



SEÇÃO: EPISTEMOLOGY & PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

## The role of modifying adjectives in fictional discourse<sup>1</sup>

*O papel dos adjetivos modificacionais no discurso ficcional*

*El papel de los adjetivos modificativos en el discurso ficticio*

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**Recebido em:** 22 abril 2023

**Aprovado em:** 16 outubro 2023.

**Publicado em:** 22 novembro 2023.

**Abstract:** I argue, following Amie Thomasson's (1999) account on the metaphysics of fiction, that fictional objects are abstract artifacts. However, artifactualism struggles on how to make sense of the properties one can correctly ascribe to a fictional object: how is it possible for a fictional character, like L. B. Jefferies from the movie *Rear Window*, to be a photographer and an abstract artifact at the same time? Can such a character do such a thing as investigate a crime? In order to solve this conceptual tension, I introduce the vocabulary developed by François Recanati (2018) regarding fictional, metafictional and parafictional utterances. Then, in opposition to the accounts that rely on make-believe in order to make sense of fictional discourse, I put forward Hans Kamp's and Barbara Partee's (1995, 2010) theory of modifying adjectives to the case of fiction, and argue that the uses of the adjective 'fictional' are intersective regarding the metaphysics of fictional objects, while privative regarding the properties ascribed to them according to the story. Consequently, although fictional objects do not exemplify the properties that are attributed to them in a story, given that abstract artifacts are not spatially located and cannot establish causal interactions with other objects, those are the properties we are entitled and obliged to assign to them. So, I present a unified account on how our practices of fiction are intelligible and in accordance with the artifactualist approach.

**Keywords:** metaphysics of fiction; fictional discourse; artifactualism; modifying adjectives.

**Resumo:** Argumento, seguindo a perspectiva de Amie Thomasson (1999) acerca da metafísica da ficção, que os objetos ficcionais são artefatos abstratos. No entanto, o artefactualismo encontra dificuldades em fazer sentido das propriedades que podemos atribuir corretamente a um objeto ficcional: como é possível que um personagem ficcional, como L. B. Jefferies do filme *Janela Indiscreta*, seja um fotógrafo e um artefato abstrato ao mesmo tempo? Tal personagem pode fazer algo como investigar um crime? A fim de solucionar essa tensão conceitual, introduzo o vocabulário desenvolvido por François Recanati (2018), que trata dos proferimentos ficcionais, metaficcionais e paraficcionais. Então, em oposição às perspectivas que usam a noção de faz-de-contas para analisar o discurso ficcional, apresento a teoria dos adjetivos modificacionais de Hans Kamp e Barbara Partee (1995), e argumento que os usos que fazemos do adjetivo 'ficcional' são intersectivos no que diz respeito à metafísica dos objetos ficcionais, enquanto são privativos no que diz respeito às propriedades que lhes são atribuídas de acordo com a história. Consequentemente, apesar dos objetos ficcionais não exemplificarem as propriedades que lhes são atribuídas em uma história, uma vez que artefatos abstratos não têm localização espacial e não podem estabelecer interações causais com outros objetos, essas são as propriedades que temos permissões e somos obrigados a lhes atribuir. Assim, apresento uma perspectiva unificada sobre como as nossas práticas de ficção são inteligíveis e estão de acordo com a perspectiva artefactual.

**Palavras-chave:** metafísica da ficção; discurso ficcional; artefactualismo; adjetivos modificacionais.



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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a revised and extended version of the first and third chapters (sections 1.2.1, 3.1 and 3.2.3.3) of my Ph.D. thesis, which was written in Brazilian Portuguese (Cf. LEMOS, 2020). I'd like to thank CAPES — Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel — for their financial support.

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**Resumen:** Argumento, siguiendo la perspectiva de Amie Thomasson (1999) sobre la metafísica de la ficción, que los objetos ficticios son artefactos abstractos. Sin embargo, al artefactualismo le resulta difícil dar sentido a las propiedades que podemos atribuir correctamente a un objeto de ficción: ¿cómo es posible que un personaje de ficción, como L. B. Jefferies en *La Ventana Indiscreta*, sea a la vez un fotógrafo y un artefacto abstracto? ¿Puede un personaje así hacer algo como investigar un crimen? Para resolver esta tensión conceptual, presento el vocabulario desarrollado por François Recanati (2018), que se ocupa de los enunciados ficcionales, metaficcionales y paraficcionales. Entonces, en oposición a las perspectivas que usan la noción de hacer creer para analizar el discurso ficticio, presento la teoría de los adjetivos modificativos de Hans Kamp y Barbara Partee (1995, 2010), y argumento que nuestros usos del adjetivo 'ficticio' son interseccionales en lo que respecta a la metafísica de los objetos ficticios, mientras que son privativos en cuanto a las propiedades que les atribuye la historia. En consecuencia, si bien los objetos ficticios no ejemplifican las propiedades que se les atribuyen en una historia, dado que los artefactos abstractos no tienen ubicación espacial y no pueden establecer interacciones causales con otros objetos, estas son las propiedades que tenemos permisos y estamos obligados a atribuirles. Así, presento una perspectiva unificada sobre cómo nuestras prácticas ficticias son inteligibles y se ajustan a la perspectiva artefactual.

**Palabras clave:** metafísica de la ficción; discurso ficticio; artefactualismo; adjetivos modificativos.

## Introduction

What are the properties one can correctly ascribe to a fictional object? Take the character L. B. Jefferies from Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) as an example. One may correctly attribute to Jefferies the property of being a wheelchair user, because this is how the character is portrayed in that story. After all, Jefferies uses a wheelchair at all times during the movie, the people around him constantly and explicitly talk about the accident that left him debilitated, and at no time does a character or subtext suggest that Jefferies was faking his inability to move around standing on his own feet. Furthermore, one might still recognize that this is actually a decisive property for the unfolding of the movie's plot, since it makes coherent the boredom that leads Jefferies to observe his surroundings with a pair of binoculars, and thereby witness the horrifying crime that takes place in the neighborhood.

But one might still predicate other properties to fictional objects, properties that are not restricted to what is the case according to a story. If on the one hand it is the case that, according to *Rear Window*, Jefferies is a human being, works as a photographer, has suffered an accident that forced him to use a wheelchair for a few weeks, and witnessed a murder; on the other hand, one can also assure that he has the properties of being a fictional character, being an abstract artifact (according to my account), being a creation of the writer Cornell Woolrich, having first appeared in print in 1942 in the short story *It Had to Be Murder*, having reappeared in a movie adaptation scripted by John Hayes and directed by Alfred Hitchcock in 1954, and having been played in that movie by the actor James Stewart.

However, there are two conceptual tensions here: the first appears when we notice that the last set of properties that I listed in the previous paragraph, despite being correctly attributed to the protagonist of Hitchcock's movie, is not compatible with those properties that are attributed to him according to the story. According to *Rear Window*, it is not the case that L. B. Jefferies is a fictional character created by Cornell Woolrich and played by James Stewart in an Alfred Hitchcock film. According to the movie, Jefferies is a man made of flesh and blood who works as a photographer; and people like Woolrich, Stewart and Hitchcock do not even exist (or their existences are indeterminate). The second tension occurs because it seems inconsistent to say that an abstract artifact works as a photographer, rides a wheelchair or witnesses crimes because abstract objects are not spatially located and cannot take part in causal relations. In this sense, it seems we are making a category-mistake when we say that fictional objects have the properties that are attributed to them in a given work of fiction.

These tensions show that fictional discourse is rather complex<sup>3</sup>. After sketching Amie Thomasson's (1999) artefactual approach to fiction (section 2), I will follow François Recanati's (2018)

<sup>3</sup> I've argued elsewhere (LEMOS, 2020a) that there's something wrong with the pure make-believe (WALTON, 1990), hybrid (KRIPKE, 2013; SEARLE, 1975; THOMASSON, 2003) and purely referential (INWAGEN, 1977, 1983, 2003; PARSONS, 1980; ZALTA, 1983) theories.

vocabulary – which was influenced by Alberto Voltolini (2006) and Andrea Bonomi (2008) – and analyze three types of utterances regarding fiction: the fictional, metafictional and parafictional utterances<sup>4</sup> (section 3). Then, I will present an approach that is in accordance with a purely referential theory of fiction and, relying on Hans Kamp's and Barbara Partee's (1995, 2010) theory of modifying adjectives (section 4), I will argue that the artifactualist uses the adjective 'fictional' intersectively when it comes to the metaphysics of fictional objects, while privatively when it comes to the properties ascribed to them according to the story (section 5)<sup>5</sup>.

Therefore, I will defend that fictional objects do not really have the properties that are attributed to them in the works of fiction in which they appear, which means that Jefferies is not really a photographer, but a *fictional* photographer. On the other hand, these objects have the properties that are attributed to them in metafictional contexts, which means that Jefferies has the property of being a fictional character *simpliciter*. Nevertheless, I will argue that stories of fiction not only entitle us, but also oblige us, to use the properties that are attributed to fictional objects by an author, as these are precisely the properties that make us imagine, interpret and communicate about the states of affairs instituted in a given work. Thus, my approach suggests that there is a normative aspect to the semantics of fictional discourse, and provides a unified analysis for the three kinds of utterances related to fiction.

## 1 An artifactual approach to the metaphysics of fiction

In this section I will sketch Amie Thomasson's (1999) artifactual approach to fiction<sup>6</sup>. Even though Thomasson has not put forward a definition for 'fictional object', by 'fictional object' I mean any object that was created by one or more authors by a performative act associated with our practices of fiction (or imported from another fictional story) and individuated by a proper name, set of descriptions or an image (LEMOS, 2020a, 2021). In this sense, fictional characters (like Raskolnikov from *Crime and Punishment*), fictional places (like Oz from *The Wizard of Oz*) and fictional items (like the kryptonite from the Superman stories) all count as fictional objects<sup>7</sup>.

The process of authoring is an important part of our practices of fiction because without human activities there would be no such things as works of literature, movies or fictional objects. Differently from mountains and oceans<sup>8</sup>, as argued by Lynne Rudder Baker (2008, p. 12), there are a number of phenomena that exist only as a result of human intervention, such as certain "events (e.g., a baseball game), objects (e.g., a driver's license), actions (e.g., voting), dispositions (e.g., being honest), activities (e.g., reading your mail), institutions (e.g., a national bank), [and] medical procedures (e.g., a heart transplant)".

As Amie Thomasson (1999, p. 6) argues in the first few pages of *Fiction and Metaphysics*,

[...] we describe authors as inventing their characters, making them up, or creating them, so that before being written about by an author, there is no fictional object. Taking authors to be genuinely creative as they make up fictional

<sup>4</sup> I emphasize that I will investigate utterances rather than sentences because my interest lies in how the speakers use such sentences and, consequently, in the meanings these sentences acquire (i.e., the propositions they might express) due to our practices of fiction.

<sup>5</sup> I have recently discovered that Benjamin Schnieder and Tatjana von Solodkoff (2009) proposed a thesis along these lines. I think their account is correct and I openly endorse it. However, in their discussion regarding the (in)determinacy of fiction – in an attempt to answer Anthony Everett's (2005) objection to realism –, they have not explained *why* such uses of the adjective 'fictional' are (as they call it) determining or modifying. In this paper I aim to work on a similar thesis, even though from a considerably different point-of-view. I will depart from François Recanati's (2018) vocabulary involving fictional, metafictional and parafictional utterances; introduce Barbara Partee's and Hans Kamp's (1995) distinctions regarding intersective, subsective, privative and modal uses of adjectives; and suggest a normative aspect that makes us say that, for example, although L. B. Jefferies is not a photographer, 'being a photographer' is a property we are not only entitled, but obliged to attribute to him.

<sup>6</sup> For a more thorough analysis of artifactualism (THOMASSON, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Adopting Terence Parsons' (1980) terminology, I would say that the fictional objects that appear for the first time in an original story is a *native* object (such as Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis*); while *immigrant* objects are those imported from other contexts and may be fictional (such as Don Quixote in Borges' *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote*) or not (such as Virgil in Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* or Napoleon in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*).

<sup>8</sup> But there is room for controversy once the term 'artifact' is vague and might suffer from the sorites paradox. For example, are genetically modified animals or plants artifacts? (MARGOLIS; LAURENCE, 2007).

characters is central to our ordinary understanding of fiction. One of the things we admire about certain authors is their ability to make up sympathetic, multidimensional characters rather than cardboard cut-outs, and at times we count our good luck that certain characters like Sherlock Holmes were created when, given a busier medical practice, Arthur Conan Doyle might never have created him.

So it comes as no surprise that Franz Kafka wrote *The Metamorphosis* and created the character Gregor Samsa; or that Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote *Crime and Punishment* and created the character Rodion Raskolnikov. For if they had dedicated their lives to something other than literature, as suggested by Thomasson's example, we would not have been given the opportunity to read and engage with stories about Samsa and Raskolnikov. As Thomasson (1999) and myself suggested (LEMOS, 2020b), we take the authoring process so seriously that if somebody copies someone else's work (including works of fiction) without making explicit the proper references, that person may be accused of plagiarism and even be accountable for civil and criminal penalties. In this sense,

P1. Raskolnikov was intentionally created by Fyodor Dostoevsky.

C. Therefore, Raskolnikov is an artifact.

Artifacts are objects that are intentionally created by humans. We are surrounded by artifacts such as chairs, tables, and laptops. Right now I am writing this paper using all the resources mentioned above, and it is likely that the reader is also using similar devices. We could even say that this paper is an artifact created by myself, as I intend to make a series of assertions directed to my peers; and this paper would not have come into existence if I had not conducted research and made the effort of writing these ideas down, for example.

Similarly, if Raskolnikov was intentionally cre-

ated by Fyodor Dostoevsky, then Raskolnikov is an artifact. However, as much as Raskolnikov is similar to chairs, tables and laptops (as they are all artifacts), fictional objects are not made of wood or aluminum. Thomasson (1999, 2003) argues that the difference between fictional objects and other types of ordinary artifacts is that fictional objects are *abstract* — in the sense that they are not spatially located and are unable to take part in causal relations — while the other ordinary artifacts mentioned in the beginning of the last paragraph are *concrete*, i.e., they are spatiotemporally located and causally efficient.

## 2 Fictional, Metafictional and Parafictional Utterances

Why do we claim that L. B. Jefferies is both a wheelchair user and a fictional character? The answers are quite simple: we claim that he is a wheelchair user because this is how he is depicted in *Rear Window*; and we say that he is a fictional character because he appears in a film directed by Alfred Hitchcock — while Hitchcock intended to narrate a story that was not an attempt to describe a given state of affairs from the empirical world. So there is a semantic difference between saying something in and about a story of fiction. Following François Recanati (2018), I maintain that there are three types of utterances regarding works of fiction and fictional objects: fictional, metafictional and parafictional utterances — even though my analysis is different from his because I rely on performatives in order to make sense of fictional utterances. Take a look at the three utterances listed below<sup>9</sup>:

(1) "I saw through that window. I saw family fights and arguments and mysterious travels at night; knives and saws and ropes; and now, since last night, no sign of his wife." (As stated by L. B. Jefferies in *Rear Window*).

<sup>9</sup> Amie Thomasson (2003) uses the concepts 'fictionalizing discourse', 'internal', 'external' and 'existential'. Although there is an equivalence between some of these concepts and those used by Recanati (2018), I rather use the current vocabulary so as not to impose a relation between something that is "inside" and "outside" a story of fiction, as that may generate an irreconcilable opposition between fictional and nonfictional discourses. Further, existential statements needn't constitute a new category of their own, but may be diluted into fictional, metafictional and parafictional utterances. Finally, Barry Smith (1980) recognizes that there are two types of statements in fiction: A-statements or B-statements, but this vocabulary has been abandoned.

(2) L. B. Jefferies is a fictional character created by Cornell Woolrich in 1942.

(3) According to *Rear Window*, L. B. Jefferies saw family fights through the window of his apartment.

Utterances like (1) are *fictional utterances*. I have argued elsewhere (LEMONS, 2021) that fictional utterances are made by one or more authors who, through a performative act conducted in a public language, introduce a proper name or set of descriptions that create a fictional object. I have also argued, as a condition for the success of a such a performative, that these utterances must be linked to a set of practices (the 'institution of fiction') that was established prior to the authors' utterances being made, and with which an author intends to associate his fictional utterances. In short, I use this nomenclature appealing to its intuitive character: *the fictional utterances are those that the authors make when producing a work of fiction, thus being the same utterances that we read in a literary work or that constitute the dialogues of the characters and the subtexts that we find in movies or plays*.

Utterances like (2) are *metafictional utterances*. They are made by a spectator (broadly conceived) when he refers to fictional objects *taking them as fictional objects*. The spectator attributes to them properties that he believes have not been predicated by an author in his fictional utterances, but that could be (correctly or not) attributed to these objects when we take into account their context of creation, an interpretation of the narrative or the metaphysical category to which the objects in question belong to. *That is, these are the utterances that predicate something to the fictional object or to the work of fiction beyond what is the case according to the story*.

For example, as an instance of a metafictional utterance, it is true that L. B. Jefferies is a fictional character created by Cornell Woolrich. In this sense, in order to know that (2) really is the case, we only need to acquire a copy of *Rear Window*

and read the writers' names as stated in the technical file, in the final credits, or another reliable source of information. Take a look at utterance (2a) in order to mark a contrast that makes explicit that metafictional utterances can be valued as either true or false:

(2a) L. B. Jefferies is the protagonist of Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*.

Utterance (2a) is false because the protagonist of the film *Vertigo* is John Ferguson. Although Ferguson is played by James Stewart (the same actor who played L. B. Jefferies) and appears in a film directed by Alfred Hitchcock (the same director from *Rear Window*), it is evident that Ferguson and Jefferies are not the same fictional object, being Jefferies the protagonist from *Rear Window* instead of the protagonist from *Vertigo*. Ferguson and Jefferies are different fictional objects not only because they share different properties (after all, the same fictional object may have different properties throughout the same story while remaining the same object), but because they were created in different contexts by specific intentional acts.

Finally, utterances like (3) are *parafictional utterances*. They are utterances that a speaker makes when dealing with fictional objects or stories, attributing to them the properties that he believes have been predicated by the author or authors in their performative acts (either explicitly through the dialogues between the characters, or implicitly through subtexts and successions of events<sup>10</sup>), but which are preceded explicitly or implicitly by a prefix or sentence operator that is semantically equivalent to "according to the story". Take a look at the parafictional utterances (3) and (3a) that appear down below:

(3) According to *Rear Window*, L. B. Jefferies saw family fights through the window of his apartment.

(3a) L. B. Jefferies saw family fights through the window of his apartment.

<sup>10</sup> For example, it would not be necessary for L. B. Jefferies to declare "I am using a wheelchair" during the film for it to be the case that Jefferies was using a wheelchair. The circumstance that *Rear Window* portrays Jefferies as using a wheelchair would be enough for us to establish that Jefferies is a wheelchair user.

The parafictional utterances (3) and (3a) are semantically equivalent (that is, they have the same meaning and express the same proposition). In this case, (3) has an explicit sentence operator and (3a) has an implicit sentence operator. It's important to note that the parafictional utterance (3a) should not be mistaken for a fictional utterance, because what separates one type of utterance from the other is that the parafictional utterances are not exactly the quotes of a sentence that occurred in a work of fiction. *Utterances such as (3) and (3a) are said to be parafictional rather than fictional because they refer to what is (or is not) the case according to the story, but they are not themselves constituent parts of the story.* If a character has said something like (3a) or if a speaker (even if by mistake) intended to quote an utterance that occurred in a work of fiction, then they will have made an indirect fictional utterance. If a fictional character has not said anything like (3a) or if a speaker does not intend to quote a fictional utterance, but rather wants to say that a certain fictional state of affairs has (or has not) occurred in a work of fiction, then they will have made a parafictional utterance.

As is the case with metafictional utterances, parafictional utterances also express propositions. Parafictional utterances are true when they are in accordance with what is actually the case in a given story, and they are false when they are not in accordance with the story. Thus, propositions (3) and (3a) are true because they are in accordance with (1). However, if the utterer of (3a) does not recognize that there is an implicit sentence operator in the utterance, then the proposition will be considered false because it is not the case that Jefferies (non-fictionally) saw family fights through the window of his apartment (I will analyze this point in further details in sections 4 and 5, as this is precisely one of the two conceptual tensions I will try to untangle).

Let's analyze the parafictional utterance below and draw a new contrast:

(3b) According to *Rear Window*, L. B. Jefferies did not see family fights through the window of his apartment.

Utterance (3b) expresses a false proposition because it does not match the events from *Rear Window*. After all, Jefferies is portrayed in the story as having seen family fights through the window of his apartment. If we do not recognize that there is a difference between utterances (3) and (3b), we will lose the criterion that makes us able to distinguish the limits of an interpretation of a given work of fiction and fall into a theory that says that either all kinds of interpretation are legitimate, or that all kinds of interpretation are illegitimate. Nevertheless, as I have argued elsewhere (LEMOS, 2020a, 2020b), the distinctions between (3) and (3b) are unlikely to be satisfactorily established without resorting to a realist ontology of fiction.

And what could make fictional utterances like (1) false? What exactly would be the background against which we could establish that fictional utterances are true or false, since they do not address any actual state of affairs in the empirical world? I hold that nothing could have this role. If Alfred Hitchcock had instituted a state of affairs other than that expressed by utterance (1), let us say that a state that says that Jefferies did not have an accident and continued his routine as a photographer as if nothing had happened, such a state of affairs would be the original fictional event instituted by a performative on the part of the author — which in turn would not have made utterance (1) false, but only indicate that utterance (1) does not belong to the universe of utterances that were made in *Rear Window*.

Therefore, fictional utterances do not need a background against which we can establish that utterances such as (1) are true or false: *they are the very background against which parafictional utterances must be directed to, so that parafictional utterances are valued as either true or false.* Just as a priest or a judge does not say something true or false when they say "I now pronounce you husband and wife" in the appropriate context, but – following Austin's (1975) account – establishes the state of affairs of marriage, an author of fiction does not say anything true or false when he makes fictional utterances, but establishes a certain fictional state of affairs – what I have



called 'fictional facts' (LE MOS, 2020a, 2021) – that constitutes their stories of fiction.

In short, fictional utterances are those expressed through performative acts made by one or more authors in a given work of fiction. When it comes to truth values, fictional utterances are neither true nor false, but institute fictional facts. Metafictional utterances are those the spectators make regarding fictional objects as fictional objects. Metafictional utterances are valued as true or false according to the adequacy of what is stated in relation to the metaphysical status of the object. Finally, parafictional utterances are those that are preceded explicitly or implicitly by a prefix or sentence operator equivalent to "according to the story", and can be valued as true or false based on their adequacy to the fictional utterances and subtexts of the relevant work of fiction.

### 3 Modifying adjectives: intersective and privative uses

I maintain that all uses of fictional proper names or descriptions in fictional, metafictional and parafictional utterances, if the performative uttered by the author is felicitous, refer to fictional objects. This is the reason why, along with Peter van Inwagen's (1983) and Edward Zalta's (1983) accounts, I call it a *purely referential theory* — in contrast to Kendall Walton's (1990) pure make-believe theory, that takes all the three kinds of utterances as pretending to refer to something that does not exist; or Amie Thomasson's (2003) hybrid theory, that takes fictional utterances as pretenseful, but metafictional and parafictional utterances as referential (LE MOS, 2020a).

Nevertheless, differently from Inwagen's and Zalta's accounts, I do not rely on a sort of two kinds of predication approach. I propose using Hans Kamp's and Barbara Partee's (1995, 2010) theory of modifying adjectives, and thus develop an account that has a semantic support (therefore, it is not *ad hoc*) that can explain our literary and cinematographic practices (therefore, it is not restricted to a system of logic) and is in accordance to the artifactual theory (therefore,

it is neither Meinongian nor anti-realist).

An analysis regarding the distinction between determining and modifying adjectives could be traced back to the origins of Phenomenology. In particular, to the works of Franz Brentano (2015) and Kazimierz Twardowski (1979). According to Twardowski (1979, p. 28), for example, determining adjectives "add either a positive or a negative characteristic to its meaning", while modifying adjectives

[...] when joined to a noun, take away its original meaning [...] while losing its original meaning, a noun, when combined with a modifying adjective, becomes a name of an object to which the noun, taken in its original meaning, may no longer be applied (an 'artificial limb', a 'forged banknote', a 'former minister', etc.).

Therefore, a learned man is still a man due to the fact that 'learned' is a determining adjective; on the other hand, an artificial limb is not a limb because 'artificial' is a modifying adjective.

However, as Jan Claas and Benjamin Schnieder argued, there are perfectly fine uses of modifying adjectives that don't shift the original meaning of the noun that's being modified. For example, in "[A] national security appointment, much less a potential one, should never be turned into a political football" and "He lost a leg in *World War I*, had a wooden leg fitted, and practiced so well at concealing his limp that he seems to float through a room" (CLAAS; SCHNIEDER, 2019, p. 76), the underlined modified expressions don't change the meaning of the words "appointment" and "leg", respectively.

This is the main reason why I'll follow the tradition that relies on the works of Kamp and Partee, and hold that there are four different uses of adjectives that can be established according to their inferential properties. Such uses of modifying adjectives are classified as intersective, non-intersective but subsective (from now onwards, *subsective*), non-subsective and privative (from now onwards, *privative*) or plain non-subsective (from now onwards, *modal*):

(i) Intersective: sick, carnivore, blond, rectangular, French.

(ii) Non-intersective but subsective: typical, recent, good, perfect, legendary.

(iiia) non-subsective and privative: would-be, past, spurious, imaginary, fictitious, fabricated (in one sense), mythical (maybe debatable); there are also prefixes with this property too, like ex-, pseudo-, non-.

(iiib) plain non-subsective: potential, alleged, arguable, likely, predicted, putative, questionable, disputed (PARTEE, 2010, p. 275).

The first group is that of (i) *intersective uses*. In a nominal phrase in which there is an object 'x', a noun 'n' and an adjective 'a', the use of an adjective is intersective if, from those terms, one is entitled to infer that the object x is both the noun and the adjective. When one says 'x is a green grape', for example, one may infer that x is a grape and that x is green. Where '∴' means 'it follows that' and '#' means 'it does not follow that':

x is a green grape	x is a green grape
∴ x is a grape	∴ x is green

In formal terms:  $\| \textit{green N} \| = \| \textit{green} \| \cap \| \textit{N} \|$  (Cf. PARTEE, 2010, p. 275).

In a nominal phrase in which there is an object 'x', a noun 'n' and an adjective 'a', (ii) *the use of an adjective is subsective* if, from those terms, one is entitled to infer that the object x is the noun, but cannot otherwise infer that x is the adjective. For example, if one says 'x is a good teacher', one can infer adequately that x is a teacher, but one cannot infer that x is good, at least not in an unrestricted way:

x is a good teacher	x is a good teacher
∴ x is a teacher	# x is good

If x is also a philosopher, for example, one cannot infer from 'x is a good teacher' that x is a good philosopher. However, it does not mean that x cannot be a good philosopher either, but only that one cannot infer such a logical relation from 'x is a good teacher'.

x is a good teacher	x is a philosopher
# x is good	# x is a good philosopher

In formal terms:  $\| \textit{good N} \| \subseteq \| \textit{N} \|$  (Cf. PARTEE, 2010, p. 275).

The third group is that of (iiia) *privative adjectives*. According to Cappelle et al., "Privative' comes from the Latin verb *privare*, which means 'rob', 'remove', 'strip' and which also lies at the origin of the English verb *deprive*" (CAPPELLE; DENIS; KELLER, 2018, p. 10). If the adjective in a nominal phrase is privative, one cannot infer that x is the noun, but can infer that x is the adjective. For example, from the sentence 'x is a plastic banana' one cannot infer that x is a banana, but can rightly infer that the object x is made of plastic:

x is a plastic banana	x is a plastic banana
# x is a banana	∴ x is made of plastic

In formal terms:  $\| \textit{made of plastic N} \| \cap \| \textit{N} \| = \emptyset$  (Cf. PARTEE, 2010, p. 275).

The last group regards (iiib) *plain non-subsective uses* or simply *modal uses of an adjective*. Modal uses of an adjective are those in which one cannot infer from a nominal phrase neither that x is the noun, nor that x is not the noun. For example, in 'x is an alleged criminal' one cannot infer that 'x is a criminal' nor that 'x is not a criminal'. However, neither can one infer that x is the adjective unrestrictedly, as in 'x is alleged' (which lacks a full predicate for it to be meaningful), but one can infer opposing possibilities such as 'x may be a criminal' and 'x may not be a criminal', which stresses the modal aspect of this kind of adjective:

x is an alleged criminal	x is an alleged criminal
# x is a criminal	# x is not a criminal

x is an alleged criminal	x is a teacher
# x is alleged (?)	# x is an alleged teacher

x is an alleged criminal	x is an alleged criminal
∴ x may be a criminal	∴ x may not be a criminal



In formal terms:  $\| \textit{alleged criminal} \| \neq \| \textit{alleged} \| \cap \| \textit{criminal} \|$

Or:  $\| \textit{alleged criminal} \| \not\subseteq \| \textit{criminal} \|$  (PARTEE, 2010, p. 275).

This is thus the list of the four types of uses of modifying adjectives that are classified according to their inferential functions. The reason why we do not call them, for example, intersective (privative, etc.) adjectives is due to a serious problem with this kind of classification, especially when it comes to privative adjectives: "I doubt that there is any English adjective which is privative [...] in all of its possible uses" (KAMP, 1975, p. 125), insofar as there are intersective uses of adjectives that were previously classified as a privative adjective, as in the case of the two different uses of the adjective 'fake' below:

(privative use of the adjective 'fake'):

x is a fake banana	x is a fake banana
# x is a banana	∴ x is a fake

(intersective use of the adjective 'fake'):

x is a fake video	x is a fake video
∴ x is a video	∴ x is a fake

So instead of dealing with this issue in terms of intersective, subsective, privative and modal adjectives, we should deal with it in terms of intersective, subsective, privative and modal *uses* of adjectives. In this sense, the semantics of these terms are subordinated to a pragmatic approach to metaphysics. Therefore, the consequences established in the next section are due to the fact that we are working from a realist point-of-view to the metaphysics of fiction. Given that these uses depend on the background assumptions established by a given group of speakers, let us see how this theory works when applied to an artifactual approach to the metaphysics of fiction, and how they operate when it comes to fictional, metafictional and parafictional utterances.

#### 4 The role of 'fictional' as a modifying adjective

I argue that one should interpret that an artifactualist uses the adjective 'fictional' privately when properties are assigned to a fictional object in fictional and parafictional utterances, while he uses the same adjective intersectively when the properties are assigned to it in metafictional utterances. That is what they *mean* when they talk about fiction<sup>11</sup>. Let's take a look at the privative use of the adjective 'fictional' in the fictional utterance below and compare it with the privative use of the adjective 'plastic' that was previously used as an example:

x is a plastic banana	x is a plastic banana
# x is a banana	∴ x is made of plastic

x is a <i>fictional</i> photographer	x is a <i>fictional</i> photographer
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# x is a photographer	∴ x is <i>fictional</i>
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From this privative use of the adjective 'plastic' in the sentence 'x is a plastic banana', one can infer that x is made of plastic, but cannot infer that x is a banana. Even though it is hard to define what a banana is (actually, it is hard to answer any "what is x?" question), one could assume that bananas are edible fruits that belong to the genus *Musa*. Whatever is the criterion a fruit must meet in order to belong to such a genus, clearly *plastic* bananas do not belong to it because no entity from the genus *Musa* (biologically speaking) should be made out of plastic. So although x is not a banana, there is an object x such that x exists and is made of plastic. Also, we attribute the property of being a banana to x, even though the adjective "plastic" establishes it is not a *real* banana, but just something that looks like – due to its shape and color, perhaps – a banana. In other words, such an x is not a banana: it is a *plastic* banana.

I draw a parallel with the case of fictional objects here. If one says "x is a fictional photogra-

<sup>11</sup> And this is also the reason why, although Thomasson's (1999) approach should be labeled 'hybrid', her account fits well in such a perspective when make-believe is put aside. In other words, I could be said to be trying to make sense of Thomasson's theory without resorting to pretense in order to make sense of the semantics of fiction.

pher", as is the case with L. B. Jefferies, then one can infer that *x* is fictional, but cannot infer that *x* is a photographer. In this case, *x* is fictional because it was originally introduced in a story where the author changed the force of his illocutionary act from a simple assertion (or question, exclamation, etc.) to the performative I called "he act of fiction making"<sup>12</sup> (LEMOS, 2021). And given that *x* is fictional, it should not be thought of as a *real* photographer due to the fact that, according to the interpretation I favor, fictional objects are abstract artifacts. I stress the fact that only material objects can take pictures (given it involves causal relations like the absorption of light rays by the camera lens, the clicking of the camera buttons, etc.) or do similar things like solving crimes. Although *x* is not a photographer, according to the artifactual approach, *there is an object x such that x exists and is fictional*. Also, we attribute the property of being a photographer to *x*, even though the adjective "fictional" establishes it is not a *real* photographer, but something that looks like — imaginatively, perhaps — a photographer. In other words, such an *x* is not a photographer: it is a *fictional* photographer.

Now compare it with the intersective uses in a metafictional utterance:

<i>x</i> is a green grape	<i>x</i> is a green grape
∴ <i>x</i> is a grape	∴ <i>x</i> is green

<i>x</i> is a <i>fictional</i> object	<i>x</i> is a <i>fictional</i> object
∴ <i>x</i> is an object	∴ <i>x</i> is <i>fictional</i>

From the intersective use of the adjective 'green' to describe a grape, one can infer that *x* is both a grape and green. After all, if you assume that there are such things as colors and extended things, if *x* is a colored extended object, then *x* has to be both colored and extended (the color at stake in this example being the color green). Things are even simpler when it comes to intersective uses of the adjective 'fictional' because the same implication takes place when the artifactualist says '*x* is a fictional object'. When they perform a

metafictional utterance, they are making explicit their metaphysical and conceptual preferences. If L. B. Jefferies is a fictional object, and if fictional objects exist, then L. B. Jefferies is both an object and fictional. The same reasoning applies for terms like "*x* is a character", "*x* was created by Cornell Woolrich", "*x* was played by James Stewart", and so on, even when the adjective "fictional" is not used, but only presupposed. If a metafictional proposition is true, the fictional object really instantiates — in the only type of predication there is — the properties that are being attributed to it.

Notice there is no need to resort to pretense or make-believe when one says something like "there are six plastic bananas on my kitchen counter" in a situation where there are six plastic bananas on his kitchen counter. Such a proposition (like many others similar to this one) is uttered straightforwardly, which means both the speaker and the listener understand that the objects on the counter are really made of plastic (instead of being organic).

I draw a new analogy when it comes to fictional objects: if one recognizes the virtues of the artifactual theory, he accepts that fictional objects are abstract artifacts and, as a result, does not make the category-mistake of confusing a "real" photographer made of flesh and blood with a fictional photographer. He knows for a fact that Sebastião Salgado is a photographer made of flesh and blood, and it is still possible to attend his lectures and interact with him by shaking his hand (while he is still among the living, at least). This subject also knows that L. B. Jefferies is a *fictional* photographer who appears in Alfred Hitchcock's movie *Rear Window*, and that Jefferies is not located in space and cannot causally interact with other objects. Therefore, he knows one cannot attend to Jefferies' lectures or shake his hand — even when Jefferies ontological dependence conditions are preserved (THOMASSON, 1999).

In that sense, just as we do not pretend that there are plastic bananas on the counter, we do not pretend that Jefferies is a photographer who suffered an accident that led him to use a wheel-

<sup>12</sup> I got this concept from Currie's *The Nature of Fiction* (1990). However, I gave it a different definition.

chair — and neither do we pretend that Jefferies is a fictional character. We only assume that, in the ontological catalog regarding types of bananas, there are no plastic bananas; and in the catalog regarding photographers, there is no Jefferies. While in the ontological catalog regarding things made of plastic, there are plastic bananas; and in the catalog regarding fictional characters, Jefferies exists. So a plastic banana is not a banana, but an extended object made of plastic (which turns out to be a material artifact), and L. B. Jefferies is not a photographer, but a fictional object (which turns out to be an abstract artifact).

It is important to take account of the fact that it does not mean that one will make himself understood if one calls a plastic banana by an arbitrary name. If we have a plastic banana, a plastic pineapple and a metal apple on the counter, one will not refer to a plastic banana when he says "hand me the plastic pineapple" or "hand me the metal apple", since these expressions refer to other objects that are not actually a plastic banana, but a plastic pineapple and a metal apple, respectively<sup>13</sup>. Although it is not legitimate to infer that a plastic banana is a banana, we must ascribe to it the property of being a banana in order to successfully refer to that object — even if the object is identified due to a resemblance to an organic banana, like a thing with a yellow and elongated appearance. What is at stake here is that we take a plastic banana as an existing object, refer to it by calling it a banana, and that there is no make-believe involved in this procedure.

Analogously, I argue that even though L. B. Jefferies is not a photographer, we must use the property 'being a photographer' in order to identify it, to refer to it and to be able to communicate properly about the events depicted in the movie *Rear Window*<sup>14</sup>. One can refer to L. B. Jefferies by asking "what is the name of that character, present in one of Alfred Hitchcock's films, who uses a wheelchair and witnesses a crime when observing his neighborhood through a window?", but one cannot refer to this character by asking

"what is the name of that character, present in one of Hitchcock's films, who suffers from acrophobia?", since in the second case the question would regard the fictional character John Ferguson from *Vertigo*. And, again, it is not really the case that Ferguson suffers from acrophobia: it is only fictionally so, but this is still the property one should ascribe to that character.

Such an analysis shows that our practices of fiction have a normative aspect that involves a series of entitlements (as in permission) and obligations (as in commitment). In this case, we are entitled and obliged to identify the fictional character L. B. Jefferies as a photographer who uses a wheelchair. What *entitles* us to say that Jefferies is a photographer are the fictional events instituted by the authors of the movie *Rear Window*. Conversely, if Hitchcock and the screenwriters had established that Jefferies was an astronaut, we would be entitled to say that Jefferies was an astronaut because that would have been fictionally so.

But, in addition to the entitlements granted for us by a work of fiction, our linguistic practices also establish certain obligations. It is evident that our interpretations of the same work of fiction can diverge radically, and this is one of the reasons why some of these practices consist in real disputes. Indeed, we commonly discuss with others about the meanings of the events of a work of literature or a film. But there are limits for the interpretation of a work. At the moment I have neither the space nor the theoretical instruments to establish the criteria that make an interpretation plausible or implausible (that would lead our discussion to the field of hermeneutics), but I will stick with our intuitions and say that it is certainly legitimate to say that, according to the story, L. B. Jefferies uses a wheelchair, while it is illegitimate to claim that Jefferies has become a monstrous insect. In this sense, our literary and cinematographic practices lead us to have a rational attitude towards the interpretation of a work, constraining us to predicate to a fictional object the properties that are

<sup>13</sup> There are situations when we refer to an object even when we describe it incorrectly, like in the case where there is just one plastic banana on the table and someone asks "hand me the plastic pineapple, please". But my point remains untouched: it was an *incorrect* description of qualities of the purported object, and it may be corrected by someone who says "do you mean the plastic *banana*?".

<sup>14</sup> This is why, for example, I have been using the pronoun 'he' instead of 'it' to talk about Jefferies.

raised by the fictional work in which that fictional object appears. If this criterion is not preserved, the conversation will lose its rationality and we will not be in a position to talk meaningfully about a work of fiction. Such a circumstance would be similar to playing chess with someone who insists that the pawn may capture the opposing king when they are two or more squares apart. It would disrupt our practices of fiction<sup>15</sup>.

Finally, let us observe how the theory I propose deals with the two problems that motivated the writing of this paper. The first problem was whether we assign incompatible properties to a fictional object. The answer is: there is no incompatibility. Even though a fictional object does not have the properties an author attributes to it in a story, one can attribute to them properties like "being a fictional character". The same happens when the adjective "fictional" is not explicitly used, but only presupposed, like in "being an abstract artifact", "being created by some author" and "appearing for the first time in a movie in 1954". All those properties can be correctly attributed to them in utterances derived from metafictional contexts, because, in such contexts, and from an artifactual point-of-view, the adjective 'fictional' is used intersectively.

The second problem was how can an abstract artifact instantiate properties that are only instantiated by material objects? In other words: how can an abstract artifact take pictures or solve mysteries, as is the case with L. B. Jefferies? The answer I provide is as follows: *they are not able to instantiate those properties or do such things*. I recognize that abstract objects cannot have those properties because, one more time, they are not in space and cannot establish causal interactions. Nonetheless, given that the use of the adjective 'fictional' is privative in this context, the properties that an author attributes to a fictional object in a work of fiction are exactly the properties that we are entitled and obliged to use in order to refer to that fictional object. If we assign other properties that are not foreseen by the work of fiction, or deny that we can assign a property to

a fictional object, we will end up violating our practices of fiction, ignoring what it means for something to be fictional and would not be able to say a meaningful word about it.

### Concluding remarks

I have analyzed what are fictional, metafictional and parafictional utterances. Then, within the horizon of a purely referential theory, I adapted Hans Kamp and Barbara Partee's (1995, 2010) theory of modifying adjectives and maintained that the adjective 'fictional' is used intersectively in sentences derived from metafictional contexts, and privatively in sentences derived from fictional and parafictional contexts. Therefore, L. B. Jefferies really is, for example, a fictional character. On the other hand, Jefferies is not a photographer, Rodion Raskolnikov is not a murderer, Gregor Samsa is not a monstrous insect. They are *fictional* photographers, murderers and insects. In this sense, I argued that although fictional objects do not have the properties that are attributed to them in a given work of fiction, those are exactly the properties we are entitled and obliged to attribute to them in order to make sense of our literary and cinematographic practices. I hope I have presented a theory that not only has internal consistency and high explanatory power, but is also a unified account that can rival the perspectives that assume there is something odd with the artifactualist approach.

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<sup>15</sup> Even Walton (1990, p. 39) seems to agree with this perspective when he says "Anyone who refuses to imagine what was agreed on refuses to 'play the game' or plays it improperly. He breaks a rule".

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