

IMAGINATION, PERCEPTION AND MEMORY. MAKING (SOME) SENSE OF WALTON'S VIEW ON PHOTOGRAPHS AND DEPICTION

Imaginación, Percepción y Memoria. Dando Sentido a las Ideas de Walton sobre Fotografía y Representación Pictórica

Paloma ATENCIA-LINARES
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

Recibido: 5 de agosto de 2017
Aceptado: 7 de septiembre de 2017

ABSTRACT

Walton has controversially claimed that all pictures (including photographs) are fiction and that in seeing a photograph one *literally* –although indirectly– *sees* the photographed object. Philosophers have found these claims implausible and I agree with them. However, I try to give some plausibility to Walton's view. I try to clarify (but not defend) Walton's view of depiction by contrasting pictorial experience with perceptual experience more generally. I focus on the case of photographs and I claim that, although *seeing* objects *in* photographs is not a case of literally perceiving objects, photographs share an important feature with perceptual experience: the content of photographs, like the content of pictorial experience, is particular in character. This explains their peculiar phenomenology. Photographs, however, are more similar to memory experiences than to perceptual experiences.

Palabras clave: Walton, transparency, particular content, perception, imagination, depiction, photography.

RESUMEN

Walton sostiene que todas las representaciones pictóricas (incluidas las fotografías) son ficciones y que, al ver una fotografía uno literalmente –aunque indirectamente– *ve* el objeto fotografiado. Los filósofos han considerado estas afirmaciones implausibles y yo estoy de acuerdo con ellos. No obstante, intentaré dar una lectura razonable de estas ideas waltonianas. Intentaré clarificar (que no defender) la visión waltoniana de la representación pictórica y para ello contrastaré la experiencia pictórica con la experiencia perceptual en general. Me centraré en el caso concreto de la fotografía y sostendré que, a pesar de que *ver* objetos en una fotografía no constituye un ejemplo de percepción *literal* de un objeto, las fotografías comparten un rasgo fundamental con la experiencia perceptual: el contenido de las fotografías, como el de la experiencia pictórica, es un contenido particular. Esto explica su fenomenología. Las fotografías, sin embargo, son más cercanas a las experiencias de la memoria que la experiencia perceptual.

Palabras clave: Walton, transparencia, contenido particular, percepción, imaginación, representación, fotografía.

1. INTRODUCTION

As is well known, Kendall Walton claims that photographs ground perceptual experiences of the objects they are of; he maintains that photographs are *transparent*, so we literally –but indirectly– see through them. However, he also holds, photographs, like other pictorial representations, are fiction, because in seeing them we imagine ourselves seeing *directly* the objects they are of. Walton's view on photographs, as his view on depiction more generally, has been widely rejected. It is not the case, critics have claimed, that photographs literally ground perceptual experiences of their objects¹ (. Furthermore, it is not the case that imagination explains depiction (Lopes 1996, Hopkins 1998, Currie 2002, Wollheim 2003, Stock 2008, Matravers 2010); and it is certainly implausible that all pictures, let alone photographs, are fiction (Lopes 1996, Currie 1995, 2002).

My aim in this paper is not to defend Walton's view – I basically agree with his critics in the three points mentioned: (1) clearly not all pictures are fiction; (2) imagination does not explain depiction and (3) photographs don't support perceptual experiences of the objects they are of. However, I think that, by looking at the possible motivations behind Walton's view, we can

1. CURRIE 1995, CARROLL 1996, COHEN and MESKIN 2004, NANAY 2004.

extract some grain of truth. I suggest that behind Walton's view there is an underlying contrast between perceptual experiences and pictorial experiences, on the one hand, and a similarity between perceptual experiences and photographic (pictorial) experiences, on the other, that not only can help us make sense of some of Walton's obscure and confusing claims, but also may point us in the right direction to understand an important aspect of photographic (pictorial) experiences.

My strategy will be the following: firstly, I will review Walton's view on depiction and I will claim that it is not correct to attribute to Walton the view that all pictures are fiction *in the ordinary sense*, although this is a misunderstanding partly caused by his ambiguous use of the term "fiction". Secondly, I will suggest that Walton's views on depiction are better understood when we contrast pictorial experience with perceptual experiences on the one hand, and compare them with imaginative experiences on the other. And finally, I will contend that although Walton is wrong in saying that photographs ground perceptual experiences of the objects they are of, they nevertheless share something important with perceptual experiences; both photographic experiences and perceptual experiences have particular content. This, I suggest, explains the peculiar phenomenology of photographs and, to that extent, Walton's intuition was on the right track. However, despite this similarity with perception, I will claim, photographs should not be modelled on perceptual experiences but on memory experiences.

2. WALTON ON DEPICTION. FICTION, IMAGINATION AND PERCEPTION

Kendall Walton maintains that all pictures –moving and still, including photographs– are fiction. This controversial statement is a direct consequence of two claims that lie at the core of his theory of representation. On the one hand, for Walton something qualifies as fiction if it has the function of prescribing imaginings in certain games of make-believe. No matter how minor or peripheral the mandate to imagine in a work is, if it has that function, then it is fiction (WF). On the other hand, Walton contends that understanding pictorial representation –or understanding what pictures depict– always demands an imaginative experience (WD). In particular, Walton contends that seeing-in, or the foundational twofold experience characteristic of the way we perceive pictures as pictures, is best explained as being partially imaginative. The idea is that, in perceiving the picture's surface, one imagines of one's seeing that it is one's seeing the depicted object face-to-face. So, when I see Edward Hopper's Self-Portrait, I imagine of my act of looking

at the marks on the canvas that it is my act of looking at Edward Hopper in the flesh. It is therefore fictional of my seeing Hopper's picture that it is my seeing Hopper face-to-face. Hopper's picture functions as a prop in a rich or vivid visual game of make-believe. This is also applicable to photographs. Although for Walton, photographs are transparent and so we can literally see the photographed objects through them, this seeing is indirect seeing – as when we see through a telescope or a microscope; so in (literally but indirectly) seeing, say, a soldier in Robert Capa's photograph, I imagine myself seeing the soldier directly or face-to-face². All pictures, then, are props in visual games of make believe and this is precisely what distinguishes them from descriptions or linguistic representations. Yet, in the light of WF, this also has the consequence that all depictive works are fictional by definition.

Read at face value, and with the ordinary distinction between fiction and nonfiction in mind, this claim is straightforwardly implausible. Clearly there are not only nonfictional pictures in general but there certainly are nonfictional photographs and films. To say the contrary would be to deny a long-standing tradition of documentary photography and film. This alone should lead us to suspect that Walton's notion of fiction may be an idiosyncratic one; after all, he cannot be denying such blatant evidence. In fact, and criticisms of his view notwithstanding, Walton does not do so. He admits that there are some pictures that aim to inform, instruct, or illustrate, but he claims that this "serious" –nonfictional– use of pictures is parasitic on their use as make-believe³. From this line of reasoning it seems to follow that, for Walton, there are a set of pictorial works whose categorization will be something like fictional-fictions while others would be nonfictional-fictions. Walton's notion of fiction, we may think, is broader than the ordinary one, since it covers both fictional and nonfictional pictures (in the ordinary sense⁴). If this is so, he would not be accounting for what it is that distinguishes both categories, and that is tantamount to saying that Walton does not account for our ordinary distinction between fictional and nonfictional pictorial works. But of course, as I suggested before, that may have not been part of his plan.

Be this as it may, Walton's ambiguity has led many to misunderstand his claims, and many theorists have tried to block Walton's misleading conclusion that all pictures are fiction by denying that an imaginative engagement explains depiction – given that most critics accept that imagination is indeed the mark of fiction. Now, although I think that it is not legitimate to attribute

2. WALTON 1984; WALTON 1990; WALTON 2008.

3. WALTON 1990, 85.

4. FRIEND 2008.

to Walton the claim that all pictures are fiction *in the ordinary sense*, there are independent reasons to agree with critics in that depiction is not adequately explained by appeal to an imaginative experience. I will not discuss these reasons here – I will take for granted that they succeed; what I want to do instead is explore what could be the motivations behind a view, such as Walton's, that claims that pictures are fictions and that depiction should be explained in terms of imaginings.⁵ These motivations have rarely been discussed and I think they shed light not only on Walton's own view but on the character of pictorial experience more generally. I will develop these in what follows.

2.1. *Pictorial and Perceptual Experience*

The fact that Walton frequently contrasts his view of pictorial representation with linguistic representation very often obscures many of the claims he makes, and the motivations that lie behind his view on pictures. But I think that Walton's proposal that pictures are fiction –and that imagination is involved in pictorial experience– gains more plausibility –or at least becomes more intelligible– if we compare pictorial experience with perceptual experience more generally.

We can start with some basic or naïve observations. Experiencing pictures or seeing objects in pictures is a peculiar phenomenon. In some important respects, pictorial experience *is* a perceptual experience: we certainly use our sight and perceptual capacities to see the physical object that is in front of us (i.e. the canvas, the frame, the marks, etc.) and to identify in the patterned surface of the picture a recognisable object (i.e. a man, three women, a sunny landscape, etc.) However, the phenomenology of seeing an object face-to-face and that of seeing an object in a picture differ substantially: in the latter case, unlike in the former, we experience the object as being absent from our immediate environment, although somehow present in experience. This could lead one to think that, although seeing an object in a picture is not equivalent to seeing an object in the flesh, it is nevertheless *as if* we were seeing such object. Moreover, given that it is not, contra Gombrich, a case of illusory experience, it might be tempting to think of that “as if” as

5. I do not suggest that these motivations are Walton's own or that the proposal I will develop in what follows is one that Walton himself had in mind when he put forward his view or one which he would endorse. The ideas I will develop are intended to make sense to a view, such as Walton, which may seem, in principle, counterintuitive.

suggesting a sort of imaginative experience. After all, in (visually) imagining something, one perceives the object “before the mind, yet absent from one’s surroundings”; that is precisely why imagination is sometimes conceived of as thought-in-absence. Pictorial experience, following this reasoning, would be something like *as if*, make-believe (or fictional) seeing or, in some ways similar to an imaginative experience.

It seems plausible to think that this contrast between pictorial and perceptual experience—or between fictional and ordinary or real seeing—could be behind Walton’s claims. This assumption, at least, would help to make sense of, and give some plausibility to, two rather obscure claims Walton makes about pictures: that (real) objects are inessential to pictures⁶ and that the use of pictures in make-believe is prior to their possession of semantic content⁷. Here is why. Perceptual experience, one could think, always puts us in direct contact with real existing objects (unless, of course, one is hallucinating; but in that case, according to some theories, it would not be a case of perception).⁸ Moreover, the possibility of doing so seems essential to our concept of perception (even when hallucinations are possible).⁹ In fact, the intuitive conception of perception tells us that the content of perceptual experience is partly determined by the objects and events the experience “picks out”, namely, the objects that are present or *given* to the subject in experience. For instance, when I have a visual experience of an apple that is in front of me, the nature of my experience is partly determined by the object—the apple—and the way it actually is.¹⁰ This is why the content of perceptual experiences is frequently conceived of as being *object involving*; that is, one could not have been in that token perceptual state, had *that* apple not been present. By contrast, one could think, pictorial experience does not guarantee a connection with reality. When we see objects in pictures, those objects are not *really* present to us; moreover, they might have not even been present in the moment the artist made the picture. Pictures always depict things and events *as if* they existed, and thereby, *as if* they could be

6. WALTON 1990, 122.

7. WALTON 1990, 351.

8. Hallucination, according to disjunctivist theories, is *not* a case of perception. See, for instance (Hinton 1973; Snowdon 1980; McDowell 1986; Martin 2002).

9. Not all theories of perception agree with the claim that perceptual experience put us in direct contact with objects. The sense-datum theory and some intentionalists deny that this is so. See (Crane 2005).

10. Not all theorists of perception think that (real) objects determine the content of perceptual experiences see (McGinn 1982; Davies 1992). However, it seems part of our concept of perception that they do so.

seen;¹¹ but this is so regardless of whether they exist or not. In fact, it seems possible for someone to have a pictorial experience of a non-existent object, which is subjectively indistinguishable from a pictorial experience of a real mind-independent object. Now if this is so, one could further claim, the essence of the pictorial experience cannot depend on real objects, since essentially the same kind of experience can occur in the absence of (real) objects—¹² I could have two indistinguishable pictures of, say, a dog, even if the dogs in one of the pictures dogs never existed. Moreover, it *does* seem possible to conceive of pictorial representation without the possibility of depicting real objects. Objects, then—following this line of thought—are inessential to pictures. And, likewise, real objects cannot determine the (semantic) content of pictorial experience, because, again, one could have the same experience in the absence of real objects. The content of pictures, therefore, cannot be determined by the objects and events we *see-in* them – that seeing is *make-believe seeing*: we cannot literally “pick out” the objects in experience since they are not *really* present to us as they are in “ordinary” perception; moreover, these objects might not even exist! In the case of pictorial experience then, the argument seems to go, what determines the (semantic) content are not the (real) objects that we see depicted in the picture, but the objects or events that we *make-believe we see in* them.

Support for this interpretation, and another reason to think that pictorial experience calls for an imaginative engagement, could be the kind of demonstrative remarks people make when looking at depictions. For example, when Stephen utters “That is a ship”, while pointing toward a ship-depiction, his utterance seems to be appropriate¹³. However, one could claim that we cannot take his claim literally, for it is not *literally* true that *that*—which we point—is a ship: Stephen is *really* demonstrating the object that is in front of him, namely the picture, not a real ship. However, Stephen’s claim seems appropriate because, since he is *make-believe seeing* a ship, it is also *make-believe* that he is demonstrating a ship.¹⁴

11. Depicting something *as* non-existent would require to depict something that cannot be seen, but that does not seem possible. See (Hopkins 1998, 28–30; Stock 2008, 370).

12. Notice that this argument mirrors the “argument from hallucination” that is normally put forward to challenge the intuitive fact that when we have a perceptual experience we see real mind-independent objects and that real objects actually determine the content of perceptual experiences (Crane 2011).

13. WALTON 1990, 217.

14. This view of the use of demonstratives with pictures has been challenged by Dominic Lopes (Lopes 2010).

One way to summarise and interpret the spirit behind these claims could be this. Pictorial experience, in Walton's view, is *make-believe, as if*, or *fictional seeing* because, unlike *real* seeing, it does not guarantee a connection with reality. In pictorial experience, it is *make-believe* that things are present to us in experience, while they are *really* absent from our surroundings; we perceive *copies* of objects (or props) and not the objects themselves, but we *make-believe* that we see the *real* things¹⁵. Similarly, in pictorial experience, it is *make-believe* that some objects exist and can be seen, while they *really* do not exist and cannot be seen. In fact, nothing in the nature of pictorial experience prevents that all the things we see-in pictures could actually be non-existent: (real) objects are inessential to pictures. Moreover, the phenomenology of pictorial experience would be the same regardless of whether the depicted object exists or not.

Surely none of this makes Walton's view of depiction, as an explanation of *seeing-in*, more defensible. However, the contrast with perceptual experiences at least helps us see what could be the motivations for putting forward what is otherwise a rather unintuitive view. Moreover, I think it captures some grain of truth about the nature of pictorial experiences in general.

2.2. *An alternative account: Kathleen Stock's*

As a matter of fact, Kathleen Stock has suggested a view regarding the thoughts that (figurative) pictures generate that seems in some ways similar to this alternative reading of Walton's view. Although Stock does not talk about the nature of *experiences*, according to her, pictures typically prompt propositional thoughts that are non-committal with respect to the existence of the objects that the viewers see in them. Moreover, she says that these thoughts should be conceived of as imaginings. In fact she claims, imagining –understood in this way- is the “default position when it comes to seeing-in¹⁶”. Briefly stated, Stock's position is the following: when we grasp the content of a (figurative) picture we generate a propositional thought with the existential content “there is an object O with appearance x” –or as she puts it “an O with appearance x, exists.”¹⁷ This thought is typically, although not always, an unasserted

15. The exception, for Walton, would be the case of photographs. But in this case the contact with objects would be indirect and, as in the case of pictures more generally, there is no guarantee that all that we see depicted in the photograph are *real* objects.

16. STOCK 2008, 373.

17. Even if the picture depicts a non-existent object or situation, Stock claims, I think correctly, that pictures present them as existing, that is why we can *see* them in the pictures. (Stock 2008, 370)

proposition (a state that represents things as being a certain way which is not a belief). And the proposition is unasserted because typically, pictures *on their own* do not put viewers in a position to believe that the content displayed by pictures is actually the case or exists in the real world as depicted.¹⁸ Unasserted thoughts of this kind, she further claims, should be construed as imaginings. This, Stock contends, is the default position for pictures. However, there are certain pictures that do indeed put the viewer in a position to assert their contents; that is, to believe that *it is in fact the case* that “an object with appearance x, exists.” Examples of this kind of pictures, she claims, are *trompe l’oeil* pictures, documentary photographs and some hand-made pictures— provided that, in the latter two cases, *the viewer’s knowledge of its circumstances of production, gives her reason to think it is an “accurate guide to the visual appearance of what is depicted”*¹⁹. In sum, for Stock, there are two types of pictures: those that prompt the viewer to (merely) imagine—as opposed to assert or believe—that the depicted content exists as it appears, and others that prompt the viewer to believe so. The majority of pictures, however, fall into the former category. Prompting imaginative thoughts in the way she describes it is, then, the default position for pictures in general.

2.3. *Similarities and Differences between Stock’s view and the proposed reading of Walton’s*

Stock’s view, I think, is similar in spirit to the reading of Walton’s view I proposed before for the following reason: I suggested that the motivation behind Walton’s view — the view that having a pictorial experience is different from having a perceptual experience (and perhaps similar to having an imaginative experience) — could be that pictorial experiences (like imaginative experiences and) unlike perceptual experiences are non-committal with respect to the existence of their objects, and pictorial experiences need not pick out any particular object. Now, although Stock does not talk about experiences, or the contents thereof, she claims that pictures typically give rise to mental states — propositional thoughts — that are equally non-committal with respect to the existence of their objects.

18. The viewer can have independent reasons to believe that such content is indeed the case; in fact, she can believe that “O with appearance x, actually exists” based on other sources. But that does not change the status of the thought *derived from the picture*; that thought remains unasserted because the picture *on its own grounds* does not motivate the viewer to believe that such content is the case.

19. STOCK 2008, 373.

And, as in the reading of Walton I proposed, Stock's view could be traced back to a contrast between pictorial and ordinary perceptual experiences – although she does not say so explicitly. If I see, say, an apple in front of me that looks red and round, it is likely that my perceptual experience *alone* puts me in a position to think that the apple actually exists and that it is round and red as it seems to me in experience. Of course, I can be hallucinating, but the phenomenology of my experience presents it as if it were the case that there is *in fact* a round and red apple right in front of me; moreover, my experience presents it as if *that* apple and not any other with that look existed. Also, unless I have reason to doubt my experience, I would naturally come to believe that things are as they appear to me in experience.²⁰ The case of pictures, one may think, is different, and this may be what Stock is suggesting. The experience of pictures alone, and independently of other background information, does not normally prompt the viewer to believe that what she sees actually exists. The picture presents an object or situation as being thus and so, and so the viewer represents it in that way in her thought; but her experience alone does not put her in a position to think that an object as the one she sees in the picture is actually out there in the world in the way it is depicted. The experience of the picture alone does not motivate the viewer to assert the existence of what is depicted, that is why the viewer just *imagines* that it exists.²¹ This way of understanding Stock's claims also fits nicely with the case of the *trompe l'oeil* picture that Stock mentions as an example of pictures that *do* ground assertive thought. Since the experience of a *trompe l'oeil* may seem to the viewer qualitatively identical to a perceptual experience with similar content, it makes sense to claim that, the experience of *trompe l'oeil* pictures leads her to form a belief.

Now there is an important difference between Stock's view and Walton's. Whereas –according to my reading of Walton– his view on pictorial experience in general is similar in spirit to Stock's, Walton's view on photographs in particular is different from Stock's. For Walton, photographic pictorial experiences are a special kind of pictorial experience which is closer –or actually equivalent– to perceptual experiences. For Stock, by contrast, photo-

20. This claim is independent of whether perceptual experience actually justifies beliefs. This other claim (that perceptual experience justifies beliefs) might be more controversial see (Davidson 1986).

21. As Stock presents it, the claim does not seem to be that pictures do not provide sufficient grounds to *justify* the belief that an object O with appearance x actually exists. Rather, it seems to be that pictures do not *lead naturally* to form beliefs, independently of whether they are justified or not. In other words, Stock's claim does not seem to be normative.

graphic experiences are on the same level as other pictorial representations regarding the thoughts they generate. Here, I disagree with Stock and, as it will become clearer later on, I partly agree with Walton. But let me state my disagreement with Stock first.

According to Stock, photographs (in general) are like other pictures in that they trigger unasserted thoughts or imaginings by *default*; she admits that certain photographs, like *documentary photographs* are indeed “assertive pictures” –or pictures that motivate the viewers to assert that their content actually exists; however, this is so *only* if viewers have knowledge about the history of production of the picture and this gives them reason to think it is an “*accurate guide to the visual appearance of what is depicted.*” So one way to put this idea is to say that perceiving photographs does not typically prompt the viewer to think that *it is the case* that a thing such as what she sees in the photograph actually exists *unless* she has background knowledge about the circumstances of production of the photograph, and this gives her reason to think the picture has been reliably produced.

I think this is not so in the case of photographs –documentary or otherwise. It may be correct to say that viewers *should not* so easily believe the content of some photographs, given that they can be faked or doctored; but this is different from saying that photographs *as a matter of fact* do not typically put the viewer in a position to think that what she sees actually exists. I take it that what Stock is suggesting is the latter –if it were a normative rather than a descriptive claim, it would not make much sense to say that *trompe l’oeils* fall in the category of “asserted pictures.” But, if this is so, I do not think Stock’s claim is correct. It seems to me that photographs, in virtue of their peculiar phenomenology, do indeed prompt viewers to think *by default* that what they see actually exists. That this is so, I think, explains why photographs are very good at misleading people and, in all likelihood, also why theorists have claimed that photographs lead us to identify the objects (of the world) they are of²². Moreover, it does not seem to be the case that in order to undergo the peculiar experience that photographs afford the viewer needs to have any background knowledge about the circumstances of production of the photograph. Of course, it may well be that if the viewer has reason to suspect that the circumstances of production of the photograph are not reliable, she would then not come to think that what she sees is actually the case. But this suggests something different from what Stock is claiming. It suggests that photographs typically generate “asserted thoughts” –as Stock calls them– *unless* one has reason to think otherwise, and not the opposite,

22. SAVEDOFF 2008.

as Stock seems to be suggesting. This, again, is compatible with the view that we should not always *trust* our experience of photographs because they are frequently misleading. But one should not confuse the claim that beliefs prompted by photographs may *not* be *justified* by default –this, I think, is an open question –with the claim that the default reaction of viewers when they see photographs is to think that what they see in them actually exists.²³ Similarly, the peculiar phenomenology of photographs, I think, naturally –and normally– puts us in a position to think that what we see actually exists. In fact, our experience of photographs seems to put us in a position not only to make the general existential claim that *there is some object that looks a certain way* but also, the singular claim that *that object* is thus and so. In this respect, I think, photographs –or photographic experiences– are more similar to the case of perceptual experiences.

This aspect, I think, is better captured by Walton's view on photographs, so let me go back to his view.

3. PHOTOGRAPHS, PERCEPTION AND MEMORY

Photographs are for Walton a special kind of pictures, and thereby support a special kind of (pictorial) experience. In trying to account for their peculiar phenomenology, he introduced the idea that photographs actually ground perceptual experiences of the objects they are of. Photographs, according to Walton, are *transparent*: when I see my grandfather in the photograph, I literally –although indirectly– see my grandfather. Now, as I said before, this view has been widely criticised. Theorists have claimed that photographs fail to instantiate some necessary conditions for seeing. Carroll²⁴ and Currie²⁵ maintain that in order to see an object, it is necessary that one's visual experience grounds a non-inferential belief about the object's location in egocentric space, and photographs cannot ground such belief. Similarly Cohen and Meskin (2004) suggest that photographic experiences, unlike perceptual experiences, fail to covary with respect to changes and movements in the egocentric location of the depicted object: "as I move around the world with the photograph, the egocentric location of the depictum changes, but the photographic image does not"²⁶.

23. Compare with the following case: many theorists claim that beliefs grounded in testimony are not justified by default, however our natural tendency is to believe *by default* what others tell us, *unless* we have reason to think otherwise.

24. CARROLL 1996.

25. CURRIE 1995.

26. COHEN and MESKIN 2004, p.201.

Finally, but in a similar spirit, Bence Nanay claimed that photographs, unlike perceptual experiences, do not support sensorimotor counterfactuals: “what is necessary for seeing is that there is at least one way for me to move such that, if I were to move this way, my view of the perceived object would change continuously as I move²⁷.”

I think all these criticisms are sound and I do not think Walton is correct in claiming that photographs literally ground perceptual experiences of the objects and situations they are of. However, I do think that photographic pictorial experiences share with perceptual experiences something important that accounts for the peculiar phenomenology of both experiences. Photographs, and the experiences thereof, like perceptual experiences are particular or singular in character: the content of both experiences is not merely qualitative or existential but object-involving; the object or situation they are of is itself a constituent of the experience. So when I look at the photograph of my grandfather, as when I perceive my grandfather, I am aware of *my grandfather* and not merely that there exists or there is a person of a certain sort. I do not have the experience of seeing merely an image of some man or other who matches certain look or the qualitative properties displayed by the image; my experience is not merely an experience of likeness; my experience *picks out* a particular object – in this case, my *grandfather*. This is not only the case with familiar people or objects; if I open the newspaper and see a photograph of a man whom I have never met before, I assume that the image presents me with a particular man, *that* man whoever he happens to be. So in the same way that one could not be having that token perceptual experience in the absence of the particular object it is of, one could not have the same photographic experience in the absence of the particular object it is of. Moreover, in the same way that, according to some theories of perception, one could not be in a perceptual experience *type* in the absence of objects, one could not have a photographic experience in the absence of objects.

Notice, however, that this implies not only that (real) mind-independent objects are essential for the *production* of photographs but also that these objects are constituents of their contents and the experiences thereof. To say that the production of photographs always presupposes the existence of an object, which the photograph is causally and counterfactually related to, does not thereby imply that the content of photographs or the experiences thereof is necessarily singular. Surely, the latter presupposes the former, but the fact that a certain intentional state or representation has been caused by an object does not entail that the content of that state or representation

27. NANAY 2010, p. 468.

is thereby *singular* – not even if the content preserves visual similarity. A causal connection is compatible with purely general or existential content. I cannot develop this here in detail, but maybe two examples would suffice. (1) Katie's desire to buy a Chanel little black jacket may have been caused by seeing Jackie's little black jacket (moreover, she might not be having such desire if she hadn't seen Jackie's little black jacket), but the content of her desire is not necessarily *Jackie's particular little black jacket*, but any little black jacket *looking exactly like Jackie's* that can be found at a Chanel store. (2) A rubber duck is produced in a factory as a result of an automatic process that uses moulds that are shaped like ducks using a duck maquette. The resulting rubber duck may have been caused and look exactly like the mould and the maquette, but it does not represent in any relevant way the particular duck-shaped maquette, it represents *a generic* duck.

It is true that Walton tries to justify his claim that photographs are transparent by appealing to causation and the preservation of visual similarities and, as critics have correctly pointed out, these are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for something to ground a perceptual experience. However, I think that even if Walton's explanation is incorrect, his claim that photographs ground perceptual experiences suggests something else apart from the causal explanation. If photographs were really transparent, then they would have, as perceptual experiences do, particular content; and, as I said before, I think this is true of photographs as well as of perceptual experiences. So when I experience a photograph of a given object, as when I have a perceptual experience of that object, my experience puts me in a position not only to make the general existential claim that *there is some woman that looks a certain way* but also, the singular claim that *that woman* is thus and so. It is *that* object/person I have *in mind* – and not merely a qualitative profile of it that could be satisfied by various objects with the same look.

Now, of course, in photographic experiences, unlike in perceptual experiences – and this is where Walton's view goes astray – the particulars are not present in our surroundings. But this does not mean that we cannot still be in cognitive or experiential contact with particular objects. Think of the case of episodic memories. When I recall some previous experience I had at some point in my life, I bring to my mind a particular event or object that is not present anymore in my immediate environment. However, I am still in direct experiential contact with it. Moreover, the content of my episodic memory, as the content of the perceptual experience from which it derived, is particular in character. That is, when I have an episodic memory of a previous experience I had, the content of my memory is not merely existential content, rather, it presents me with particular situations or objects. As it has

been claimed, episodic memories are *retained acquaintance* (Martin 2001), they preserve or inherit the particularity of the original perceptual experience not merely their qualitative character.

I suggest that we can tell a similar story in the case of photographs. There are many good reasons to reject the idea that we can literally see through photographs. But it makes sense to claim that the moment when the camera is in front of the object, the moment where the photograph was first taken, that event can indeed be assimilated to what could have been a perceptual experience. Certainly, it cannot be literally a perceptual experience because the camera is not the kind of thing that can undergo conscious experiential states. But the camera and the photosensitive material (the film) are in a similar relation to the object that the subject of a perceptual experience would be. If the camera were, say, a sophisticated robot with consciousness (imagine that this could be possible), it would arguably undergo a perceptual-like episode of the object in front of it.

So rather than support perceptual experiences of the objects they depict, I suggest that photographs preserve the content (or part of the content) of a perceptual-like event. Hence, in the same way as memories not only preserve the qualitative aspect of the scenes, since their phenomenological content also preserves their particular character²⁸, photographs not only preserve the *likeness* of the scenes and objects, they also preserve the *particularity* of the original perception-like episodes. In this sense, I suggest, instead of claiming that photographs ground perceptual experiences of the objects they are of, it may be more accurate to say that photographs, like episodic memories, preserve the particular content of past perceptual-like episodes. In this way, in having a photographic pictorial experience we are in direct cognitive contact with particulars, even though they are not present in our surroundings. Similarly, in the same way that episodic memories fail to co-vary with respect to changes and movements in the egocentric location of the depicted object, photographs and the experiences thereof fail to co-vary with changes and movements in the egocentric location of the depicted object as well.

If this is sound, this could be a way to make more sense to Walton's intuitions. On the one hand, instead of saying that photographs are *transparent* and we literally see through them, we can say that they literally put us in direct cognitive contact with particulars; and, on the other hand, instead of saying that photographs ground *indirect* seeing, we can say that they are images that preserve a particular content that is not present in our surroundings.

28. EVANS 1982.

4. PHOTOGRAPHIC CONTENT AND DEPICTIVE CONTENT

Now, to say that photographs and the experiences thereof, like memories or perceptual experiences have particular content does not entail that photographs can *only* represent the particular objects that constitute their content. A Photograph of a particular object o_1 —which is constitutive of the photographic content and the experience thereof— can also depict another object o_2 as well, either by *stipulation* or by visually reminding us of—or *making it somehow visible*. A photograph of Charles Chaplin, for instance, may be used to represent Charlot, *by stipulation*— by adding, say, a proper name as its title. Similarly, a photograph of a pipe—where the particular pipe is the constitutive element of the content— can depict a saxophone by making it somehow naturally visible. In this case, although the photographic content and the experience thereof would be picking out a particular pipe, we would not be interpreting them correctly if we only *saw* a pipe with holes *in* the photograph.

Likewise, to say that photographs and the experiences thereof have particular content does not entail that photographs can *just* represent particulars and not, for instance, general types. Even if photographic content and the experiences thereof are always particular, photographs can be used to represent something general, as when a photograph of a particular telephone is used in a catalogue to represent *all the telephones of that type*, or a photograph of a particular dog is used in an encyclopaedia to represent how *dogs* look. The content of the photograph and the ensuing experience will still be particular, it will still pick out only one object, but in certain contexts the use it is given may just put emphasis on what that particular has in common with other things of its kind, namely, its visual aspect.

This, I think, is partly why Walton claims that even though photographs are transparent, they are also *fiction* or representational in his sense. In as much as photographs have particular content, they put us in cognitive or experiential contact with particular objects, however, in as much as they are pictorial representations more generally, the objects that are present in our experience are absent from our environment. And, what they (primarily) represent, need not be determined by the objects they are of, or the objects that are constitutive of their content and the experiences thereof. Clearly, in the case of photographs, since our experience of them always includes particular real objects, they always represent them in some way—and the experience of photographs always put us in contact with those objects— but this may not be the primary object of representation; what determines what the picture ultimately aims to represent is not limited—not even in the case of photographs—to the real objects that are a constitutive part of their content.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- CARROLL, N., *Theorizing the Moving Image*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- COHEN, J., and MESKIN, A., "On the Epistemic Value of Photographs." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 62-2 (2004), pp. 197–210.
- CRANE, T., "What Is the Problem of Perception?" *Synthesis Philosophica* 2 (40) (2005), pp. 237–264.
- , "The Problem of Perception." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2011. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/perception-problem/>.
- CURRIE, G., *Image and Mind: Film, Philosophy and Cognitive Science*. First Edition. Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- , "Imagination and Make-believe." In *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, edited by Berys Nigel Gaut and Dominic Lopes. Routledge, 2002.
- DAVIDSON, D., "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge." In *Truth and Interpretation. Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson*, edited by Ernest LePore, 1986. Basil Blackwell, pp. 307–319
- DAVIES, M. "Perceptual Content and Local Supervenience." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 66 (1992), pp. 21–45.
- EVANS, G., *Varieties of Reference*. Oxford University Press, 1982.
- FRIEND, S., "Imagining Fact and Fiction." In *New Waves in Aesthetics*, edited by Kathleen Stock and Katherine Thomsen-Jones, 150–169. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- HINTON, J. M. *Experiences: An Inquiry Into Some Ambiguities*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973.
- HOPKINS, R., *Picture, Image and Experience: A Philosophical Inquiry*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- LOPES, D. *Understanding Pictures*. Oxford University Press, 1996.
- , "Picture This: Image-based Demonstratives." In *Philosophical Perspectives on Depiction*, edited by Catharine Abell and Katerina Bantinaki, Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 54–80.
- MARTIN, M., "Episodic Memory as Retained Acquaintance." In *Time and Memory*, edited by C. Hoerl and T. McCormack. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001
- , "Particular Thoughts and Singular Thought." In *Logic, Thought, and Language*, edited by Anthony O'Hear, 51 (2002) Cambridge University Press, pp. 173–214.
- MCDOWELL, J., "Singular Thought and the Extent of 'inner Space'." In *Subject, Thought, and Context*, edited by John McDowell and Philip Pettit. Clarendon Press, 1986.
- MCGINN, C., *The Character of Mind*. Oxford University Press, 1982.
- MATRAVERS, D., "Why We Should Give Up on the Imagination." *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 34 (1) (2010), pp. 190–199.
- NANAY, B., "Taking Twofoldness Seriously: Walton on Imagination and Depiction." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 62 (3) (2004), pp. 285–289.

- , “Transparency and Sensorimotor Contingencies: Do We See Through Photographs?” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 91 (2010) 463–480.
- SARTRE, J.P., *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*. Routledge, 2004.
- SAVEDOFF, B., “Documentary Authority and the Art of Photography.” In *Photography and Philosophy*, edited by Scott Walden, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008, pp. 111–137
- SNOWDON, P. F., “Perception, Vision, and Causation.” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 81 (1980), pp. 175–92.
- STOCK, K., “The Role of Imagining in Seeing-in.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66 (4) (October 2008), pp. 365–380.
- WALTON, K., “Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism.” *Critical Inquiry* 11 (2) (December 1984), pp. 246–277.
- , *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*. 1st Edition. Cambridge, USA, Harvard University Press, 1990.
- , “On Pictures and Photographs: Objections Answered.” In *Marvelous Images: On Values and the Arts*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 117–132.
- WOLLHEIM, R., “On Pictorial Representation.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (3) (1998), pp. 217–226.
- , “What Makes Representational Painting Truly Visual?” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*, vol. 77, (2003), pp. 131–167.