

Norms of Fiction-Making

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I provide a variation on ideas presented by Walton and Currie, elaborating the view that fictive utterances are characterized by a specific form of illocutionary force in the family of directives – a proposal or invitation to imagine. I make some points on the relation between the proposal and the current debates on intentionalist and conventionalist views, and I discuss interesting recent objections made by Stacie Friend to the related, but crucially different, Gricean view of such force advanced by Currie and others.

Under the influence of Walton's work, several writers including Currie, Lamarque and Olsen, Davies, and Stock have proposed accounts of the distinction between fiction and non-fiction, on which the former essentially involves an invited response of imagining or make-believe.¹ Forcefully contesting these views in a recent series of papers, Stacie Friend² argues for the claim that 'there is no conception of "imagining" or "make-believe" that distinguishes a response specific to fiction as opposed to non-fiction',³ recommending 'that we give up the quest for necessary and sufficient conditions for fictionality'.⁴

Friend advances an alternative account of fiction and non-fiction as *genres – supergenres* encompassing genres such as the historical novel, or literary biography. Following here another influential work by Walton,⁵ she proposes a relational, historical, context-sensitive account of such *genres*:

'A genre ... is a way of classifying representations that guides appreciation, so that knowledge of the classification plays a role in a work's correct interpretation and evaluation ... whilst membership in some genres ... is determined by necessary and sufficient conditions, the vast majority are determined by a variety of non-essential conditions, including contextual and historical conditions ... classification generates

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- 1 K. Walton, *Mimesis and Make-Believe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); G. Currie, *The Nature of Fiction* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990); P. Lamarque and S. H. Olsen, *Truth, Fiction and Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 1994); D. Davies, *Aesthetics and Literature* (London: Continuum, 2007), ch. 3; and K. Stock, 'Fictive Utterance and Imagining', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume 85* (2011), 145–62; and 'The Imperative to Imagine', in *On Imagination and Fiction* (manuscript), ch. 2.
 - 2 S. Friend, 'Imagining Fact and Fiction', in K. Stock and K. Thomson-Jones (eds), *New Waves in Aesthetics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008), 150–69; 'Fictive Utterance and Imagining', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume 85* (2011), 163–80; and 'Fiction as a Genre', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 92* (2012), 179–208.
 - 3 Friend, 'Fiction as a Genre', 182–3.
 - 4 Friend, 'Imagining Fact and Fiction', 166.
 - 5 K. Walton, 'Categories of Art', *Philosophical Review 79* (1970), 334–67.

expectations about the features of a work, and thereby determines appropriate standards of evaluation'.⁶

Friend appeals to Walton's distinction between standard, non-standard, and variable properties; in particular, she counts prescriptions to imagine as a *standard* property of fiction.⁷ In thus relying on some relatively intrinsic properties, over and above the purely relational ones, her account is an *impure* version of genealogical-institutional accounts of kinds, thereby differing from the infamous account of *art* as a category conferred without constraints by 'the Artworld'.⁸ As Davies and Stecker point out,⁹ impure versions do not (or do not immediately, at least) fall prey to compelling criticisms of the pure varieties on charges of explanatory vacuity or of missing the axiological role of the relevant classifications.¹⁰

In this article I defend a version of the *prescriptions to imagine* account of fiction from Friend's criticisms. Like Currie and the other writers, I propose to think of fictions as (results of) speech acts; unlike them, however, I take the normative characterization literally, assuming an Austinian account of such acts in contrast to the Gricean account in terms of communicative intentions that these authors rely on. Independently of the present dispute, a normative account fares better relative to the intentionalism/conventionalism debate about the interpretation of fictions. More to the present point, by separating the constitutive nature of fiction from the vagaries of context-sensitive genre classification, it allows us to grant the forceful points that Friend makes, while rejecting her main claim. On the suggested view, prescriptions to imagine are not mere Waltonian standard properties of fictions, but are constitutive of them, and thus imagining does distinguish a response specific to fiction as opposed to non-fiction. The historically changing, contextual features that Friend relies on have an important role to play, not in the determination of the fiction/non-fiction normative kinds but rather of their applications to particular cases – i.e. in establishing when a work is to be evaluated as one or the other of those kinds, if this is a determinate matter at all.

Intentionalist Accounts

Unlike Walton, who was sceptical of such goals and merely intended to characterize a theoretically useful notion of *representation*, Friend's opponents aim for conformity with, as far as it is sensible to do so, ordinary intuitions about the fiction/non-fiction divide.¹¹ Also unlike Walton, who countenances non-intentionally produced representations, they rely on a view of fictions as results of speech acts. Currie provided an account of fictions as produced by a speech act, *fiction-making*, and gave a Gricean, psychological analysis of it, as

6 Friend, 'Fiction as a Genre', 181.

7 *Ibid.*, 188.

8 *Ibid.*, 193.

9 S. Davies, 'Definitions of Art', in B. Gaut and D. M. Lopes (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2001), 169–79, and R. Stecker, 'Definition of Art', in J. Levinson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), 136–54.

10 A. Neill and A. Ridley, 'Relational Theories of Art: The History of an Error', *BJA* 52 (2012), 141–51.

11 Friend, 'Imagining Fact and Fiction', 152–4.

constituted by the intention to produce specific imaginings as a result of its recognition.¹² For the reader to better appreciate the connection between Currie's account and the Gricean accounts of speech acts discussed in the next section, I allow myself to paraphrase his proposal so as to highlight its closeness to Bach and Harnish's Gricean account of assertion presented there, hoping that this is not too unfaithful to Currie's actual account:¹³

(FM_D) To fiction-make *p* is to utter *S* thereby R-intending audiences of a given kind to take the utterance as a reason to think that the speaker intends them to make-believe *p*.

Here, 'R-intending' abbreviates the proper elaboration of the Gricean appeal to *reflective* communicative intentions – intentions fulfilled in their own recognition. The other writers against whom Friend argues follow Currie here. Now, on the basis of four much-discussed thought experiments, Currie argued that fictive intent is not sufficient for fictionality;¹⁴ the content must also be at most 'non-accidentally' true, a condition which he cashed out in terms of the absence of counterfactual dependence of the utterance on the represented facts.¹⁵ Lamarque and Olsen posit a related requirement that the audience adopt the 'fictive stance' towards them, by inferring neither that the utterer believes them nor that they obtain.¹⁶ Currie, and Lamarque and Olsen thus adopt what Friend describes as the *mere-make-believe* approach to fictionality:

The guiding intuition is that belief, *rather than* imagining, is appropriate for non-accidentally true content ... the kind of imagining prescribed by fiction must be imagining *without belief*. Call this attitude *mere-make-believe*.¹⁷

Fiction (as opposed to non-fiction) invites mere-make-believe, whereas non-fiction (as opposed to fiction) invites belief. This proposal may seem plausible given that mere-make-believe is appropriate to those features of a work that are *made up* (and known to be so), and it is common to associate fiction with such features.¹⁸

Following such a 'mere-make-believe' approach, Currie, and Lamarque and Olsen thus offer first and foremost a characterization of fictive *utterances* – articulations of full sentences, or parts thereof, by means of which a speech act can be performed. As Currie acknowledges,

12 Currie, *The Nature of Fiction*.

13 His actual proposal (*Ibid.*, 33) is this: *U*'s utterance of *S* is fictive if 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 (those who have χ) to make-believe that *p*, for some proposition *p*; (4) make-believe that *p*; (5) take (2) as their reason for (3); and (6) take (3) as their reason for (4).

14 *Ibid.*, 42–5. In two of these thought experiments, an author deliberately reproduces truths but presents them as imagined. In two others, an author unwittingly produces a story that reflects the facts – in one because he doesn't know that his source is reliable, and in another because he has repressed memories of the events he describes – yet intends it to be imagined.

15 *Ibid.*, 47.

16 Lamarque and Olsen, *Truth, Fiction and Literature*, 44.

17 Friend, 'Fictive Utterance and Imagining', 165.

18 Friend, 'Imagining Fact and Fiction', 158–9.

this has the result that most fictional works are ‘a patchwork of fiction-making and assertion’.¹⁹ Thus, realist fictions include truths about the settings in which the fictional events occur, intended as such. Recently I read a first version of a novel by a foreign friend, partly set in Barcelona during the 1992 Olympic Games. A character went from the city centre to the Tibidabo mountain on a train belonging to the national railway network, Renfe. I pointed out to him that that was wrong: the Catalan railway network runs that line. He concurred, and changed the passage accordingly. Otherwise, readers who had encountered the passage would have correctly assumed that they were intended to believe – not just to imagine – that there was a Renfe line in Barcelona in 1992 connecting Plaza Cataluña and Tibidabo. Even the most fantastic fictions invite readers to assume the truth of propositions constitutive of the concepts they deploy. The reverse is also the case, as Friend shows. Non-fictions standardly traffic in mere-make-believe. Historians, journalists and philosophers ask us to imagine possible scenarios, or in other acknowledged ways make up parts of the contents they put forward. On the accounts we are considering, such creations end up as patchworks of fact and fiction. They are left with no easy way of concurring with pretheoretic intuitions in determining their global classification in a principled way.

Now, Currie dismisses the question about the conditions on which works (as opposed to the utterances of which they consist) are fictional. However, as Friend points out, he himself had noticed that what matters to us, affects our appraisals, and guides our intuitions is the classification of works: ‘our concern with classification is first and foremost a concern with works’, for it is the classification of works that guides the appraisal we make of them.²⁰ Different features will be found objectionable, depending on whether we take a given work to be fiction or non-fiction. A speculative, free indirect-discourse reconstruction of the train of thought of a character would be improper in a biography, but not in a historical novel; Chekhovian loaded guns which are subsequently never fired would have the opposite evaluative consequences. But while we are not in doubt about how to classify the parts of works of problematic classification, it is unclear that theorists following Currie’s approach can classify full works in accordance with pretheoretic intuitions, as Friend shows with compelling examples.²¹

Stock and Davies follow a *prima facie* more promising holistic approach, taking as their basic notions more extended items than the utterances we find in fictions – respectively, *fictions* and *narratives*. Davies contends that the author of a fictional narrative does not obey a ‘fidelity constraint’ – a requirement to include in the narrative only events believed to have occurred, and to present them as occurring in the order they are believed to have occurred.²² However, Vargas Llosa was guided by such a constraint in most of his *The Dream of the Celt* – his reconstruction of the life of Roger Casement – though recent reviews in *The Guardian*, *New York Times*, and *New York Review of Books*, while perfectly aware of this, do not hesitate to count it a novel and appraise it as such.²³

19 Currie, *The Nature of Fiction*, 48–9.

20 Friend, ‘Imagining Fact and Fiction’, 164.

21 Friend, ‘Fictive Utterance and Imagining’, 166–7; Friend, ‘Fiction as a Genre’, 186–7.

22 Davies, *Aesthetics and Literature*, 46.

23 Davies might reject the alleged counterexample, taking these cases (including ‘new journalism’ works) or the Javier Marías’ *Dark Back of Time* example below as intuitively of unclear classification; cf. D. Davies, ‘Fictionality, Fictive

Stock appeals instead to a characterization of the propositional imagination prescribed by a fiction, on which imagining a content requires either disbelieving it or at least being prepared to ‘connect’ it with other disbelieved contents – by which she means to ‘attempt to conjoin, or otherwise treat as premises in the same argument, to think as true with respect to the same world’.²⁴ But we embark on imaginative projects regarding contents which we have no reason to disbelieve: reading biographies or histories in the hope of getting a better imaginative understanding of a period or character, contemplating in imaginative detail a course of action we plan to pursue, or recreating in our imagination the landscapes we walked across on an alluring hike as a way of conjuring up sleep.

Friend’s diagnosis of what goes wrong in these attempts to account for the distinction between fictional and non-fictional *works* is that, for their proponents, ‘the guiding intuition is that belief, *rather than* imagining, is appropriate for non-accidentally true content ... the kind of imagining prescribed by fiction must be imagining *without belief*’.²⁵ I will argue that she misidentifies the nature of the problem. If we think of speech acts in normative-evaluative terms, as opposed to psychological-descriptive ones, we can explain the difference between fiction and non-fiction without running into trouble, while still upholding the intuition that Friend dismisses: belief will still be (in a way to be explicated) the attitude *appropriate* to non-fiction, mere imagination the attitude *appropriate* to fiction. In the next two sections, I will present the alternative normative account of speech acts in general, and directives in particular, that I will rely on; in the two final sections, I’ll present the normative account of fiction-making, and I’ll come back to discuss how it fares vis-à-vis these issues.

Norms and Speech Acts

As a result of Strawson’s forceful criticism of Austin’s social account of speech acts,²⁶ and in spite of the work of proponents of such accounts like Searle and Alston,²⁷ until recently the Gricean psychological account advocated by Strawson has been the default assumption in contemporary philosophy. This situation has been changing in the past few years, due to the impact of Williamson’s account of assertion.²⁸ Let us compare a paradigm Gricean

Utterance, and the Assertive Author’, in G. Currie, P. Kot’átko and M. Pokorný (eds), *Mimesis: Metaphysics, Cognition, Pragmatics* (London: College Publications), 61–85. I do not think they are, but, in any case, for reasons indicated below (cf. footnote 79), I do not think he offers a good account of the elements of fictional narratives regarding which the fiction-maker obeys (in many cases manifestly so) the fidelity constraint, as in the example of the Barcelona railway network.

24 Stock, ‘Fictive Utterance and Imagining’, 141.

25 Friend, ‘Fictive Utterance and Imagining’, 165.

26 See P. Strawson, ‘Intention and Convention in Speech Acts’, *Philosophical Review* 73 (1964), 439–60; J. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 2nd edn (Oxford: OUP, 1989 [1962]).

27 See J. Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge: CUP, 1969), and W. P. Alston, *Illocutionary Acts and Sentence Meaning* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

28 T. Williamson, ‘Knowing and Asserting’, *Philosophical Review* 105 (1996), 489–523; included, with some revisions, in his *Knowledge and Its Limits* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), ch. 11, references to this version.

account of such a speech act – the influential one to be found in Bach and Harnish²⁹ – with Williamson’s account. As indicated above, ‘R-intending’ here is to be explicated in terms of Gricean *communicative intentions*:

(GA) To assert *p* is to utter a sentence that means *p* thereby R-intending the hearer to take the utterance as a reason to think that the speaker believes *p*.

Bach and Harnish’s (GA) is a *descriptive* account, not a *normative* one: unlike normative accounts, such as those presented below, it does not, by itself, mention norms, but only certain psychological states of speakers and their intended audiences. As Hindriks notes, although it is indeed a feature of our assertoric practices that we criticize performances that violate rules such as those mentioned in normative accounts, for instance those that are *false*, these facts about our practices of appraising assertions are, by themselves, insufficient to justify normative accounts.³⁰ For we also evaluate assertions – say, as witty, polite or well-phrased – relative to (invoking Rawls’ well-known distinction) merely *regulative* norms, norms that regulate, relative to certain purposes, acts in themselves not *constituted* by such rules.³¹ All norms we apply to assertion could be merely regulative of a constitutively non-normative practice defined by (GA). The regulative norms in question could be derived from an ultimately *moral* sincerity rule such as (SR):

(SR) In situations of normal trust, one ought to be sincere.

Thus, for instance, the appraisal of assertions relative to a truth rule could be explained as merely regulative, on the assumption that (GA) characterizes their nature, as derived from (SR) given the further assumption that the speaker’s belief that his assertion is supposed to give the audience reasons to ascribe to him is itself regulated by a truth rule.

In contrast with descriptive accounts such as (GA), Williamson claims that the following norm or rule (the *knowledge rule*) is constitutive of assertion, and individuates it:

(KR) One must ((assert *p*) only if one knows *p*).

In the course of the debate that this proposal has generated, other writers have accepted the view that assertion is defined by constitutive rules, but have proposed alternative norms; thus, Weiner proposes a *truth* rule, (TR),³² and Lackey a *reasonableness* rule, (RBR):³³

(TR) One must ((assert *p*) only if *p*).

(RBR) One must ((assert *p*) only if it is reasonable for one to believe *p*).

We do not need to examine here the reasons for and against these accounts, but it will be useful later to bear these three proposals in mind. Also for later use, we should note that the obligations these rules impose are not *all things considered*, but *prima facie*; in any particular case, they can be overruled by stronger obligations imposed by other norms.

29 K. Bach and R. M. Harnish, *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979).

30 F. Hindriks, ‘The Status of the Knowledge Account of Assertion’, *Linguistics and Philosophy* 30 (2007), 393–406.

31 J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: OUP, 1972).

32 M. Weiner, ‘Must We Know What We Say?’, *Philosophical Review* 114 (2005), 227–51.

33 J. Lackey, ‘Norms of Assertion’, *Noûs* 41 (2007), 594–626.

We can think of these norms as having a *sui generis* source, specific to speech acts.³⁴ Given this, we can tighten them up. Perhaps the reason why Williamson gives only a necessary condition for correctness, and not a sufficient one, lies in the fact that he thought that knowing a proposition does not suffice for making an assertion of it correct. And this is true, of course, *all things considered*; however, as far as I can tell, no unacceptable consequences follow from assuming that it is *prima facie* permissible to assert anything that one knows – even if, *all things considered*, there may well be many reasons for such incorrectness. Thus, we can simplify the analysis by tightening up the formulation of the rules; in the case of (KR), the proposal would be this:

(KR′) For one to assert *p* is correct if and only if one knows *p*.

A second feature of normative accounts to keep in mind is that both (KR) and (KR′) – as much as the alternative proposals (TR) and (RBR) – characterize what is *essential* or *constitutive* of *assertion* (and not, as it may seem at first glance, of *correct assertion*). The proposal is that assertion is an act essentially constituted by its being subject to the relevant norm. On Williamson's view, assertion is the unique representational act such that, in performing it, one is committed to knowing the represented proposition, i.e. the propositional act such that, if one performs it without knowing the intended proposition, one is thereby infringing an obligation. There might be additional features or rules contributing to a full characterization of assertion, as in Searle's well-known account or in Alston's elaboration, i.e. 'sincerity' or 'preparatory' conditions.³⁵ (KR)/(KR′) characterize what an act must 'count as' for it to be an assertion, i.e. what Searle describes as its 'essential rule'.

This leaves the question of what it is that counts as being subject to (KR)/(KR′) completely unspecified, but this is, I think, as it should be. If the declarative mood of the whole sentence is a default conventional indicator of assertion, then uttering a sentence in that mood in the proper default context is such an act. But there might well be other, indefinitely variegated non-conventional ways of making assertions, similarly counting as being subject to (KR)/(KR′) – say, by means of conversationally implicating them, perhaps by asking a rhetorical question: asserting that nobody wants to read a book by uttering 'Who the heck wants to read this book?'

The crucial difference between prescriptive accounts along the lines of those just outlined and descriptive accounts such as (GA) lies in the question whether all norms we invoke to appraise assertions are merely regulative (as on the latter view), or some of them (the truth rule, the knowledge rule, the reasonableness rule) are instead essential or constitutive. There are in my view compelling objections to (GA), which show that prescriptive accounts are worth taking seriously. Thus, the clerk in the information booth uttering 'The flight will depart on time', or the victim saying to his torturer 'I did not do it', or any of us saying to our neighbour in the elevator 'Nice weather, isn't it?', may well lack the Gricean intentions that (GA) requires for them to make these assertions.³⁶ The clerk may not care about what her audience thinks she believes; the victim of torture may

34 A more thorough analysis might reveal that these norms ultimately have a more general source, in ethics, say, or (as in fact I think) in rationality.

35 See Searle, *Speech Acts*; Alston, *Illocutionary Acts and Sentence Meaning*.

36 Alston, *Illocutionary Acts and Sentence Meaning*, ch. 2.

know it is useless to expect her audience to derive any reason to believe she is innocent from her utterance; when we make small talk in the elevator, we know our beliefs about the weather are independently manifest to our audience. Nevertheless, the speakers in all these cases are definitely asserting. Normative accounts nicely capture this: no matter their intentions, the speakers are still committed to knowing what they say (or having justification for it, or being truthful, or, as in the account I myself favour, putting their audiences in a position to know).³⁷ Of course, this falls well short of a full argument for a normative account of assertion, which anyway is beyond the scope of this essay, but it provides some motivation to explore such accounts. Parallel considerations will be developed below concerning fiction-making.

Now, if an assertion is a speech act whose nature is normative, then this is to be expected of all speech acts: a full argument for a normative account of assertion should show how it could be extended to other speech acts, such as questions or directives (commands, requests, suggestions, etc.). I agree with Currie, Lamarque and Olsen, Davies, and Stock that fictions are best understood as results or products of speech acts (the way promises, contracts, or marriages are such results or products);³⁸ but I think a normative account does better than the Gricean view they take for granted. Normative talk is in fact typically used in presenting the speech-act view, even though, when it comes to offering a theoretical characterization, writers withdraw to descriptive talk of intentions. Stock, for instance, presents one of her main claims as the contention that ‘necessarily, a fictive utterance *prescribes* imaginings’.³⁹ As we have seen, the view is standardly presented, after Walton (who characterized representations as artefacts), with the function of *prescribing* imaginings.⁴⁰

There is, of course, no absolute obligation, not even *prima facie*, to imagine whatever is proposed in a fiction, or to enjoy it in the first place; at most, the obligation impinges on those whose preferences and dispositions make it a pertinent choice to properly engage with what it has to offer. Fictions should be seen, I submit, as *weak directives* such as *proposals* or *invitations*. This is the view that I will now articulate. I first briefly discuss recent views about directives in general in the following section; then I present my proposal on fiction-making, and finally I provide some support for it in the final section by arguing that it does better than the Gricean proposals when it comes to Friend’s objections, and by giving some indications of why it is preferable in general.

Directives as Normative Speech Acts

Normative theorists like Alston characterize the constitutive norm for strong directives such as orders or commands as an obligation on the addressee to carry them out,

37 M. García-Carpintero, ‘Assertion and the Semantics of Force-Markers’, in C. Bianchi (ed.), *The Semantics/Pragmatics Distinction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 133–66.

38 Cf. F. Moltmann, *Abstract Objects and the Semantics of Natural Language* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 138–9.

39 Stock, ‘Fictive Utterance and Imagining’, 146, my italics.

40 The present proposal combines the normative ideas explicit in Walton’s account (*Mimesis and Make-Believe*, 41), which he traces back to teleology, with Currie’s speech act view.

emanating from a relevant authority on the side of the speaker.⁴¹ As in the case of assertion, a full account will include further norms, in particular in this case the ‘preparatory’ norm that the speaker has the required authority. In the format of (KR’), the constitutive condition for ordering that Alston advances could be put like this:

(D) For one to order *A* to *p* is correct if and only if one lays down on *A* as a result an obligation to *p*.

As in the case of the assertion norms, the obligations in question are *sui generis* and *prima facie*. As in that case too, the combinations that the rules forbid (there, to assert what is not the case, or not known, etc.) should be possible: it should be possible to command *A* to *p* without *A*’s acquiring thereby the relevant *sui generis* *prima facie* obligation to *p*. This requirement is met: even in the army there are specified situations under which certain orders (to perform unconstitutional acts, or violate human rights, etc.), although having come into existence as emanating from the requisite authority, are nonetheless incorrect in that the addressees do not thereby incur the intended *prima facie* obligation.^{42,43}

Imperative sentences have uses that go beyond the core cases of strong directives. (The same, of course, applies to declarative sentences.) Uttering ‘Take bus 44’ in reply to ‘How do I get from here to the airport?’ is not a command, but a suggestion, a piece of advice,

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- 41 See Alston, *Illocutionary Acts and Sentence Meaning*, 97–103. M. Kissine (*From Utterances to Speech Acts* (Cambridge: CUP, 2013), ch. 4) provides an account of directives as supplying the hearer with a (mutually manifest) reason to act. I take this to be compatible with my proposal, on the usual assumption that obligations are (‘objective’) normative reasons to act.
- 42 Suppose that I have hypertension and therefore shouldn’t eat salt. I say to Peter ‘Please pass the salt’. But he knows of my hypertension, and thus has no *all-things-considered* obligation to pass me the salt. Qua commander, however, my action was not blameworthy at all; this is so because I have nonetheless imposed a *prima facie* obligation on Peter, which he has to balance with his moral obligations towards me in order to make an *all-things-considered* decision. (In the example, I do not execute a command, but a request; as I explain below, the obligation is in this case conditional upon the good will of the addressee towards the kind of desire my order expresses.) One might think that all alleged cases of incorrect orders are like this: the *sui generis* obligation is also *prima facie* there, but overruled by stronger obligations. A full defence of the proposal should show that this is not the case, by articulating in detail the nature of the relevant *sui generis* obligations, taking into consideration the role that directives play. Thanks to Bryan Pickel for discussion.
- 43 In the past decade, several authors have suggested semantic accounts of *directives* (what utterances of imperative sentences signify by default) on which these are semantically distinctive objects, distinct from assertions (what declarative sentences signify by default), just as questions (what interrogative sentences signify by default) are. C. Han, ‘Imperatives’, in C. Maienborn, K. von Heusinger, and P. Portner (eds), *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2011), 1785–1804; P. Portner, ‘Imperatives’, in M. Aloni and P. Dekker (eds), *The Cambridge Handbook of Semantics* (Cambridge: CUP, forthcoming); and M. Jary and M. Kissine, *Imperatives* (Cambridge: CUP, forthcoming) include good overviews. In the perhaps most influential account of assertion among contemporary semanticists, Stalnaker suggests that these are proposals whose contents (when successful) are added to a ‘common ground’, a collection of mutually accepted propositions (R. Stalnaker, *Context and Content* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), 78–95). Researchers such as Han, Portner, and Jary and Kissine suggest that strong directives also have a content to be added (when they are successful) to a collection of propositions – not those constituting the common ground, but a ‘ToDo list’ or ‘plan set’ representing something like the active intentions of the addressee. This is not, of course, a full-fledged endorsement of (D), but I take it to be consistent with it and – I submit – would be nicely explained by it.

or proposal; similarly for an utterance of ‘Come round to my house to watch the game!’, after the addressee has manifested interest in watching the game tonight and a lack of any plans for seeing it. ‘Help me!’ is not a command, but a request. ‘Come in!’ uttered after someone knocks on my door issues an authorization. ‘Get well soon!’ said to someone who is ill or ‘Please don’t rain!’ looking at the sky are expressions of wishes, rather than orders.⁴⁴ Fiction-making cannot be assimilated to commands, but to weak directives such as proposals or suggestions; we need to see how (D) should be extended to such a case.

Alston contends that even weak directives, when made on the proper authority by the speaker towards the audience, do impose on them weak obligations of some sort: disjunctive obligations to follow them or at least provide acceptable reasons not to.⁴⁵ On the alternative view I prefer, the obligations in question are conditional on some contextually available presumptions about the preferences of the addressee. In the exchange above on how to get to the airport, the speaker lays down an obligation on the addressee, conditional on the presumption that the latter wishes to get to the airport; in the exchange on watching the game, one conditional on the addressee’s desire to watch the game; requests can be taken as conditional on the addressee’s good will towards one’s needs. If these presuppositions fail, the (unconditional) obligations conditional on them do not exist; the conditional obligation itself, however, is still there, imposed by the speech act on the present account. So we can reformulate the norm for directives in a more encompassing way thus:⁴⁶

(D’) For one to enjoin *A* to *p* is correct if and only if one lays down as a result on *A* (given one’s authority, or conditionally on *A*’s presumed good will towards one’s wishes, or on *A*’s presumed wishes, etc.) an obligation to *p*.

As above, this combination must be possible: an order/request/proposal has been made, but it is incorrect; i.e. while the presumed conditions obtain, the audience has not acquired the prima facie obligation. Again as above, the condition appears to be satisfied. Thus, if the addressee in a previous example does want to get to the airport, but the speaker has indicated the wrong bus, the proposal is wrong, the speaker can be blamed for having made it, and the addressee is not in fact under the obligation: this was not after all ‘the thing to do’ for her. An informed spectator would feel entitled to tell the addressee: ‘You *should not* take that bus, you know; it does not go to the airport.’ Alternatively but perhaps equivalently, given the conceptual connections between deontic and axiological notions, norms for weak directives could be phrased in evaluative vocabulary.⁴⁷ In a

44 Semanticists adopt different views in light of this. Han follows what I take to be the best course, focusing on commands as core cases and leaving the other cases to be explained pragmatically as indirect speech acts; Portner, and Jary and Kissine aim instead to provide an account general enough to encompass the different uses. See the overviews mentioned in the previous footnote, and references therein.

45 Alston, *Illocutionary Acts and Sentence Meaning*, 100.

46 I use ‘enjoin’ for a generic directive covering commands and also the acts in the family to which I want to assimilate fiction-making. The proposal is not intended to cover cases such as imperatives that issue permissions or express wishes. Thanks to Dan López de Sa here.

47 Cf. R. Wedgwood, ‘The “Good” and the “Right” Revisited’, *Philosophical Issues* 23 (2009), 499–519, for a discussion of those connections.

nutshell, a correct proposal presents an action as *worth carrying out* by the addressee, given her presumed desires. Hence, it can be criticized relative to the values in its constitutive nature if, assuming the addressee has those desires, carrying it out will not lead to their satisfaction – as in the example above.

In the previous section, I presented three different proposals on the norm defining assertion, made by philosophers who share a normative view of this speech act. They assume that assertion is what is done by default (i.e. unless conditions in an open-ended list apply, such as those creating irony, fiction, etc.) by uttering declarative sentences: as Williamson puts it, ‘in natural language, the default use of declarative sentences is to make assertions.’⁴⁸ This gives us an independent, *causal-historical-intentional* specification of the phenomenon that philosophers advancing those norms are trying to define: it is the act, whatever its proper characterization is, which is in fact associated with the indicative mood in natural languages as used on some occasions (the default ones), which speakers intend to make by such means on such occasions. What is in dispute is which of the three norms (if any) an assertor is thereby subject to when she utters a declarative sentence in a default case. Of course, she may not be subject to *any* of them: assertion might turn out not to be constitutively normative at all, as defenders of (GA) contend; or it might be characterized by a different norm altogether; or perhaps it only admits of a messy, disjunctive characterization appealing in part to some of those norms.⁴⁹

The three rules we have considered, (KR), (TR), and (RBR) do specify some abstract acts, of which they are constitutive. These abstract acts are normative types, constitutively specifying obligations or permissions. This is only a normativity of sorts, because assertors are in actuality at most subject to one of the obligations imposed by the three purported rules.⁵⁰ The others are perhaps simply ‘not in place’ in the actual world, actually committing nobody, in the way the obligation of driving on the right is not in force in Britain.

What is it that makes it the case that specific constitutive rules are in force in a population? This is a big question that cannot be properly addressed here. Lewis’s plausible answer to a related question is that a convention of using certain expressive resources to signal conformity to them exists in that population.⁵¹ The intentions of the speaker also play an important role in particular cases, among other things to determine that she is speaking literally and her utterance should be interpreted in its default mode, thereby being subject to specific norms. When it comes to indirect assertions, such as those made by means of rhetorical questions, the fact that the speaker’s act is to conform to the norm of assertion is fully determined by her intentions. I will appeal in the final section to this

48 Williamson, ‘Knowing and Asserting’, 258.

49 Levin is sceptical about mono-normative accounts; she argues that assertors are subject to different norms in different (equally ‘default’) contexts (J. Levin, ‘Assertion, Practical Reason, and Pragmatic Theories of Knowledge’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 76 (2008), 359–84).

50 This is oversimplified. If a ‘pluralist’ view of the kind mentioned in the previous footnote is right, the three norms we have considered would be definitional of our assertoric practice, being in force under different conditions.

51 D. Lewis, ‘Languages and Language’, in K. Gunderson (ed.), *Language, Mind and Knowledge* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), 3–35.

distinction between abstract norms and norms actually in force to deal with some of Friend's points, but I will present first a normative characterization of fiction-making as a directive speech act.

Fiction-Making as a Normative Speech Act

An initial problem Currie already noticed is that in the typical case of fiction-making the make-up of the audience (what authors address as 'my readers') is relatively indefinite.⁵² Hence their presumed preferences are more difficult to specify than in the previous examples. Nonetheless, I take it that we have a sufficiently clear idea of the mindsets that are addressed by fictions. Thus, I cannot criticize the Harry Potter novels for depicting characters whose emotional lives do not engage me, because they do not address the general desires, preferences, and dispositions that make engaging with fictions an appealing option to me, other things being equal. Fictions are proposals addressed to those with a general mindset of interests, abilities, and dispositions, and fictions of specific kinds (thrillers, romances, adventure, children books, etc.) are proposals addressed to those with a correspondingly specific mindset.⁵³ Referring in these general terms to the required presuppositions, we can put the constitutive norm for fiction-making in the following way:

(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.

As above, I take it that this combination is possible: an act of fiction-making has been made, but it is incorrect, i.e. while the addressees meet the required condition of having the mindset needed to make them potential appreciators, they should not in fact pursue the imaginative project that the fiction presents – the reason being that the desires in that mindset are not going to be adequately satisfied by it: the fiction is too boring, dull, or uninteresting in whatever other ways.⁵⁴ All good readers are familiar with the 'reader's duty', the feeling of being compelled to go on reading a 500-page novel which by page 50 has lost its initial attraction; apparently this is a common experience for a very large proportion of readers of *Under the Volcano*, both those who succeed in finishing it and those who do not. On the present view, the experience combines the respect for the demands that the fiction puts on us, good readers, with the suspicion that our trust in this particular case was misplaced, so that, in fact we are not bound by the relevant obligations.

52 Currie, *The Nature of Fiction*, 33.

53 Cf. Walton, *Mimesis and Make-Believe*, 40, for an alternative, even less committed way to put the proposal.

54 In a very minimal sense, to imagine a proposition is just to entertain it. In that sense, perhaps all representational acts require for their understanding imagining their content. The proposal is thus under risk of an explosive overgeneration. In reply, I want first to point out as before that the 'must' in (FM_N) refers to a *sui generis* obligation, specific to the type of speech act in question; it should not be understood as expressing, say, metaphysical necessity. Secondly, I assume that the imagination involved in our engagement with fictions is a richer attitude than the mere entertaining of propositions, which perhaps can be cashed out in terms of the functional roles of both attitudes, its relations or lack thereof to experiences, emotions, etc. Thanks to Josep Macià, Genoveva Martí, and Richard Woodward for discussion.

Alternatively, and as suggested before for proposals in general, we can appeal to axiological notions:

(FM_N′) For one to fiction-make p is correct if and only if p is worth imagining for one's audience, on the assumption that they have the relevant desires and dispositions.

On this proposal, fiction-making is a representational act constitutively such that, in putting forward the represented content p , one exposes oneself to criticism if there is no relevant value that the contextually assumed audience can obtain from imaginatively attending to p . If a fiction offers a content worth imagining, then to the extent that I am into that sort of thing and other matters do not interfere, imagining it might well be *the thing for me to do*. In the prescriptive terms that Alston prefers, in which (FM) is stated, in putting forward a fiction one presents oneself as having an authority to prescribe to that audience the imagining of p , bestowed on the presumption that doing so will be worth the audience's while. This position should be refined in several ways, but I hope this will do for present purposes. The very generality we need to rely on might make the proposal sound trivial, but I trust that it is not. Neither (D) nor any of the previous proposals for norms for assertion are trivial, in spite of being general. For it is substantive (and perhaps wrong) to claim that those are normative kinds, constituted by some of the values we do invoke in appraising them.

With this proposal on what fiction-making is in place, I am in a position to provide an account of what a fiction is: a fiction is a proposition or collection of propositions – typically a long one, if we think of them as structured; but, famously, Monterroso's 'The Dinosaur' just consists of 'when s/he awoke, the dinosaur was still there' – which has been put forward under the norm (FM_N)/(FM_N′). It might be a matter of some controversy whether 'The Dinosaur' meets this norm. A fictional work consists of a series of utterances made primarily with the goal of presenting a fiction, including propositions to be inferred from them by mechanisms explored by Lewis and Walton among others.⁵⁵

Fictions are on this view truly normative, in the sense discussed at the end of the previous section; they are not just abstract entities, but rather norms that are in place, and hence matter to rational beings, in virtue of the facts gestured at above: mostly, relevant conventions and the intentions of the fictioneers. That the norm is actually in place is secured by conventions or practices, establishing in a general way the conditions under which someone counts as being subject to it: the use of expressions such as 'once upon a time', free indirect discourse, publishing the work in the fiction collection of a publishing company, or, more indirectly, relying on the weirdness of the content, and so on and so forth. As Friend points out, protestations that a content is presented as nothing but the truth (as in the Preface to the original edition of *Robinson Crusoe*), given certain practices of publication and reception, can in fact be another indication that the content is put forth as fiction.⁵⁶ The intentions of the fiction-makers are also highly relevant in particular cases.

55 For critical discussion, see D. Lewis, 'Truth in Fiction', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1978), 37–46; Walton, *Mimesis and Make-Believe*; and M. García-Carpintero, 'Fiction-Making as a Gricean Illocutionary Type', *JAAC* 65 (2007), 203–16.

56 Friend, 'Fictive Utterance and Imagining', 177.

Not just the intention of producing a work in a given genre, as Friend has it, but that of subjecting the product of what one does to a norm.⁵⁷ As I will argue, what Friend takes to be criteria establishing that something is a fictional work – i.e. that it belongs in the genre she takes fictions to be – are on the present view indicators that someone subjects what she does to the norm constitutive of fictions.⁵⁸

Fictions and Fictional Works

I will conclude by providing some reasons in favour of the normative account of fiction-making. The fact that we evaluate fictions in accordance with $(FM_N)/(FM'_N)$ provides an initial consideration in its favour, as the corresponding point did for the case of assertions and directives; as in that case, however, it could be that the norms in question are merely regulative and not constitutive. The debate on the interpretation of works of art confronting *actual intentionalists* of different stripes, on the one hand, with *hypothetical intentionalists* and *conventionalists* or *value-maximizers*, on the other, provides a consideration in favour of a normative account of fiction-making along the lines of $(FM_N)/(FM'_N)$,⁵⁹ akin to the reasons I mentioned above in favour of normative accounts of assertion vs Gricean ones.

As some participants in the debate have pointed out, there are different interpretive projects, with different goals, and any proposal on the table might correctly characterize some of them; as Wolterstorff puts it, ‘it is a mistake to ask what is *the* goal and *the* nature of interpretation; it all depends on the sort of interpretation one has in mind’.⁶⁰ However, as he contends immediately afterwards, ‘among all the different activities that have fair claim to being called interpretation, there is one that all of us practice most of the time and which is basic to almost all other kinds of interpretation’. If fiction has a nature that distinguishes it from non-fiction, it is to be expected that the basic form of interpretation is the one answerable to that nature of the interpretive object. A correct account of the nature of fictions should therefore illuminate us regarding the position we should take in the debate. The reverse is also the case: data about what counts as a proper interpretation of the basic kind sheds light on what the nature of the interpreted object is.

Now, most contemporary participants reject the radical versions of the contending views: the ‘extreme intentionalism’ on which works mean what was intended by their author, even when the intention was not well executed and cannot be discerned in any way in the work by informed appreciators; and the ‘textualism’ that shuns any appeal to the intentions of its actual or hypothetical creator. Moderate actual intentionalists think that the actual intentions of the creators of a fiction determine its correct interpretation,

57 Friend, ‘Imagining Fact and Fiction’, 165.

58 *Ibid.*, 165–6; Friend, ‘Fictive Utterance and Imagining’, 176–7; ‘Fiction as a Genre’, 193–5.

59 For a good discussion and presentation of the distinctions, and further references, see S. Davies, ‘Authors’ Intentions, Literary Interpretation, and Literary Value’, *BJA* 46 (2006), 223–47.

60 N. Wolterstorff, ‘Resurrecting the Author’, in P. French and H. Wettstein (eds), *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 27 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 4–24, 5. Cf. also R. Stecker, ‘Moderate Actual Intentionalism Defended’, *JAC* 64 (2006), 429–38, at 436.

but only if successfully realized in the fiction, i.e. if they can be discerned from the fiction by an informed and attentive audience, or at least are compatible with it.⁶¹ Hypothetical intentionalists and conventionalists (according to Davies, they in fact coincide⁶²) contend that meaning is determined only by what an informed audience would surmise a hypothetical author could have intended, or in ways that maximize its value.

I agree with actual intentionalists on the crucial role that discerning the intentions with which a work of art is in fact produced has in our appreciation of it, which Carroll neatly illustrates with relevant examples.⁶³ And I agree with their criticism of hypothetical intentionalism and conventionalism along the lines that, even if it is a legitimate interpretive project to *treat* a fiction (or a non-fictional piece, such as the Bible or myths) as if it had an interpretation manifestly unintended by its author that would make it interesting, this cannot be correct for the fundamental interpretive project we are discussing. But I do not think these points support the Gricean account of the nature of fictions; below I will explain how the normative account ascribes a role to authors' intentions, allowing for the points just granted.

The Gricean view on meaning determination for fictional works provides moderate actual intentionalists with a good reply to one of the main charges made against intentionalism – the objection that an author might intend 'secret meanings' with his fiction, without those meanings being intuitively part of its content, and hence of the nature of the interpretive object. The reply is that the intentions relevant to determine what the fiction is must be *communicative intentions*, hence intentions that it is reasonable to expect to be discerned in the work.⁶⁴ However, there is a more serious objection. As many critics of intentionalism have pointed out, *p* could be part of the fictive content of a fiction, even if its author lacks the specific intentions assigned by the Gricean account.⁶⁵ Thus, for instance, in my view Resnais' film *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961) tacitly has a content of the kind explicit in his later film *Providence* (1977): it presents us with different sets of possibilities (some of them inconsistent with each other) that one of the characters (*X* in *Marienbad*, a professional novelist in *Providence*) is imagining, perhaps for a work of fiction under construction. This interpretation is somehow consistent with some of the cryptic declarations of its authors, the writer Alain Robbe-Grillet who wrote the screenplay and Resnais himself, but for all we know it might be that they did not intend their audience to imagine precisely this on the basis of the recognition of that very intention; even so,

61 Stecker, 'Moderate Actual Intentionalism Defended', 429; N. Carroll, 'Art Interpretation', *BJA* 51 (2011), 117–35, at 119.

62 Davies, 'Authors' Intentions, Literary Interpretation, and Literary Value'.

63 Carroll, 'Art Interpretation'.

64 See Davies, 'Authors' Intentions, Literary Interpretation, and Literary Value', 230; García-Carpintero, 'Fiction-Making as a Gricean Illocutionary Type', 212–3; Carroll, 'Art Interpretation', 119.

65 Davies, 'Authors' Intentions, Literary Interpretation, and Literary Value', 131–3. García-Carpintero ('Fiction-Making as a Gricean Illocutionary Type', 213–4) provides a reply to this sort of criticism, which should be understood relative to the characterization offered below of the proper role for authors' intentions to play. Alward makes this point against speech-act analyses in general, but it only tells against Gricean accounts ('Word-Sculpture, Speech Acts, and Fictionality', *JAAC* 68 (2010), 389–99).

the fact that the film contains enough material supporting this interpretation justifies us in sustaining it.⁶⁶

There is no inconsistency here with the acceptance above of the moderate actual intentionalist's point, i.e. that contents that would make a fiction better but are incompatible with the intentions of its creator should not be ascribed to it. Here we are concerned with contents that may not have been intended in their full specificity, but are consistent with the intentionally given indications of the fictioneer. The problem for the Gricean view lies in explaining why such contents are correctly taken as part of the fiction's content. This is an analogous difficulty to the one posed by the 'don't care' or 'hopeless' counterexamples to the Gricean account of assertion. I will presently indicate how the normative account deals with it. True, some forms of moderate actual intentionalism, such as Carroll's, allow for the ascription to fictions of contents that have not been explicitly entertained by their creators, to the extent that they are consistent with what has been intentionally put in the fiction and would not be disavowed by their creators. This is extensionally correct, but the problem lies in justifying it properly. I do not think the Gricean account of what fictions are can do this; in contrast, as we are about to see, the normative account delivers this result.

As we saw, normative accounts of assertion easily explain why a speaker in a 'don't care' situation (the attendant in the information booth) is asserting, even if she lacks the Gricean intentions postulated by (GA); all that is required is that she knows the language, and intentionally uses the sentence with its default meaning. The same explanation, *mutatis mutandis*, accounts for the ascription to fictions of contents that, in their full specificity, were not the object of Gricean intentions on the part of the authors. It is enough that they are aware of legitimate interpretive practices, and deploy their works with the generic intention that they are understood in accordance with them, being thereby subject to appraisal relative to norms such as $(FM_N)/(FM'_N)$.

Let us now move to examine how the present account deals with Friend's challenge. As I pointed out above, the normative proposal I have outlined has correspondences with Friend's proposal. In particular, what for her are criteria establishing that something is a fictional work – i.e. that it belongs in the genre she takes fictions to be – on the present view indicate conformity to the norm constitutive of fictions. There are other relations between the present proposal and Friend's. According to her, the relation between fiction and imagination lies in that 'the existence of fiction as a *genre* is at least partially explained by the purpose of allowing authors to use their creative imaginations to make things up'⁶⁷ or 'to engage audiences in mere-make-believe'.⁶⁸ On the present view, a similar account can be provided for the fact that the norms of fiction-making are in force among us.

66 Robbe-Grillet writes in the introduction to the script: 'the film ... is about a reality that the hero creates from his own vision, his own words' ('le film ... s'agit d'une réalité que le héros crée par sa propre vision, par sa propre parole'; A. Robbe-Grillet, *L'Année dernière à Marienbad: ciné-roman* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1961), 12). Resnais states in an interview 'this film is an attempt, still very crude and very primitive, to approach the complexity of thought, of its processes' ('ce film est ... une tentative, encore très grossière et très primitive, d'approcher la complexité de la pensée, de son mécanisme'); quoted in R. Benayoun, *Alain Resnais: arpenteur de l'imaginaire* (Paris: Ramsay, 2008), 105–6.

67 Friend, 'Fictive Utterance and Imagining', 178.

68 Friend, 'Imagining Fact and Fiction', 165.

However, these correspondences only highlight the crucial difference between the proposals. On her view, ‘what other theorists propose as defining properties of fictionality – such as containing utterances whose contents we are to imagine – I see as *standard features* of works in the fiction genre’.⁶⁹ The notion of ‘standard property’ is borrowed from Walton; it is a property whose possession is a criterion to place a work in a given category, but might be absent in some instances.⁷⁰

The properties to which fictive utterance theorists try to reduce fictionality, such as the invitation to imagine a particular content ... play the same role that Walton attributes to the standard properties of perceptual artworks ... they contribute to classification without determining it.⁷¹

On the present view, that fictions contain utterances whose contents we are to imagine is not just a Waltonian standard feature of fictional works, but an essential property of them. Against Friend’s main claim, fictions can after all be defined by necessary and sufficient conditions.

Friend considers a related question,

Could we conceive of a work of fiction that did not invite us to imagine made-up content? ... Although there is no reason in principle to deny that a standard feature can be a necessary condition, I hesitate to say that it is *inconceivable* that a work of fiction could be entirely true, given the right context.⁷²

I agree with her and others on this;⁷³ Javier Marías’ *Dark Back of Time* (about the reception of his previous novel *All Souls*) is a good illustration: it is a work of fiction that, for all we can tell, might consist only of true propositions. This is why I reject Currie’s diagnosis, based on his already mentioned thought experiments, that fictions cannot be non-accidentally true.⁷⁴ However, notice the displacement in the question that Friend in fact confronts. In answering the question she puts to herself, she points out that we can conceive of fictions that do not invite us to imagine *made-up* content, and as I said I agree with this. But what was at stake in the context in which she asks herself that question is whether we can conceive of fictions that do not invite us *to imagine content*, period; for it was this that she had just claimed to be a mere standard property of fictions (in the previously quoted passages), rather than the property of inviting to imagine *made-up* content.

On another important point that she makes we are in full agreement, though: to wit, that ‘the classification of a work as a fiction or non-fiction can make a genuine difference to appreciation’.⁷⁵ She illustrates this neatly by discussing the effect of reading alternatively

69 Friend, ‘Fiction as a Genre’, 188.

70 Walton, ‘Categories of Art’.

71 Friend, ‘Fiction as a Genre’, 189.

72 *Ibid.*

73 Cf. Davies, *Aesthetics and Literature*, 46–7.

74 Currie, *The Nature of Fiction*, 42–5.

75 Friend, ‘Fiction as a Genre’, 200.

as fiction and non-fiction a passage of *The Surgeon of Crowthorne*. On the present view, this is so because we are dealing with essentially normative-axiological kinds.

What about her objections? How does the present proposal deal with her examples of fictions including commitments to truth and non-fictions including prescriptions to imagine? We just need to appeal to a point other writers have made, which the normative approach validates without further ado: namely, that (to put it in my favoured terms) one and the same act might be intended to be subject to different norms,⁷⁶ and not just relative to different audiences (the one possibility compatible with his account that Currie is prepared to contemplate⁷⁷). Thus, on a natural account of indirect speech acts, in uttering ‘I will never drink again’/‘You will clean the latrines’ one is (‘tactically’, in Dummett’s illuminating metaphor) asserting that I will never drink again/you will clean the latrines, and (‘strategically’, pursuing the metaphor) promising never to drink again/ordering the addressee to clean the latrines.⁷⁸ One utterance is thus subject to two different norms, one for asserting and another for promising/ordering.

Similarly, I suggest, the fiction-maker may strategically commit herself to (FM_N)/ (FM_N’), while tactically committing herself to the assertion norm with respect to (more or less determinate) parts of the fiction. Some contents in fictions are not merely put forward for them to be imagined, together with all the others, but they are also asserted in the interest of ‘realism’, as illustrated above with the Barcelona railway network example. The assertion in these cases is tactical, in that it contributes to the ultimate strategic goal of presenting a fiction with sufficiently realistic elements, hence having the values we associate with imagining such fictions. In other cases (*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*), it is (also) the other way around: the fiction is tactical for strategic assertoric acts with moral or political contents.

Friend also discusses the reverse problem – non-fictional works that include invitations to imagine (counterfactuals, metaphors, explicit appeals for the audience to consider possible scenarios; early historical traditions that allowed for made-up speeches, etc.). In this case, I do not think it is problematic that works are a patchwork of fact and fiction. Parts of realist fictions that are also asserted in the interest of realism are integral constitutive elements of the fiction, part of what is to be imagined to properly appreciate them.⁷⁹ But non-fictions do not need to have that kind of unity. There is no problem with mostly assertoric

76 Lamarque and Olsen, *Truth, Fiction and Literature*, 66; Stock, ‘Fictive Utterance and Imagining’, 149–50.

77 Currie, *The Nature of Fiction*, 35.

78 M. Dummett, ‘Mood, Force, and Convention’, in his *The Seas of Language* (Oxford: OUP, 1993), 202–23. Cf. M. García-Carpintero, ‘Explicit Performatives Revisited’, *Journal of Pragmatics* 49 (2013), 1–17, for discussion of related points about performatives.

79 In defending his earlier account (Davies, *Aesthetics and Literature*), discussed above, from Friend-like criticisms Davies questions this ‘comprehensiveness’ requirement (Davies, ‘Fictionality, Fictive Utterance, and the Assertive Author’, 61–85). Discussing examples like the Barcelona railway network above, he separates two different components of what is true in a fiction: one providing the ‘real setting’, and another constituting the content readers are supposed to imagine. It is only the latter what constitutes the fictional narrative to which his account applies, and which is hence supposed to meet the non-fidelity constraint. But I find this distinction artificial; as many have pointed out regarding the celebrated example of Anna Karenina’s first sentence, such ‘real setting’ claims typically play an essential role in generating the core elements of the contents the fiction asks readers to imagine, and henceforth must be themselves imagined.

narratives that include questions or directives addressed to the reader. Similarly, I submit, to the extent that it remains clear what the assertoric commitments of the speaker are, there is no problem with non-fiction works that include proposals to imagine. Of course, we would criticize a contemporary writer of history or biography who makes up battles or speeches, including them in the work without warning; but this is because present conventions will lead us to assume that that was not a mere proposal to imagine.

To sum up, the difference between fiction and non-fiction lies in the commitments the agent incurs, and not in further attitudes – such as that the imagined contents are taken to be at most accidentally true, or at least poised to be connected with other contents taken to be so. An act's being subject to $(FM_N)/(FM'_N)$ makes it ideal for the addition of interesting made-up content, but this is not mandatory. Fiction and non-fiction can be defined by necessary and sufficient conditions, albeit normative/axiological ones: an act produces a fiction if and only if it is subject to $(FM_N)/(FM'_N)$ as its uniquely defining constitutive norm; and an act produces a non-fiction (assertion) if and only if it has been subject to, say, (TR) as its uniquely defining, constitutive norm. It is in this way that we may still capture 'the guiding intuition ... that belief, *rather than* imagining, is appropriate for non-accidentally true content ... the kind of imagining prescribed by fiction must be imagining *without belief*'.⁸⁰

The contextual, historically varying, potentially indeterminacy-engendering features that fix the vagaries of genre classification do not specify what a fiction is, but determine merely when something is put forward as one. We should not think that the fact that Tacitus could get away with making up battles without warning his readers, while a contemporary historian could not, has as a consequence that assertion itself is not the same phenomenon as it was 2,000 years ago. The same applies to fiction. It is only the criteria for determining what is asserted and what is not that have changed. What obscures this from our view is a conception of the distinction between fiction and non-fiction on which this is predicated on the psychological attitudes of the speakers, or the semantic properties of the contents they put forward. There is an essential difference between fiction and non-fiction, but it lies in the commitments speakers incur.⁸¹

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80 Friend, 'Fictive Utterance and Imagining', 165.

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