# From Fictionalism to Realism

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Edited by

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P U B L I S H I N G

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# INTRODUCTION

# FROM FICTIONALISM TO REALISM— FICTIONAL AND OTHER SOCIAL ENTITIES

## C. BARBERO, M. FERRARIS, A. VOLTOLINI

### 1. The state of the art of the controversy

In philosophy, *ontological debates* typically concern the issue of whether, with respect to certain problematic kinds of entities—abstract entities like numbers and universals, phenomenal entities like *qualia* and sense-data, deontic entities like aesthetical and ethical values, etc.—they in fact exist. In such debates, "realists" hold that there are entities of the relevant kind; "anti-realists," or eliminativists, hold the opposite.

In this respect, fictional entities are no exception. A longstanding debate in ontology concerns the problem of whether in the overall inventory of what there is, there are also characters of novels and plays like Madame Bovary, Anna Karenina and the like. Those adhering to the realist camp believe that there are such entities, for they are what we are referring to and thinking of when we tell stories or even describe their non-story-dependent features. Those belonging to the antirealist camp instead believe that there are no such entities, the contrary impression depending only on a misunderstanding of the functioning of our language and thought. In the beginning of the last century, Meinong (1904) and Russell (1905) were the respective champions of such positions.

Towards the very end of the last century, some fresh air entered the debate. On the one hand, in the realist camp a more palatable conception of *ficta* spread out, the so-called "artefactualist" or creationist position. According to such a position originally set forth by Ingarden (1931) and defended first of all by Thomasson (1999), there are things such as fictional entities which are also mind-dependent entities, i.e. they need to be thought of (paradigmatically, by their author or creator) in order to come into being. If their author or creator had not conceived of it, a *fictum* would not have existed. Moreover, *ficta* need something like a physical or a memory trace, such as the existence of copies of novels with them as

protagonists in order for them to persist, i.e. to remain in being. If any such trace disappeared, it would be correct to say that a *fictum* is dead. This idea has been developed in various forms which have tried either to attenuate the thesis that the existential dependence of a *fictum* is merely related to the author's original conception (Schiffer 1996) or make artefactualism compatible with the idea that a *fictum* genuinely possesses the properties that are predicated of it in the relevant narrations (Barbero 2005; Voltolini 2006). On the other hand, thanks to Walton in the antirealist camp, another conception came about that can better account than the previous antirealist theories for our deeply rooted impression that there are fictional entities— the fictionalist or pretence-theoretical approach (Walton 1990). According to such a conception, there are no such things as fictional entities, yet we make believe that there is something like that in the very same way in which we play cowboys and Indians as kids—we only *make believe* on such people. As a result, in the scope of a pretence there are such things like Madame Bovary, Anna Karenina and the like; in such a scope, for example, Madame Bovary is a superficial woman who lives in the disparity between her romantic ideals and the mediocrity of her life that will eventually lead her as well as her family to disaster. Yet it is only fictionally (not really) true that there is such a woman with such characteristics. In this respect, one may interpret all fiction-involving discourse either as properly embedded into a "in the fiction"-operator, so that no ontological commitment arises with respect to entities that are quantified over *within* such an operator (Brock 2002; Phillips 2000), or as involving a mere context-shift, so that such a discourse has to be semantically interpreted from the context of the pretence (Recanati 2000). Walton's approach favours the second interpretation in which the pretence-theoretical stance can be generalized to all representational arts. Not only when we write novels or plays, but also when we draw paintings or sculptures it is fictionally the case that there are individuals that do not actually exist; in the latter case, it is also fictional that we see such individuals, by fictionally reinterpreting the perceptions that are actually directed at what the perceiver is really facing (canvases, statues, etc.).

Interestingly enough, such positions have recently been generalized outside the issue of fictional entities so as to become the leading stances in ontological debates also concerning other kinds of entities. On the one hand, artifactualism has been extended to all social entities like documents, institutions and social events that can be seen as mind-dependent entities needing a physical inscription for their survival. Thomasson herself (2003b, 2009) has suggested this possibility, and the ideas of Ferraris (2009) are one of its most articulated formulations. On the other hand, the

fictionalist attitude has been applied to a variety of other entity types which are not really introduced in the ontological realm for there is only a (shallow) pretence that there are such entities. Again, the idea is that the discourse apparently concerning such entities has to be understood either as framed in the scope or a proper "in the fiction"-operator or as uttered in the unreal context of a pretence-world. In either variety, this fictionalist approach has been applied to different problematic entities such as possible worlds (Rosen 1990), mathematical entities (Field 1980) and moral values (Kalderon 2005).

Thus, at present the realist/antirealist controversy is mostly an artefactualist/fictionalist controversy, primarily but not exclusively with respect to fictional entities. Therefore, the main questions become the following. On the one hand, how can a creationist manage to deal with antirealist objections as applied not only to *ficta* but also to other entities which are indisputably social? What does it mean that fictional entities and social entities in general are "created" entities? On the other hand, is fictionalism really tenable, both with respect to fictional entities (is it really true that *no* fiction-involving discourse is ontologically committal?) and with respect to entities of other kind? Let us accept that fictionalism cannot be an overall strategy, for in order to be launched it must presuppose at least the existence of some kind of entities. For instance, one may say that in order to fruitfully develop a fictionalist mindreading strategy, one has to presuppose that there mental entities of some kind. If this is the case, what are the criteria for fictionalism to be applied to certain kind of entities and not to others?

## 2. How this book situates itself in the controversy

This volume is an opportunity to further pursue this debate, both with respect to fictional entities and to social entities. To start with, pretence itself must be reconsidered. Walton (1990) conceived make-believe as *p*, in terms of prescribing to imagine that *p*. As Kendall Walton now admits, this conception is unsatisfying, for many cases show that such an analysis does not provide sufficient conditions for make-believe. The proper fictional world must be specified in which a certain imagined content has to be true. Yet this clarification notwithstanding, it is hard to appeal to make-believe as a keystone to understand anything involving fiction. For instance, as Carola Barbero stresses in arguing against Radford's irrationality argument for fictional emotions, fiction might prompt real and rational emotions, for emotions are not essentially existence-entailing states. Hence, the fictionality move *à la* Walton, which escapes

irrationality by holding that it is only in fiction that we have emotions with respect to such characters, is not required. Moreover, it may be the case that, like verbal representations, *qua* non-verbal representation depictions involve pretending that there are individuals and states of affairs which are really not there. Yet, Alberto Voltolini underlines, *pace* Walton, that this is not a good reason to treat in make-believe terms that which makes a pictorial representation pictorial. According to Walton, something is a depictive representation, a "picture," only if in seeing it this not only prompts one to make-believedly see the picture's subject, but also one makes believe that that very seeing is the seeing of such a subject. Nevertheless, there are both empirical and conceptual reasons against this idea. Empirical reasons are that children learn to understand depiction before they learn to understand fiction, hence to engage in make-believe activities. Conceptual reasons are that insofar as make-believe that a certain experience is another experience cannot suitably be treated in terms of a visualizing activity, there is no chance of accounting for the admittedly experiential character of a pictorial experience in make-believe terms, as Walton wishes.

    It may thus be the case that as far as involvement with representations is concerned, a fictionalist approach cannot hold any kind of representation. Yet as far as fiction is concerned, fictionalists claim that their approach holds firm, insofar as no thorough account of it has to involve fictional entities as creationists maintain. To begin with, creationism is a rather problematic position. On the one hand, it involves a causal relationship between the created entities and their creator. On the other, *qua* abstract entities, such created entities are devoid of causal power. Hence, one of the two assumptions must be dropped. It may seem easier for creationism to drop the first one: speaking of the creation of a fictional entity is metaphorical talk, for what really occurs is that something comes into being by means of complying with some constitutive rules (as Thomasson 2003a and 2003b suggests). Yet Stuart Brock, Cei Maslen and Justin Ngai try the second option. According to them, there is no ultimately valid reason as to why abstract entities should be deprived of causal powers. Some might take this defence of creationism as offering a poisoned apple to a creationist, for the intuitive link between abstractedness and non-causality is very hard to dismantle (for instance, if one accepts that *abstracta* have no spatial dimension and, as Kim 2005 holds, genuine causality holds only in a spatial dimension, it follows that *abstracta* are non-causal). Yet there are even harder problems for a creationist on fictional entities. It is not the case, as Fred Kroon convincingly explains, that quantificational discourse on fictional entities

shows that we are ontologically committed to such entities, as a disguised creationist such as Van Inwagen (1979) originally believed. For one thing, if this discourse is committal, we have to accept that an analogous discourse about so-called imaginary companions is also committal as well. Yet the latter discourse is hardly committal, for children well know that they engage in a make-believe way with such purported entities. Perhaps a creationist might bite the bullet and acknowledge that, appearances notwithstanding, even such a discourse is committal. Yet they cannot allow for a further analogous discourse to be committal, namely the discourse involving indeterminate fictional entities, those that we merely generically describe in fictions, like the many dwarfs and orcs engaged in everlasting battles in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. The creationist has to admit that we are not ontologically committed to any such entity individually.

The main merit of Kroon's criticism is to underline that if creationists want to argue in favour of fictional entities, they have to rely on genuinely ontological arguments and not on semantically disguised arguments of that kind (for some attempts at doing that, Thomasson 1999 and Voltolini 2006). By way of an alternative, as we hinted at before, a creationist may more easily say that once we accept that some of our practices are imbued with certain constitutive rules, we get fictional entities in the same way as we get institutional entities (e.g. laws, nations, weddings). In this respect, fictional entities are nothing but a subset of social entities, which include institutional entities as their paradigmatic cases. As Paolo di Lucia shows, among the different types of entities produced by legal norms, *figmenta* are precisely one kind of institutional entities that are sustained by constitutive rules: as a matter of fact they indeed are what comes out from "counting" something "as" something else

But are constitutive rules enough? The most popular defender of social entities, Searle (1995), would nowadays say that constitutive rules have such an ontological power—as expressed by the general rule that an entity *X* counts as *Y* in a context *C*—only insofar as they are grounded in collective intentionality. But, Maurizio Ferraris argues, collective intentionality is a philosopher's myth. As recent neurological research shows, there is no physical base in our brains for it. Moreover, it is clearly superfluous. For in order for institutional entities to come into existence and to persist in it, it is enough to appeal to different kinds of dependence to human subjects and physical traces respectively, by thus generalizing what Thomasson had maintained with respect to fictional entities in particular.

So, in this ontological controversy who is right, on balance? Maybe, as is often the case in philosophy, the truth lies in-between. As Achille Varzi holds, at the very beginning *qua* naïve fictionalists we rely on an instrumentalist view according to which, with respect to common-sense ontology, we simply make as if there were the entities it postulates, for such a pretence is useful and convenient. (Our mindreading practice may be an example of this: we ascribe mental states to others just because this is the simplest and most elegant way to explain their behaviour.) Yet if we try to systematize that stance by developing a proper fictionalist position relying on a generalized use of the "in the fiction"-operator, we end up with something hard to swallow for the fictionalist themself; namely, that there are possible worlds in which the pretended entities exist, an idea which the serious overall fictionalist should deny. For Varzi, the moral is that we have to retreat to a weaker form of fictionalism not denying that there are the entities we postulate but rejecting the idea that there are some forms of relations among them. This is what Hume said with respect to causation. It is not clear whether a creationist may rely on such a way out, for they would perhaps be forced to abandon many of the relationships which are fundamental in their metaphysics—if they reject causality, can they still appeal to dependence as a relation "out there" in the world? Despite this, it is certainly a strategy worth pursuing.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# FICTIONALITY AND IMAGINATION RECONSIDERED[1]

# KENDALL L. WALTON

What are fictional truths? What is it for a proposition to be fictional ("true in a fictional world"[2])?

In *Mimesis as Make-Believe* and elsewhere, I proposed that a proposition is fictional just in case there is a prescription to the effect that it is to be imagined. More precisely, a proposition is fictional in (the world of) a particular work, *W*, just in case appreciators of that work are to imagine it, just in case full appreciation of *W* requires imagining it.[3] After running with this definition for many years, and seeing others take it on, it finally dawned on me that it is only half right. Prescriptions to imagine are necessary but not sufficient for fictionality.[4]

Before explaining this, it will be helpful to remind ourselves of an important feature of imagining, a respect in which imaginings differ from beliefs.

## 1. Imagination (and Belief)

Several theorists have remarked that imaginings (propositional imaginings) are much like beliefs with respect to their functional role. One similarity is supposed to be that "imagination preserves the inferential patterns of belief."[5] Inferences from a set of imaginings (together with some beliefs) to further imaginings correspond to inferences from a set of beliefs to further beliefs.[6] This mirroring of inference patterns is supposed to be true not only for free standing imaginative experiences, e.g. daydreams, but also for imaginative responses to fiction.[7] We imagine what is made explicit in a work of fiction. Then we draw inferences from it; we infer that certain other propositions are also true in the fiction, and we imagine them. These inferences are supposed to parallel inferences we

would make from propositions we believe initially to others which we come to believe as well.

Inferences from imaginings to imaginings often do parallel inferences from beliefs to beliefs, but very frequently they do not. In the case of imaginings in response to works of fiction, they do (roughly) when what I call the *Reality Principle* of implication is operative. However, the applicability of the *Reality Principle* is very limited.[8] I will focus now on an especially fundamental way in which imaginings differ from beliefs, one that makes for differences in inference patterns that do not result from limitations of the *Reality Principle*.

Fictional truths come in clusters, and so do one's imaginings of the propositions that are fictional. Different clusters correspond to different fictional worlds, the worlds of different works of fiction, or different fantasies or daydreams. Fictionality is always relative to a particular fictional world: a given proposition is not fictional *simpliciter*, but fictional in the world of a particular novel, story, movie or daydream.[9] Much of the recent literature on the imagination ignores this clustering, or pays insufficient attention to it.[10]

The importance of the clustering lies partly in how imaginings combine with one another. Contents of different clusters don't combine to justify inferences in the way that contents of the same clusters do. If *p* and *q* are both fictional, and belong to the same cluster, usually the conjunction, *p&q*, is fictional also, and is to be imagined. This is not so if *p* and *q* belong to different clusters, different fictional worlds.

Reading Kafka's *Metamorphosis* I imagine that a boy was transformed into a bug. Reading *War and Peace*, I imagine that things like that just don't happen. There is no pressure at all to imagine the conjunction, to imagine that someone turned into a bug and people never turn into bugs, nor is there any tension between the conflicting imaginings.

While watching a performance of *Othello*, I fantasize about taking Othello aside, telling him about Iago's treachery and forestalling the threatened disaster. I imagine doing this, but I also imagine, in accordance with the events on stage, that no one intervenes and that the tragedy unfolds as scheduled. I certainly do not imagine that I do and do not reveal Iago's treachery to Othello, and there is no tension at all in the fact that I have imagined two incompatible propositions. These imaginings belong to different clusters.

Nothing quite like this clustering is true of beliefs. Any beliefs that I possess will combine with any others to justify the inference to their conjunction. If I find myself believing contradictory propositions, I have a

problem. I feel obliged to change one or the other of my beliefs to avoid being committed to the contradictory conjunction.[11]

## 2. Fictionality

My original account of fictionality, again, is this: a proposition is fictional in (the world of) a particular work, *W*, just in case appreciators of that work are to imagine it, just in case full appreciation of *W* requires imagining it. This proposal hasn't been especially controversial. Many writers have gone along with it, sometimes changing the terminology.[12] However, it simply will not do, and not just because it is a little fuzzy, which of course it is, but also because it gives us a necessary condition for fictionality in a particular world, but not a sufficient one.[13]

Counterexamples to the sufficiency of my account, cases in which appreciators of a given work are to imagine propositions that are not fictional in it, come in several varieties. I will present more counterexamples than are needed to make this negative point, in order to block some tempting but inadequate fixes, fixes that work for some kinds of cases but not for others. (Also, some of the examples are interesting in their own right.)

The most obvious counterexamples are what some call *iconic meta-representations*. Vermeer's *Woman Standing at a Virginal* depicts a framed picture of Cupid on the wall behind the woman.

Viewers of *Woman at a Virginal* are to imagine a picture of Cupid. But they are also to imagine Cupid, a naked winged child with a bow; they are to imagine that there is such a child.[14] Full appreciation of the painting includes looking at the part of the canvas that depicts the picture, and being induced to imagine Cupid, or in any case a child with wings and a bow, to imagine that there is such a being. Yet it is not fictional in *Woman at a Virginal* that there is a child with wings with a bow.

The point of imagining Cupid is, of course, to discover what the picture on the wall depicts. We learn that it is fictional in *Woman at a Virginal*, that the picture on the wall is a picture of Cupid, when we find ourselves imagining Cupid. The depicted frame lets us know that we are to imagine that there is a *picture* of Cupid, and that it is fictional in *Woman at a Virginal* that there is only a picture of Cupid there.

We can think of the small portion of the canvas inside the depicted frame as having its own fictional world, one in which it *is* fictional that there is a child with wings. That part of the canvas illustrates the content of the depicted picture, in the world of the larger picture, but it remains true that spectators, *qua* viewers of Vermeer's painting as a whole, are to

imagine that there is a child with wings, although this is not fictional in
Vermeer's painting.



Fig. 1.1: Vermeer, *A Young Woman Standing at a Virginal* (c. 1670–1672,
National Gallery).

Fig. 1.2: Photograph of a doll

We can't always recognize a part of a work and attribute to it its own fictional world. It is fictional in fig. 1.2 that there is a doll, a representation of a child with red hair wearing a frilly pink dress. How do we know that that is what the doll represents (and that it is a doll)? Looking at the photographic depiction, we imagine a child with red hair wearing a frilly pink dress; we imagine that there is one. There is a prescription, to viewers of the photograph, to imagine this; *qua* appreciators of the picture, they are to do so. But it is not fictional in the photograph, nor in any part of it considered alone, that there is a child with red hair wearing a frilly pink dress.

Many other iconic meta-representations are counterexamples to my account of fictionality. There are stories within stories (e.g. *One Thousand and One Nights*), dream sequences in film, Hamlet's play about Gonzago's murder in Shakespeare's play, and of course *Rashomon*.

So far, the problematic examples are instances of meta-representations, works representing the contents of other representations, but we shouldn't rush to find a solution specific to meta-representations. Counterexamples of other kinds are on the way.

Some fictions represent illusions, and their contents. When the illusion is suffered by a character, the work will qualify as a meta-representation. I mentioned dream sequences in film, and there are ordinary point-of-view shots: First, a shot of a character eating mushrooms, then wobbling around, stoned, with glazed eyes, followed by a shot of a purple elephant flying through the air. It is fictional that the character hallucinates a purple elephant, that he seems to see a purple elephant, but it isn't fictional in the film that there is a purple elephant. In order to ascertain what the character seems to see, the viewer must, in the second shot, imagine seeing a purple elephant, imagine that there is a purple elephant. Is the viewer to imagine merely *seeming* to see a purple elephant, and not that there is one? How does she figure out what it is that she is to imagine seeming to be the case? She finds herself imagining seeing a purple elephant, and there being one.

Sometimes a work represents simply an illusory situation, without portraying anyone suffering from the illusion. It is fictional in the photograph, fig. 1.3, that the cactus looks soft and cuddly, but (by virtue of obvious background information) fictionally it is actually prickly, not soft and cuddly. The viewer is to imagine the cactus being soft and cuddly, but it is fictional only that it *looks* soft and cuddly. It is by engaging in this imagining that they discover how fictionally the cactus looks (how fictionally it would look were someone to see it from the right point of view).

Since it is not fictional, in the world of the picture, that anyone experiences this illusion, it is a stretch to call this a meta-representation. But it does involve what we might call a "secondary content." Now for counter examples to the prescribed imagining account of fictionality that don't even have a secondary content. Imaginings of propositions that are not fictional, which do not help to determine what is fictional; they serve different purposes.

Fig. 1.3: Fuzzy cactus.

Sometimes appreciators experience a (real) illusion, an illusion that a work makes it fictional that *p* when it doesn't, and often it is not fictional that there is an illusion that *p*, not even an illusory situation. Appreciating the work fully might require experiencing the real illusion (and recognizing that it is an illusion). The work may be designed to give appreciators the impression of, to hint at, its being fictional that *p*, without making it so. Appreciators may be expected to notice that it seems to them as though *p* is fictional, and this may involve their being induced to imagine *p*.

It seems as though the guy on the left, in fig. 1.4, has a golf ball for a nose, as though this is fictional. We can hardly help imagining that he does, but it is arguable that this is not fictional, not true in the picture world, that this impression is illusory. Nevertheless, to appreciate the photograph fully (whether or not the photographer intended this) arguably requires imagining a person with a golf ball nose. One misses something important about the picture if one does not imagine this.

Fig. 1.4: Golf ball nose.

Jumonji's photograph (fig. 1.5) is disturbing. The explanation may be that viewers imagine, implicitly, a headless person. But it isn't fictional, in the picture, that anyone is missing a head; nor, I think, is it fictional that there is an illusion, or illusory situation, that someone is headless.

Finally, a couple of more obvious examples: Background music in film can easily create an illusion, give the impression that a certain proposition is fictional, which turns out not to be.[15]

A murder mystery with misleading hints will lead readers to think that, e.g., the butler is the villain and to imagine that he is, though they discover in the end that, say, the UPS deliveryman, not the butler, is guilty of the crime. If the misleading impression is due to conventions of the literary genre, conventions as to who can be the villain in this kind of story, or on the tendencies of this particular author, or because at a certain point we think there aren't enough pages left in the book to make the UPS man rather than the butler the villain, it is likely not to be fictional, true in the story world, that there is any sort of illusion that the butler did it.

Fig. 1.5: Bishin Jumonji, untitled 1973.

## 3. Tempting Solutions

The murder mystery example will suggest a solution, one that fails to generalize to several of the other cases. We are expected to imagine, when we read Chapter 3, that the butler did the dastardly deed, but by the end of the novel, when all is said and done, we realize that we are to imagine not this, but that it is the UPS delivery man who is guilty. So, the suggestion is, only what is to be imagined at the end, after we have experienced and absorbed all relevant aspects of the work, is fictional in the work.

This solution does not work for the Vermeer painting, or the photograph of the doll, or the Jumonji photograph. As long as we see Vermeer's entire painting, including the depiction of Cupid, we are to

imagine seeing a child with wings, to imagine that there is a child with wings. We are not supposed to stop seeing the marks as a child with wings, or seeing a child with wings "in" the marks, when we notice the depicted frame. Jumonji's photograph doesn't stop being disturbing when we figure out that it is not fictional that the man is decapitated. The hypothesis (which I take to be plausible at least) is that we continue to imagine his being headless as long as we find the picture disturbing.

Gregory Currie suggested another solution (though he didn't claim that it works for all of the examples).[16] It rests on a distinction between imaginings that are mandated or prescribed, and what appreciators must imagine in order to engage in the mandatory ones, i.e. imaginings which, although not themselves prescribed, are necessary for full appreciation of the work in question. The idea is that only the content of the former imaginings count as fictional, true in the fictional world. Viewers of *The Woman at a Virginal* are to imagine a picture of a child with wings. In order to do so, they must imagine a child with wings, but, according to this suggestion, this imagining is not itself prescribed. Therefore, it is fictional in *The Woman at a Virginal* that there is a picture of a child with wings, but not that there is a child with wings.

This is not a viable general solution. It won't help with the non-meta-representational cases, and there are serious worries concerning the meta-representational ones.

It is not clear that there is a non-question-begging way of distinguishing between imaginings that are prescribed and ones that are not. What grounds are there for holding that imagining a picture of a child with wings is prescribed and imagining a child with wings is not, other than that the content of the former is fictional and that of the latter is not? Vermeer certainly intended and expected viewers of his painting to imagine a child with wings—the marks he made on the portion of the canvas within the depicted frame are designed to get viewers to imagine this.

It seems that there *could* be a mandate to imagine a child with wings, a mandate to imagine a picture of a child with wings (partly) *by* imagining a child with wings. Suppose that there is. Suppose that whatever social conventions or facts about the artist or natural propensities (or combination thereof) are needed to establish this prescription do in fact obtain. Surely this would not make it fictional in *The Woman at a Virginal* that there is a child with wings.

The primary interest, or a very substantial one, of some meta-representational stories—stories representing the telling of other stories—is in the internal story or stories, rather than the frame story. It would be

strange indeed to deny that readers of *One Thousand and One Nights* are prescribed to imagine the content of the stories Scheherazade tells. Yet it is fictional in *One Thousand and One Nights,* the frame tale, only that Scherazade tells these stories, not that they are true.

As I mentioned, this proposed solution fails our non-meta-representational examples, several of them anyway. It probably doesn't apply to the whodunit story, if the illusion that (fictionally) the butler is the villian is due to traditions of the genre or the number of pages left in the story. Imagining the butler's guilt may not be necessary in order to imagine propositions that are fictional. The same may well be true of the Jumonji example—imagining a headless person is not needed in order to discover what else we are to imagine.

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I don't know how to fill the gap; I don't know what, in addition to a prescription to imagine, is needed to make a proposition fictional in the world of a given work. I am not sure what sort of account of fictionality we should expect. I and others have mostly relied simply on intuitions about what is fictional in particular cases, usually without invoking this or any definition of fictionality. We can continue doing this, for some purposes, at least insofar as our intuitions are shared, but of course we would like to know as well as we can what lies behind the intuitions

What I liked about my original account was that it seemed to capture what is important in our experience of fictions, viz. the imaginings we actually engage in, and our judgments or impressions about which imaginings are prescribed, and which are optional. We now see that appreciators also judge, on some basis or other, which of the propositions whose imagining is prescribed are fictional in the work, and which are not. This too is an important aspect of our experience of fictions. We somehow "construct" a fictional world, recognizing a subset of the to-be-imagined propostions as constituting it. We deploy a more substantial notion of fictionality than I previously thought, one that is not in any obvious way reducible to or explainable in terms of imaginings.

 (When daydreaming, I imagine certain things, sometimes deliberately, sometimes spontaneously, more or less at random. But then I *decide*—rather than discover, in the case of daydreaming—which imaginings to accept for my daydream, which of their contents to count as fictional in the daydream.)

## 4. Seeing the Unseen; Reporting the Unreported

Whatever fictionality exactly is, the fact that the content of prescribed imaginings need not be fictional will help us to deal with a couple of awkward kinds of representations, one in the visual arts and a rough analogue in literature.

Fig. 1.6 is a picture of a Rhamphorhynchus, a Pterosaur from the Jurassic period. Let's call him "Ralph." Given obvious background information—the absence of humans 150 million years ago—I take it to be fictional in the picture world that no one is observing Ralph.[17] Viewers of the picture imagine that this is so. But in looking at pictures, I claim, viewers *imagine seeing* the objects or kinds of objects that are depicted, and I understand imagining seeing something to involve imagining that it is seen.[18] Do we, then, observing Ralph's portrait, imagine that Ralph is and is not seen? No, but we do imagine that he is seen and also imagine that he is unseen. Is this a problem? No.[19]

A partial analogue in literature of the seeing-the-unseen problem is the reporting-the-unreported problem. A story ends with the words, "and no one lived to tell the tale," or less explicitly, the narrative indicates that all of the characters and all witnesses to the story events die off on a remote island or planet, implying that (fictionally) no one was able to report the events. In either case, readers are to imagine that the events go unreported. However, it is often claimed that all or most stories and novels have narrators; many do in any case.[20] Readers imagine the words of the text being uttered (or written) by a person, the narrator, who thereby reports the events of the story. Do readers of stories like those I just described imagine that someone reported the story events and no one did? No, but readers do (in some instances) imagine that someone reported the events, and also imagine that no one reported them. Is this a problem? Not much of one.[21]

Gregory Currie and Ian Ravenscroft deny that to view a picture is to imagine that what it depicts is seen. Rather than imagining seeing Ralph, with seeing in the content of the imagining, they will say, we imagine Ralph and the rest of the scene in a "visual manner."[22] This nicely sidesteps the seeing-the-unseen problem, if it is right, but no analogous resolution of the reporting-the-unreported story is available. We might expect that the seeing-the-unseen case is to be resolved in whatever way works for the reporting-the-unreported case, making postulation of a visual mode of imagination unnecessary (for this purpose at least). As a matter of fact, seeing-the-unseen will turn out to be more easily treated (without appealing to a visual mode of imagination) than reporting-the-unreported is.
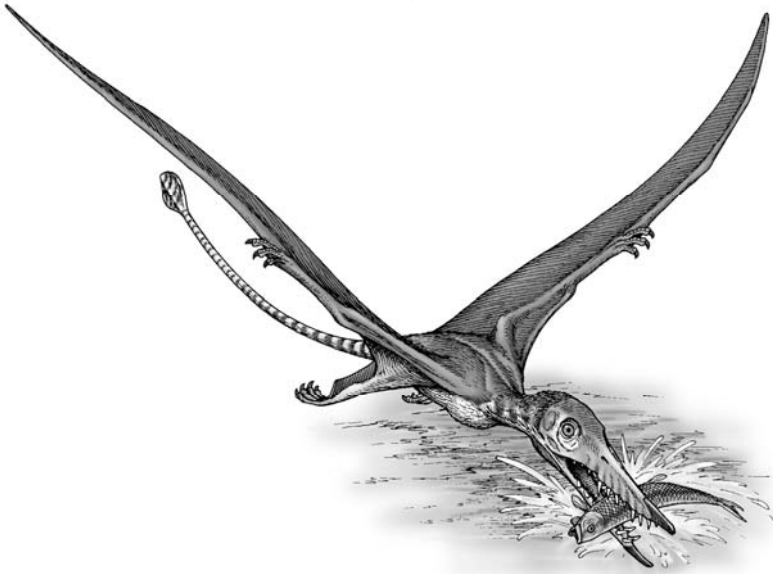
Fig. 1.6: *Rhamphorhynchus*, artist John Klausmeyer, © University of Michigan Museum of Natural History.

It is probably obvious how I will defuse these puzzles, the first one at least. In our previous examples, the counterexamples to the prescribed imagining account of fictionality, appreciators do and are expected to imagine propositions inconsistent with one another. We imagine that there is a child with wings, and we imagine that there is only a picture of a child with wings. We imagine *both*:

> … that there is a purple elephant, and also that there is no such thing.
> … that a person has a spherical white nose, and also that he doesn't.
> … that the cactus is soft and fuzzy, and also that it is prickly, not soft and fuzzy.
> … that someone's head is missing, and also that it isn't.
> … that the butler did it, and also that he didn't.

There is nothing at all paradoxical or problematic about these pairs of imaginings, nothing strained or strange about imagining each of the two conflicting propositions. There is no pressure at all to imagine their contradictory conjunctions: that there is and is not a purple elephant, for example, or that a person does and does not have a spherical white nose.

Why? Because the different imaginings with conflicting contents are not associated with the same fictional world; they don't belong to the same cluster. It is fictional *in the world of the movie* that there are no purple elephants. Viewers imagine this. They also imagine that there is a purple elephant, but it is not fictional in that world that there is a purple elephant. Viewers manage somehow to exclude this proposition from the world of the movie.

<center>* * *</center>

Observing the Rhamphorhynchus picture, one imagines Ralph unseen. One also imagines seeing Ralph. These imaginings do not belong to the same cluster, the same fictional world. The content only of the former belongs to the world of the picture, even though both imaginings are prescribed for appreciators of it. So the two imaginings live happily together in the viewer's experience. This is like the meta-representational cases: One imagines seeing Ralph, thereby ascertaining what it is that one is to imagine occurring unseen.[23]

Untold tales are a little more complicated, and they come in several varieties which need to be distinguished. We do experience tension, in some cases more than others.

Consider a (relatively) straightforward instance of a novel with an explicit narrator, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* Huck Finn is the narrator. It is fictional in the novel world that Huck and his friends, Tom Sawyer and Jim, had various adventures, and that he reports them by means of the words of the text.[24] We would have a jolting paradox if at the end of the novel Huck declared, "no one lived to tell the tale," or if Twain had made it obvious for one reason or another that Huck couldn't have reported his adventures. (Suppose the novel ended with, "The posse chasing Jim shot me dead and dumped my body in the river. It was never found and no one ever knew").[25] It would be hard to deny, in that case, that it is fictional in the novel world that Huck recounted his adventures and also that he couldn't have done so and didn't, and there would be pressure to imagine that he did and did not recount them.

But "no one lived to tell" stories can be much less jolting, especially when the narrator is (as some say) not a "character." But what does this mean? A narrator is a fictional person. Doesn't that make him or her a character? Not all narrators have names. Many don't refer to themselves in the first person (or at all), and many do not participate in the actions that they report; they *just* report them. But none of this disqualifies them as characters.

Let's not worry about whether narrators count as characters; consider instead what fictional worlds they belong to. In the case of stories with nameless, "omniscient," narrators, who do not refer to themselves and do not participate in the action, I think it is often reasonable to recognize a world, call it the "primary" story world, containing the events of the story but not the narrator (perhaps this is what is meant when a narrator is said not to be a "character"). It is fictional in this world that the events occur but not that the narrator reports them. Readers do imagine the narrator's reporting them (and probably expressing attitudes about them in doing so), but this imagining does not belong to the cluster associated with the primary story world. We can recognize a "secondary" story world, in which the narrator does report the events of the story.[26]

This imagining does, however, help readers determine what is fictional in the primary story world. The kinds of events the reader imagines the narrator reporting are the ones that (fictionally) occur unreported by the narrator, in the primary story world. In the special case of a "no one lived to tell" story, it is fictional in the primary story world that the events are unreported, not reported by anyone, and readers imagine that this is so. There is no tension between this imagining *as part of the primary story world cluster*, and readers' imagining the narrator's reports, since the latter imagining does not belong to this cluster. (The reader's imaginings, in the primary story world cluster, won't include any imaginings about the narrator, neither that she reported them, nor that she did not.)

So far, this is much like the Rhamphorhynchus case (except that the reporting of the story events occurs in a work-world, whereas the seeing of Ralph occurs only in what I have called the spectator's game-world.) However, there is an interesting difference, an added complexity in the story case. The narrator reports that "the events were unreported." We imagine this, though not as part of the primary story world cluster. Viewers of the Rhamphorhynchus picture, although they imagine that Ralph is seen, do not imagine his being seen *to be unseen*; they don't imagine *seeing* that he is not seen. When the narrator is "omniscient" it will be fictional, in the secondary work world, that what they report is true, hence fictional that they report unreported events. So readers are expected to imagine that these events are and are not reported, this imagining belonging to the secondary work world. There remains the primary work world cluster, however, in which readers imagine only that the events are unreported.

When narrators are explicit, as in *Huckleberry Finn*, and also *One Thousand and One Nights*, we will be much less inclined to recognize a primary work world which does not include the narrator's reporting. That there is no sharp line between these two kinds of cases should be of no concern.

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