strikes us that, given the words of a novel or the paint on a stretch of canvas, such and such is fictional. Insofar as we do have reasons, what we are conscious of being guided by is a diverse assortment of particular considerations which seem somehow reasonable in one or another specific case. (WALTON, 1990, p. 139)

There is no problem that is a part of the communication of imaginings that cannot be raised for the communication of non-fictional information. Communication is a complex process. The open-ended nature of imagination may subject fiction-making to stricter rationality constraints in order to enable the communicative intention to be readily recognizable by the speaker's target audience. Fiction, especially when communicated under publicity-averse scenarios, allows for less room to solve misunderstandings, pushing the communicative exchange to exploit more conventional means. That, however, does not entail the fact that the communicative exchange has shunned intentions in favor of conventions. Conventions, including Abell's institutions, can be a part of the rational endeavor that is expressing and recognizing a communicative intention.

As far as declarations can be construed as communicative – rather than institutional – speech acts, I take that fiction-making is a suitable candidate for the class. Before concluding, however, I address a rather unpopular suggestion: the possibility of taking fiction-making to be a constative. In order to do so, I propose a novel account of the constative class.

5.3 A tentative account of constatives

Neither Bach and Harnish nor Grice or Searle consider fiction-making as part of the array of illocutionary forces they analyze. Most, if not all, established taxonomies will require changes in order to account for fiction-making.

Taxonomies of speech acts usually come as a corollary of an account of illocutionary force. A theory of speech acts consists of a series of principles that provide a

set of conditions under which an utterance of a sentence counts as the performance of a linguistic action. In a taxonomy, illocutionary forces can be categorized in relation to the overarching similarities between different linguistic actions and the conditions that govern their performance. As a result, taxonomies diverge from theory to theory, hardly ever providing a readily agreeable categorization.

I acknowledge that since the existence of an illocutionary force depends on the possibility of performing a linguistic action according to a set of principles, no taxonomy may be proposed independently of a theory of speech acts. I wish, however, to sketch a more ecumenical approach, relying on some general principles that can be taken as an agreeable middle ground. In order to do so, I intend to rely on standard cooperative cases of information exchange free from any conversational misunderstanding. The idealized situation assumes that the participants of a communicative exchange are rational subjects that will not propose or accept a faulty conversational move. Every speech act will be taken to be performed with an achievable goal that will be successful upon uptake.

My proposal assumes that speech acts can be safely seen as effect-oriented and norm-complying. This does not mean that illocutionary forces are to be characterized in relation to such effects or norms. Every account of illocutionary force, however, assumes that speech acts are at least partially identifiable in relation to their effects, and that every performance of a speech act is subject to a set of normative felicity conditions. Such effects and conditions may not be necessary or sufficient for the performance of a successful speech act. That is, the principles that guide this taxonomy do not provide a stable ground to characterize the performance of a speech act with the desirable illocutionary force in non-ideal situations. Furthermore, my account holds the distinction between communicative and institutional speech acts. It does not, however, assume that speech acts are characterized solely by the expression of a communicative intention. The only requirement is that, whether fixed by intention, convention, or some other means, a standard performance of a speech act in a norm-complying cooperative situation prompts a standard effect.

Following Roberts (2018), I start my investigation into the class of constatives with assertions. Roberts suggests that there is linguistic evidence to consider assertions as a pragmatic universal. She supports her suggestion by noting that an equivalent to the declarative clause-type seems to be present in every known language. The declarative mood can be taken as a grammatical universal. Grammatical universals can be generalized to pragmatic universals. That is, consider a vacuous context, i.e., a context that is destitute of any relevant information that would veer the interpretation of an utterance

beyond what is taken to be its literal meaning. In a situation involving two cooperative participants engaged in a standard communicative exchange, a literal utterance of a declarative sentence can be securely taken to be an assertion[4].

Accepting that sentential mood can be standardly related to illocutionary forces requires nothing beyond accepting the fact that a grammatical universal can be generalized to a pragmatic universal. While there is room for linguistic conventionalism, it is not necessary to assume that the sentential mood of a sentence is an illocutionary force-indicating device that fixes the illocutionary force of the utterance. An intentionalist could maintain that uttering a declarative sentence, for example, constitutes a convenient way to express a belief. Similarly, a norm-based account could sustain that such an utterance is an easy way for the utterer to be taken as norm-complying.

I follow Sbisà (2020) in assuming that most, if not all, accounts of assertion appeal in some form to belief. Belief is present as a part of an account of assertions from Grice's (1989b) explicit formulation of assertion in terms of a prescription to believe, to Searle's (1969) sincerity conditions, to an alleged belief as a result of a commitment. Additionally, an explanation based on belief provides a fertile ground that can be explored by normative or functionalist accounts, given the relationship between belief and knowledge or truth, and belief and action.

As an overarching theme, I believe it is not contentious to assume that, by issuing an assertion by means of uttering a declarative sentence in a standard and collaborative environment, one presents oneself as holding a belief. By expressing a belief, it is safe to assume that, for cooperation to ensue, the speaker expects the target of their utterance to acquire a belief with the same content. In a communicative setting, knowing the beliefs of the participants in a conversation allows for a better flow of information, expanding the tools available to achieve success in a cooperative activity. By having a shared set of beliefs, we can predict the behavior of the other participants in the communicative exchange and behave in expected ways in order to advance the cooperative activity.

The resulting picture is not far from the account of assertion put forward by Bach and Harnish. I reiterate that, while I consider belief to occupy a central position in the characterization of a standard performance of assertion, I am not proposing an account of the speech act. The role that belief plays may not be a constitutive aspect of the illocutionary force of an assertive utterance. I do not aim to propose a set of

[4]A similar reasoning can be applied to the other two grammatical universals. The interrogative mood generalizes to questions, and the imperative mood generalizes to orders.

necessary and sufficient conditions. The proposal shares similar aims with Stalnaker's (1978) account of the essential effects of an assertive utterance. To assert, in a standard situation, is to put forward a belief; the successful uptake of a belief conveyed by an assertion results in a shared belief.

The class of constatives, I propose, consists of speech acts that prompt a change to an attitude that has a normative profile similar to belief. To paraphrase Williams (1973), belief aims at truth. A belief is correct if the content of the belief is true. That is, truth puts forward the correctness conditions by which we evaluate beliefs. To believe that P means to accept P as true. Truth is a constitutive aspect of belief; belief is a truth-directed attitude. The class of constatives, I propose, can be characterized by attitudes with similar correctness conditions.

I call the default type of assertion strong assertions. A standard performance of a strong assertion in a vacuous context expresses and raises a belief. The correctness condition of the prescribed belief is fixed by truth. The normative profile of a strong assertion is as follows:

Strong assertions: a standard performance of a strong assertion aims at truth.

Not all situations that involve a declarative utterance to express a belief, however, can be taken as regulated by an aim at truth. Engaging in a cooperative activity requires only that the participants in a communicative exchange are aligned in relation to the content of what is expressed:

> [T]here may be various reasons to ignore the possible situations in which some proposition is false even when one realizes that one of those possible situations may be the actual one. One may simplify or idealize in an inquiry, one may presume innocence to ensure fairness, one may make assumptions for the purpose of contingency planning, one may grant something for the purpose of an argument. (STALNAKER, 2002)

That is, there can be situations where the speaker expresses a belief but their utterance does not prompt a change in their target's belief. Not prompting a change in belief, moreover, can be the expected effect of the speaker's utterance.

Such situations involve a speech act that is normatively distinct from strong assertions. These situations involve an utterance that consists of the performance of an assertion-like speech act whose main perlocutionary aim is not to prompt a belief. I call this illocutionary force a weak assertion. Weak assertions are standardly performed

in situations where the participants of a communicative exchange need only to present themselves as disposed to act upon a piece of information, even if this information is perceived by their interlocutors as false.

The proper response to a weak assertion is acceptance. Acceptance is an attitude weaker than belief. To accept that P is to take P as true for the purpose of a cooperative activity. Acceptance is not truth-aiming. Distinct from belief, the norms that regiment the correctness conditions of acceptance are restricted to what is perceived to be shared between the participants of a conversation. A standard performance of a weak assertion in a vacuous context raises acceptance. The correctness condition of the prescribed acceptance is fixed by a belief. The normative profile of a weak assertion is as follows:

Weak assertion: a standard performance of a weak assertion aims at belief.

The participants of a conversation, however, can, and sometimes do, coordinate on information they overtly perceive to be false. Such situations can be raised by suppositions. By issuing a supposition, the speaker expresses content that they accept and expects the hearer to do the same. A successful supposition raises acceptance towards the content that the speaker has shown to accept. A standard performance of a supposition in a vacuous context raises acceptance. In suppositions, the correctness condition of acceptance is fixed by acceptance. The normative profile of a supposition is as follows:

Suppositions: a standard performance of a supposition aims at acceptance.

This characterization can be refined. There could be a relevant difference between supposing information that could be true and supposing information that is necessarily false. Stalnaker (2014), for example, takes suppositions to be necessarily temporary. This characteristic may be relevant in investigating the necessary and sufficient conditions that characterize an utterance as an actual performance of a supposition.

Furthermore, it is important to notice that the set of forces I characterize here – i.e., strong assertions, weak assertions, and suppositions – may not necessarily account for a fitting description of our communicative toolkit. There could be, for example, a distinction between stronger and weaker suppositions. Furthermore, in actual conversations, strong and weak assertions may result from the same kind of conversational move. This is expected, as most, if not all, instances of communication do not happen against a vacuous context with cooperative participants. I am open to the possibility that the set

of speech acts we perform in non-idealized conversational scenarios may be either broader or narrower than the one I sketched here.

Moving forward, I take that the class of constatives can be characterized as the class of illocutionary forces whose normative profile involves a propositional attitude that aims at ϕ, where ϕ fixes the conditions to take the attitude as correct:

> **Constatives:** a standard performance of a constative speech act is related to a ϕ-directed attitude towards P.

The performance of a strong assertion takes ϕ as truth, a weak assertion takes ϕ as belief, and a supposition takes ϕ as acceptance. Closer to Searle than to Bach and Harnish, I assume that all members of the class of constatives are truth-apt. Unlike Searle's class of assertives, however, my account of constatives does not assume that every constative has a word-to-world direction of fit, which better accommodates utterances with overtly false contents.

Turning to fiction, I consider acts of fiction-making to function as regulative devices of the reader's imaginative process. Properly grasping the content of a work of fiction involves achieving coordination between the imaginings held by the reader and the imaginings held by the author. Fiction-making, similar to strong assertions, aims to bring about an equilibrium between the reader's and the author's mental states. Similar to suppositions, fiction-making allows for overtly false information. Unlike suppositions, however, coordinating on imagined content does not lead to a disposition to action. The expected kind of imagination raised by fiction-making is make-believe. Make-believe is a ϕ-directed attitude. The appropriate imagination raised by a work of fiction aims to conform with what the author imagines to be true-in-fiction.

A standard performance of an act of fiction-making in a vacuous context raises make-believe. The correctness condition of the prescribed make-believe is fixed by the author's imagination. The normative profile of an act of fiction-making is as follows:

> **Fiction-making**: a standard performance of an act of fiction-making aims at imagination.

I believe that the account of constatives as the class of speech acts related to a ϕ-directed attitude provides a good fit for fiction-making. In an idealized situation, every act of fiction-making performed by the author of a fictional work informs the reader of the correct content that ought to be part of the reader's imaginative process. The description is similar to the idealized situation where an assertion performed by a speaker informs the correct content that ought to be part of the hearer's beliefs.

5.4 Partial conclusions

In this chapter, I proposed a place for fiction-making in a taxonomy of speech acts. I analyzed the possibility of classifying fiction making as either a directive, declarative, or constative speech act. Fiction-making, I conclude, seems to better be classified as either a declarative or a constative speech act.

Bergman and Franzen (2022), however, argues that intentionalist accounts of fiction-making are committed to a declarative reading. Building upon Currie's (1990) account of fiction-making as a prescription of imagination, I argue that Currie's prescription is not the kind of prescription for an illocutionary force to be characterized as a directive. Such mischaracterizations, I argued, arise from either a faulty interpretation of Walton's account of props or from a misreading of Grice's (1989d, 1989e) effect-oriented account of meaning. Following, I discuss García-Carpintero's (2013) norm-based account of directives. I believe García-Carpintero's account provides a class that can comfortably accommodate effect-oriented accounts of fiction-making. The characterization, however, is at odds with my expressivist tendencies.

Moving to declarative speech acts, I discuss the possibility of taking fiction-making to be a speech act that prompts a change to our institutional reality. I assume a distinction between communicative and institutional speech acts, taking the latter to be regulated by a conventional, non-linguistic, principle. I claim, however, that there is a gap between the fictional world and the institutional reality. Fictional facts, unlike institutional facts, lack the robustness to regulate our social lives.

Moving forward, I engage with Abell's (2020) proposal to broaden the concept of intuitions in order to include any kind of cooperative endeavor that aims to solve a coordination problem by an arbitrary, but conventionally accepted, means. Abell account provides a thinner characterization of the institutional reality that can accommodate fictional works. While I take Abell's proposal to be promising, I disagree with her conventional account of the communicative nature of fiction. Abell takes the communicative aspect of fiction to hinge upon different kinds of institutions that regulate the content of a fictional work. Although I concede the existence of such institutions, I take them to be a tool that can be explored in the process of expressing and recognizing a communicative intention.

Concluding, I explore a novel account of constatives that can accommodate fiction-making. I claim that a taxonomy should be built upon a shared set of assumptions

that do not rely directly upon a particular characterization of illocutionary force. I restrict my investigation to ideal utterances that are performed in a vacuous context. I propose a norm-based characterization for the class of constatives. Every member of the constative class, I argue, shares a similar kind of correctness condition. Just as the correct kind of belief raised by an assertion aims at truth, I argue the correct content of a make-believe raised by an act of fiction-making aims at the author's imagination.

Chapter 6

Final Remarks

In this work, I proposed an account of the act of writing fiction as a *sui generis* illocutionary force and a dynamic account of fiction-making. My proposal developed around a Grice-inspired picture of communication. Grice's account takes the communicative exchange to be a process of expressing and recognizing communicative intentions. I propose that the expression of a communicative intention is an audience-directed, overt, rationality constrained, and self-referential act of self-expression. Such an account presented an overarching theme that permeated my arguments.

Chapter 2 starts with a discussion of Searle's (1969, 1979c) conventionalism and the role linguistic conventions occupy in his argument against speech act theories of fiction. I take Searle's argument to rely on a misguided claim that the illocutionary force expressed by an utterance is fixed by the meaning of an illocutionary force indicating device. I argue that the process of expressing and recognizing an illocutionary force, contrary to what Searle claims, can avail itself of a variety of sources that cannot be settled solely by conventional means. As an alternative to conventionalism, building upon Bach and Harnish's (1979) theory of speech acts, I propose a mild expressivist account of illocutionary force.

My account of fiction-making builds upon the seminal works of Currie (1990) and Walton (1990). My proposal is part of the broad class of make-believe theories of fiction. Focusing on literary fiction, a make-believe theory of fiction assumes that the sentences that compose a fictional work can be taken as props that prompt the reader to imagine the content of that work. In other words, the sentences that compose a work of fiction can be seen as a set of instructions that fix the content of the correct imagining that is elicited by a fictional work. Different from Currie's effect-oriented proposal, I define fiction-making as an expression of the author's imagination. Prescribing the reader to make-believe the content of the utterance is a primary perlocutionary intention that is

expressed by the speech act.

In Chapter 3, I develop a dynamic account of fiction-making. Following Stalnaker's (1978, 2014), I take the context to reflect shared information. I believe Stalnaker's project provides an important tool that can be explored in order to clarify and organize intuitions about the communicative process. I explored such conversational dynamics in order to explain away Predelli's (2019) uniformity argument against speech act theories of fiction. I take Predelli's uniformity argument to explore the lack of a proper account of the contents that are put forward by an act of fiction-making. I propose that such content is always a speech act. That is, in the process of writing a work of fiction, the author expresses their imagination towards a process of information exchange. The characters that compose these works are, by linguistic means, conveying information about the fictional world. Predelli's uniformity, I argue, is a consequence of this representational nature of fictional works.

Moving forward, I discuss the role pretense can play in explaining fictional discourse. I characterize pretense as comprised of an imagining and an action. To pretend is to perform an action while imagining oneself as doing something else. Pretense accounts of fiction-making claim that, in the process of writing a fictional work, the author of that work pretends to perform regular speech acts. I do not believe pretense has a place in the explanation of literary fiction. Literary fiction does not provide a situation where the correct kind of action can be performed in order for an individual to pretend to perform an actual speech act. My argument, however, does not extend to all forms of fiction. Pretense can have a place in film and theater, role-playing games, and some forms of oral storytelling.

In Chapter 4, I aim to clarify some aspects of my dynamic account, as well as my characterization of the content of fiction-making. Recently, a discussion of the dynamics of fiction has brought to the forefront a family of proposals under the guise of unofficial common ground accounts. Stokke (2023) developed the intuition that asserting and fiction-making seem to put forward information that is, in some sense, assumed to report a fact. Assertions are reports of actual facts, while fiction-makings are reports of fictional facts. Stokke proposes that the contextual region updated by an utterance that conveys a fictional fact to be the fictional record. The fictional record is composed of information the reader takes to be believed by the narrator or the storyteller.

Stokke's proposal is built upon the same intuitions as my account. Both theories, moreover, assume that fiction-making is a report-like speech act, whose content consists of attributing a speech act to a fictional character. My proposal, unlike Stokke's,

does not restrict the speech act conveyed by fiction-making to the figure of the storyteller. Moreover, Stokke's proposal assumes that the contextual effect exerted by non-declarative speech acts that convey fictional information is strictly distinct from their regular counterparts. I believe that such a move requires a better explanation. Matravers (2014) raised a convincing argument that the process of reading a work of fiction is strikingly similar to the process of reading a non-fictional work.

The dynamic picture I put forward, moreover, has distinct aims. Stokke takes that an illocutionary force can be characterized by its communicative footprint. That is, a dynamic account of the effects an utterance exerts on the context can suffice as a characterization of its illocutionary force. I take, however, that the static picture proposed is essential. Following Harris (2020), I present a scenario where there is a successful information exchange, but the information conveyed does not become contextually available. Harris calls such situations publicity averse scenarios. Written forms of literary works are, I argue, examples of publicity averse scenarios. As a consequence, a proper account of fiction-making requires a static counterpart.

Moving forward, I provide some remarks on my commitment to a ubiquitous narrator. I argue that keeping a sharp distinction between author and narrator provides a theoretical advantage. I discuss some intuitions about the way we understand fictional information and the consequences of distinguishing the storyteller from the author in different narrative styles. I conclude with a discussion about assertions in fiction. I argue that, given the rationality constraints that regulate the expression of communicative intentions, the set of utterances that can be taken as assertions in fiction is restricted to a small set of trivial information.

In Chapter 5, I investigate the place fiction-making occupies in a taxonomy of speech acts. I believe taxonomies of speech acts to be a messy subject. At odds with most taxonomic projects, I claim that a good taxonomy ought to be built upon a shared set of assumptions regarding successful expressions of illocutionary forces. The task, I believe, should be closer to Stalnaker's account of conversational dynamics than to Searle's set of necessary and sufficient conditions for a speech act to be performed. Nonetheless, I tackle the possibility of classifying fiction-making as a directive, a declarative or a constative speech act.

First, I argue that a directive reading of intentionalist accounts of fiction-making is misguided. The mistake rests either on a faulty interpretation of props as a set of rules or a misunderstanding of Grice's effect-oriented account of meaning. Moving forward, I compare my proposal with García-Carpintero's (2013) norm-based account

of fiction-making. García-Carpintero takes fiction-making to be characterized by the expression of a conditional obligation. While I take García-Carpintero's class of directives to provide a good fit for account effect-oriented theories, the proposal does not fit my expressivist picture.

Moving forward, I engage with the intuitive proposal that fiction-making is a declarative speech act. Declarative speech acts are means by which we construe our institutional reality. I argue that a naive account of intuitions cannot account for fiction, as there is a gap between the institutional and fictional reality. I discuss Abell's (2020) widening of the class of institutions to include any kind of cooperative endeavor that aims to solve a coordination problem by a conventional means. Abell's proposal, however, allows for a myriad of institutions that are related to fiction. Such institutions, Abell argues, are conventionally explored in order to generate the set of facts that compose a fictional work. I disagree with Abell's conventionalist approach. Fiction institutions, I argue, are better framed as devices that can be explored in the process of expressing and recognizing communicative intentions.

Alternatively, I investigate the possibility of taking fiction-making to be a constative. Assertions are the poster child illocutionary force for the class of constatives, and I believe assertions and fiction-making share some important characteristics. I propose a novel account of constatives that hinges on a normative account of assertions in an idealized, cooperative and successful scenario. I take that constatives can be classified in relation to the normative behavior of their correctness conditions. The proper response to an assertion is a true belief. Similarly, the proper response to an act of fiction-making is a make-believe whose content is the same as the content of the author's imagination.

To conclude, I am unsure whether fiction-making would be better characterized as a declarative or a constative. The discussion, as I said, is built on unstable grounds. The task of correctly classifying an illocutionary force benefits from a full picture of the classes that compose the taxonomy. The classification is better construed as a holistic project where each illocutionary force is assigned to the class that provides a better fit.

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