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Assertions in Fictions: An Indirect Speech Act Account

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Abstract

I contrast in this paper the account I favor for how fictions can convey knowledge with Green's views on the topic. On my account, this obtains because fictional works *make assertions* and other acts such as conjectures, suppositions, or acts of putting forward contents for our consideration; and the mechanism through which they do it is that of *speech act indirection*, of which conversational implicatures are a particular case. There are two main points of disagreement with Green in this proposal. First, it requires that assertions can be standardly made indirectly, which Green (2007, 2015) questions on account of the need to account for the intuitive distinction between *lying* and *misleading*. Second, it requires that verbal fiction-making doesn't consist merely in "acts of speech" (Green 2015), but in straightforward speech acts. After providing a response to Green's argument against indirect assertions, I'll show that the response affords a defeasible but useful criterion for *what is said*. On that basis I'll offer a normative account of indirection based on classical Gricean ideas, which allows for indirect assertion and accounts for some difficult cases involving assertions or related assertoric acts made in fictions.

Keywords: assertion; implicature; fiction; indirect speech acts.

1. Introduction

I share many views on assertion and speech acts in general with Mitch Green. The details of our views differ, as it is bound to happen in philosophy. While Green offers a sophisticated expressive account, I (García-Carpintero 2004, forthcoming) defend instead what I regard as at least complex (if not sophisticated) version of a normative, constitutive norms view. Sophistication makes for convergence. Thus, Green's (2007, 2009) reliance on norms through his appeal to a "Handicap Principle" greatly improves in my view on Gricean expressive non-normative accounts like Bach's & Harnish's (1979), as on Davis's (2003) bare intentionalism. Asserting *p* is according to Green (roughly) expressing that one believes *p* by deploying a device designed (by natural or social selection) for that purpose, which, when one is sincere, affords knowledge that one does believe *p*, insofar as one subjects oneself thereby to a specific norm that would make insincerity costly. The norm in question is not far from the one I myself promote for core assertions (§2). I, on the other hand, emphasize (*op. cit.*) that it is not enough to analyse assertion in terms of constitutive norms. An account must be provided in addition for why particular constitutive norms have come to be enforced; and such

explanation would in my view mention aspects of design and expression very close to what Green (2007, 2009) calls ‘showing’, which figures prominently in his proposal.

The differences between our views thus concern what in the respective accounts is taken to be *essential*, or *constitutive* of the acts – whether something fundamentally psychological in nature or something fundamentally normative instead. Such issues however, although of course important for philosophical theorizing itself, are rather subtle, difficult to adjudicate if at all decidable, and as a result one is in my view entitled to adopt about them a Yablonian “quizzicalist” (fictionalist) attitude, declining going into them beyond the articulation of one’s own story in as clearly as possible way, in opposition to the alternatives.

This contribution is about how we can learn from fictions, on the assumption that I also share with Green (and others like Friend 2008, 2014, Ichino & Currie 2017, Reicher 2012, or Stock 2017) that we do. When it comes to this more specific topic, I have also promoted views very close to many of those that Green has been defending over the years. In particular, I (García-Carpintero 2016a, 2016b) support Literary Cognitivism (LC) in the way he (2017a, 48) defines it: “literary fiction can be a source of knowledge in a way that depends crucially on its being fictional”. I can even agree with the account that Green (2010, 2016, 2017a) has provided, as I explain below. We also agree that literary fictions are sources of knowledge in more straightforward ways, as in the following two examples – even though, against what he contends, for reasons given below (§7) these examples in my view also support LC:

- (1) 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. (I. Fleming, *Thunderball*, 1963, London, Pan Books, 116; quoted in Friend 2008, 159).
- (2) Nonhuman animals have gone to court before. Arguably, the first ALF action in the United States was the release of two dolphins in 1977 from the University of Hawaii. The men responsible were charged with grand theft. (K. J. Fowler, *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, 305; quoted in Stock, 2017, 24).

I am expected to focus on disagreements in this piece, though. I will do that by contrasting the account I favor for how fictions can convey knowledge, which with small variations applies both to cases such as (1) and (2), and the cases that Green provides in support of LC. On my account, fictional works *make assertions* and other acts in what Green (2017b) calls *assertive family*, such as conjectures, suppositions, or acts of putting forward contents for our consideration; and the mechanism through which they do it is that of *speech act indirection*, of which conversational implicatures are a particular case.

There are two main points of disagreement with Green in this proposal, if I understand his views correctly. First, it requires that assertions can be made indirectly, which Green (2007, 2015) questions on account of the need to respect the intuitive distinction between *lying* and *misleading*. Second, it requires that verbal fiction-making doesn’t consist merely in “acts of speech” (Green 2015), but in straightforward speech acts. A further disagreement coming together with these two lies in that I reject the Austinian appeal to the performative formula that Green (2015) favors as criterion for illocutionary types. And there is finally the already indicated issue about the support lent to LC by (1) and (2). These disagreements are in a way minor, vis-à-vis those indicated above regarding the nature of speech acts. Given the quizzicalist take I lean towards on these more fundamental issues, however, in another way I

find them more serious. This is because they concern explanatory issues with direct empirical implications, towards which I would be more reluctant to adopt such a cavalier attitude.

Here is how I will proceed. In §2 I'll show that these debates are far from being merely verbal, by outlining theory-neutral criteria for the phenomena to be discussed, assertion and indirection. In §3 I critically discuss accounts of assertion that straightforwardly identify it with what, from the viewpoint defended here, is only a related but distinguishable category: assertoric acts that are explicitly made, which, following Grice, I'll call *sayings*. In §4 I critically discuss Green's argument for the view that assertion must be explicit (i.e., a *saying*), based on the distinction between lying and misleading. The discussion crucially relies on distinguishing assertion and *sayings*, and in so doing it affords a useful criterion for *what is said*, which I'll articulate in §5; I'll then elaborate there on previous suggestions by Saul (2002, 2010), offering a normative account of indirection which takes Gricean calculability as constitutive of that way of conveying meanings. §6 argues that fiction-making is a *sui generis* speech act, and not merely an act of speech. §7 applies the proposal on indirection in §5 to assertions and other assertoric acts in fictions. §8 concludes.

2. Speech Act Indirection

Theorists of speech acts assume that some of them are made indirectly. To illustrate, an utterance of 'Thanks for not browsing our magazines.' found in the train station kiosk is not an expression of gratitude, nor is 'Could you pass the salt?' typically a question; instead, both are indirect ways of making requests. Searle (1975) provides an influential account, which generalizes the ground-breaking proposal by Grice (1975) for conversational implicatures. Thus understood, these are a particular case of indirect speech act in which a constative act is indirectly made by means of a declarative sentence.¹ Several arguments, however, have been recently made that indirection in general is a less clear-cut phenomenon than usually assumed, and more specifically that assertions cannot be made indirectly, by Fricker (2012), Green (2015), Lepore & Stone (2010, 2015) and others. As indicated, I will discuss Green's argument based on the lying/misleading distinction. I will also outline a new account of indirection that I have developed elsewhere, very much influenced by Grice's view, which I like in particular because, as I'll show, unlike others it allows for a plausible uniform account of the possibility of learning from fictions.

As is well known, Grice ascribed a fundamental role to the *calculability* or *derivability* criterion in his own account of indirection – and Searle follows suit in his generalization: "The presence of a conversational implicature *must be* capable of being worked out ...", Grice (1975, 31); "the final test for the presence of a conversational implicature had to be, as far as I could see, a derivation of it. One *has to produce* an account of how it could have arisen and why it is there", Grice (1981, 187); my emphasis in both cases.

Grice's theory of implicatures has been heralded as a magnificent example of the sort of theoretical contribution that philosophy is in a position to make, to our knowledge in general and more specifically to scientific undertakings. In this case, the scientific undertaking is one that by now manifestly is the most recent scientific sprout of philosophy itself, i.e., natural language semantics: Grice's contribution lies of course in helping semanticists to avert

confusions about the properly semantic contribution of expressions. However, describing the Gricean account of indirection as philosophico-theoretical shouldn't lead to think that *implicature* is (like *proposition*, *a priori* or *possible world* truly are) just a purely theoretical construct in philosophy, invoked to answer some of its proprietary questions, but only thus indirectly related to phenomena for which we have direct intuitions. On the contrary, as I'll argue below the intuitive distinction between *lying* and *misleading* reveals our intuitive grasp of indirection – particularly, of the specific kind that Gricean implicatures are.

There are thus in my view some intuitions guiding us in selecting examples of indirect speech acts such as the ones just given. This is helpful on two very important counts. Firstly, the intuitions help us providing an initial characterization of the phenomenon that we will be theorizing about, assuming little theoretical baggage – one that writers such as Davis (1998) or Lepore & Stone (2015), who would be sceptical about the very phenomenon if we already initially characterized it as involving Gricean calculability, could accept as actually instantiated. Secondly, the intuitive availability of the phenomenon will help us to deflate a persistent temptation to think that these disputes are “merely verbal”. Similar points apply to the notion of assertion here at stake. I want now to articulate pretheoretical characterizations of those phenomena, assertion and indirection.

Roughly, I take indirection to intuitively be a specific way of conveying meaning, leaving open the character (psychological or social) of its specificity.² I will make a proposal about this intuitive understanding, on the further assumption that there are speech acts that well-formed sentences might be used to make (perhaps unsuccessfully), given their mood, their constituents, and the way they are compositionally put together, in *central (default) cases* in *default contexts*. These are contexts in which no more is assumed than sharing a public language, and whatever is required for disambiguation and context-dependence resolution.³

To illustrate the idea with the specific case that will be occupying us, I will make about *assertion* the same assumption just stated about *indirection*, to be justified on similar grounds, by its explanatory virtues. I'll assume that we have a pre-theoretical notion of assertion (or *stating*, *claiming*, *affirming*, which I take to be alternative common currency words for the same phenomenon) on which this is an act that we perform in central cases by uttering declarative sentences. I take such *central cases* to be those in which we intend to be “taken at our word”, such as using as literally and explicitly as possible a declarative sentence to answer a request for information, or to tell somebody how our day went. I'll assume that the distinction that the Kripke-Putnam arguments about natural kinds have made salient, between *nominal essence* and *real* nature, equally applies here.⁴ I will mention three features of the nominal essence of the kind I am thus picking out: (i) It is a kind of intentional act, whose point is to produce outright belief. (ii) In performing it, speakers present themselves (perhaps insincerely) as believing what they say. (iii) It has a “word-to-world” *direction of fit* – when its content doesn't fit the world, there is a mistake in the act, unlike what obtains in the case of the central acts we make with interrogatives and imperatives.⁵

These features of the “nominal essence” of assertion, which help us picking out central cases, manifest themselves in our normative practices, as made explicit in the third criterion: in our finding appropriate to criticize, or required to excuse, assertions when what is said is false, when the speaker doesn't believe it, or the audience already has the belief. Conversely, there are uses of declarative sentences that fail to be central because they clearly lack some of

these features. Thus, e.g., cases in which the sentences occur in a fiction, or in which the speaker adds an appositive ‘I guess’, ‘I think’, ‘I assume’, ‘I conjecture’, or ‘I promise’; cases in which the sentence occurs embedded as the antecedent of a conditional, a disjunct or after ‘it might be that’; explicit performatives such as ‘I hereby promise that ...’; or, indeed, cases in which the speaker manifestly doesn’t aim to be believed merely because she is saying so, like many of the claims literally made by means of declarative sentences in this paper.

As indicated, this characterization is only intended to elucidate the intuitive features of a pre-theoretically familiar kind. The kind in question, like indirection, is “natural” in being presumed to have a nature explanatory of the traits in its nominal essence, but “hidden” in not being immediately accessible to intuition, and available only, if at all, after theoretical scrutiny. The Gricean and Austinian proposals to be specified in §3 are attempts at theoretically specifying it, and so are, I take it, the alternative accounts by Brandom (1983), Dummett (1973, ch. 10), Green (2007) or Stalnaker (1978). But it is left open that research like this might well conclude that there is after all no kind shared by central cases, which merely constitute a disunified motley (Cappelen 2011). If, however, the assumption is confirmed, it might turn out that, given the true nature of assertion, we also make it in non-central cases. For instance, it might turn out that we should conclude that in the explicit performative case the speaker is not just *promising*, but also *asserting* that he is promising, and in fact promising only indirectly, in virtue of his assertion.⁶ I will also be assuming that there are similarly central cases in default contexts for acts we make with sentences in the imperative and interrogative moods (a specific sort of *directive* and a *question*, respectively).⁷

I am thereby assuming that moods behave like the rest of the lexicon in being polysemous: they have conventional uses other than central ones, such as guessing or conjecturing for the declarative mood.⁸ Polysemy cannot always be explained by positing a *core* or *central* sense, on the basis of which the others are derived in specific ways; this is perhaps implausible for the tree/fruit polysemy in ‘walnut’. M. But in some cases it is a good working hypothesis that there is a core sense.⁹ I thus take *central* cases for the moods to be their senses in *default* contexts: something in the discourse or extralinguistic context must indicate that the intended sense is not the core one. An account of assertion thus aims on my view at contributing to a full theory of the lexicon (the meaning of the declarative mood, in this case); this is the main reason why I don’t think that the debates we will rehearse are mere verbal disputes.

With this in place, we can now go back to say what an indirect speech act is, in the pre-theoretic sense we were after. I will take it to be one made with a sentence whose central use in a default context would be to make a different one, in force or content (cp. Sadock 1974), in part by deploying it: in indirect speech acts, “the speaker’s utterance meaning and the sentence meaning come apart” (Searle 1975, 30).¹⁰ Consider these standard putative examples of indirect assertions: rhetorical questions (3), irony (4) and metaphor (5):

- (3) Utterance: ‘Who likes being criticized?’; putative assertion: *Nobody likes being criticized.*¹¹
- (4) Utterance (with sarcastic intonation): ‘Paul is a truly good friend’; putative assertion: *Paul is disloyal.*
- (5) Utterance: ‘Nuclear reactors are time bombs’; putative assertion: *Nuclear reactors might disastrously fail at any moment* (Bergmann 1982, 231).¹²

In these cases, the speaker doesn't make the central speech act indicated by default by uttering the relevant sentences. It is manifest that the speaker of (3) lacks proper erotetic goals, and those of (4) and (5) assertoric commitments, with respect to the literal content. As announced, I take this to capture merely the "nominal essence" of indirection, on the assumption that it might have a "hidden" one to be theoretically articulated. I will contend (§5), against Davis (1998) and Lepore & Stone (2015), that an adequate view should invoke Grice's calculability condition. For consider examples (1) and (2). I take them to be indirect assertions, in spite of the fact that its force and content perfectly match those conveyed in central uses. The reason is that the sentences occur in fictions, and, as I explain below (§6), its meaning there is primarily fictional (an invitation to imagine, say); the competent reader is supposed to work out that she is also intended to believe it, because she is being told by someone in a position to know, only on account of some features of this fictional utterance – i.e., its belonging in a sufficiently "realist" genre, and its contributing to characterize the realist setting for the otherwise fictional plot. But all of this is problematic and controversial, so I do not take (1) and (2) to be central cases of indirection. I'll come back to this below, §7.

3. Assertion and Explicitness

After presenting in theory-neutral ways the phenomenon of indirection I am after, I will introduce in this section the view on assertion I will be taking for granted. But I need to put aside first a proposal manifestly incompatible with the proposal I want to defend.

Some writers (e.g., Alston (2000, 116-120); Hindriks (2007, 400); Jary (2010, 15-16); Pagin (2011, 123); Stokke (2013, 49)), aiming as far as I can tell to characterize the kind introduced in the previous section, advance accounts of it that imply that this act cannot be indirectly made.¹³ This is because such accounts define an assertion to be the communication of the proposition *p* by means of a sentence that (literally, I take it) means it. This makes it impossible to make assertions of *p* with sentences that mean something else, or with non-linguistic means. Green (2007, 2009), as we have seen, requires something weaker, but it might have the same effect; to wit, that assertion be made with a device that has been designed for the purpose of showing the speaker's belief, under specific normative conditions. Given that, on my assumptions, this is not just a merely terminological decision, these views require argument – which Green does provide, I'll discuss it in the next section. First, examples like (3)-(5) make an intuitive case against them. Second, many accounts of assertion at the very least worth considering do not exclude this *prima facie* intuitive view. These include the Gricean intentionalist views and the normative accounts to be presented shortly, and also the alternative accounts by Brandom (1983), Dummett (1973, ch. 10) or Stalnaker (1978). Finally, it appears to be possible to make other speech acts indirectly, as in the previous request examples; why should assertion be special?

The definitional condition on assertion making indirect assertions impossible is usually not backed with argument, but motivated in ways that appear *ad hoc*.¹⁴ Thus, suppose that one is attracted by the Fregean view that asserting *p* just is *putting forward p as true*. There are clear counterexamples to this – cases in which intuitively a proposition *p* is put forward as true that intuitively are not assertions of *p*. To wit: cases in which *p* is merely guessed or conjectured,

cases in which it is presupposed, cases in which it is promised, and so on. Adding the condition that we are discussing – that it is an additional necessary condition to use a sentence that means the proposition – would allow one to dismiss some of these counterexamples.¹⁵ Without some independent justification, and on the assumption that these authors are not just stipulating how they use the word ‘assertion’, but trying to capture the nature of an act picked out by the sort of pretheoretical intuitions articulated above, this just is an *ad hoc* manoeuvre to rescue the Fregean view. Why not instead look for a better account of the phenomenon?

Bach & Harnish (1979, 15-6, 42) offer one – an influential expressive Gricean account. ‘R-intending’ here is to be explicated in terms of Gricean *communicative intentions*:

(GA) To assert *p* is to make an utterance thereby R-intending the hearer to take it as a reason to think that the speaker believes *p* and intends the hearer to believe it.

Bach & Harnish’s (GA) is a *descriptive* expressive account, not a *normative* one: unlike normative accounts, by itself it does not mention norms, but only certain psychological states of speakers and their intended audiences.¹⁶

In contrast with descriptive accounts such as (GA), Williamson (1996) 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; we don’t need to go into them for our present purposes. The obligations these rules impose are *sui generis*, like those constitutive of games, the model on which Williamson bases his account: they do not have their source in norms of morality, rationality, prudence or etiquette. They are not *all things considered*, but *prima facie*; in any particular case, they can be overruled by stronger obligations imposed by other norms. They are intended to characterize what is *essential* or *constitutive* of *assertion* (and not, as it may seem at first glance, of *correct assertion*). The view is that assertion is an act essentially constituted by its being subject to the relevant norm: the unique representational act such that, if one performs it without knowing the intended proposition, one is thereby contravening an obligation. There are additional features or rules contributing to a full characterization of assertion, as in Searle’s (1969) well-known account or in Alston’s (2000) elaboration, i.e., “sincerity” or “preparatory” conditions. (KR) is intended to characterize what an act must “count as” for it to be an assertion, i.e., what Searle describes as its “essential rule”.

I take to be common ground among participants in these debates that assertion is the act that we pre-theoretically characterized above, §2: namely, what is done by default by uttering declarative sentences: “In natural language, the default use of declarative sentences is to make assertions”, Williamson (*op. cit.*, 258). On my proposal, this is a “natural” kind picked out by three features in its “nominal essence” described there. Both Gricean expressivist proposals and normative accounts would easily explain those three features; so would the alternative accounts by Brandom (1983), Dummett (1973) or Stalnaker (1978). I will not go here into the details of how those different explanations would go. In related work, however, I have argued that a particular normative account explains better some further data (SUPPRESSED FOR BLIND REFEREEING). Moreover, a normative view fits naturally the account of indirection I will

provide. I will thus take for granted henceforth that assertion is a constitutively normative kind, and also that the rule (KR) articulates its constitutive rule.¹⁷ This view (like the others just mentioned) is entirely compatible with the intuitive impression that the speakers in examples (3)-(5) are making assertions. Thus, the speaker of the ironical assertion (4) might intend to provide information about the disloyalty of Paul that her audience wouldn't have had otherwise. We can thus challenge them to give reasons to justify the putative assertions, or criticize them if they are false, and so on and so forth.

4. Arguments against Indirect Assertion: Lying and Misleading

Now, as indicated different writers have in fact provided arguments that assertions cannot be made indirectly, including Fricker (2012), Green (2007, 2015) and Lepore & Stone (2010, 2015). In this section I will discuss Green's argument (2007, 2015) based on the distinction between *lying* and *misleading*.¹⁸ The discussion is firstly intended to put aside the objection. But it will also give us a useful criterion for the controversial but theoretically important notion of *what is said*, which I will need for my characterization of indirection in the next section. Although the argument doesn't establish that assertions cannot be indirectly made, it reveals an intuitive difference between assertions done by indirect means (those that my Gricean account aims to explain) and explicit ones, *sayings*.

Let us thus consider the argument against indirect assertions based on the need to capture the intuitive distinction between lying and misleading. The argument assumes that insincerely asserting suffices for lying. In reply, while agreeing with Green (against Mahon (2016), for one) that lying requires asserting, I'll suggest that what suffices for lying is not *insincerely asserting*, but rather insincerely asserting *in an explicit way*. This makes the view that one can make indirect assertions compatible with the lying/misleading distinction: in making an insincere *indirect* assertion, one doesn't lie but merely misleads.

Green (2015, 22-3; see also Green 2007, 102-3) articulates the argument thus:¹⁹

While indirect communication is ubiquitous, indirect speech acts are less common than might first appear. Consider an example of a type often used to illustrate indirect speech acts. A asks B, 'Can you come to dinner with us tonight?', and B replies, 'I have to study.' B makes it clear that she is too busy to join A for dinner. However, must we conclude that she has done this by illocuting, for instance stating that she is too busy to join A for dinner? This seems unlikely. After all, if B did not think that her studying would prevent her from joining A for dinner, she would be misleading in saying what she does, but not a liar; yet if in answering as she has, she is asserting that she is unable to join A for dinner, she would be lying if she took her study plans not to interfere with dinner plans.

In a nutshell, Green's argument goes like this: intuitively, those indirectly conveying putative assertions of contents they know to be false are not lying, but merely misleading their audiences; hence they cannot be asserting, because asserting what one believes to be false suffices for lying. If S implicates *p*, while S doesn't believe *p*, S misleads but doesn't lie about *p*. Hence, S doesn't assert *p*, for otherwise S would be lying.

The problem with this argument lies in the assumption that asserting what one believes to be false *suffices* for lying. The condition that has been traditionally taken as necessary for lying regarding *p* to account for the distinction between lying and misleading is not (plainly) asserting *p*, the way this has been characterized here, §2; but rather *stating* or *saying* it, this taken in a very specific, technical sense: something like *putting forward a sentence whose literal and direct use would be to assert p*, whether or not one does *assert* it – cf. Chisholm & Feehan (1977, 150-1), Mahon (2016, 4).

Mahon in fact *rejects* the necessity of an assertion condition for lying. I do not agree with him on this, for reasons I cannot go into here.²⁰ My proposal is rather this. The distinction between lying and misleading as regards to *p* does not consist in that only the former involves asserting *p*. Assertions, like other speech acts, are made in different ways: they can be implicit, indirect, merely hinted or insinuated (Searle 1979, ix); or they can be as explicit as possible, direct and literal: what is meant is then as close as possible to the semantic content of the sentence by means of which they are made. The intuitive distinction between lying and misleading tracks this equally intuitive distinction between the implicit, hinted or insinuated, and the explicit, direct or literal. The distinction is hence compatible with the possibility of indirect assertions.²¹ Green doesn't say anything against this way of tracing it, which fits the intuitive data. So this undermines his case against indirect assertions.

5. A Normative Account of Indirection

I move thus now to provide an account of the nature of indirection in general and implicatures in particular. I start by showing how the role that the difference between explicitly and indirectly asserting plays in the account of the distinction between lying and misleading provides us with a good, even if defeasible criteria for the notoriously contentious but theoretically significant notion of *what is said*.

Following Saul (2012, ch. 3), several writers have used the distinction between lying and misleading as a good guide to a sufficiently well determined notion of what is said; I adapt the following articulation from Michaelson (2016, 482) to the terminology and claims I prefer:

- (LT) If *p* is part of the contribution that a sentence *P*, as uttered by *X* to *Y*, makes to what is locuted, then if:
- A. *X* asserts *p*, but
 - B. *X* believes that *p* is false, then
 - C. The utterance of *P* is a lie, not merely misleading.

Adopting an interpretation of Austin's locutionary act that I think I share with others (cf. e.g. Recanati (2013, 624), Bach (2012, 49) and Green (2017b, 1597-8), I use 'locuting' (in the case of declaratives) for the act of putting forward a sentence whose literal and direct use would be to assert a given content *p*. The ironic speaker of (4) locutes that Paul is a good friend, without saying it.²² If someone utters 'The vote was anonymous.', meaning that the vote was unanimous (Bach & Harnish 1979, 33), she locutes that the vote was anonymous but it is unclear whether she said it – because it is unclear whether she asserted it, cf. Davis (1999, 35 fn). But for a content to count as locuted, it should be the case that, if the speaker

insincerely asserts it, she is lying and not merely misleading. Michaelson puts to use the test, to question some pragmatic views about referentially used descriptions.

Note that *what is locuted* cannot on my view be identified with *semantic content* without qualification. Following Lewis (1980), I have argued that we should still distinguish *semantic content* proper (“compositional content”, as writers such as Ninan (2012), Rabern (2012) or Yalcin (2014) call it in making the point) from *assertoric content*, or (in the present terminology) what is locuted.²³ Semantic content is ascribed to sentences in order to fulfill some of the explanatory tasks for theories of natural languages, in particular accounting for facts about systematicity and productivity in understanding, communication and acquisition, or judgments about entailments or truth-value or appropriateness relative to given situations. Ultimately, the intuitive data in all those cases concern (in the case of declaratives) assertoric contents, and hence semantic contents should contribute to them; but, as Lewis (1980) points out, it doesn’t follow that they need to be identified, and (as argued in the papers just mentioned, and others referred to in them) there are very good reasons against doing it.

I move now to provide the Grice-inspired account of indirection compatible with indirect assertions that I have been announcing. A central question for such accounts is whether we need to appeal to the sort of derivation contemplated by Grice, based on the Cooperative Principle, to account for it, against objections by critics such as Davis (1998) and Lepore & Stone (2015). I’ll suggest that we do.

Grice was well aware that his tests for implicatures didn’t provide necessary conditions jointly sufficient for the phenomenon. This is clearly the case for *nondetachability*, given the category of Manner implicatures. Cancellability is also not necessary. Davis (1998, 6) has an interesting case in which an implicature is entailed by what is said, hence its denial cannot be added without contradiction. A taxpayer answers the auditors question ‘Is it true that you or your spouse is 65 or older or blind?’ by saying, ‘I am 67.’, thereby *logically* but also conversationally implicating that either he or his spouse is 65 or over or blind. Examples (1)-(2) above are extreme cases of this, in which the implicated assertion is the very same locuted act. Implicatures generated by making contradictory claims (‘Today I am not myself.’) raise similar issues, as do cases in which adding a cancellation clause in the original context would simply reinforce the implicature (cf. Åkerman (2015) and references there for discussion).

Grice, however, gave a distinctive status to calculability; calculability is necessary for an implication to be a conversational implicatures.²⁴ Following this, I suggest to take calculability from the Cooperative Principle as *constitutive* of indirection in general and conversational implicatures in particular. This is my proposal, for the specific case of conversational implicatures:

- (I) For one to conversationally implicate an assertion of *p* by uttering *S* in *c* is:
 - (i) for one to put her audience in a position to know that one is subject to assertoric norms vis-à-vis *p*,
 - (ii) through a Gricean derivation from the Cooperative Principle and the maxims,
 - (iii) given the assertoric content of *S* in *c*.

A generalization of (I) to indirection in general would substitute for assertoric content whatever is similarly made explicit (“locuted”) in the case of moods other than declaratives, and maxims developing the Cooperation Principle when the purpose of the conversation at the

specific stage is other than assertoric (cf. Martinich 1980, 219-20, Vanderveken 1991, 376-380). Just for illustration, consider the case of ‘Thanks for not browsing our magazines.’ The speaker *locutes* an expression of gratitude. As such, it would be manifestly inadequate in the context, because the speaker cannot know that the indicated condition for the emotion to be appropriate (that we are not browsing the magazines) obtains, and this is mutual knowledge between speaker and potential audience.²⁵ A request with the same content (suggested, as Searle (1975, 35) has it, by the indication of a preparatory condition for it, that the speaker wants that we don’t browse the magazines), which the speaker has the authority to make, would be a saliently appropriate act in the circumstances, on the other hand, and all of this is equally mutually known. So, assuming that the speaker does indeed have the relevant intention, she might become bound by the norms for requests in this way.

On the view promoted here, indirection is a specific way for a speaker to become beholden to the norms constitutive of a particular speech act, alternative to literally/directly expressing it. In the prototypical cases that give us an initial grip on the notion, the indirectly conveyed act differs from the one that would be literally and directly made with the sentence that the speaker uses in the context – in the declarative case, it differs from the locuted act. However, as (1)-(2) illustrate, this is not required; I elaborate in §6 on how (I) accounts for it.

The specific way in question involves a process along the lines of Grice’s calculation from the Cooperative Principle, which I understand epistemically, not psychologically. In correctly conveying a content indirectly, the speaker *puts her audience in a position to know* that she has thereby become beholden to the norms constitutive of the relevant act. I understand the notion of *being in a position to know* along the lines articulated by Chalmers (2012, 92-100), in terms of there being a *warrant structure* of a specific kind – in our case, the one captured by Gricean derivations.²⁶ This is roughly a structure such that, if an audience of the envisaged kind were to form a belief that the indirectly conveyed speech act has been performed, this belief was based on the steps of the derivation in the way specified in it, and the belief were not defeated or Gettiered, it would be doxastically justified and would constitute knowledge.

This notion of indirection in general and implicatures in particular is thus straightforwardly *normative*, in Saul’s (2002, 244) sense: implicatures are claims that audiences *should* arrive at, but may not. To repeat, indirection is a way of becoming beholden to norms constitutive of a given speech act which, if correctly pursued, puts the relevant audience in a position to know that one has thus become in the way indicated above.

(I) thus deals well with the sort of cases that Saul (2002, 2010) discusses: implicatures made by audiences misinformed about the context, or to audiences with defeaters about their endorsement of the Cooperative Principle. (I) is noncommittal about the psychological reality of Gricean derivations, but it is compatible with the view that, in normal conditions of successful indirect communication, such derivations do describe actual psychological processes at Marr’s abstract first level (Geurts & Rubio-Fernández 2015). (I) then allows for distinguishing *what is said* – assertoric contents, perhaps richly contextually modulated – from *what is conversationally implicated* along the lines that Recanati (2004, 23) does with his *Availability Principle*.²⁷ I submit that, when combined with an adequate account of the general underdetermination of meanings, it adequately deals with the otherwise potentially damaging objections raised by skeptics about Grice’s theory of implicatures such as Davis (1998) or Lepore & Stone (2015); but I cannot go into the details here.²⁸

Bach (2012, 60-1) objects to accounts of indirection such as (I) on the grounds that they confuse epistemological issues (how audiences manage to establish that a meaning is conveyed) with ontological ones. But there might well be response-dependent kinds – kinds ultimately constituted by mental states of rational beings. Indirection is such a kind, on the present view. Consider Davis’ example mentioned before, in which someone intuitively indirectly conveys that either he or his spouse is 65 or over or blind by uttering that he is 67. Beyond the intuition that this is so, why is this a conversational implicature, as opposed to a (direct) assertion? After all, it is quite standard to take straightforward implications, such as p for $p \ \& \ q$, to be *directly* asserted (Soames 2008). The present proposal provides a clear answer: because, given the context, it is the claim that either the speaker or his spouse is 65 or over or blind that the speaker is expected to assertorically commit to, the one he directly commits to being too much informative to be relevant in the context; and that he is in fact doing this is to be derived along Gricean lines, invoking the maxims.²⁹

6. Fiction-Making as a *Sui Generis* Speech Act

I will conclude by showing in some detail in the next section why (1)-(2), repeated below, are cases of indirection according to (I); first I’ll argue in this that they directly make a speech act in a category of its own, *fiction-making*:

- (1) Utterance: ‘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’ (from I. Fleming, *Thunderball*, 1963, London, Pan Books, 116; quoted in Friend 2008, 159); putative assertion: *Ditto*.
- (2) Utterance: ‘Nonhuman animals have gone to court before. Arguably, the first ALF action in the United States was the release of two dolphins in 1977 from the University of Hawaii ...’ (K. J. Fowler, *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, 305; from Stock, 2017, 24); putative assertion: *Ditto*.

Why should we count the assertions allegedly made in (1)-(2) as indirect, if the content asserted is the same one literally conveyed by the sentence? In a nutshell, this is why: (i) The utterances occur as part of a discourse that, as a whole, is put forward as a fiction. (ii) Following Currie (1990), I have argued (SUPPRESSED FOR BLIND REFEREEING) that we should understand fictions, against Searle (1974-5) (and Green), as resulting from a specific speech act, fiction-making. Finally, (iii) the assertion is indirectly conveyed in accordance with (I) on the basis of the fiction-making act, along lines that I will presently articulate. Before going into this, however, I would like to discuss whether the fiction-making act itself is indirect, when made by means of utterances of sentences in the declarative or other moods.

Currie (1990, 15) follows Searle (1974-5, 60) in taking utterances produced in fiction-making to be *literal*. If one means by this that the fiction-making act actually made precisely fits what is semantically codified in the sentence uttered,³⁰ I do not think this is correct. For, with most contemporary semanticists, I take it that some force-indications (at least, those distinguishing declaratives, interrogatives and directives) are semantically conveyed.³¹ And I do not think fiction-making fits that semantic contribution of the declarative mood: I would

only count assertions and related acts in Green's (2017) *assertive family* (guesses, conjectures, suppositions) as literally made with declarative sentences. Should we hence count fiction-making, when done with sentences, as already an indirect speech act itself? That is not so straightforward, as I'll presently explain. But I need to discuss before one of the main disagreements between me and Green announced at the start. I will thereby elaborate on my reasons to take fictions to result from a speech act, fiction-making.

Green also rejects that fiction-making is a literal speech act, but for a reason that I cannot share: to wit, that it is not a speech act at all. Although he agrees with Currie and me that "a fiction is an artifact comprising series of sentences whose contents are presented as to be imagined" (2017a, 48), he doesn't take fiction-making to be a speech act on account of this; in presenting us with series of sentences for us to imagine their contents, according to him the fiction-maker just performs an "act of speech", rather than a *speech act* proper (*ibid.*, 54).

Now, there is a clear intuitive distinction between *acts of speech* in general (clearing up one's throat by uttering words, rehearsing a speech, *perlocutionary acts* such as *convincing* or *frightening* people, or Austinian *misfires* – an order given without the required authority, a promise not accepted) and *speech acts* proper, in the sense that Austin (1962) was after – *illocutionary acts*, in his terms. But there is considerable controversy about how to properly delimit the latter. Green (2015, 2017c) adopts Austin's own criterion, namely, that the act can be performed by means of performative sentences. But I don't think we should go this path.

In adopting the performative characterization, Austin appears to be motivated by his speech-act conventionalism. Green and I agree however that the criterion by itself doesn't provide any support for conventionalism, because the fact that something might be done by conventional means doesn't make it conventional in any interesting sense. We also agree that speech-act conventionalism is wrong anyway, for cases such as assertions and promises – as opposed to declarations such as marrying or naming, and perhaps commands. Moreover, there are clear intuitive counterexamples to the performative delineation. As Sadock (2004, 56) points out, most theorists count *threats* as illocutionary acts, but they can hardly be done by means of the performative formula. *Bribes* make for a similar case. *Depicting* the way for you to come home by drawing a map is also intuitively an illocutionary act, which obviously cannot be done with the performative formula.³²

The reasons explaining why those acts cannot usually be made in that way are similar: an incompatibility between the goals of the acts and the resources that the performative formula allows for carrying them out. It should be clear that, by the same token, allowing for indirect assertions requires us to reject the performative criterion. Threats and bribes can rarely be made explicit, because it is in their nature that they usually can work only by being hinted or insinuated. In the same vein, I want to allow for indirectly made speech acts, including assertions – i.e., for merely hinted or insinuated ones. Following Vendler (1976) in his apt objection to Strawson's (1964) reliance on the performative criterion, I would say that it is not because they are not illocutionary acts that bribes or hinted assertions cannot be made with the performative formula; it is just because an attempt at doing them in such a way would be to commit "illocutionary suicide". Searle (1979, ix) offers the proper take on this, by suggesting that hinting and insinuating are just *manners* or *styles* in which illocutionary acts are made, as opposed to ways of depriving them of their illocutionary character.

Be this as it may, the appeal to the performative criterion or to speaker-meaning wouldn't help Green to support the view that verbal fictions consist of mere acts of speech, because there wouldn't be anything untoward in embedding the content of a fiction in the performative formula: I hereby invite you to imagine that Why then shouldn't they be speech acts, as Currie and I think they are? This is not the place to try to characterize the nature of speech acts in general, assuming they have one. But there is something sufficiently theory-neutral we can observe about paradigm cases, such as assertions, requests, questions and promises, that may help us here. They involve speakers' commitments vis-à-vis sufficiently determinate representational contents, whether or not these commitments are constitutive of the acts (as normative accounts would want) or just derivative from their non-normative nature, given norms with other sources, perhaps morality or rationality.³³ These commitments are such that their failure usually lead to criticisms of the speakers: *what you told me is not true; I don't see any reason to do what you ask me to; the question you are asking has no answer; I don't see why I should have any interest in your doing what you promise me to do ...*

Now, there are corresponding things we say about fictions, and hence I take this to be a good intuitive reason to count them as communicative acts – speech acts of a specific category, not mere acts of speech. We have an intuitive notion of the *plot*, *story* or *content* presented in a fiction. This is what, on Walton's (1990) view (from which all current speech act accounts take inspiration, even though his is not one), the fiction requires imagining for a competent engagement with it, if the question arises. This is also what Lewis (1978) tries to capture as *truth in fiction*, with his preferred possible worlds framework. Now, we criticize fictions relative to this notion, in ways that suggest a proprietary illocutionary force (vis-à-vis such propositional contents) of the kind that Currie (1990) and Stock (2017) articulate in Walton-inspired Gricean terms – as proposals to imagine – whereas I (SUPPRESSED FOR BLIND REFEREEING) have tried to capture it in normative terms. Thus, we complain that the plot is *boring* (to imagine), or implausible, or just impossible to make out – thus upsetting, or simply blocking, the imaginative project of engaging with the relevant fiction.³⁴

With this in mind, we can raise a serious challenge to Green's characterization of fictions as comprising mere "acts of speech". In the quotation provided above he defines them as "series of sentences whose contents are presented as to be imagined". I don't think he has any other choice, given his view that they are just acts of speech. But we can now see that this is clearly inadequate. Nabokov's Kinbote in *Pale Fire* is a textbook case of an unreliable narrator. When he tells us that a Zemblan assassin intending to kill Zembla's deposed king (i.e., Kinbote himself) accidentally killed the poet Shade, we are not supposed to take this to be true in the fiction, part of the story we are presented to be imagined. We must infer instead that the killer is the insane Jack Grey, who wanted to kill the judge who put him away, mistaking Shade for him.³⁵ The sentences comprising the fiction are there for us to entertain their contents, indeed; but this doesn't mean that we are always supposed to imagine such contents, in the sense relevant for the proper appraisal of fictions on account of their true nature. In many cases we are supposed to imagine instead other contents that we only arrive at through inferences, based in part on that of the sentences comprising the fiction.

In (SUPPRESSED FOR BLIND REFEREEING), I gave another compelling example, intended to refute Lewis' (1978) account of truth-in-fiction. On that account, the worlds constituting the fictional content "are the worlds where the fiction is told, but as known fact rather than

fiction. The act of storytelling occurs, just as it does here at our world; but there it *is* what here it falsely purports to be: truth-telling about matters whereof the teller has knowledge” (*ibid*, 266). I quoted in full (my own translation of) a short story by Julio Cortázar, “A Continuity of Parks”. It features a reader “transported” to what he reasonably takes to be a merely fictional story which, unfortunately unbeknownst to him, narrates a succession of events in fact simultaneously unfolding while he reads, eventually leading to (one is supposed to infer) his being killed “offscreen” in the story’s denouement. This is the central plot element of the fiction, the proposition that any competent interpreter must imagine, for her to properly appreciate it. However, as I explain there, we would never have concluded it from the assumption that we are confronted with assertions in nearby worlds, trying to find out what the fictional narrator puts forward there “as known fact”. Rather, we appear to take the fiction as presented by a fiction-maker, motivated to provoke interesting imaginings.

How are those inferences to be explained? As I have argued (SUPPRESSED FOR BLIND REFEREEING), the speech-act view of fiction-making offers clear-cut answers, based on general principles. For these inferences work essentially along the lines of the extension of (I) to speech-act indirection in general outlined above, on the assumption that the “accepted purpose or direction” of the conversation that Grice’s (1975, 26) Cooperative Principle entreats us to take into account in general is this particular case the one specific to fiction-making.³⁶ I fail to see how cases like these, central to our understanding of fictions, can be accounted for on Green’s assumption that fictions comprise just “acts of speech”. At the very least, they pose a very serious challenge to that view.

Assuming thus on this basis that I am entitled to the speech-act view of fictions, I come back now to the question whether fiction-making itself should be considered an indirect speech act, when verbally done. Konrad (2017, 53-4) has an interesting discussion of this. She dismisses the indirect speech act account, with an argument that I take to be flawed. She considers only “additive” indirection, on the model of Grice’s “gas petrol” example, in which both the direct and the indirect act are actually performed. She argues on this basis that, when it comes to the fictional contribution of declarative utterances, the indirect-act view would thus entail that, implausibly, the “author’s commitment to the normal rules of the assertive speech act would still remain” (*ibid.*). However, as Grice himself noticed and has been repeatedly pointed out after him (cf. e.g., Vandevcken 1991, 375-6, Meibauer 2009), there are “substitution” implicatures in addition to additive ones, in which the locuted act is not actually made; our examples (3)-(5) are cases in point, as are the initial request examples.³⁷

Nonetheless, I agree with Konrad that fiction-making is a direct speech act of its own, even when made by verbal means. I take it that this is the proper thing to say also about the case of declarations like naming, marrying or giving out players; there is no indirection going on in such cases. I take fiction-making to be done by the author pretending to do something – or having other actors doing the pretending. The pretend actions might be non-verbal, as in mime or ballet, or verbal; there is no significant difference in the two cases. Searle (1974-5) was right about this;³⁸ he was only wrong in claiming that there is nothing more to fiction-making than pretense, for which he gave a bad argument (Currie 1990, 12-16).³⁹

7. Assertions in Fiction as Indirection

I'll finally move to assertions in fiction. As indicated at the outset, with Green, other writers (Friend 2014, Reicher 2012, Stock 2017) and common sense I assume that fictions can make assertions, (1) and (2) being good examples for that. Now, on my own account the assertions in question are dependent on the primarily fiction-made content – via genre assumptions about fiction-made contents that are also put forward as providing knowledge by fiction-makers with certain ambitions. Following Stock (2017, 24, 29, 32) I take it that when Fowler wrote (2) she was not just fiction-making its content, although certainly she was doing that too – for the content put forward to be imagined by the full “utterance” constituting the novel is to be determined in part by the content of (2). I take it that she was also asserting it, providing her readers with correct information she had properly researched, and liable to being correctly criticized if the claim is false or merely accidentally true. And I suggest that she was asserting it *in virtue of* fiction-making it; i.e., that its role in the constitution of the fiction that she was producing is essential in explaining that she was also assertorically committing herself to this. This is on account of the type of fiction that this is supposed to be, and the sort of claims that authors like Fowler are understood to commit themselves to by producing such fictions. This would hence be an indirect assertion; but one made by uttering a sentence whose literal content is precisely the asserted one.

(I) provides an adequate framework for the just outlined account of how this goes.⁴⁰ The details can be further developed along lines that others have already given. In his already mentioned classical discussion of “truth in fiction”, Lewis (1978) envisaged two ways of learning from fiction that provide such elaboration. The first, applying to (1) and (2), he derives from the role played by an assumption that has come to be known (after Walton (1990)) as the *Reality Principle* in going beyond what is explicitly presented in fictions in order to determine their content – a principle roughly to the effect that we can take to be “true in the fiction” what is true *simpliciter*, to the extent that it is consistent with what is explicitly made part of the content of the fiction: “There may be an understanding between the author and his readers to the effect that what is true in his fiction, on general questions if not on particulars, is not to depart from what he takes to be the truth”.⁴¹ Along similar lines, Gendler (2000, 76) has explained how principles allowing the import of truths about the actual world to the content of fictions are a coin whose reverse side are corresponding *export principles*, allowing audiences in some cases (realist fiction genres, such as historical novels, biopics, etc.) to infer from fictional contents truths about the actual world.⁴²

This first mechanism accounting for how we can learn straightforward empirical truths from fictions implements (I) in a specific way: the genre-codified “understanding between the author and his readers” that Lewis talks about I see as an invocation of the maxim of Relation, circumscribed to the specific conversations that engagements with fictions in the relevant genres are, and their specific illocutionary aims. Given this, unlike Green I take these cases to already support Literary Cognitivism (LC) in the way he (2017a, 48) defines it: “literary fiction can be a source of knowledge in a way that depends crucially on its being fictional”. His reason (2016, 286) against this is not that he understands LC – when it comes to propositional knowledge – to require that the knowledge in question could not be provided by non-fictional means; he explicitly rejects this interpretation. His reason appears to be that the

fictional settings in which (1) and (2) are embedded are not “crucial” to our acquiring the relevant pieces of factual knowledge. However, on the suggested account the assertions are in fact inferred given a maxim of relation specific to the relevant fiction-making genre: it is the positive evaluation of the imaginative projects proposed by the fictions as such, given the fundamental illocutionary category to which they belong, which requires that their settings are sufficiently realistic. I think it is reasonable to count this as “crucial” enough to the specific fictional character of those works for these cases to already validate LC.

I agree with Green however that a second way by which we can learn propositions from fictions more clearly establishes LC, which Lewis (1978, 278-9) also envisaged:

Fiction can offer us contingent truths about this world. It cannot take the place of non-fictional evidence, to be sure. But sometimes evidence is not lacking. We who have lived in the world for a while have plenty of evidence, but we may not have learned as much from it as we could have done. This evidence bears on a certain proposition. If only that proposition is formulated, straightway it will be apparent that we have very good evidence for it. If not, we will continue not to know it. Here, fiction can help us. If we are given a fiction such that the proposition is obviously true in it, we are led to ask: and is it also true *simpliciter*? And sometimes, when we have plenty of unappreciated evidence, to ask the question is to know the answer.

Gendler (*op. cit.*, 76) calls this second inferential process “*narrative as factory*: I export things from the story whose truth becomes apparent as a result of thinking about the story itself. These I add to my stock the way I add knowledge gained by modeling”. Green (2010, 2016, 2017a) has nicely developed a model which I take to be an elaboration of these ideas. On this model, we can acquire knowledge from fiction along the lines that we do when we make valid inferences based on suppositions. We can illustrate this with what appear to be thematic claims made in fictions about the very philosophical matter we have been discussing – the possibility of acquiring knowledge from fiction. Being professionally interested in the topic, we should expect fictions to convey constatives about it. And of course, there are many examples of this kind. The already mentioned short story by Julio Cortázar, “A Continuity of Parks”, is a good example. A claim we can take it to be putting for our consideration is modal: there might be fictions whose contents are entirely true. This would be a philosophical claim, contradicting some views on fiction (cp. Deutsch 2000). Drawing on recent work on the epistemology of modality, Stokes (2006) elaborates on how fictions support such modal claims.⁴³ The basic idea is that they make situations conceivable; under certain assumptions, developed in different ways by different philosophers, this supports a claim that what is thus conceivable is thereby also possible. Lewis (1978, 278) also envisaged this: “Fiction might serve as a means for discovery of modal truth ... Here the fiction serves the same purpose as an example in philosophy ... the philosophical example is just a concise bit of fiction.”

The two sorts of cases I have discussed for assertions (and other constative acts) to be indirectly made in fictions are instances of indirection of the *additive* kind, typically inferred in accordance with (I) via derivations based on a Relation maxim specific to conversations whose aims are those constitutive of fiction-making, and involving genre considerations. We can also think of examples of *substitution* indirection involving purported fictions. Consider,

for instance, an obvious roman-à-clef “novel” which, being terribly boring, narratively pedestrian, lacking any interesting dialogue or ideas, and so on and so forth, falls manifestly short of fulfilling the specific goals of fictions; while, on the other hand, it contains interesting and reliable information, and its having being published as fiction can be easily explained – censorship in a dictatorial state, potential expensive lawsuits in a liberal one.

8. Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed two disagreements I have with Mitch Green’s work, if I understand it correctly: that fictions result from specific illocutionary acts; and that they make assertions and other constative acts through a process of speech act indirection. I have assumed a theoretically motivated notion of assertion, and I have argued relative to it that there are indirect, merely hinted or insinuated acts in that kind. Disagreement about these matters is not merely verbal, I have argued; for the target kinds, assertion and indirection, are explanatorily significant classes. The former is supposed to explain the data that expressive and normative theorists have deployed to argue for their specific accounts: for a specific expressive theory, either Gricean or an alternative one like that advanced by Green, or for assertion being defined by a specific constitutive norm, truth, justification or knowledge. They thus include, for instance, data about instances of the kind made by agents lacking Gricean reflective intentions, or about normative conversational patterns. I have shown that data of those very sorts are available for merely indirect assertions. Intuitions about the distinction between lying and misleading, as other data I haven’t been able to discuss here, support a notion of indirection like the one advanced here. For arguments to the opposite based on the intuitive distinction between lying and misleading merely trace one between explicit and indirect assertions, the former corresponding to *sayings* in one of the theoretically important senses that philosophers have given to the word. I have articulated a defeasible but theoretically useful criterion for *what is said* – in a related philosophically important sense, in which it doesn’t presuppose assertoric commitment. With that tool, I have provided a normative account of indirection consistent with central Gricean views, and capable of answering the objections of critics skeptic about Grice’s achievements. Finally, I have shown how it provides a good framework to understand how fictions make assertions.

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Notes

¹ Cf. Bach & Harnish (1979), 62-5; Vanderveken (1991), 376; Bianchi (2013), 121-2; Davis 2014, §1; Green (2017b), 1598-9.

² Cp. Davis forthcoming, §2.

³ Contexts therefore in which Bach & Harnish's (1979, 7) *Linguistic* and *Communicative* presumptions are operative, and whatever comes with them by way of mutual beliefs.

⁴ In this discussion, I use 'natural' not in opposition to 'social', but in the way the term is used to refer to properties and kinds in Lewis' (1983) "sparse" (as opposed to "abundant") sense. In fact, the account I'll assume for assertion and the one I'll provide for indirection take both to be "social constructs", definable by social rules. Natural properties and kinds are here those that play substantive explanatory roles, and hence have a "hidden nature" which only reveals itself after theorizing. The theorizing in question might just be philosophical, armchair-like; but it should be unifiable with empirical theorizing along standard lines.

⁵ Stainton (2016) makes a distinction similar to my own between what I will later call *sayings* (i.e., assertions that have been made explicit by conventional means) and assertions ('full-on stating' vs. 'quasi-stating', in his own terms). Like me, he takes sayings (assertion in central cases) to have a social, normative nature, to be conventional, tied to the declarative mood, and to underwrite the distinction between lying and misleading (*ibid.*, 407). Pepp (forthcoming) also makes a distinction similar to my own. She also points out that the assertoric acts we make indirectly may well have the same substantive features that expressive and normative theories ascribe to assertions.

⁶ Cf. SUPPRESSED FOR BLIND REFEREEING.

⁷ Cf. König & Siemund (2007) on the individuation of the moods.

⁸ Cf. Sadock (1974, 2004). Together with assertion, these acts belong in what Green (2017c) calls *assertive family*.

⁹ Cf. Tyler & Evans (2003) on prepositions, for another example involving functional elements of the lexicon that (in contrast with some substantive lexical items) some philosophers think that cannot be polysemous (cf., e.g., Glanzberg 2007).

¹⁰ Davis (2014) similarly characterizes implicatures as “either (i) the act of meaning or implying one thing by saying something else, or (ii) the object of that act”. He acknowledges that ‘saying’ must be taken here in a technical “narrow” sense. If ‘saying’ in Davis’ narrow sense corresponds to what I’ll call below ‘locuting’, his characterization is similar to mine, for the specific case of implicatures. As a final characterization of indirection, however, I would reject it, mentioning (1) and (2) as counterexamples. In addition to account for this, my own proposal elaborates on the procedure that Davis’ just gestures at with ‘by’, without further explication, in ways he would reject. For similar reasons, I can only accept as providing a pretheoretical characterization Bianchi’s (2013, 107) suggestion: “Implicating ... amounts to conveying a (propositional) content without saying it – a content providing no contribution to the truth-conditions of the proposition expressed by the sentence uttered”.

¹¹ The example is from König & Siemund (2007); Reimer (forthcoming) also argues for the possibility of indirect assertion, focusing on the case of rhetorical questions, of which she offers many examples along the lines of (3).

¹² These examples are intended as cases of particularized implicatures. Maybe they are conventionalized; in that case, I ask the reader to take them as if she encounters them for the first time – as was actually the case with me when I first found the ‘Thanks for not browsing our magazines.’ example. Green (2017d) has a distinction between *Image-Demanding* and *Image-Permitting* metaphors, which I take to be related to the non-conventionalized (the

former) vs. conventionalized (the latter) one. He might allow that the latter might indirectly make assertions, although I am not sure whether that would be an adequate interpretation. In any case, I am making the claim for both cases. Viebahn (2017) provides similar examples of putative “non-literal” assertions, adding cases of hyperbole and loose use. His views are different from the ones defended here, but this shows that I am far from being idiosyncratic in finding at least *prima facie* worth considering the view that assertions are made in the cases offered for illustration. In addition to Bergmann (1982) and Camp (2006) on metaphorical assertions, cf. also Graham (2010), fn. 5, p. 151, and MacFarlane (2011), 80-1.

¹³ Williams (2002, 74) has a similar condition, but he only claims that it applies to “standard” or “central” cases of assertion, something I of course don’t take issue with.

¹⁴ This doesn’t apply to Green’s view, as already acknowledged. In fact, Green (2017c) makes related points against views of the kind critically discussed here.

¹⁵ Alston (2000, 114) and Stokke (2013, 46-7) provide considerations sounding very much like this to defend accounts with similar problems to the Fregean one, close to it in spirit.

¹⁶ These accounts will explain the normative appraisals we make of assertions as derivable from (GA) plus moral or prudential norms. Given these aims, I understand ‘reason’ in (GA) not to be taken in normative terms; a reason is perhaps here a piece of evidence figuring as a premise in an inference. Bach & Harnish are not explicit about this, but Bach (2008) makes it clear that he takes what he counts as the central norm of assertion (belief) to be regulative.

¹⁷ This is just for the sake of simplifying the discussion. As indicated above, I take the moods to be polysemous. One can thus take assertion (what is conventionally done by default with declaratives) to be instead a disjunctive kind, including acts defined by some of the rules that have been canvassed in the literature; cf. Levin (2008) and Goldberg (2015).

¹⁸ I have discussed Green’s arguments at greater length elsewhere, and also the other arguments, cf. SUPPRESSED FOR BLIND REFEREEING.

¹⁹ The quoted text only says that indirect communication “is less common” than assumed; Green (2017c, 7, 10), while still claiming on the basis of the lying/misleading distinction that “conversational implicature is not a species of assertion”, allows that “some, albeit unusual cases of indirect assertions are possible”. In p.c., he tells me he had in mind here cases like *putting 2 and 2 together*. X and Y are detectives trying to solve a crime. X tell Y that it was either Jones or Smith. After a few moments of evidence-gathering and calculation, X also assert that it was not Jones. On Green’s views, X is thereby *assertorically committed* to the conclusion that Smith is the culprit, but not all entailments of things one assert to which one is assertorically committed are thereby assertions (Green 1999, 89). But in this example it does seem that X is (indirectly) asserting that Jones is the culprit, and Green wants to allow for it as possible exceptions. Perhaps this was already implicit in the concession, but let me note that I don’t find it is strictly speaking consistent with the claim that conversational implicature is not a species of assertion. This is because I take this assertion to be a conversational implicature – one analogous to an example from Davis discussed below, §5, in which the implicated content entails what is said. In any case, it should be clear that the cases of conversationally implicated assertions I want to allow for go beyond this.

²⁰ Cf. SUPPRESSED FOR BLIND REFEREEING.

²¹ Pepp (forthcoming) makes similar points.

²² Given his assumptions about what is said, Grice contends that the speaker in such a case merely “makes as if to say”. This is in part why I am resorting to the ugly sounding ‘locuting’, although I share the majority view (cf. Bach 2012, Davis 2014, and further references there)

that Grice's is here idiosyncratic and we shouldn't follow him. To skirt the debate, I am reserving 'say' for a Gricean sense that entails asserting.

²³ Cf. SUPPRESSED FOR BLIND REFEREEING).

²⁴ "The presence of a conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out ...", Grice 1975, 31; "the final test for the presence of a conversational implicature had to be, as far as I could see, a derivation of it. One has to produce an account of how it could have arisen and why it is there. And I am very much opposed to any kind of sloppy use of this philosophical tool, in which one does not fulfil this condition", Grice 1981, 187.

²⁵ Cf., e.g., Bach & Harnish (1979, 64) on the quality maxim for what they call 'acknowledgements', including expressions of gratitude; see also Green's (2017b, 1598-9) own generalization.

²⁶ Cf. Audi's (2003, 154-5) remarks on the distinction between *reasoned beliefs*, which phenomenologically feel like resulting from inferences, and *beliefs for reason*, which don't, in spite of being inferentially justified.

²⁷ I stand, however, by my previous criticisms of Recanati's own deployment of the principle (SUPPRESSED FOR BLIND REFEREEING).

²⁸ A crucial element in showing that the underdetermination of indirectly conveyed meanings need not go beyond the one already afflicting what is said, on account of vagueness and referential indeterminacy, lies in having a more complex view of context that critics usually take for granted, as Camp (forthcoming) and Stokke (2016), among others, have recently pointed out; cf. (SUPPRESSED FOR BLIND REFEREEING). This is another topic to which Green (1999, 2017b) has made important contributions.

²⁹ The same account applies to the example provided in p.c. by Green discussed above, fn. 19, which is why I think it is a case of conversational implicatures.

³⁰ Cf. Bach & Harnish (1979), 10-12. As it will transpire, Currie appears to mean by ‘literal’ what I do by ‘direct’. If so, as I explain below, in fact I agree with him that fiction-making is “literal”, thus understood, even when done with verbal means.

³¹ Green would agree; cf. his (forthcoming) for a nice recent formulation. There he rejects, as I (SUPPRESSED FOR BLIND REFEREEING) have done, Hanks’ (2015) identification of propositions with types of assertoric acts. Nonetheless, I disagree with his (forthcoming, fn. 3) acceptance of Hanks’ (2015, 9) rejection of what he labels the “taxonomic” distinction between force and content. This is the view that there is a meaning-component (a truth-conditional component, traditionally conceived as the proposition proper) common to all attitudes and speech acts, including questions, directives and assertions. Hanks’s argument, which Green apparently buys, relies on the point that contemporary linguistics assigns different semantic objects to declarative, interrogative and imperative sentences. This is of course right, and it is the point I am relying on in the main text, in saying that some force-indications are semantically conveyed. But, as Collins (2017, §5) points out, Hanks’ rejection of the taxonomic distinction doesn’t follow at all from this; it is in fact as unstable as his rejection of the “constitutive” dimension of the distinction. For current semantics also distinguishes meanings for NPs, meanings for VPs, and forceless meanings for combinations thereof, which are common constituents of the full meanings of imperatives, interrogatives and indicatives. As Pagin (forthcoming) notes, Hanks’s formalizations in fact also discern them. Given that Hanks appears to have no qualms with abstract entities *per se*, the appeal to current semantics appears to legitimize force-involving sentential meanings as much as their forceless common “parts”. This is what, with the tradition, I’ll keep calling ‘proposition’.

³² Green (2017b, 1595, fn) offers what is in fact a different delineation of speech acts, although I assume he takes it to be a mere variation on the official one: “I use ‘speech act’ to

refer to an act that can be performed by speaker-meaning that one is doing so”. Although I don’t take speaker-meaning to be constitutive of meaning, neither in Grice’s nor Green’s understanding, my objections to the performative definition don’t extend to this. For, as Camp (forthcoming) points out, people who hint a bribe or a threat speaker-mean it. The same obviously applies to depiction. Green (forthcoming, §1(b)) also offers the speaker-meaning definition; he counts threats as speech acts, not acts of speech.

³³ Green (1999, 2000) appeals to a general normative notion of commitment in his deservedly influential work on general features of different speech acts.

³⁴ Alward (2010a) provides a nice metaphor for the fiction-making speech acts from which I take fictions to result: they would be the deployment of “word-sculptures” – it would be better to generalize this to “representation-sculptures”, so as to encompass films and pictures. He provides a “weakly institutionalist” account of fictionality, which is consistent with my favored (SUPPRESSED FOR BLIND REFEREEING) normative speech-act account. It is “weak” in that it allows fiction-making to depend on a practice or convention, but it doesn’t require it. Alward himself, however, takes his account to be an alternative to speech-act views, which he rejects. His criticisms, however (*op. cit.*, 395) only take into consideration Gricean descriptive proposals such as Currie’s or Stock’s; they are easily dealt with by normative views like the one I favor (see SUPPRESSED FOR BLIND REFEREEING for a reply, and fn. 38 below).

³⁵ Cf. Wood (1998), 198.

³⁶ Green (1999, 2017b) elaborates on how the Cooperative Principle is just a general one, to be further specified relative to the specific conversational aims, record and acts comprising particular conversations. He (2017, §4.3) makes a good case for fictions as conversations (cf. Carroll 1992); Dixon & Bortolussi (2001) argue against this, but Gerrig & Horton (2001)

provide a good rejoinder. However, the view of fiction engagement as conversation also fits better with taking them to be results of specific speech acts, than mere acts of speech.

³⁷ Against Dinges (2015), I believe that the constitutive derivation for all implicatures, both additive and substitutional, takes as a premise the violation of a maxim at the level of what is said – usually Relation in the substitutional cases that Dinges focusses on. On a similar vein, Bach & Harnish (1979, 70) distinguish nonliteral direct acts (*substitutional* implicatures) from indirect ones (*additive* implicatures); cf. also Bach (1994, 144). This just reflects the significance that for Griceans has whether or not what is locuted is also *said*. From the present perspective, the distinction is spurious – Bach & Harnish themselves rightly worry about the case of understatement, which should be indirect but literal for them (*op. cit.* 292).

³⁸ I thus agree with Alward's (2009) take on "onstage illocution": it is just pretense. He, however, argues that this tells against speech act theories of fiction-making like Currie's or my own. His argument assumes that "fictional storytelling is best viewed as a species of theatrical performance in which storytellers portray the narrators of the stories they tell. As a result, the aforementioned theories of fictional discourse can be used without revision as accounts of theatrical discourse" (*op. cit.*, 321). This is wrong. I grant that all verbal fictions have narrators, explicit or implicit ones, and also that actual storytellers of verbal fictions "portray" such fictional narrators. But it doesn't follow at all from this that "theories of fictional discourse can be used without revision as accounts of theatrical discourse". Alward's argument is predicated on a confusion, hidden in the ambiguous expression 'the goal of theatrical illocutionary action' (*op. cit.*, 323). Actors in general and the storyteller of a verbal fiction in particular play two different roles. (i) There is first the actor-role, with its defining goals; I agree with Alward that this should be seen as pretending. (ii) There is in addition the storyteller-role. The difference is clearer in the theatrical case, because the author of the play

is typically someone else than the actors; but it nonetheless clearly exists for verbal storytellers. For instance, in portraying an unreliable narrator such as Kinbote in the example below, the storyteller in his first role portrays someone asserting *p*, while in his second capacity he invites his audience to imagine *not-p*. Currie is theorizing about (ii), not about (i). The fact that (i) is just pretense is thus compatible with (ii) being understood as a speech act.

³⁹ Cp. Hoffman 2004, 519-20, which I don't think succeeds in recovering Searle's argument by appeal to Searle's "Principle of Expressibility" (cp. Alward 2009, 324): as suggested above in the main text, the proposals or invitations that I take acts of fiction-making to be are, indeed, explicitly expressible, by means of the performative formula.

⁴⁰ The works referenced right after stating (I) – including Bach & Harnish (1979, 64), Martinich (1980, 219-20), Vanderveken 1991, 376-380, and Green (1999, 2017b, 1598-9) – dispose of Alward's (2010b, 356; 2009, 324-5) worry that an extension of Grice's maxims to the act of fiction-making would be *ad hoc*; cf Kania (2007, 406) for a similar reply.

⁴¹ Cf. Friend (2017) for discussion and an alternative, which she calls *Reality Assumption*: everything that is (really) true is fictionally the case, unless excluded by the work.

⁴² For an account of genres that I like, and fits nicely the present normative framework, cf. Abell (2014, 32). Genre membership is a function of (common knowledge of) the purposes defining a given category (the historical novel) plus the producer's intention that the work performs those purposes.

⁴³ Cf. also Ichikawa & Jarvis (2009) and Egin (2014) on assimilating fictions on this score to thought-experiments.