"Let's imagine a world in which…": The Problem of Fictive and Nonfictive Utterances in Literature

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Abstract: This essay examines the relation between fiction and imagination and the patchwork problems between fictive and nonfictive utterances. In following a speech act approach, the author agrees generally with the intentionalist positions supported by Currie, Davies, and Stock and opposes the normative positions defended by Walton, Friend, and Matravers. However, the author departs from these other intentionalists insofar as they: (a) oppose belief and imagination as make-believe, and (b) apply fictive intent primarily to individual utterances rather than works as a whole. Rather, the author argues the constitution of literary fiction is grounded in a first-order meta-intent (or *absolute holistic intentionalism*) determined by the author's fictive attitude toward the world of the work as a whole.

Keywords: Fiction, imagination, fictive/nonfictive utterance, intentionalism, make-believe

1. Introduction

A persistent problem in the philosophy of fiction is how to make sense of the relation between fictive and nonfictive utterances in works of literature. In pretense theories, for example, fictive utterances are pretended illocutionary assertions that are modeled upon our ordinary serious assertions such that they carry the same "horizontal" meanings and yet lack the "vertical" force of being directed toward the actual world (Searle, 1974). However, there are some propositions within fictional works which the author seems to intend the reader to take seriously by directing such statements toward the actual world. The opening passage of *Anna Karenina* regarding happy and unhappy families is frequently offered as an example.

Following Walton (1990), many philosophers link fiction and imagination such that fictional propositions are ones we are prescribed to imagine. After Currie (1990, 1995), many thinkers go further and contrast the pairing of fiction and imagining with the pairing of nonfiction and belief. Nonfictive utterances are ones intended to be *believed*, whereas fictive utterances are ones intended to be *imagined*. Problems arise, however, as to how to make sense of the relation between fictive and nonfictive utterances within a given work. For some utterances the author seems to intend the reader to imagine (and so direct toward the fictional world), whereas other utterances the author seems to intend the reader to believe (and so direct toward the actual world). This leads to the so-called "Patchwork Problems" (Friend, 2011) in terms of: (a) *classification*: given the intermixture of fictive and nonfictive utterances within a text, how are we to identify a *work* as fiction or nonfiction? and (b) *psychological attitude*: how is the reader to respond to a given utterance within the work?[1] Both problems are significant. For, (a) how we classify a text influences the way we appreciate a given work (Friend, 2008, 2011, 2012), and (b) if imagining and believing are distinct mental attitudes, then the result is a rather disconnected, if not dizzying, reading experience – what Stock, calls a "schizophrenic" mixture of attitudes (2011). As Matravers (2014, p. 22) points out, these two problems often blur together, which only leads to greater confusion.

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This paper considers the relation between fiction and imagination and in turn the patchwork problems between fictive and nonfictive utterances in literature. Against Friend and Matravers, I support the consensus view that there is an essential connection between fiction and imagination, though in the literary context fictive imagining must be qualified differently from how it often is. In following a speech act approach, I agree generally with the intentionalist positions supported by Currie, Davies, and Stock in terms of fictive intent and oppose the normative positions, such as those defended by Walton, Friend, and Matravers. However, I conceive of fictive intent *holistically*, and in doing so depart from these other intentionalists, at least insofar as they: (a) insist upon an overly strong contrast between belief and imagination (i.e., as make-believe), and (b) take a bottom-up approach by applying fictive intent primarily to individual utterances (or narratives) rather than to the work as a whole. Rather, I argue the constitution of literary fiction is grounded in a first-order meta-intention, or *absolute holistic intentionalism,* that is determined by the author's (and in turn reader's) fictive attitude toward the world of the work as a whole. Nonetheless, there can be second-order intentions embedded in the fictional work/world, such that individual utterances (or passages) can be imagined and believed. By reconfiguring the connections between fiction, imagination, and belief, I reconceive the relation between fictive and nonfictive utterances in literature and in turn provide plausible solutions to both the classification and psychological problems.

2. Some Alternative Accounts

Although specific theories have differing notions of how broadly they conceive of fiction, most accounts tend to focus upon narrative, linguistic fiction. Much of the debates unfold between normativists and intentionalists, both of whom agree there is no linguistic, textual, or semantic feature that necessarily and sufficiently reveals an utterance, narrative, or work to be fictional. Rather, they opt for a more functionalist approach that requires, to varying degrees, an agreement between the shareholders of the communicative event. This usually involves the intention of the speaker and the fictional stance of the listener. Although intentionalists and normativists agree both intentions and conventions are typically involved in the practice of fiction, the dispute centers upon which one is constitutive. That is, when considering the fictional status of an utterance, narrative, or work, should we put the emphasis more upon the side of the producer/author or the receiver/reader?

Walton (1990) opts for the latter approach and so thinks intention is not necessary. He points to cloud formations or cracks in rocks that can be employed as props in games of make-believe despite not being formed with that intent. Intentionalists counter by distinguishing between something being *treated* as fiction and something *being* fiction.[2] Since Walton's account of fiction as representation is wielded as an explanatory principle that is aimed at solving many of the perennial problems within the philosophy of fiction, his account extends into realms far broader than not only linguistic narratives but also our ordinary intuitions about fiction (e.g., courtroom sketches or portraits of historical figures are fictions according to "Walt-fiction").[3] For this reason, I will not consider Walton's theory here, but instead I will summarize briefly a few influential intentionalist accounts, followed by a couple of normative critiques.

a. Intentionalist Theories of Fiction

Most intentionalists argue for the necessary connection between fiction and imagination that is grounded in fictive intent. They qualify imagination as propositional imagining, which often contrasts sharply with belief.[4] They rely upon Grice's work (1957) on assertion to make the argument for fiction as a distinct illocutionary act. In brief, Grice argues the mere statement "It is raining" is not sufficient to convey to a listener the belief that it is raining. Rather the communicative act is more complex insofar as the listener (L) must recognize that in uttering the statement (S) the utterer herself (U) holds the belief (S) and that her very intention in uttering S is to inform the listener such that L, in recognizing this intention, comes to believe S. A similar structure is at work with fictive utterance.

It is understood that the author (A) in stating P is intending her listener to imagine P and the listener (L), in recognizing this intention, should imagine P. Hence, the fictive utterance theory is a psychological account grounded in the Gricean intention of the author and the corresponding recognition of this intention by the audience, which leads to the taking up of the proper fictive (i.e., imaginative) stance as a distinct cognitive attitude.[5]

Although intentionalists generally agree that fictive intent as the prescription to imagine is a necessary condition of fiction, they disagree over whether it is sufficient. Currie and Davies argue it is not and so provide an additional condition. Their concern is not that we might have a work of fiction made up entirely of true utterances as both allow for this possibility. Rather, the problem arises when the author is aware of the factual truth of such utterances and yet nonetheless intends her audience to imagine, rather than believe, the content. For Currie, the utterances must only be accidentally true. That is, the way the fictional narrative is told must not rely entirely upon an actual sequence of events already known to be true. Thus, it cannot be the case that "if the events had been different in various ways, the [fictional] narratives would be correspondingly different" (Currie, 1990, p. 47).

Davies includes a slightly different condition. For him, the *reason* the author orders her narrative the way she does must be for storytelling purposes other than fidelity to the sequence of events based on the belief that the events actually occurred in the depicted way. "In other words, what (utterer) U wishes to achieve in having readers make-believe that p does not depend upon p's being true. That proposition's being true is not the reason for its inclusion in the narrative" (2007, p. 46). So, in Davies's construal, the narrated events may be non-accidentally true. However, the fact that they are non-accidentally true cannot be the reason (intent) for their inclusion in the narrative.

Unlike these two "binary" accounts, Stock (2011, 2017) provides a "unitary" account by arguing that fictive intent is not only necessary but also sufficient.[6] Unlike Currie, Stock does not draw a sharp distinction between imagining and believing so that the same utterance can be both imagined and believed. However, she does deny that all the utterances in a work of fiction can be both imagined and believed. For her, there must be at least one utterance that is not believed and so *only imagined*. Those utterances that are imagined and believed must be connected to an utterance that is only imagined such that the interconnected sequence comprises a single scenario. For Stock, although there can be an overlap between what one imagines and what one believes, the overlap cannot be complete. "In other words, the content of a thinker's propositional imagining cannot coincide wholly in content with the content of her current beliefs, though it may coincide with some subset of them" (2017, p. 146).

b. Normative Critiques

As mentioned, there is a consensus view that distinguishes imagination/fiction from belief/non-fiction as distinct cognitive attitudes (Schroeder and Matheson, 2006; Matravers, 2014, Davies, 2020). In his early work, Currie (1990, 1995) argues that imagination/fiction is distinguished from belief/non-fiction insofar as the former pairing does not have the same perceptual inputs and behavior outputs as the latter pairing. However, Matravers (2014) argues imagination is often involved in simulations in which the normal perceptual inputs and behavioral outputs are not in play and yet the referential content of such imaginings is nonetheless nonfictional and so is to be believed. For example, a vivid, concrete description of an historical event which the reader imaginatively visualizes can be as powerful and emotionally moving as a novel. Although the reader has none of the usual perceptual inputs or behavioral outputs, she nonetheless believes the descriptive narrative account that she also imagines (assuming the source is trustworthy and there is reasonable evidence).[7] Matravers, therefore, denies an essential link between fiction and imagination. In fact, he thinks the fiction/nonfiction contrast is unhelpful insofar as both rely imaginatively on mental models such that there is a more basic contrast between representations and confrontations. Confrontations are those apprehensions

that intrude upon our egocentric space such that we respond more immediately, whereas representations are those apprehensions we receive through a remote medium other than direct perception (e.g., through texts). In such instances, our behavioral response, if we have one at all, is less immediate or direct. However, as Stock (2017, p. 167) contends, one can grant Matravers the distinction between representation and confrontation and still argue the fiction/nonfiction contrast is a finer grained distinction within the category of representation.

Friend (2008, 2011, 2012) also denies there is a necessary connection between fiction and imagination. For Friend literary fiction is a genre (or super-genre) that she bases upon Walton's notion of a category of art, one that exhibits a cluster of non-essential properties that are standard, contra-standard or variable. Standard features are ones we expect in a genre, contra-standard are ones we do not expect, and variable are ones that can differ in a given category without influencing classification. Friend admits the invitation to imagine content is a standard feature of fiction; however, it is not a necessary feature. Moreover, she thinks the invitation to imagine content is also evident in nonfiction insofar as we not only form mental images of historical narratives but also make-believe fictional utterances within nonfictional works (as with the histories of Herodotus and Tacitus). So, Friend too allows for a mixture of utterances to be only imagined and utterances to be believed in works of fiction and nonfiction. Thus, it is the recognition of the various norms of contemporary practices regarding classification that determines the reader's proper response in terms of how to appreciate a given work. Such norms are subject to change over time. For example, it was standard for classical historians to include statements that are merely to be imagined (e.g., speeches, internal thoughts), whereas for contemporary historians this would be contra-standard and so looked upon controversially, as exemplified by *Dutch,* a biography of Ronald Reagan that is told by a fictional narrator (Morris, 1999).

There are many points of agreement between Friend's position and mine own, particularly in her holistic approach to the problem of fiction, which focuses on works rather than utterances. Nonetheless, my position departs from hers in two significant respects. First, I side with the intentionalists who ground literary fiction in fictive intent and so place the emphasis upon the producer rather than the consumer of fiction, though of course the reader must modify her own intentional approach in a way that aligns with the author's. Secondly, Friend denies there is any conception of imagination as a distinct cognitive attitude that distinguishes fiction from nonfiction. Friend states her claim unequivocably: "I argue that there is no interpretation of imagining or make-believe that designates a response distinctive to fiction as opposed to nonfiction" (2008, p. 2). In contrast, I hold there is a distinct kind of imagining that adequately accords with the producing and consuming of literary fiction.

Moreover, there are other problems with Friend's account. First, while Friend admits the invitation to merely imagine certain content is a standard feature of fiction, her genre account does not explain why this is so. Secondly, because there is nothing more substantial to ground fiction other than whatever conventional norms happen to be in place at a given period, it leaves her account open, like institutional accounts, to the charge of circular reasoning.[8] Finally, one can accept the important role of correct classification, genre identification and other conventions in directing us to a proper attitude and in turn appreciation of a text while nonetheless holding that such conventions are merely regulative rather than constitutive of literary fiction.

3. Two Points of Disagreement with the Intentionalists

a. Fictive Imagining as Make-Believe

Obviously much more can be said about the intentionalist accounts discussed above, in terms of further specifying their positions and highlighting their merits. Indeed, my own account is indebted to much of their analyses. However, for reasons of economy, and to clarify my own version of fictive intent, I will focus on two significant points of disagreement. (Actually, the first issue may not be a

disagreement as much as an ambiguity, though the reason for the ambiguity is rooted, I think, in the second issue, which is manifestly a point of disagreement.)

The first issue has to do with what is meant by "imagine." Imagination is involved in so many of our mental acts that many philosophers resist the temptation to provide a "full-fledged account of what it is to imagine" (Walton, 1990, p. 21). Indeed, as Currie (2020, p. 16) points out, "Given a broad enough conception of the imagination, it will turn out that imagination is involved in any process of learning we can find, because imagination is involved in all mental activities."[9] If we are to link fiction to imagination, then, we must narrow the concept so to specify how imagination functions within the specifically literary fictional context.

As already mentioned, theories that connect imagination and fiction typically focus upon narrative literature. Nonetheless, one frequently finds in such accounts, references and examples that go beyond the specifically literary fictional context (e.g., counterfactuals, children's games, daydreams, jokes, thought experiments, novel explanations, suppositions, and so forth). In contrast, my account remains quite strictly within the confines of literature understood broadly here as linguistic narratives (though much of my argument seems applicable to film as well). This would include the obvious literary genres of novels, short stories, drama, and epic poetry, though it might also include other forms of poetry and perhaps jokes, at least those communicated in narrative form. In short, it includes whatever might be characterized, quite broadly, as "story." Thus, our concern is what distinguishes the imaginative activity of engaging with literary fictional stories, be it the producing or consuming of them. Let us call this distinct cognitive attitude "L-F-Imagining."[10]

What, then, is L-F-Imagining? First, it cannot be merely the forming of mental images. For, as we have seen, nonfictional narratives (memoirs, biographies, histories) often present their content in as vivid and descriptive ways as a novel. In such cases, readers imaginatively engage with nonfictional works in ways as vicariously intense and emotionally charged as those of fictional stories. Rather, L-F Imagining is a propositional imagining, one that with the appropriate reflexive Gricean intent requires a cognitive attitude that is distinct from ordinary assertion. Early theorists, such as Searle, appeal to the language of pretense such that a fictional utterance is a pretended, non-serious assertion. Many critics point out the problems associated with the notion of pretense and so replace it with make-believe.[11] However, make-believe, as commonly construed, is susceptible to many of the criticisms directed at pretense theories.

Admittedly, there is a broad and loose sense of make-believe that readily applies to much literary fiction insofar as some of the content is created or made-up. Nonetheless, as Gibson argues, there has developed a "canonical" sense of make-believe that is much stronger than the more neutral imagination insofar as the former contrasts sharply with belief in a way the latter does not. The result is "the attitude of make-believe builds into the fictive stance an *antagonism with reality*" (2007, p.172).[12] Thus, in the canonical construal there remains a carry-over from pretense theories such that to make-believe means to pretend some of the content to be true or real (i.e., world-adequate), even though one knows or believes it is not (i.e., that it is false or made-up). But, although the author of a fictional work frequently does make up some of the content of her story, "(t)he danger is the common identification of make-believe in this canonical sense with the *basic* imaginative stance we take toward the content – *all of it* – of works of literary fiction" (Gibson, 2007, p.158).

Currie captures the stronger contrast made by fictive utterance theorists when he states: "What distinguishes reading fiction from the reading of non-fiction is … the attitude we adopt toward the content of what we read: make-belief in one case, belief in the other" (1990, p. 21). Interestingly Davies's early work (2007) seems not to require the fictional content be made up in this strong sense. However, his more recent accounts (2015, 2022) affirm the stronger contrast in his distinction between "real setting" and "fictive content." It is only the fictive content that we are prescribed to imagine (i.e., make-believe) since those aspects of the real setting (such as the city of London in Sherlock Holmes stories) are ones we are to believe. Only the narrative must not abide by the fidelity

constraint since many utterances in the work of fiction apply to the actual world. Once more the relevant contrast is an opposition between *believing* some content (the *real* setting) and *make-believing* other (*fictive*) content.

Stock weakens the contrast insofar as she argues explicitly that we can imagine and believe the same content. Nonetheless, ambiguity remains. For, according to Stock, fictional imagination requires "the reader does not believe *some part* of the wider work's content" (2011, p. 159). But, as Friend points out, does "not believe," mean "*dis*believe" (which suggests the opposition to belief) or merely "not included in one's set of beliefs" (which suggests a more neutral imagining) (2011, p. 169)? It is not clear. Indeed, there are passages in which Stock seems to equate utterances which are not to be believed with falsehoods, once more suggesting the stronger antagonism between imagine and believe.[13]

Overall, then, I agree with these other intentionalists that L-F Imagining is grounded in fictive intent and requires a cognitive attitude distinct from belief as ordinary assertion. However, I disagree that literary-fictive attitude is one of make-believe insofar as make-believe contrasts sharply with belief and truth. Rather I hold that L-F-Imagining is a specific kind of communication or illocutionary act that requires a cognitive attitude that is distinct from ordinary assertion and in turn belief, while nonetheless not being opposed to or in necessary conflict with belief. To explain how this is possible, let us turn to the second point of disagreement I have with these other intentionalists.

b. Holism vs. the Piecemeal Approach

The ambiguity over L-F-Imagining as make-believe seems rooted in a deeper disagreement I have with these other intentionalists, namely, in their overall approach to the problem of fiction, one which might be called piecemeal rather than holistic. Currie best sums up the piecemeal approach, which moves from parts (utterances) to the whole (work), rather than the reverse, when he says, "(T)he fictionality of works is going to depend upon the fictionality of the statements they contain" (1990, p. 49). This approach leads Currie (like Searle, 1975) to accept the inevitability of the patchwork problems insofar as a work can consist of an intermixture of fictive and nonfictive utterances. Currie brushes aside the classification problem (PP1) as uninteresting, but, as Friend demonstrates, how we classify a given work affects greatly how we appreciate it. Moreover, as Stock points out, this intermixture leaves Currie's account open to the second patchwork problem (PP2) insofar as readers are forced into a schizophrenic patchwork of attitudes in that they should make-believe some utterances and believe others.

In contrast, I take the relevant fictive intent and in turn attitude of L-F-Imagining to be holistic, in that *all* utterances explicitly stated in a fictional work (as well as all inferences) apply primarily to *a* fictional world, rather than *the* actual world. In this sense, fictive imagining can be understood as World-Imagining. It is the fictional world of the work as a whole that is distinct from the actual world (as a distinct spatio-temporal framework), even though a fictional world may overlap with the actual world in many (or most and perhaps even all) respects. There is, then, a constitutive meta-act of fictive intent that grounds the fictional world and in turn corresponding attitude in which all utterances are to be integrated and so understood. This constitutive act is a primary, first-order intentional invitation by the author who says implicitly both to herself and to her reader, "Let's imagine a world in which …" The fictional world, once constituted by this act and in turn agreement, becomes more and more determinate by being built up by the establishment of whatever principles and props are part of the specific game. These general principles are revealed slowly to the reader through the particulars as the story unfolds. So, if a text states that a donkey, after plodding along several feet, begins to fly, then the reader is prescribed to imagine explicitly a particular donkey – *this* donkey– flying; at the same time the reader is implicitly imagining a world in which donkeys can fly, which is quite dissimilar to our actual world. If the reader is informed that a character lives in Albany, the capital of New York, then the reader imagines a world in which Albany is the capital of

New York, which is similar to our actual world. The employment of "real names" (and all the implications they carry with them) furnish or flesh out the fictional world in a variety of ways. All things being equal, stories run offline by unfolding inferences and expectations that are typical of the actual world until the reader is informed otherwise. When the reader is informed otherwise, she accepts the prescription as a matter of course because she has already accepted the invitation *to imagine a world in which* … (whatever the narrator describes and so prescribes). However, the reader is not prescribed to imagine (i.e., make-believe) some propositions and intended to believe others. Rather, the primary intention to "imagine a world in which …" is a holistic one. It is a wholesale invitation (intention) and in turn acceptance insofar as the reader creatively imagines a world in which ... (whatever the author describes and so prescribes). Hence, all utterances within a fictional work are fictional, though some also apply to our actual world while others do not. Because fiction is inherently mimetic, the initial default attitude is that the world created is like the actual world in some respects, though how much and to what degree is always an open question. The reader constantly adjusts the gauge of how much the fictional world is like or unlike the actual world as the story unfolds. Of course, knowing something about the given work beforehand (its author, its genre, the dustjacket blurbs, reviews, etc.) will guide the reader's expectations and in turn interpretation of the work.

Much more needs to be said to unpack this notion of fictive intent as World-Imagining, but I will limit myself here to two points of clarification before returning to the patchwork problems and concluding with a few examples. First, as stated, the relevant distinction between literary fiction and nonfiction pivots upon the work as a whole. In fiction, the work refers primarily to a fictional world, whereas in nonfiction the work refers primarily to the actual world. Thus, there are many fictional worlds, but only one actual world (though there are many representations of the actual world). Admittedly, the distinction between *a* world and *the* world takes us into rather murky metaphysical and epistemological waters, ones we cannot plummet in much depth here. In short, the distinction relies upon our ordinary intuition of the ontological priority of *the* world which is held to be, to some extent, a mind-independent reality (even though our representations of it are mind-dependent).[14] Now one way Matravers and Friend challenge the fiction-nonfiction divide is by arguing that any complex text or set of representations (fictional or nonfictional) requires integrating various aspects or utterances into a mental or situational model (one which some might loosely call a "world" and if so, conclude there are many nonfictional worlds as there are fictional ones). I disagree, not so much with the point, but with the terminology.[15] For, although I agree there must be some kind of formal or conceptual integration of any written text which binds the work, however loosely, together, I do not share the assumption that a mental model (fictional or nonfictional) carries the same ontological weight in terms of overall reference. For the reader, I claim, does not approach a work of fiction and nonfiction in the same stance of neutrality, aiming primarily to integrate and understand the work and only secondarily determining if the world-as-a-whole, to which the work refers, is fictional or nonfictional. Rather, the meta-intent is primary. Thus, L-F Imagining requires all the content to be necessarily true of the fictional world. By placing the emphasis of the distinction upon meta-intent and the corresponding worlds, rather than individual utterances, there is no inherent tension between imagining an utterance P to be true (of the fictional world) and believing P to be true (of the actual world). For, there is no reason why the same utterance cannot apply to two worlds at once.

The second point in need of clarification is my use of the term "primary" when I say that the work refers *primarily* to a fictional world rather than the actual world. By primary, I do not mean most significant or even the ultimate purpose or aim of the author. For example, in the novel, *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair's ultimate purpose (the one that is most significant) is arguably to expose the dehumanizing and unsanitary working conditions in meatpacking plants of early twentieth century Chicago. In this sense, his ultimate (some might say "primary") aim is to disclose truths about the actual world. This is not what I mean here by primary. Rather, the primary *means* by which Sinclair reveals such general truths about the actual world is not by depicting real persons that actually existed

and events that actually happened in their particularity as actual persons and events (i.e., as historical entities). Rather through the novel Sinclair creates an imagined world which adequately describes the *kinds* of things that could and *in general* did (or do) happen. In this respect, the fictional world is "primary" in that everything that is stated and inferred necessarily applies to a fictional world. Secondarily – though nonetheless more significantly from the cognitive standpoint – there is much within the fictional work/world of *The Jungle* that we also apply to the actual world. All secondarily means here is "not necessarily." Thus, much of the task of the attentive reader of literary fiction is to consider which utterances, passages, or implied general truths apply only to the fictional world and which ones apply also to the actual world.

One final point can be made regarding the piecemeal and holistic approaches to the problem of fiction. Matravers argues that a main problem with the consensus view of linking fiction to imagination is that it requires a "transformation criterion," one in which "the imagination is required to transform a proposition in the actual world into a different proposition in the fictional world" (2014, p. 13). But not every proposition considered to be fictional requires such a transformation. Matravers offers a sentence from a Raymond Chandler novel: "Room 332 was at the back of the building, near the door to the fire escape" (2014, p. 14). In this case, there is no transformation enacted by imagination. All one needs is a grasp of English to understand the fictional proposition in the same way one would a nonfictional proposition. However, it is only a piecemeal approach that requires the reader to transform some propositions by acts of imagination while reading others as straightforward assertions applied to the actual world. A holistic account avoids this problem. For by making the distinction between worlds, rather than utterances, one need not transform some individual utterances, those that are fictional, since all utterances within the work are fictional and so are to be propositionally imagined insofar as they apply primarily to a fictional world. Moreover, in construing L-F-Imagining as weaker than make-believe, there is no reason why one cannot secondarily believe that which one primarily imagines. Phenomenologically, this seems to conform to our way of reading works of fiction since we integrate all aspects explicitly stated in the text, along with those that are implied, while also recognizing that many utterances directly stated or implied are intended to refer also to the actual world and so are to be believed.

4. Fictive and Nonfictive Utterances in Literature

We are now in a position to return to the patchwork problems between fictive and non-fictive utterances in literature. As we just saw, according to the piecemeal approach the reader is required to transform some propositions by acts of imagination while reading other propositions as straightforward assertions applied to the actual world. Now much of the confusion concerning individual utterances in works of literary fiction is due, I think, to an ambiguity in the term "fictional" when applied to an individual utterance within the context of a work of literary fiction and when applied to that same utterance as abstracted from the work. For fiction in the literary context does not possess the same meaning as fiction in the ordinary (e.g., historical, empirical, factual) context.[16] To call an utterance "fictional" in the literary context is to recognize (mundanely) that the statement occurs within a work of fiction and so is directed primarily toward a fictional world, which means integrated into the fabric of the imagined world. When one abstracts an individual utterance from the fictional work and asks whether it is "fictional," the meaning is altered slightly. Fictional no longer means the proposition was stated by an implied author as directed toward an imagined world (call this F1).[17] It now refers to a statement that does *not adequately refer* to the actual world (call this F2).[18] To say (abstractly) that Anna Karinina is fictional (F2) is merely to say there was no actual person named Anna Karinina whose life story corresponds roughly, or in general outline, to the way Tolstoy (as implied author) describes her. But we also say Anna Karinina is fictional (F1) insofar as

she is the main character in the imagined world created by Tolstoy. Even if we equivocate F1 and F2, there is no apparent contradiction since in both senses "Anna Karinina is fictional." However, the same does not hold for Napolean. "Napolean is fictional" in the F1 sense since he is a character in the fictional world of *War and Peace*. At the same time, "Napolean is nonfictional" in the F2 sense since there was an actual emperor who led the French Army in its march toward Moscow and was present at the Battle of Borodino, etc. Likewise, Moscow is both a fictional and nonfictional city. This is not illogical because the contradiction is only apparent due to the equivocation of F1 and F2. Moscow is a fictional city in the fictional world (work) of *War and Peace* (F1), and Moscow is a nonfictional city in Russia in the actual world (-F2).

Now admittedly most theorists acknowledge a similar distinction insofar as they point out that nonfiction should not be straightforwardly equated with truth and fiction with falsehood given that there are falsehoods in nonfictional works and truths in fictional works.[19] Nevertheless, as some of these accounts unfold, the association between fiction and falsehood, or at least fiction and non-factual, seems often to creep back in, as we saw above with the ambiguity of the term make-believe. In any event, by placing the relevant distinction upon worlds, we avoid this confusion since any individual utterance can apply to two distinct worlds (a fictional world and the actual world).

a. The Classification Patchwork Problem (PP1)

To repeat, the classification problem arises in those theories that endorse a piecemeal approach insofar as there is a strong contrast between imagining and believing such that some utterances are to be imagined (i.e., make-believed) whereas other utterances are to be believed. If so, the question becomes how we are to classify works since almost everyone agrees doing so based on sheer quantity (i.e., tallying the total of fictional utterances v. nonfictional ones) will not do. Given the above distinction, we can see how a holistic account resolves (or perhaps dissolves) the classification problem. Since the essential determination is teleologically holistic (rather than piecemeal), distinguishing a work of fiction from nonfiction is constituted by the meta-fictive intent of the work as a whole, one which refers primarily to an imagined world. Therefore, there is no opposition between an utterance in literature being either fictional or nonfictional. Rather, all utterances within a work of literary fiction are fictional (F1) and so are to be primarily imagined. At the same time, some of those same utterances are also to be believed and so in this sense can be termed nonfictional (-F2) insofar as they refer also to the actual world. Interestingly Currie recently (2020) provides an opening to the holistic approach in as much as he acknowledges the possibility of a hierarchy of intentions such that there can be a primary intention to which secondary intentions are subservient (pp. 23-25). The presence of a hierarchy would explain why there can be utterances to be only imagined in nonfictional works (e.g., classical histories) and utterances to be believed in fictional works (e.g., descriptions of sanctuary practices in fifteenth-century Paris in *Notre-Dame de Paris*). Nonetheless, Currie does not think the recognition of a hierarchy of intentions requires him to modify his fictive utterance account in any substantial way. Moreover, in my estimation, he continues to conceive imagination too strongly as make-believe such that the antagonism between literary fiction and reality remains.

Davies also suggests a way to classify works that seems close to what I advocate here. For, he says there may be a "higher-order kind of 'fidelity' that governs work construction" (2015, p. 52). When a work contains an intermixture of utterances to be believed and not believed, we are to consider the overall structural relations by asking, "Does the fictional narrative … serve to illustrate, clarify or amplify something asserted within the work … or does what is asserted within the work serve to clarify or comment on the fictional narrative?" (p. 54). But despite entertaining this possibility, Davies also maintains a piecemeal approach by separating fictive narrative from real content, which preserves the strong contrast, if not opposition, between imagining (fictionality) and believing (factuality). Thus, the status of how to classify the work as a whole remains ambiguous.

b. The Psychological Patchwork Problem (PP2)

But even if my account resolves the classification patchwork problem, does my version of fictive intent and in turn L-F-Imagining fare any better in solving the psychological patchwork problem (PP2) or merely repeat it in a different form? The precise difficulty of PP2 focuses upon the reader's response to specific utterances within a fictional work, which, given the piecemeal approach, seems to call for distinct attitudes. As Stock puts it, the result is

> an uncomfortable split in an author's otherwise apparently homogeneous activity: now she produces one kind of utterance, now she produces the other, yet both serve to furnish a fictional world, somehow. At best, it leaves a problematic gap in our understanding of the practice of reading fiction, since, one assumes, a difference in kind of utterance demands a difference in response; yet if this is so, not only are we unclear at what those prescribed responses are, exactly, but we are unsure how they are supposed to interact (2011, p. 145-146).

Stock's account rightly shows how literary imagination seamlessly integrates content that is made-up with content that is world-adequate. However, because she starts with a piecemeal approach, she is forced to distinguish the fictional world from the actual world by insisting the author intends at least one utterance (i.e., "piece") of the fictional work be made-up (i.e., as false or *not* world-adequate). This utterance is to be "only imagined," which stands in opposition to those utterances (pieces) that are world-adequate and so are prescribed to be both imagined and believed. I agree with Stock that not every proposition in a literary fictional work is intended to be believed such that there must be some utterances which are not asserted and so are intended only to be imagined. I also agree there are fictional utterances that can be both imagined and believed (asserted). However, imagine does not mean make-believe. For literary fiction is distinct from other kinds of fiction (which includes make-believe) insofar as it is the fictional world as a whole which is distinct from (but not necessarily opposed to) the actual world. Moreover, because Stock maintains a piecemeal or constructivist (bottom-up) approach, her account is open to Friend's charge that if fictive-imagining means constructing a scenario in which utterances we believe are integrated with at least one utterance of which we are not to believe, then works which are uncontroversially classified as nonfiction (e.g., classical histories) must be classified as fiction, since they contain some utterances to be only imagined.

Like PP1, the psychological problem is resolved at the level of meta-intent insofar as the author invites the reader either: (a) to imagine a world presented, which, when taken as a whole, refers to a fictional realm or (b) to believe that the world represented, which, when taken as a whole, refers to the actual one. Once the primary meta-intent is established, there are complex secondary intentions that are subservient to the primary meta-intent. For example, the secondary or subservient intentions of Tacitus allow him to create internal monologues of an historical figure, which the reader is asked to imagine, but not believe; at the same time, the reader integrates the imaginings within a world that refers to the actual one (i.e., as historical). These utterances or passages serve to enhance and enliven the world that again, taken as a whole, is intended to be believed. Such imagined utterances or passages function subordinately insofar as the primary intent of the work is still to provide a history that refers to and so adequately represents the actual world. Nonetheless, the reader easily recognizes that the monologues, when isolated or abstracted from their context, are not to be believed but only imagined.

A similar complex structural relation operates, though in the reverse, in cases of historical fiction. Insofar as the meta-intent is fictive, the reader is invited to imagine *a* world, rather than *the* world. However, such a fictional world is intended to resemble in much detail the actual world, specifically at a particular place and time in history. For this reason, the reader recognizes that many of the utterances and passages presented by the narrator are to be both imagined (as applying to the fictional world) and believed (as referring to the actual world). The reader's knowledge of the various genres

guides her appreciation of the text, though of course there will frequently be ambiguity such that the reader may not always know which aspects within a work of fiction are also to be believed.

Here it might be objected that my account seems more or less equivalent to Friend's genre account, since both are holistic in focusing upon works rather than utterances. Indeed, in this respect, they are quite similar. Moreover, I agree with much of Friend's arguments regarding the significance of classification in guiding our understanding and evaluation of particular works. I also support Friend's account insofar as she points out how the identification of specific sub-genres (historical fiction, New Journalism, etc.) helps to guide the reader in sorting out the admixture of "fictional" and "nonfictional" elements (in the ordinary sense of these concepts) in terms of what is to be believed or not believed in works of fiction and nonfiction.

Nonetheless, as stated earlier, the two main points of divergence between my account and Friend's are: (a) she opts for a conventionalist account whereas mine is intentionalist, and (b) she denies there can be an adequate account of imagination that links it to fiction as distinguished from nonfiction such that this connection serves as the necessary and sufficient condition for fictional works. The two aspects are of course linked. As mentioned, Friend borrows from Walton's "categories of art" in holding that the super-genres of fiction and nonfiction are determined by a cluster of non-essential properties that are standard, contra-standard, or variable. Furthermore, for Friend, classification is contextual in that although authorial intent is a standard condition, it is not a necessary one. Moreover, when intention is involved, it is not as a meta-fictive intent which invites the reader to imagine in a certain modality. Rather, it is merely the author's intent to engage in an established practice. For example, Friend claims the works of Tacitus are to be considered nonfiction:

> because he intended to write non-fiction history within an established practice recognized by his audience, an audience fully aware of the conventions for historical writing of that period. (Notice that it is Tacitus's intention to write non-fiction history, and *not* his intention to invite belief or make-believe, that is important here)" (2012, p. 193-194).

Constitutively, my account puts things the other way around. To be sure, conventions of a particular period will regulate how much is generally acceptable within the larger categories of fiction and nonfiction such that a given author might abide within the rules of the established practice or attempt to broaden its borders. Friend is right that at times certain attempts at expansion might not catch on in a given period (as seems to be the case with *Dutch* as a form of biography or historical nonfiction). But, in my estimation, although bookstores, publishers, and critics communicate, guide and effect classification, they do not *determine* it (and so sometimes they get it wrong). Indeed, their guiding principle in being the liaison between author and reader should be the correct classification of the meta-intent of the author.

It should be noted, however, that in grounding the distinction between works of fiction and nonfiction in authorial intent, such intention is not necessarily the one overtly stated by the author but rather the one revealed through the work.[20] Normally, critics, publishers and bookstores trust the stated intention by the author, though there can be cases of deception, such as with Frey's *A Million Little Pieces*. Other times, the overall meta-intent might change through the writing process, as with Seamus Deane's memoir-turned-novel, *Reading in the Dark*. In any case, I disagree with Friend's claim that had Tacitus written today, his work might rightly be classified as fiction, or had Gore Vidal's historical novels been written in the 16th Century they might rightly be classified as nonfiction. In each case, the *being* of the work would not change since it is grounded in the meta-intent of its author insofar as the world of the work as a whole is either intended to refer primarily to the actual world or an imagined world. At times, the stated intent of the author might need to be questioned, and if so, it requires critical interpretation from the reader as to what the implied author's overall intent, as revealed in the work, is. Also, such ambiguity explains why there is often disagreement

regarding those difficult borderline cases (e.g., Friend thinks Capote's *In Cold Blood* is clearly nonfiction whereas Gibson thinks it is fiction.) For my part, in principle I do not rule out the possibility that in some cases, the meta-intent of an author may be schizophrenic in that there is no clear hierarchy of primary and subservient intents, aims, and attitudes, and so the work and world itself may be splintered or fragmented. Such incoherence would count, it seems, as an aesthetic or cognitive defect to the work, though there may be other merits that justify its overall literary value.

In closing, then, I have argued for an absolute holistic intentionalism insofar as the distinction between fiction and nonfiction in literature is grounded, necessarily and sufficiently, in the meta-intent of the author which constitutes the world of the work as a whole in referring primarily to a fictional world or the actual world. Although the meta-intent is grounded in the work, the reader is typically informed of this intent in conventional ways, which then guides their mode of reading and in turn expectations and interpretations of the work. In fiction, this mode of reading is a distinct kind of imagining such that the concept of literary fiction is essentially linked to imagination as an intentional mode. Although there remain difficult cases, due to the difficulty of discerning the author's meta-intent, either because of a long lapse of time from when the work was written or from the intentional blurring of the lines by the author, nonetheless the distinction remains. Thus, identification of the distinct meta-intent, as grounded in the work itself, should be the guide to appropriate classification and in turn the reader's intentional mode when engaging the work.

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Notes

[1] Friend refers to the two Patchwork Problems as PP1 and PP2. Matravers (2014) also makes this twofold distinction in terms of classification and psychological attitude.
[2] See Currie (1990) and Davies (2007).
[3] The term "Walt-fiction" is coined by Friend (2008).
[4] See Currie, 1990; 1995; 2014; 2020; Davies, 2007; 2015; 2022; Stock, 2011; 2017.
[5] See Lycan (2018), Chapter 7 for a helpful overview of the issues concerning Gricean intent.
[6] The terms "binary" and "unitary" come from Davies (2022).
[7] Friend (2007, 2011, 2012) makes a similar argument.
[8] See Stock (2017, pp. 165–167) for further details of these two critiques.
[9] Currie cites McGinn (2004) as an example of this very broad approach.
[10] Stock (2017) describes her version of fictional imagining as "F-Imagining," so I am merely specifying here the narrower realm of literary fictional imagining.
[11] For critiques, see Walton (1990), Currie (1990), and Lamarque (2009).
[12] Emphasis mine.
[13] See, for example, Stock, 2011, pp. 155, 157–159.
[14] This "held to be" is crucial in that my claim is merely phenomenological insofar as the mind cognizes the actual world *as if* it were mind-independent, as distinct from fictional worlds, which it cognizes as mind-dependent. In this way, I aim to avoid any metaphysical commitments and so sidestep the conflict between realists and antirealists.
[15] To my knowledge, Friend and Matravers do not employ the term "world" when referring to mental or situational models, but one can see how a skeptic might do so.
[16] Friend (2012, p. 180), as well as others, make a similar distinction.
[17] For more on "implied author," see Booth (1988), pp. 125–6, 134–5.
[18] An example would be when a prosecutor tells the jury the witness's testimony was pure fiction.
[19] See, for example, Friend (2008, 2012) and Davies (2022).
[20] Currie (2020, p. 25) makes a similar point.

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