

# Fictionality in Imagined Worlds

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## 1. Introduction

It is fair to say that Kendall Walton is responsible for bestowing on *imagination* the central place it holds today in various domains of aesthetics and the philosophy of art. Elaborated most fully in *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (1990), his proposal that we should conceptualize not just fiction, but representational art more generally, in terms of its role in prompting imaginings in games of make-believe is a position some may embrace and others reject, but no one—at least no one interested in these topics—can ignore.

Among the many issues that Walton's theory has influenced is the debate concerning how to understand "truth in fiction," or *fictionality* in Walton's terminology. It is in Walton's sense fictional that Offred is a handmaid, but not that she is the Commander's wife (in Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel *The Handmaid's Tale*). Since Offred and the Commander do not exist and the events of Atwood's novel never actually took place, what justifies these conclusions? In virtue of what does a proposition count as fictional? One answer, derived from David Lewis (1983), is that "truth in fiction" is truth at a certain set of possible worlds. Walton rejects the claim that "fictional truth" is any kind of truth at all. Instead, he proposes that what is fictional is what a work prescribes imagining. In reading Atwood's novel, we are supposed to imagine that Offred is a handmaid, not that she is the Commander's wife; and this is why the former is fictional and the latter is not.

Recently, Walton (2015) has raised objections to his own account. He now maintains that while a prescription to imagine is necessary for fictionality, it is not sufficient. He further argues that there are no systematically identifiable sufficient conditions. I disagree. To avoid Walton's conclusion, what is needed is a more detailed account of the kind of imagining relevant to fictionality. I propose to develop such an account in this paper.

I proceed as follows. In the next section, I delineate the scope of fictionality by considering the range of representations to which the concept applies, which goes well beyond works of fiction in the ordinary sense. In §3 I argue that the kind of imagining that determines what is fictional is *imagining a storyworld*. I elaborate an account of the content of this kind of imagining by appeal to cognitive psychologists' notion of constructing a *mental model* or *situation model*. After further clarifying the proposal in §4, in §5 I address Walton's objections to his own view. I argue that the framework of situation models has the resources to overcome the challenges he poses. However, the appeal to situation models does not explicitly concern imagining; situation models reflect only the *content* imagined, rather than the attitude taken toward it. In §6 I propose an account of the relationship between fictionality and imagining that does justice to the ambitions of Walton's theory.

## 2. Fiction and Fictionality

To grasp the scope of Walton's notion of *fictionality*, it is essential to understand his conception of *fiction*. In *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (henceforth: *Mimesis*) Walton uses the terms *fiction* and *representation* (or *representational art*) interchangeably. His ambition is like that of Nelson Goodman (1976): to offer an account of representation across art forms, the core features of which for Walton are exemplified by paradigmatic works of fiction. Goodman defined representation in terms of denotation, making it difficult to accommodate non-denoting representations such as paintings of unicorns and novels about fictional

characters. Walton instead defines fictions or representations by their function in serving as props in certain games of make-believe: specifically, games in which we are meant to imagine the contents of the works. The connection to children's games is intentional. Just as the child pushing a toy truck across the floor while imagining that it is rumbling down the road plays the sort of game appropriate for the toy, the reader of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) who imagines that Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna plays the sort of game that is authorized for the novel. Not only does Walton's approach avoid the problem Goodman faced with non-denoting representations, it also easily accommodates non-linguistic fictions (by contrast, for instance, with various definitions of fiction that rely on speech act theory).<sup>1</sup>

The category Walton carves out does not line up with ordinary classifications, however. For example, representations in Walton's sense need not be intentionally created: rocks or clouds can serve as props in games of make-believe if they are accorded that role in a social practice (1990, 87-88). Nonfiction texts such as histories and biographies are difficult to accommodate. On the one hand, it is counterintuitive to deny that they are *representations*; on the other, it is problematic to identify them as *fictions*. I have argued elsewhere that many works of nonfiction invite imagining in one form or another and should therefore be included in Walton's category (Friend 2008). For example, many histories ask us to imagine what it was like to live in another time and place. Easier (though less intuitive) to classify are pictures, which for Walton invite imagining by definition. To "see-in" a picture, in Richard Wollheim's (1992) phrase, requires imagining, *of* looking at the picture, that it is seeing the represented scene. The same holds for photographs. Though Walton (1984) notoriously maintains that they are "transparent," allowing us literally to see their subjects, this is *indirect* seeing; we still imagine that we are *directly* seeing the subjects, face to face. As a consequence, even journalistic photographs are classified as fiction for Walton.

Because Walton's concept of fiction or representation cuts across familiar distinctions—such as between artifacts and natural objects, fiction and nonfiction—it is useful to adopt a term of art, *waltfiction*, for the category (Friend 2008). (I reserve the terms 'fiction' and 'nonfiction' for the ordinary, narrower categories, according to which novels and plays are fiction and histories and biographies are nonfiction.) I will focus on waltfictions that are uncontroversially *works*. For present purposes, then, waltfictions are defined as those works designed (or taken) to prescribe imaginings about their content, where imagining the content is participating in the game of make-believe authorized by the work.

The invocation of *games* highlights two essential features of Walton's account (Friend 2014). The first is the significance of participation: rather than looking in at a fictional world from the outside, readers and audiences imaginatively participate in that world. In Walton's theory, imaginings about the content of a work are generated by more basic *de se* games of make-believe, which differ according to the modality of the representation. When I look at Goya's *The Third of May 1808* (1814), I am supposed to imagine seeing Napoleon's troops about to massacre innocent civilians—or more accurately, to imagine *of* my looking at the painting that it (my looking) is seeing Napoleon's troops ready to open fire. When I read Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, I am supposed to imagine *of* my reading the novel that it (my reading) is reading about such people as Okonkwo and Ikemefuna.<sup>2</sup> Goya's painting prescribes imagining *that* the troops are about to open fire in virtue of the fact that, within an authorized game of make-believe, we *see* that this is so. Similarly, Achebe's novel prescribes

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<sup>1</sup> Such definitions include those proposed by Currie (1990) and Stock (2017) among others.

<sup>2</sup> According to the "report model," we imagine more specifically that we are reading a nonfiction *report* of events (Currie 1990, 73; Matravers 1997). I prefer to say more neutrally that we "learn" about the fictional events by reading, where it may be unspecified how exactly we learn. Walton (1990, Chapter 9) considers both "reporting narrators" and "storytelling narrators."

imagining *that* Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna in virtue of the fact that, within an authorized game of make-believe, we *read* that this is so.

These points draw attention to the second feature of Walton's account associated with the appeal to games: the normativity of representation. Some moves in a game are licensed, others are not. Just as nothing prevents a child from using the toy truck as a hammer, nothing prevents the reader from imagining that Okonkwo spares Ikemefuna's life. Still, there is a clear sense in which this imagining is not authorized by the novel. Only some imaginings reflect what is "true in the fiction," or in Walton's terminology, *fictional*. What is fictional is what we are supposed to imagine.

Walton's use of the term *fictional* is unfortunate in two ways, however. First, "fictionality" is ambiguous between a property of works (those classified as fiction) and propositions (those that the works prescribe imagining). Second, even when we restrict ourselves to the latter sense, describing the propositions as "fictional" is misleading given the breadth of the category of waltfiction. As noted above, Walton's aim is to avoid the implication that "fictional truth" is any kind of truth, such as truth at a set of possible worlds. But what he identifies is a broader notion of *representational content* for the full range of waltfictions, and not merely for works of fiction in the ordinary sense. To avoid confusion, I will adopt a term I have introduced elsewhere (Friend 2017): I will say that what a waltfiction invites us to imagine is *storified*, and that the storified propositions are the *story-truths*.<sup>3</sup> My aim is to give an account of storified content that avoids Walton's objections.

### 3. Imagining a Storyworld

Walton does not provide an account of the kind of imagining that is relevant to storified content. When a waltfiction invites us to imagine that P, we must, at a minimum, form a mental representation with the content P. When we imagine in response to a waltfiction, though, we do not merely imagine a series of propositions; rather, we imagine a *world*. The idea of "fictional worlds" is familiar, but the concept extends beyond novels and plays to other waltfictions. Looking at *The Third of May 1808*, I do not construe the scene I imaginatively witness to occur at a frozen moment in time, spatially cut off from anything else, populated by flat cut-outs of people. To the contrary, I assume that there is a before and after, a surrounding landscape, "backsides" of the figures, and so on. In short, I imagine a world in which the events take place.

I agree with Walton that we should reject an account of storified content that relies on the notion of truth at possible worlds. Instead, I take *imagining a world* to indicate a certain kind of mental activity, involving the construction of what psychologists call a *situation model* (van Dijk and Kintsch 1983) or *mental model* (Johnson-Laird 1983). This is a complex, multidimensional representation of the world of the representation, what I will call the *storyworld*: people and things, their properties and relations, the unfolding events, settings, and so on. The notion of a situation model originates in the psychology of text comprehension, where it is typically contrasted with two other "levels" of memory representation associated with content: the *surface code*, which is the exact wording of a text, and the *textbase*, which is the semantic content of explicit sentences. Psychologists agree that understanding must go beyond these levels; to genuinely comprehend what we read, we must construct a "mental microworld of what the story is about" (Graesser, Olde, and Klettke 2002).

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<sup>3</sup> Though this proposal avoids some of the confusion surrounding Walton's terminology, it is obviously not ideal for capturing the content of non-narrative representations. In the absence of a better option, the term should simply be taken to cover all representations within the scope of waltfiction.

Though they may have propositional content, situation models are usually construed as having an analogical structure, for instance representing relations between entities in an abstract spatial framework (see Tapiero 2007). Many psychologists point to evidence that they include modality-specific representations, whether or not these are experienced as conscious imagery.<sup>4</sup> This is compatible with our being able to describe the content of a work propositionally. Having constructed a complex representation of Okonkwo—his physique, his thoughts and feelings, his actions and relations to others, and so on—we will treat certain propositions about Okonkwo as storified: for instance, *that Okonkwo is proud*. (With pictures, the relevant propositions may include demonstratives: for instance, that the central figure’s arms are raised in *that* way.) The key point is that a situation model is a mental representation of a dynamic scenario rather than just a set of propositions.

The details of the psychological literature on situation models and mental models will not concern me here (though I say more in §5).<sup>5</sup> Instead I want to indicate why situation models are good candidates for the content of the imaginings invited by waltfictions. First, imagining a storyworld is plausibly *objectual imagining*: imagining *O* (the storyworld), not just imagining *that P* (Yablo 1993).<sup>6</sup> When we construct situation models, we form mental representations of individuals and their properties and relations—a “microworld” in exactly this sense. Second, situation models are postulated to explain how we comprehend texts and representations in other media. It is by forming mental representations of people, events, and situations that we are able to follow complicated stories, integrate information from different sources, and so on.

Finally, situation models are constructed in response to different media. For example, we seem to form the same kinds of mental representations of narrative events when we watch films as when we read texts (Zacks, Speer, and Reynolds 2009). We are also able to integrate textual and visual information into the same mental representation of a situation (see, e.g., Glenberg and McDaniel 1992). In other words, we construct representations that are, at some level, independent of source modality: representations of the situations depicted, and not only *how* they are depicted. The *how* is instead reflected in the format of the *de se* games of make-believe.

Given that determining what is storified is essential to comprehending a story, the appeal to situation models has the potential to illuminate story-truth. In light of this connection, my proposal will be that what is storified by a waltfiction is (roughly) what it invites us to include in our situation models.

There is an immediate objection to treating this proposal as an account of fictionality in Walton’s sense: namely, that it does not mention imagining at all. There is no doubt that constructing a situation model is *necessary* for imagining a storyworld; one could not so imagine without mentally representing the individuals and events portrayed. But does the construction of a situation model suffice for imagining? A few theorists would say yes. For example, some psychologists take situation model construction to be an imaginative activity, allowing us to take the “mental leap into imagined worlds” (Zwaan 1999). And the idea that mentally representing situations that are outside one’s current experience constitutes an exercise of imagination is not unprecedented.<sup>7</sup> However, there are also reasons to treat

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<sup>4</sup> Evidence for this appears in Barsalou (1999), Zwaan (2003), and Kurby and Zacks (2013). See also Sanford and Emmott (2012).

<sup>5</sup> Matravers (2014) and Friend (n.d.) discuss the psychological literature on mental models in some detail.

<sup>6</sup> The contrast between propositional imagining and objectual imagining is a species of the more general distinction between propositional and objectual attitudes (Forbes 2000). Objectual attitudes are unlikely to be reducible to propositional ones (see, e.g., Crane 2013; Grzankowski 2015).

<sup>7</sup> It is, for instance, central in Bühler (2011). Thanks to François Recanati for drawing my attention to this source.

imagination as narrower in scope. This is not only because we construct situation models in response to nonfictions whose contents we believe in their entirety (Friend 2008; Matravers 2014).<sup>8</sup> It is also because describing all mental representations of situations as “imagining” potentially empties the concept of any theoretical interest.

I will therefore not assume that constructing a situation model is sufficient for imagining. However, this does not mean that my proposal fails as an account of fictionality in Walton’s sense. What is fictional or storified is the *content* to be imagined; specifying content is distinct from specifying the attitude taken toward it. If I imagine that ostriches can fly, I imagine the same proposition that some might believe, others desire, and so on. I return to the role of imagining in an account of story-truth in §6. For now, I take it that the omission of imagining does not undermine the proposal that what is storified in a waltfiction is (roughly) what the work invites us to include in our situation models.

#### 4. Distinguishing Obligations

In its rough form the proposal is subject to several objections. Because these objections arise in the context of Walton’s original account, I will articulate the points in terms of invitations to imagine; this should be understood to mean invitations to include a representation in a situation model (leaving for later the question of how to construe the attitude toward the representation).

One worry is that some waltfictions, such as Escher paintings or Robbe-Grillet fictions, storify what we (arguably) cannot imagine, such as metaphysical impossibilities or logical contradictions.<sup>9</sup> Certainly we cannot construct a *coherent* situation model that includes contradictions. This is not a serious difficulty, though. As Walton points out, “There can be prescriptions to imagine a contradiction even if doing so is not possible” (1990, 64). In such cases we recognize that we are invited to imagine both P and not-P, even if we do not manage the task.<sup>10</sup>

A more serious concern is that what is storified goes far beyond what we are required to imagine. Although it is storified in Goya’s painting and in Achebe’s novel that the people portrayed are prevented from floating into the air by gravity, we can appreciate either work without ever entertaining this story-truth (even implicitly). We should therefore reject the assumption that we are *required* to imagine everything storified. Some kinds of imaginings are plausibly mandated, insofar as they reflect a minimal requirement on understanding a work. A reader would fail to grasp the basic plot of *Things Fall Apart* if she failed to represent Okonkwo as killing Ikemefuna. A fuller appreciation requires representing more than this; for instance, readers should recognize that Okonkwo feels terrible guilt about the killing, even though this is not explicitly acknowledged. Still, even full appreciation does not demand entertaining every proposition that is storified.

Walton adds a qualification to his original account to avoid the implication that we must imagine everything that is fictional. Here is his most recent articulation of the original view: “a proposition is fictional in (the world of) a particular work, *W*, just in case appreciators of the work are to imagine it, just in case full appreciation of *W* requires imagining it” (2015, 17). In a footnote to this formulation, Walton draws attention to a key but often overlooked passage in *Mimesis*:

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<sup>8</sup> Matravers uses this observation to argue that because an imaginative response is not distinctive to fiction—a claim with which I agree—there is no interesting distinction between fiction and nonfiction—a claim with which I disagree (Friend n.d.).

<sup>9</sup> Gendler (2000) argues that we can imagine contradictions. See Stock (2003) for a reply.

<sup>10</sup> See Friend (n.d.) for further discussion.

A proposition is fictional, let's say, if it is to be imagined (in the relevant context) *should the question arise*, it being understood that often the question *shouldn't* arise. In normal cases the qualification can be understood thus: If *p* is fictional, then should one be forced to choose between imagining *p* and imagining not-*p*, one is to do the former. (Walton 1990, 40)

Though Walton presents these claims as articulating the same position, there are actually a variety of different obligations identified in these passages, which we would do well to distinguish.

Using terminology I have introduced elsewhere (Friend 2017), I draw the following distinctions among the obligations. A work *mandates* imagining that *P* (that is, including *P* in our situation models) if failing to imagine that *P* would mean failing to reach a minimum level of comprehension. A work *prescribes* imagining that *P* if including *P* within our situation models contributes to full appreciation of the work (however full appreciation is to be understood). A work *invites* imagining on the following condition, adapted from Walton's qualification: If the question arose and we had to choose between including *P* and including not-*P* in our situation models, we would be required to include the former.

Although Walton often describes the condition for fictionality in terms of "full appreciation," suggesting that what is at issue are *prescriptions* to imagine, I would argue that storified content is best captured by *invitations* to imagine in the above sense—that is, by Walton's qualification rather than by his official position. For instance, I take it as storified that gravity operates in the worlds of *The Third of May 1808* and *Things Fall Apart*. However, we can fully appreciate each of these works without ever representing this in our situation models. Still, if the question arose it would be absurd to *deny* that there is gravity in the relevant storyworlds.

Notice that there is a great deal that we may include in our situation models that goes beyond the content of a waltfiction. Different readers might imagine Okonkwo's appearance in Achebe's novel differently; different viewers might imagine different thoughts going through the minds of the soldiers in Goya's painting. Neither the precise appearance nor the exact thoughts are storified, so these different imaginings are all compatible with the representational content. If the question arose, we would not be obligated to imagine that Okonkwo's nose is of one shape rather than another, assuming that this is left indeterminate in the text. We are *authorized* or *permitted* to fill in such aspects of the storyworld as we wish, in our distinct games of make-believe.<sup>11</sup> So we are invited to include a great deal more than we should include for full appreciation, or must include for minimal understanding, but less than we are permitted to include.

With this in mind, I return to my proposal: that what is storified is (roughly) what a waltfiction invites us to include in our situation models, with the invitation to be understood in the above technical sense. Even when clarified in this way, however, the proposal faces further objections.

## 5. Sufficient Conditions

One such challenge has led Walton to reject his original account of fictionality, concluding that "[p]rescriptions to imagine are necessary but not sufficient for fictionality" (2015, 17). The problem is that many works invite us to imagine—to include in our situation

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<sup>11</sup> In Friend (2014) I used the term *authorization* for what I here call an *invitation*. I now distinguish stronger and weaker conditional obligations from mere permissions. See García-Carpintero (2013) for a discussion of conditional obligations in fiction.

models—representations that are *not* storified. Walton discusses several kinds of case, which generally fall into two categories.

The first sort of case is exemplified by plot twists in literature and film. For example, in Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* (1940), readers are invited to imagine that Justice Wargrave is fatally shot, the sixth victim of the ten. It is only at the end that we discover from Wargrave's confession that his death was faked and that he is the murderer. In response to *Fight Club*, readers of the novel by Chuck Palahniuk (1996) or audiences of the film by David Fincher (1999) are invited to imagine that the narrator organizes a "fight club" with the saboteur Tyler Durden; eventually we (along with the narrator) find out that Tyler Durden is the alternate personality of the narrator himself.

In the second sort of case, the waltfiction contains an embedded representation. Walton offers examples of "*iconic meta-representations*," such as Vermeer's *A Young Woman Standing at a Virginal* (2015, 20). The painting depicts a painting on the wall of the room in which the young woman is standing, of Cupid holding a card. For Walton, to understand the content of the painting-within-a-painting the viewer must imagine seeing Cupid, which entails imagining that there is a Cupid. Yet there is no Cupid in the world of Vermeer's painting. In Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, each pilgrim tells a story, and readers are invited to imagine the content without necessarily taking it to reflect what is the case in the world of the pilgrimage. In response to the Wife of Bath's Tale, for example, we are meant to imagine that an old woman magically becomes young once the Knight grants her power over him. Yet this is not storified in world of *The Canterbury Tales* itself.

With such examples in mind, Walton concludes that prescriptions to imagine are necessary but not sufficient for fictionality. In my terms: if P is storified, we are invited to include it in our situation models, but the converse does not hold. If this is right, what we are invited to include in our representations of the storyworld outstrips the story-truths. To address this problem, more detail about situation models is called for.

Plot twists can be accommodated by considering the way in which situation models for narratives are constructed over time. The influential *Event-Indexing Model* is designed to offer an account of this process (Zwaan, Langston, and Graesser 1995; Zwaan and Radvansky 1998). I will explain the account with respect to reading, which is how it was originally proposed.<sup>12</sup> At any given moment we construct a *current model*, corresponding to a sentence or clause. For instance, the first sentence of *And Then There Were None* reads, "In the corner of a first-class smoking carriage, Mr Justice Wargrave, lately retired from the bench, puffed at a cigar and ran an interested eye through the political news in *The Times*" (Christie 2007, 1). The sentence prompts readers to assume a spatiotemporal framework (a train carriage interior), within which are tokens of a person, a newspaper, and so on, with their properties and relations. In reading further, we continuously build up an *integrated model*, a global model that incorporates all the current models up to that point in the process of *updating*. We do this by making inferences from the explicit text that connect the various elements into a coherent representation of a full scenario. By the end of the novel, readers will have constructed a *complete model*, which is an integrated model resulting from processing the whole text. If we reflect on our reading later, amending the representation, we may arrive at a *final model*. Perhaps we think in more detail about why Wargrave did what he did, amending our mental representation.

The solution to the challenge posed by plot twists emerges directly from this account: Rather than saying that what is storified is what we are invited to include in our situation models *simpliciter*, we say that it is what we are invited to include in the *final model*, after we have finished reading (or watching) and engaged in further reflection. Up until a certain point

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<sup>12</sup> The model has also been extended to films (see Zacks, Speer and Reynolds, 2009).

in Christie's story, the reader's integrated model may represent Wargrave as dead, but this will be updated by the time she constructs a final model.

To address embedded representations, including Walton's iconic meta-representations, we must assume that situation models are internally structured. A reader who failed to keep apart the pilgrimage and prologues from the stories the pilgrims tell would fail to construct any coherent model of *The Canterbury Tales*. Similarly, a viewer who took the painted Cupid to be present in the room with the young woman in Vermeer's painting would fail to understand the content of the picture altogether. To address such cases, some theorists introduce distinct "mental spaces" or "sub-worlds."<sup>13</sup> I will borrow an idea from Leda Cosmides and John Tooby (2000), and say that the embedded representation must be associated with a "source tag" indicating its origin—for example, *painting* or *Wife of Bath*—which "buffers" it from interacting freely with other elements of the situation model. A coherent final model for Vermeer's painting will include an untagged, unbuffered representation of the painting on the wall and a buffered representation of Cupid, associated with the painting *qua* source. And a coherent final model for Chaucer's tales will include an unbuffered representation of the Wife of Bath along with a buffered representation of the Knight and his deeds, associated with her telling *qua* source.

If we include these refinements, my proposal can be formulated more carefully: What is storified in a waltfiction is what we are invited to include unbuffered in our final models for the work. So it is storified in Vermeer's painting *that in the painting Cupid is holding a card*, but not *that Cupid is holding a card*. And it is storified in Chaucer *that in the Wife of Bath's tale an old woman magically becomes young*, but not *that an old woman magically becomes young*.

Now, Walton (2015) considers something like my solution to the plot twist cases, but rejects it on the grounds that it does not by itself accommodate embedded representations. It is not clear to me why all the cases have to be handled in exactly the same way. As Richard Woodward (2014), points out, different problems may call for different solutions. In any case, my solutions are not unrelated; they are both independently plausible clarifications of the situation models picture.

My proposal still does not mention imagining, however. In virtue of what does including P in our situation models constitute imagining that P? I consider this question in the next section.

## 6. Kinds of Imagining

I have suggested that the kind of imagining relevant to storified content is imagining a storyworld. I have also argued that we represent storyworlds by constructing situation models, and that P is storified so long as a work invites us to include it in our situation models—or more accurately, to include it unbuffered in our final models.<sup>14</sup> It follows that what is essential is not the attitude we take toward P in isolation, but rather the attitude we take to the situation model as a whole. For this reason, I will say that we *imagine that P* so long as we include P in a situation model that is imagined. In other words, imagining that P means representing it as part of an *imagined storyworld*.

The important question is, then, what it takes to imagine a storyworld, where this is to take the attitude of imagining toward a situation model. Because imagining is heterogeneous (Dorsch 2012; Kind 2013), I will not try to answer this question with a single theory. Instead I will consider two kinds of imagining that can plausibly be construed as "imagining storyworlds."

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<sup>13</sup> On mental spaces see Fauconnier (1994); Sanford and Emmott (2012). On sub-worlds see Gavins (2007).

<sup>14</sup> I will drop the clarification for ease of exposition.



The first emerges from a familiar contrast between believing and imagining. Many forms of imagining are compatible with belief, such as experiencing mental imagery. However, the contrast concerns imagining in a specific sense, what I call *mere-make-belief* (Friend 2008): that is, imagining that P without believing that P. Standardly construed as propositional attitudes, belief and mere-make-belief are distinguished according to their functional roles in cognition. Though we may make inferences and experience affect in response to both, only beliefs play a role in guiding ordinary actions, while the implications and effects of mere-make-beliefs are typically confined to a limited domain (see Liao and Gendler 2019). For instance, if I believe that I have been bitten by a poisonous snake I am likely to rush to the hospital, whereas merely imagining the same, no matter how much “fear” I experience, need not move me off the sofa.<sup>15</sup> Mere-make-beliefs are often described as *quarantined* from beliefs, and therefore unable to motivate action.

One possibility is that when we imagine a storyworld, we construct a situation model quarantined from our beliefs. However, it would be impossible to construct situation models for waltfictions this way, not least because we rely on background knowledge to fill in the gaps left open by a representation. For instance, when I assume that the soldiers and victims in Goya’s painting have backsides, I *import* my knowledge of ordinary human beings. On the other side of the coin, if I learn something about Napoleon’s troops from viewing the painting, I *export* this information to my beliefs.<sup>16</sup> Situation models cannot be quarantined.

Kathleen Stock (2017) proposes a way to include believed material within the content of what is imagined, though she puts the point in purely propositional terms. She maintains that we count as “imagining that P” even where P is believed, so long as it is inferentially connected to at least one other proposition that we do not believe. To borrow her example, suppose that I am in fact typing on my computer. I can still imagine *that I am typing on my computer* if I also imagine *that my office is on the moon* (Stock 2017, 146). In line with this suggestion, we could say that so long as a situation model includes at least some representations that we do not believe to be accurate concerning the real world, it represents an imagined storyworld, and our attitude toward the content constitutes imagining.

Because most works of fiction include at least some invented material, it is plausible that (most) fiction invites imagining in this sense (Friend n.d.). However, the same cannot be said for waltfiction. The category of waltfictions includes works whose storified contents we take to be entirely true, such as journalistic photographs and accurate historical narratives. The situation models we construct in response to such works are fully believed. If they prompt imagined storyworlds, this must be for some other reason.

I suggest that a better approach will appeal to something like imaginative immersion, which occurs when we find ourselves *transported* into a storyworld.<sup>17</sup> Psychologists of narrative comprehension measure transportation according to a scale that reflects levels of absorption, imagery, and affect (Green and Brock 2000). In other words, there is something *it is like* to imagine in this sense, where the phenomenology involves sensorimotor imagery and/or experiential imagining—imagining *doing* or *being*—along with close attention and emotional response. This sort of imagining cuts across the fiction/nonfiction divide in a way that fits with the scope of waltfiction. Vivid historical narratives or memoirs can transport us into the lives of others, for example.

Of course, not every waltfiction will invite a fully immersive experience, where we are “lost” in the storyworld. However, I suggest that given the role of *de se* imagining in

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<sup>15</sup> Walton (1990) uses such observations to argue that what we experience is not genuine fear, or fear of the ordinary kind (though contrary to the usual interpretation, it may be a genuine emotion). See Friend (2016).

<sup>16</sup> The terms *import* and *export* are from Gendler (2000).

<sup>17</sup> The term *transportation* is Richard Gerrig’s (1993). See Ryan (2015) for a narratological discussion of immersion.

Walton's account, every waltfiction will invite phenomenologically inflected imagining. Looking at pictures of any sort involves such a phenomenological or experiential dimension: not merely the experience of seeing the picture, but also of imaginatively seeing what the picture portrays. Many texts prompt imagery, but even when they do not, narratives typically offer the experience of learning about events *as they unfold*. When I read Simon Schama's *Rough Crossings* (2006), about slaves who fled the British to fight on the American side in the Revolutionary War, I respond to the events as if they are happening "now" rather than centuries ago. This here-and-now perspective plays an important role in emotional engagement, including anticipating what will happen next. Walton explains suspense in just these terms: Even when we know the outcome, we adopt the position of the ignorant within our games of make-believe, so that we experience anticipation, surprise, relief, and so on (1990, 259-271).

Let us suppose, with Walton, that all waltfictions prompt *de se* games of make-believe. At a minimum, this means that we imagine *of our own experiences* that they are experiences of learning—whether through reading, seeing, hearing, or what have you—about the individuals, events, and situations portrayed by the work. We construct situation models whose content is determined by what we take ourselves imaginatively to learn in the course of such games. Even if we believe the content in its entirety, then, the process of construction is guided by an imaginative project. It is reasonable to conclude that constructing situation models in response to waltfictions constitutes imagining a storyworld, and that we can therefore count representations included in the model as "imagined" (even if they are also believed).

Now, there are numerous objections to this proposal. Although there is widespread agreement that *fiction* invites imagining, nonfiction is often defined in terms of the invitation to believe.<sup>18</sup> There is further dispute concerning how much of our imagining in response to fiction or other works is *self-involving* in the way Walton suggests. Most importantly from the point of view of a unified account of waltfiction, many theorists deny that picture perception relies on imagining. Rather than engaging in the apparently complex activity of imagining, *of our own visual experience*, that *it* is an experience of the represented scene, these theorists typically maintain that seeing-in relies on more basic perceptual or recognitional capacities.<sup>19</sup>

I cannot offer a defense of the nature and range of waltfictions here. However, I will say that those who criticize Walton's theory on one point or another very often lose sight of the overall picture. Whatever distinguishes representations in different media, such as novels and paintings, sculptures and photographs, there is something in virtue of which they all count as *representations*. Walton's contention that representations function as props in games of make-believe has substantial explanatory capacity. It offers an account of what unifies works in the category while at the same time—via differences in the *de se* games of make-believe invited by different media—explaining what distinguishes them. If this theory is wrong, it is wrong about representation in general, and not just about specific forms of representation.

Though I have not defended Walton's overall theory of representation here, I have argued that there is an account of storified content, or *fictionality* in Walton's terminology, that applies across the range of waltfictions. If this account is plausible, it provides a reason to think that Walton's categorization makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of representations generally.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> For example, by Currie (1990), though he ultimately restricts this distinction between fiction and nonfiction to individual utterances rather than whole works.

<sup>19</sup> For criticisms of Walton's account of picture perception, see, e.g., Wollheim 1998; Nanay 2004; Budd 2008.

<sup>20</sup> I would like to thank Kendall Walton for fruitful discussions of these (and many other) issues over the years.

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