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Abstract	The aim of this paper is to evaluate which context determines the illocutionary force of written or recorded utterances—those involved in written texts, films and images, conceived as <i>recordings</i> that can be seen or heard in different occasions. More precisely, my paper deals with the “metaphysical” or constitutive role of context—as opposed to its epistemic or evidential role: my goal is to determine which context is semantically relevant in order to fix the illocutionary force of a speech act, as distinct from the information the addressee uses to ascertain the semantically relevant context. In particular I will try to assess two different perspectives on this problem, a <i>Conventionalist</i> Perspective and an <i>Intentionalist</i> Perspective. Drawing on the literature on indexicals in written texts and recorded messages, I will argue in favor of the Intentionalist Perspective: the relevant context is the one <i>intended</i> by the speaker. Bringing intentions into the picture, however, requires qualification; in particular, I will distinguish my <i>Weak Intentionalist</i> proposal from a <i>Strong Intentionalist</i> one. I will show that the Weak Intentionalist Perspective is flexible enough to deal with cases of delayed communication, but not so unrestricted as to yield counter-intuitive consequences.
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3 **How to do things with (recorded) words**

4 **Claudia Bianchi**

5
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7 **Abstract** The aim of this paper is to evaluate which context determines the
8 illocutionary force of written or recorded utterances—those involved in written
9 texts, films and images, conceived as *recordings* that can be seen or heard in
10 different occasions. More precisely, my paper deals with the “metaphysical” or
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20 *Intentionalist* proposal from a *Strong Intentionalist* one. I will show that the Weak
21 Intentionalist Perspective is flexible enough to deal with cases of delayed com-
22 munication, but not so unrestricted as to yield counter-intuitive consequences.

23
24 **Keywords** Speech acts · Indexicals · Illocutionary force · Context ·
25 Recordings · Intentionalism

26
27 **1 Introduction**

28 Suppose that, after an exhausting and animated quarrel, your partner finally walks
29 away saying to you

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30 (1) I'll be back.

31 How should you take his/her words? As a promise? As a menace?

32 As is well known, in speech act theory a linguistic expression like (1) can be used
 33 to perform a variety of different speech acts, such that the same locutionary act can
 34 count as having various illocutionary forces in different occasions—as when
 35 someone utters (1) to perform, in different contexts, an act of promising or an act of
 36 threatening. In order to determine which particular speech act has been performed,
 37 we have to resort to the context, and it is naturally assumed that the force-
 38 determining context is the context of production of the utterance.¹

39 In cases of delayed communication (written notes or recorded messages), such a
 40 simple picture must be enriched, for very often the illocutionary force of a written
 41 text or a recorded utterance isn't determined by the context of production or creation
 42 of the utterance. Imagine that Homer, while in his office, writes a note reading

43 (2) Don't leave.

44 Arriving home, he may leave it in the kitchen to issue an order to his butler (context
 45 C1); later he may put the same note in Marge's bag to implore her not to leave him
 46 (C2), or in Bart's room to challenge him (C3), and so on. Homer's note can be
 47 conceived as a *recording* that may be used again and again in a variety of situations
 48 to perform many different illocutionary acts such as issuing an order, begging,
 49 challenging.

50 The aim of my paper is to evaluate which context determines the different speech
 51 acts performed with a recording. More precisely, my paper deals with the
 52 “metaphysical” or constitutive role of context—as opposed to its epistemic or
 53 evidential role: my aim is to determine which context is semantically relevant in
 54 order to fix the illocutionary force of a speech act, as distinct from the information
 55 the addressee uses to *ascertain* the semantically relevant context.

56 I will characterise two different perspectives on this issue, a *Conventionalist*
 57 Perspective and an *Intentionalist* Perspective. Drawing on the literature on
 58 indexicals in written texts and recorded messages,² I will argue in favour of the
 59 Intentionalist Perspective, and claim that the relevant context is the one *intended* by
 60 the speaker. Bringing intentions into the picture, however, requires qualification; in
 61 particular, I will distinguish my *Weak Intentionalist* proposal from a *Strong*
 62 *Intentionalist* one. I will show that the Weak Intentionalist Perspective is flexible
 63 enough to deal with cases of delayed communication, but not so unrestricted as to
 64 yield counter-intuitive consequences.

65 2 The conventionalist perspective

66 According to the conventionalist perspective (CP), the illocutionary force of an
 67 “ordinary” speech act is settled in relation to a context fixed by specific conventions

¹ Cf. Austin (1962), Strawson (1964, p. 444).

² Corazza (2004), Corazza et al. (2002), Gorvett (2005), Predelli (1998a, 1998b, 2002, 2011), Romdenh-Romluc (2002, 2006), Sidelle (1991), Smith (1989), Stokke (2010).

68 delivered by the social or conventional setting in which the speech act takes place.³
 69 As far as a note like (2) is concerned, it seems quite straightforward to rule out the
 70 context in which the note was produced or encoded as the force-fixing context:
 71 Homer created his note as a multi-purpose item, to be used in a variety of future
 72 communications, to perform a variety of different speech acts. Hence, conventions
 73 associated to *delayed* speech acts (namely speech acts performed via a written note)
 74 state that they actually take place in the context in which the message is decoded.⁴

75 Focusing on the *decoding context* seems a plausible strategy. Notes and messages
 76 would allow one to utter sentences ‘at a distance’; in other terms they would allow
 77 the utterance of a sentence at time *t* and location *l* without being in *l* at *t* in order to
 78 perform a deferred speech act. In this line of thought, in *C1* Homer issued an order
 79 with the help of (2) in the kitchen, when his butler saw the note; in *C2* Homer
 80 begged Marge not to leave him when she found the note in her bag; in *C3* Homer
 81 challenged his son Bart by means of (2) in Bart’s room, when he came home from
 82 school. According to CP, it is the context in which the sentence is decoded that
 83 contributes to determining the illocutionary force of the speech act performed by the
 84 agent. In each context, Homer used his note to perform a different speech act: in this
 85 perspective, the question of which speech act was performed hinges on features of
 86 the contexts in which Homer’s note was seen—*decoded*—rather than features of the
 87 context in which it was made or encoded.⁵

88 3 The intentionalist perspective

89 CP argues that the illocutionary force of the different speech acts performed by
 90 Homer in *C1–C3* is settled by conventions associated to the different conversational
 91 settings. Conversely, the intentionalist perspective (IP) claims that what settles the
 92 illocutionary force of a speech act is neither the context of production of the
 93 utterance nor the context of the actual decoding of the utterance: the relevant
 94 context is the one *intended* by the speaker, the one the speaker has in mind.

3FL01 ³ For the notion of “social or conventional setting” see Corazza et al. (2002, p. 11): “Our proposal is
 3FL02 that, for any use of the personal indexical, the contextual parameter of the agent [location or time] is
 3FL03 *conventionally given*—given by the *social or conventional setting* in which the utterance takes place”. In
 3FL04 cases of deferred utterances, Corazza acknowledges that the time and location of the utterance may not be
 3FL05 the time and location of production of the token. But again, the social setting *conventionally* provides the
 3FL06 relevant parameters, with different conventional rules regulating different settings: answering machines
 3FL07 (“In the case of an answering machine, the time of the utterance corresponds with the time the recorded
 3FL08 message is played back and the location corresponds to the location it is played”), post-cards (“In a post-
 3FL09 card... the time picked out by the indexical is likely to be the time of the production of the message”),
 3FL10 and post-it notes (“in the case of post-it notes the location/time of utterance corresponds to the *location/
 3FL11 time the note is read*”): Corazza (2004, p. 312) (my emphasis).

4FL01 ⁴ This is the opinion of, for example, Saul (2006) or Mikkola (2008).

5FL01 ⁵ See Saul (2006, p. 238): “*viewings* of a work... are the times that matter for determining its
 5FL02 illocutionary force. At each of these times, we have different audiences, who may interpret the... work in
 5FL03 different ways; and different felicity conditions may be fulfilled or unfulfilled”; Mikkola (2008, p. 319):
 5FL04 “the context that fixes [the illocutionary force of recordings] on my example is that of *actual decoding*”
 5FL05 (my emphasis).



95 Accordingly, the illocutionary force of a *delayed* speech act is fixed in relation to a
96 context determined by the speaker's intentions.⁶

97 In my opinion, IP has three compelling arguments against CP, and more
98 particularly against the choice of the decoding context as the force-fixing context for
99 recorded utterances. I will focus on cases of alleged miscommunication (a), multiple
100 conventions (b) and novel uses (c).

101 (a) Suppose again that Homer has created (2) as a multi-purpose item, to be used
102 in a variety of future communications. Suppose also that, after an animated
103 argument, he is willing to get a divorce and has asked Marge to move. In order to
104 help Marge to pack her belongings, Homer plans to ask his butler to stay after 5 pm,
105 by putting a note reading (2) on the butler's desk. Marge sees the note, thinks Homer
106 is begging her to stay, and starts unpacking her things. Nevertheless, intuitively
107 Homer is not begging Marge, but ordering the butler: Marge must interpret the note
108 not in relation to the actual viewing but to the *expected* viewing—an intuition CP
109 cannot account for. The relevant context is the one envisioned (i.e. intended) by the
110 speaker, and not the one settled by events the speaker hasn't and couldn't have
111 anticipated.

112 (b) A second objection focuses more specifically on the choice of the decoding
113 context as the conventional force-fixing context for delayed utterances. The
114 discussion of the semantic interpretation of indexicals—insofar as it also deals with
115 matters of contextual dependence—provides relevant examples. As Stefano Predelli
116 points out, it is unclear what conventions regulate post-its or notes left on an office
117 door: "I may write 'I am on leave today' to inform prospective visitors that I am
118 away on the day when they read the message, but I may also attach a note saying
119 'Today the dean is getting on my nerves' merely to record my annoyance on the day
120 of writing".⁷ Contrary to what CP claims, then, written notes would be governed by
121 different conventions, individuating different parameters. CP must admit that
122 sometimes the *coding* context is relevant for post-it notes: according to Predelli,

123 (3) Today the dean is getting on my nerves
124 must be interpreted in relation to the time at which the note was produced.⁸

125 In a similar vein, suppose I write a note saying

126 (4) The exam session is open
127 and attach it to my office door in order to *declare* the exam session open. In this
128 situation, (4) must be taken as an "exercitive" (an act of "declaring open") and
129 interpreted in relation to the time at which the note was produced (the coding time).
130 In the following days I could use the same note in order to *inform* my students
131 that the exam session is open; in this situation, (4) must be taken as an "expositive"

6FL01 ⁶ Cf. Bianchi (2008) for arguments against Saul's claim that the force-fixing context of a recorded speech
6FL02 act is the decoding context and in favour of an intentionalist perspective.

7FL01 ⁷ Predelli (2002, p. 314).

8FL01 ⁸ For a different opinion, see Gorvett (2005, p. 307): "anyone reading the two notes on the door would
8FL02 interpret them both as saying something about the day on which they read the note; unfortunately the
8FL03 second note [(3)] would be saying something false".

132 (an assertion, a mere representation of a state of affairs) and interpreted in relation to
133 the time at which the note is read (the decoding time).⁹

134 (c) More generally, CP assumes that stating which conventions are in order in
135 each particular setting is an unproblematic issue. The objection is particularly
136 serious if we take into account novel uses, where conventions have not yet been
137 introduced and established. Suppose, for instance, that answering machines are a
138 new device and there are no conventions regulating the performance of speech acts
139 occurring in their recorded messages.¹⁰ I phone Homer and hear the message

140 (5) Leave a message after the tone.

141 How should I take that locution? As an order, a request, an invitation? Or suppose
142 that traffic lights are a new device and there are no conventions regulating the
143 performance of speech acts occurring in their written messages. At an intersection I
144 see a traffic light with the message:

145 (6) Don't walk.

146 How should I take that locution? As a prohibition, a kind request, an entreaty? Two
147 minutes later another message appears:

148 (7) Walk.

149 How should I take that locution? As an order, a permission, an invitation?

150 According to CP the force-determining context is fixed by conventions delivered by
151 the setting in which the utterance takes place. But at the time when my phone call takes
152 place, or when my walk takes place, there are no conventions delivered by those
153 particular settings. Apparently CP does not allow the speaker to use a locution in new
154 and unconventional ways, and owes us an explanation about how conventions arise.

155 4 Objections to the intentionalist perspective

156 IP is flexible enough to deal with cases of delayed communication, ambiguous
157 practices and novel uses; according to conventionalists, however, IP is too
158 unrestricted and yields counter-intuitive consequences. The main objection is that,
159 apparently, intentionalists allow speakers to use any locution they like to perform
160 any speech act they choose, only on the grounds that they intend to do so. IP seems
161 then committed to a Humpty Dumpty picture of communication: it must apparently
162 accept that Homer could issue an order to his butler *merely* in virtue of his having
163 the intention to do so.¹¹ In other words, if we accept that intentions are the only

9FL01 ⁹ I make reference to Austin's classification: see Austin (1962, p. 162).

10FL01 ¹⁰ I borrow this example from Romdenh-Romluc (2006, p. 268). Romdenh-Romluc examines a case
10FL02 involving indexical reference at a time when conventional ways of using answering machines are not yet
10FL03 established; I claim that a similar point can be made about illocutionary force.

11FL01 ¹¹ Corazza argues a similar point against Predelli in a discussion about indexicals; cf. Corazza et al.
11FL02 (2002, pp. 8–9): "If we allow Predelli's appeal to an intentional agent, we must accept that 'I' refers to
11FL03 Joe solely on the grounds that Ben intends it so to refer. However, if we accept that Ben, purely in virtue
11FL04 of his having the intention to do so, can use 'I' to refer to Joe, why can he not use 'I' to refer to pretty

164 element settling the force-determining context of a speech act, we cannot prevent
 165 Homer from performing, by putting a note reading (2)¹² on his butler's desk in *CI*,
 166 any speech act he chooses—say, begging Marge not to leave him—purely on the
 167 grounds that he intends to do so. IP seems committed to claiming that all that is
 168 required in order to perform a speech act is the intention of the speaker: as a
 169 consequence, there could be speech acts that the addressee isn't in a position to
 170 recognize.

171 To avoid this objection, we must put some restrictions on IP, and acknowledge
 172 that, in order to fix the relevant context, not just *any* intention will do. We will see
 173 that relevant intentions are merely the ones the speaker *makes available to the*
 174 *addressee*: only if they are transparent and publicly accessible do they settle the
 175 force-determining context (namely the context in its metaphysical role). Consider
 176 example (a) in Sect. 3: Homer is issuing an order to his butler by leaving (2) on his
 177 butler's desk, but Marge takes (2) as an act of begging her. Of course Marge is
 178 wrong: if a written utterance is intended as an illocutionary act of, say, ordering, and
 179 if this intention is made available to the addressee, no accidental decoding may
 180 change its illocutionary force. It is not the *actual* decoding that fixes the
 181 illocutionary force of the utterance, but the *expected* decoding.

182 On my view the force-fixing context for (2) is the one intended by Homer: it is
 183 the expected decoding context that fixes which speech act has been performed.
 184 I concede that if the note is a multi-purpose one, Homer doesn't have a particular
 185 context (addressee and illocutionary force) in mind when he writes the note.¹³ But I
 186 maintain that he has a particular context (addressee and illocutionary force) in mind
 187 every time he *uses* the note, every time he *sets* the intended context—that is every
 188 time he makes his intentions available to his addressee. Otherwise, in order to beg
 189 Marge not to leave him, why should he put the note in her bag and not, say, in Bart's
 190 room?

191 Suppose that when Homer writes the note in his office, he intends to use it to beg
 192 Marge not to leave him; he puts the note in Marge's bag, but later changes his mind
 193 and decides to use the note to order his butler to stay after 5 pm, instead. He then
 194 takes the note from Marge's bag *before* she can see it, and leaves it on the butler's
 195 desk. In this case Homer does have a particular context (and illocutionary force) in
 196 mind when he writes the note. But he has a different context (and illocutionary
 197 force) in mind when he uses it—and this sets the relevant context of interpretation,
 198 because it is only in this very situation that he makes his intentions *available* to his
 199 intended addressee. Intentions—to be genuine *communicative* intentions¹⁴—aren't
 200 just something in the head, something that the speaker has in mind. To see this,
 201 imagine that—*after* putting the note on the butler's desk—Homer changes his mind
 202 back and decides to beg Marge not to leave him—by means of that very note on the

11FL05
 11FL06 Footnote 11 continued

11FL07 much anybody?". Cf. Donnellan (1968, p. 212): "if intentions were sufficient, then a speaker could
 11FL08 mean anything by any word at any time or refer to anything using any definite description at any time".

12FL01 ¹² Or *any* note, for that matter.

13FL01 ¹³ This objection is raised by Mikkola (2008).

14FL01 ¹⁴ Cf. Bach (1994, p. 314).

203 butler's desk. This would be an *unreasonable* communicative intention—because
 204 Homer hasn't done anything to put Marge in a position to recognize his intention.
 205 Let me elaborate this point in more detail in the following sections.

206 5 Strong versus weak intentionalism

207 IP claims that the illocutionary force of a speech act is fixed by the intended context.
 208 Bringing intentions into the picture, however, requires qualification; in particular, it
 209 is useful to distinguish my (weak) intentionalist proposal from other (strong)
 210 intentionalist perspectives.¹⁵ As I have shown, an adequate proposal must satisfy
 211 two requests that are difficult to reconcile: it must be flexible enough to account for
 212 cases where there is a discrepancy between actual and expected decoding, or where
 213 the (alleged) conventions are ambiguous, or not yet established, but at the same time
 214 not too flexible to allow the speaker to use any locution to perform any illocutionary
 215 act in any context. Both CP and IP—as I present them—are inadequate for
 216 conflicting reasons: CP does not allow the speaker to perform speech acts in
 217 unconventional ways, while IP cannot prevent the speaker from using any locution
 218 to perform any illocutionary act in any, unrestricted, context. Again, drawing an
 219 analogy with indexical reference may be illuminating.

220 – From a **Strong Intentionalist Perspective**, in order for a speaker to refer by
 221 using an indexical, all that is required is that the speaker have a certain intention:
 222 “In [the intentionalist stance] the indexicals in [an utterance of a sentence
 223 containing ‘I’ and ‘now’] *refer* to the individual or time in the intended context, in
 224 the sense that they are semantically associated with it by virtue of the mechanisms
 225 governing expressions of this kind. This is of course compatible with the fact that, in
 226 most cases, those expressions cannot be *used to refer* to that individual or time, in
 227 the sense that the sentences in question cannot be employed as a means of
 228 conveying the desired information”.¹⁶

229 In a similar vein, from a **Strong Intentionalist Perspective for speech acts**, in
 230 order for a speaker to perform a speech act, all that is required is that the speaker
 231 have a certain intention—even if it is agreed that in most cases the audience cannot
 232 recognize the illocutionary force of the speech act in question. In this view, Homer
 233 could beg Marge not to leave him by putting a note on his butler's desk—and
 234 simply failing to *communicate* his intention to his audience. The intention
 235 determines the relevant force-fixing context, even if no evidence of the speaker's
 236 intention is made available to the audience, leading to a communicative failure.

237 – From a **Weak Intentionalist Perspective**, on the other hand, in order for a
 238 speaker to refer by using an indexical, not only must the speaker have a certain

15FL01 ¹⁵ Such as that allegedly endorsed by Predelli (2002, p. 314). Actually, Predelli (2011) seems to commit
 15FL02 himself strongly only to the view he calls the “impropriety thesis”: “a variety of views regarding written
 15FL03 notes, recorded messages... yield a satisfactory explanation of the problem under discussion only to the
 15FL04 extent to which they accept improper contexts” (Predelli 2011, p. 302). I owe the distinction between
 15FL05 Weak and Strong Intentionalism to Stokke (2010): Stokke, though, draws the distinction concerning the
 15FL06 semantic interpretation of indexicals.

16FL01 ¹⁶ Predelli (2002, p. 315).

239 intention, but she must also put her addressee in a position to recognize her
240 intention.

241 In a similar vein, from a **Weak Intentionalist Perspective for speech acts**, in
242 order for a speaker to perform a speech act, not only must she have a certain
243 intention, but she must also put her addressee in a position to recognize her
244 intention. In my view, then, an intention, to be *semantically* relevant (and not only
245 successfully *communicated*, as for strong intentionalists) must be made available to
246 the addressee (for that purpose the speaker can exploit any feature of the context,
247 words, gestures or relevance in the context of utterance).

248 Let us take stock. In my (Gricean) view, intentions—in order to be semantically
249 relevant, that is in order to settle the context in its metaphysical role—must satisfy
250 two constraints: (i) a Belief Constraint; (ii) an Availability Constraint.

- 251 i. Intentions must be constrained by expectations and beliefs: a speaker S
252 cannot intend to refer to object O by using expression E in context C if S
253 doesn't believe her addressee A will be able to identify her intention.¹⁷
254 Similarly, S cannot intend to perform speech act SA using (2) in C if S
255 doesn't believe A will be able to identify her intention—namely if S
256 doesn't believe she can succeed in performing SA by using (2) in C.
- 257 ii. Intentions must satisfy what I call an *Availability Constraint*, that is they
258 must be reasonable and not arbitrary: reference is determined by public
259 behavior, by intentional acts and not by intentions as mental objects. S
260 cannot intend to refer to O using E in C if S doesn't make her intention
261 available to A—that is if S doesn't put A in a position to recognise her
262 intention.¹⁸ Similarly, S cannot intend to perform speech act SA using (2)
263 in C if S doesn't make her intention available to A—that is if S doesn't put
264 A in a position to recognise her intention.

265 In closing, let me add some remarks to clarify my two constraints.

266 6 Humpty Dumpty again

267 The Belief and Availability Constraints are in line with how Keith Donnellan deals
268 with intentions and expectations. As is well known, Donnellan views intentions as
269 “essentially connected with expectations”,¹⁹ and more specifically as *limited* by
270 reasonable expectations. As he famously puts it, a subject in normal circumstances
271 cannot flap his arms with the intention of flying, nor he can say out of the blue
272 “There's glory for you” and mean “There's a nice knock-down argument for you”
273 (as Humpty Dumpty does in his exchange with Alice). The subject flapping his arms
274 or Humpty Dumpty talking to Alice cannot have the *right* intentions, in the given

17FL01 ¹⁷ I follow Donnellan (1968) on this point; cf. Bianchi (2006), Neale (2005), and Stokke (2010). See
17FL02 *infra*, § 6.

18FL01 ¹⁸ Cf. Bianchi (2006, p. 389), where I develop this point as far as domains of quantification are
18FL02 concerned. Stokke (2010, p. 388) introduces a similar “Uptake Constraint” on referring: “It requires that,
18FL03 in order for a speaker to refer, her audience must be ‘in a position to’ recognize her intention”.

19FL01 ¹⁹ Donnellan (1968, p. 212).

275 circumstances: indeed they cannot have the reasonable expectation that they will
 276 succeed in doing what they intend to do. In other words, Humpty Dumpty cannot
 277 use the word “glory” *entirely out of the blue* and expect his addressee to grasp his
 278 communicative intention, that is expect Alice to construe his words in a novel way
 279 (meaning “a nice knock-down argument”): such an expectation would be
 280 unreasonable because nothing in the given circumstances directs Alice towards
 281 the new interpretation. Expectations, in this perspective, are limited by the existence
 282 of established practices (standard uses, regularities of behaviour), explicit stipula-
 283 tions or conventions: practices, stipulations or conventions “may be usually
 284 required for speakers to have the right expectations”.²⁰ However—and this is
 285 crucial to an Intentionalist Perspective—they need not be required (i.e. they are not
 286 necessary conditions). They are merely means of ensuring that the Availability
 287 Condition is met, that is they are only instruments (although the most common and
 288 effective) to make communicative intentions overt, manifest and, hence, available to
 289 the addressee.

290 In my Weak Intentionalist Perspective, the same goes for speech acts. The
 291 speaker’s intention to perform a speech act is constrained by reasonable expectations,
 292 which in turn are constrained by established practices and explicit stipulations.
 293 Consider again the case examined at the end of Sect. 4: Homer has the intention to beg
 294 Marge not to leave him, and leaves a note reading (2) on his butler’s desk. Stating my
 295 view in Donnellan’s terms, we could say that, in such circumstances, Homer doesn’t
 296 have the *right* intention, because we cannot credit him with the reasonable expectation
 297 of succeeding in performing the intended speech act by doing what he is doing. In this
 298 case, as I have described it, Homer hasn’t done what is necessary to enable Marge to
 299 recognise his intention. He hasn’t used an established practice (say, the habit of
 300 leaving messages for Marge on the butler’s desk), an explicit stipulation (e.g. a
 301 previous arrangement about that particular note) or a convention (a fixed agreement
 302 between Marge and himself about notes to each other). But neither has he exploited
 303 any kind of appropriate behaviour (such as overtly glancing or nodding in the
 304 direction of the butler’s desk), any relevant element related to the physical context
 305 (like an illuminated path directing Marge to the butler’s desk) or previous
 306 communicative exchanges (“Please, have a look at the butler’s desk!”). Following
 307 Donnellan, we could say that one cannot conceive of any sets of beliefs that would
 308 allow Homer to expect that putting that note on the butler’s desk was a means to
 309 fulfilling the intention of making it known to Marge which speech act he was
 310 performing.²¹ In this context, Homer’s intention to perform the speech act of begging
 311 Marge is arbitrary and utterly odd, that is unreasonable, and hence, I claim, *with no*
 312 *semantic import*.

313 An intention—in order to be semantically relevant, i.e. in order to play a
 314 *metaphysical* role—must be something that an addressee in normal circumstances is
 315 able to work out using either conventional means, or contextual information
 316 available from the physical surroundings (where, when and by whom the utterance
 317 is produced), previous linguistic exchanges (what has been said so far) and

20FL01 ²⁰ Donnellan (1968, p. 212).

21FL01 ²¹ Cf. Donnellan (1968, p. 215).

318 background knowledge (knowledge about butlers, weddings, divorces and so on). In
 319 my framework, it is essential to underline the distinction between “addressee” and
 320 “competent speaker”: it is part of S’s communicative responsibilities to put *that*
 321 *particular A* (and not just *any* competent speaker, such as a bystander²²) in a
 322 position to recognise her intentions. And the addressee can reasonably be expected
 323 to recognise a communicative intention just because the speaker has done what is
 324 necessary in order to make it public, open and manifest.²³ The speaker directs the
 325 addressee to this intended context—which is identified and sorted out by various
 326 pragmatic means (knowledge of the world, of the speaker’s desires and beliefs, of
 327 social practices and so on—and this is the epistemic or evidential role of the
 328 context). Marge isn’t in a position to recognise every bizarre intention Homer might
 329 have, if no evidence of his intention was made available to her. No arbitrary or
 330 unreasonable intention the author of a speech act might have plays a role in *fixing*
 331 (and not only communicating) the force-determining context of her speech act—for
 332 the author hasn’t done enough to make her intention available to the addressee.

333 Of course my account does not require that the addressee *in fact* recognise the
 334 speaker’s communicative intentions, only that the speaker has fulfilled her
 335 communicative responsibilities (that is, has satisfied the Belief and the Availability
 336 Constraints): having fulfilled her communicative responsibilities, however, isn’t a
 337 guarantee of successful communication. S’s having a complex array of audience-
 338 oriented intentions, and making it public and available to A does not secure
 339 communication, for A could be absent-minded, forgetful, lacking in the relevant
 340 knowledge, uncooperative or even irrational.²⁴

341 7 Conclusion

342 The goal of this paper was to analyse the force-fixing context for delayed utterances.
 343 I have focused on the metaphysical or constitutive role of the context—as opposed
 344 to its epistemic or evidential role—in order to determine which context is
 345 semantically relevant to fix the illocutionary force of a speech act, as distinct from
 346 the information the addressee uses to ascertain the semantically relevant context.
 347 I have identified two different perspectives on this issue, a *Conventionalist*
 348 *Perspective* and an *Intentionalist Perspective*. Focusing on cases of alleged
 349 miscommunication, multiple conventions, and novel uses, I have argued in favour
 350 of the latter: the relevant context is the one *intended* by the speaker. More
 351 particularly, I have characterised a *Weak Intentionalist* proposal: intentions—in
 352 order to settle the context in its metaphysical role—must satisfy two constraints, that
 353 is a Belief Constraint and an Availability Constraint. I have shown that my proposal

22FL01 ²² Contrary to Garcia Carpintero’s opinion; cf. Garcia-Carpintero (1998, p. 537): “I will take
 22FL02 demonstrations to be sets of *deictical intentions* manifested in features of the context of utterance
 22FL03 available as such to any competent user”. According to Romdenh-Romluc (2006) “indexical reference
 22FL04 must be fixed by a competent and attentive audience” (p. 274).

23FL01 ²³ Cf. Bach (1994, p. 314), Romdenh-Romluc (2006), Stokke (2010, p. 390).

24FL01 ²⁴ Cf. Bianchi (2013).

354 is flexible enough to deal with cases of delayed communication, but immune to
 355 counter-intuitive (*à la* Humpty-Dumpty) consequences.

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