

Art, Representation, and Make-Believe: Essays on the Philosophy of Kendall L. Walton

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1 Introduction

The Reach of Make-Believe

Sonia Sedivy

Kendall Walton's work offers a comprehensive reorientation to the representational arts while reaching well beyond them. He proposes a novel perspective that focuses on our imagination and our capacity for make-believe, and he highlights how make-believe involves props. Walton shows that focusing on make-believe explains paradigmatic representational arts such as paintings and novels, theatre and film as forms of make-believe with props. But he also shows how this novel perspective extends beyond the arts. His approach offers explanations of pictures and photographs in general not only artistic ones; stories in general as well as literary and performing arts; music; the nature of metaphor, and even the claims we make about fictional entities and existence. The cumulative effect is a framework that brings a variety of endeavours together that are representational *in a new sense*. Representations of this kind involve our capacity for imagination and overlap with the fictional. We will see that Walton's framework emphasizes the socially or historically contextual nature of make-believe representation and many varieties of arts.

I.

Walton proposes that we need to focus on things that have the *function* of props in make-believe rather than things we co-opt as props on the fly, as children do in their make-believe games. He eases us into his approach by discussing children's games, such as imagining tree stumps to be bears. But this is because childhood make-believe is the human capacity that lies at the root of the fact that *things have the function of props for make-believe in social contexts*.

Walton shows how a complex structure comes into view if we highlight this fact. Firstly, things have the function of props for make-believe only in social contexts where there are norms or prescriptions for certain imaginings in response to features of certain objects – texts or pictures, for example. Secondly, such games involve us as *participants*. We are prompted by props to participate in make-believe games. We do so by engaging in prescribed imaginings about the props as well as ourselves.

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As participants in make-believe, we enter imaginary scenarios or ‘worlds.’ We imagine things about ourselves from the inside or experientially. Third, props have an independence from any one of us that gives them a kind of objectivity. What we are to imagine is prescribed by the prop. It follows that what is fictional is determined by props, it is not a matter of what anyone chooses to imagine.

Evidently, representations that share this structure are fictional. As Walton writes “to be fictional is, at bottom, to possess the function of serving as a prop in games of make-believe” (1990, p. 102) and a prop mandates or prescribes certain imaginings rather than others. For example, any stump in the forest where the children are playing ‘stumps are bears’ is a bear. That there is a bear covered by leaves next to the creek is a prescribed imagining in the game whether anyone sees the stump or not; it is true in the game. Analogously, a text might evoke and prescribe imagining Lizzie Bennet poking fun at an oily suitor; a picture might evoke and prescribe imagining seeing ships on the high seas.

But Walton’s approach also reconstrues the notion of the fictional. It offers a notion that “has little to do with contrasts between fiction and reality or truth and assertion” (1991, p. 380). Rather, what is fictional is what is to be imagined – as constrained and prescribed by props. Though it is sometimes said that there are fictional truths – such as the one about Lizzie Bennet mentioned earlier – Walton suggests we ‘resist’ this manner of speaking because it suggests that truth comes in varieties (1990, pp. 41–42). Instead of “fictional truth,” all we need is what his framework gives us: the notion of what a prop prescribes imagining or what is fictional or what is true in the fiction or make-believe. Yet, Walton is comfortable with continuing to say that fictionality is a property of propositions so that there are fictional propositions – as long as we don’t get hung up on the notion of a proposition and keep in mind that this too is a manner of speaking (1990, pp. 36–37). Again, all we need to countenance is that props mandate specific imaginings. This notion of fictionality as what we are to imagine is one of Walton’s distinctive contributions, and it plays a fundamental role in his framework.

Though Walton aligns the notions of make-believe representation and fiction, he distinguishes them in the following respect. Representations are “things whose function is to be props” (1990, p. 52) in games of make-believe and he emphasizes that they need not be artefacts. In contrast, fictions are works, which is to say that they are props that are always human artefacts (1990, pp. 72, 103). This difference is due to Walton’s emphasis that naturally occurring pictures or designs – such as cloud formations or constellations of stars – have the function of props for make-believe games in our societies even though they are not produced or designed for this function. Similarly, he insists that we could read and enjoy a naturally occurring story if the surface texture of a boulder traces out letters that make up words and sentences, for example.

By explaining a large range of representations in terms of uses of imagination and fictionality, Walton's approach makes us at least pause and think about representation afresh. If he is right that many representations involve forms of make-believe, his work edges out more typical notions of representation from the core or central role they tend to occupy. These more typical notions include the idea that representations are *of* or about something; that there is a core notion of representation that divides into non-fictional and fictional varieties with the non-fictional being primary and the fictional derivative; or the idea that linguistic representation provides the model for explaining other kinds. His approach also makes us pause and think about the arts anew, challenging us to reconsider whether and how our responses are imaginative.

What is remarkable is how much Walton explains in these terms, about both representational arts and other representations. Like variations on a theme, each account explains a different detailed structure of make-believe distinguished by the nature of the prop and the imaginative experience it mandates. Case by case, the specific explanations Walton provides in terms of make-believe have become leading contenders in each field. They set terms of debate about pictures, photographs, fictional texts, and beyond.

To be sure, much of that debate is critical. Most of the chapters in this book examine Walton's specific explanations critically. I will provide a preliminary outline shortly. But first, his work on the socially or historically contextual nature of the arts and make-believe needs to be brought to the forefront.

Walton offers a landmark case for the historical or contextual nature of some artworks. The argument is made in "Categories of Art" ("Categories" henceforth) to challenge aesthetic formalism or what has come to be considered more broadly as aesthetic empiricism. But it stands as part of the turn towards contextual or historical explanation in the arts in the second half of the twentieth century.

Walton's stated aim is to delineate a group of aesthetic properties that fall outside of the formalist or empiricist view that aesthetic properties are restricted to what we can perceive in a work on an impoverished view of perception. He argues that there are aesthetic properties that are part of the 'look' or 'sound' or 'felt quality' of a work but that vary with and depend on historical or social context. Walton illustrates that properties such as the vividness of a painting – of Picasso's *Guernica* for example – are both historical *and* perceptible in the following sense. Such aesthetic properties depend on the historical category to which the work belongs *and* they require trained perceptual skills whereby we perceive the work 'in' its historical category.

To show that the vividness of *Guernica* depends on the historical category to which it belongs, Walton examines its aesthetic effects in two different social contexts where it belongs to different art categories. In our world, *Guernica* is a painting, whereas in the hypothetical scenario

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it is a guernica. These are bas-relief type works whose raised surfaces have the colours and shapes of *Guernica* but in different mouldings so that different parts of the surfaces of each guernica “are molded to protrude from the wall like relief maps of different kinds of terrain” (Walton, 1970, p. 347). There are no paintings in this hypothetical context.

The example illustrates how changing the social context and thereby the category to which the work belongs changes some of its aesthetic properties:

We do not pay attention to or take note of *Guernica*'s flatness; this is a feature we take for granted for paintings, as it were. But for the other society this is *Guernica*'s most striking and noteworthy characteristic—what is expressive about it. Conversely, *Guernica*'s color patches, which we find noteworthy and expressive, are insignificant to them.

It seems violent, dynamic, vital, disturbing to us. But I imagine it would strike them as cold, stark, lifeless, or serene and restful, or perhaps bland, dull, boring—but in any case not violent, dynamic, and vital.

(Walton, 1970, p. 347, order reversed)

The example shows that aesthetic properties such as vividness do not depend on the non-aesthetic properties simpliciter of a work but on properties that play a normative role for categories of art such as painting or guernica. *Guernica* has the non-aesthetic property of being flat in both contexts, but it is vivid or dynamic in our context and not in the other. Walton argues that what changes across the two contexts is that flatness is *standard* and colours and contours are *variable* for the category or comparison group of paintings, whereas three-dimensional moulding along with the one arrangement of colours and contours are *standard* for the category or comparison group of guernicas. In our context, the flatness that is standard for paintings makes the markings of the surface which are variable for painting – in this case *Guernica*'s sharp angles, edges, shapes, and black and white colours – stand out so that *Guernica* is dynamic or vital or violent. In the hypothetical context, bas-relief moulding of the markings is standard for guernicas, so that its flatness would stand out and *Guernica* would be bland or serene. As Walton puts the point, it is not (only) the work's non-aesthetic properties such as colours or contours that determine aesthetic impact but also “which of its non-aesthetic properties are ‘standard,’ which ‘variable,’ and which ‘contra-standard’” (Walton, 1970, p. 338).¹ In short, aesthetic properties like being dynamic or dull depend on the *prescriptive* or *normative* properties for categories such as painting or guernica to which a work belongs.

But *are* categories such as painting or guernica both historical and perceptible? This is key for Walton's argument. He needs to do two things: to show that such categories are historical and that they are perceptible, we can learn to perceive items ‘in’ them.

First, Walton restricts the categories only to those where it can be plausibly argued that we could come to distinguish members of these categories through ‘*trained*’ perceptual skills:

It is no use just immersing ourselves in a particular work, even with the knowledge of what categories it is correctly perceived in for that alone will not enable us to perceive it in those categories. . . . [P]erceiving a work in a certain category or set of categories is a *skill* that must be acquired by *training*, and exposure to a great many other works of the category or categories in question is ordinarily, I believe, an essential part of this *training*.

(Walton, 1970, p. 366)²

Second, he argues for the historical nature of categories such as painting or guernica by proposing that category membership is determined by four conditions, two of which are historical. A work belongs in a category if it has “a relatively large number of features standard with respect to the category” and “[t]he fact, if it is one, that [the work] is better, or more interesting, or . . . when perceived in the category than it is when perceived in alternative ways” (Walton, 1970, pp. 357–358). In addition, there are two historical conditions. A work belongs in a category if (i) the category is “well established in and recognized by the society in which [the work] was produced” and (ii) the artist “intended or expected” their work “to be perceived” in the specific category or “thought of it” as being in that category (Walton, 1970, pp. 357–358). There may be numerous cases that are borderline or even undecidable on these criteria – such as innovative works that challenge existing categories and open new ones. But Walton’s point is that typically at least one of the two historical conditions applies so the categories he delineates are objective and historical.

These considerations support his conclusion that aesthetic properties that depend on the normative or prescriptive properties for historical, perceptible categories of art *can be perceived* but only in a way that involves *skilled perceptual understanding of the relevant historical category (or categories)*. These are properties that it is correct to perceive in a work. The significance of this view extends beyond its counter to formalism or aesthetic empiricism to our understanding that some artworks and some of their properties depend on historical facts and categories – that is why it stands as a landmark work in the historical turn in aesthetics in the second half of the twentieth century.

But the contextual nature of art is an integral part of the make-believe framework, not just a strand in Walton’s early thought on aesthetic properties.³ *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (*Mimesis* henceforth) argues that things can have the function of props in games of make-believe only in social contexts, as we noted earlier. This does not suggest that props require

explicit conventions or that we follow explicit rules. Rather, Walton proposes the more subtle view that there are norms or prescriptions to imagine in that such prescriptions might be enforced – if questions arise. And as he puts it, “there must be social context to enforce the norms.” This entails that all forms of make-believe representation with functional props depend on specific historical context.

Together, *Categories* and *Mimesis* hold that many works of art are multiply dependent on social context. Let’s continue with painting as our example. A painting is a picture and according to *Mimesis*, a picture is ‘society relative’ since the function of being a prop that prescribes specific imaginings depends on social context. According to *Categories*, painting is a perceptually distinguishable and historical category of art. Moreover, paintings belong to several specific categories that are both perceptible and historical such as Cubist or in the style of Picasso. The combined point is that *artworks are multiply dependent on social contexts in that they are props for make-believe and they belong to historical media or styles.*

With this overview in place, let’s consider Walton’s approach in more detail and how the chapters in this book engage with it. In the next section, I will highlight

- (i) his approach to fiction and the verbal arts;
- (ii) his explanations of depictions or depictive arts – of pictures, photographs, and music – as forms of perceptual make-believe; and
- (iii) how his approach to fictional entities expands to broader issues about the arts and to topics outside of the arts such as scientific models and negative existential claims.

The third section will briefly examine some important issues that are not covered by the chapters in the book. I will draw out Walton’s implicit view on the question whether art can be defined, and I will do so in relation to Arthur Danto’s work. I will also consider the ontological implications of Walton’s contextualism. Again, I will bring Danto’s view into the discussion. Walton and Danto are arguably the most influential American philosophers of the second half of the twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries, and they are both leading architects of historicism about art. Yet, their views do not tend to be considered in light of one another.⁴ The third section contextualizes Walton’s work in relation to Danto’s as well as to Frank Sibley’s. Walton briefly addresses the issues I raise here in some of his remarks at the conclusion of the book.

II.

The volume begins with the verbal arts and Walton’s view of fictional characters and fictions in general. Walton proposes that verbal props such

as novels or stories prescribe imagining what an explicit or implicit narrator conveys and he highlights the imaginative experiences such props evoke. We have seen that *Mimesis* explains that prescriptions to imagine are both necessary and sufficient for what is fictional or true in a work. But Walton has recently criticized his own view of fictionality. He now holds that prescriptions to imagine are only necessary but not sufficient (2015). Stacie Friend argues against Walton's recent view that we cannot give necessary and sufficient conditions for fictionality by drawing on research on situation models and mental models. She argues that a work invites us to imagine a *storyworld* – to have an immersive de se experience of a complex multidimensional representation of a situation. She details how storyworlds can meet the objections Walton raises against his own earlier view. Her chapter shows how Walton's notion of imagination might be developed in view of empirical research.

Perhaps no part of Walton's work has stirred as much debate as his account of our emotional engagement with fictions and fictional characters in particular. The key to Walton's account of fictional characters or entities is the 'switch of perspective' that the make-believe framework affords. "The pretense construal has the appreciator pretending to describe the real world rather than actually describing a fictional one" (1990, p. 392). Walton explains metaphysical issues away by showing that we pretend to make assertions about characters and we do so within a make-believe world that we participate in. If assertions about fictional entities occur in make-believe games, the speaker is making assertions from within a fictional world about that world – which is the real world within the game – rather than making assertions from a perspective outside the game about a fictional world. Since the appreciator is a participant in the game, they make it fictional of themselves that they are making true claims about the real world – all the while of course, also knowing that they are engaged in make-believe.

To support this approach, Walton analyzes diverse statements that seem to make reference to fictional entities to show that in each case the truth of these assertions can be explained without positing such entities. This is where the difficult detail and controversial argumentation lies. The desired outcome is that:

What we should conclude is that it is our pretendings to assert, our games of make-believe, that are central to our conceptual scheme. It is this, not an ontological commitment to fictional entities, that plays an important role in our structuring of the world.

(Walton, 1990, p. 404)

Eileen John challenges Walton's view with a realist approach to fictional characters that nevertheless embraces the importance of make-believe. John argues that Walton places too much emphasis on explaining fictional

truths about characters, which leads him to ‘confine’ fictional characters and any references to them to our games of pretence. She counters that to explain the ‘interest and importance’ of the pretence that artworks call for, we need to countenance the variety of what we do with fictional characters that lies beyond make-believe. We use fictional characters to imagine the lives of persons and we do this in a way that keeps the fact that they are representational devices in view. She argues that fictional characters are *functional artefacts* or representational devices and their reality is demonstrated through our extensive engagement with them. Her emphasis on function provides an alternative to the realist view that fictional entities are *abstract* created artefacts while showing that realism about fictional characters can be compatible with the make-believe framework.

Derek Matravers and Eva Dadlez take up Walton’s much-debated view of our emotional engagement with fictions. Walton holds that the emotional experiences we have while engaged in pretence are not the same as the emotions we have when we are not engaged in make-believe. Many readers are troubled by his insistence that our feelings towards fictions are both ‘quasi’ and ‘real,’ which seems to suggest that they are emotions and yet not genuine emotions.

Derek Matravers argues that much of this long-running debate misunderstands Walton’s view. He identifies six main mistakes that run through the critical literature – most notably, that there is a paradox of fiction to which Walton is replying and that Walton denies that we feel genuine emotions. Matravers offers a careful reconstruction that avoids all six ‘misinterpretations’ but shows a subtle remaining problem. He distinguishes between weak and strong imaginings to argue that weak imaginings pose a difficulty for Walton’s view. When we weakly imagine a narrative, we construct a representational model and such models might embed ‘ordinary’ emotional states. But this is contrary to Walton’s view. Matravers argues that there are no grounds within Walton’s approach for denying that it is possible to embed emotions in a mental model.

Eva Dadlez challenges Walton’s view of the emotions we feel towards fictions while endorsing the make-believe framework. She offers a battery of considerations that highlight the role of thoughts in evoking feelings or emotions. She argues that our obligations, commitments, and motivations can induce genuine emotions, regardless of whether the object of those emotions exists. Fictions bring such thoughts to the forefront of our consciousness, thereby evoking emotions even though the targets of those feelings are fictional. Moreover, Dadlez points out that we can feel obligations to those who might occupy certain positions rather than to specific individuals, which also suggests that we can have feelings towards fictional characters.

Walton’s innovative account of lyric poetry (and some music) is a prime example (Walton, 2015) of how he continues to expand his approach in

surprising ways. His account of fiction in *Mimesis* leaves us with the implicit expectation that poems could be explained along the same lines as novels or stories – as prescribing we imagine what a narrator conveys. Instead, Walton recently explains much poetry (as well as some music) as akin to speeches, which are written to be used by others to express their own thoughts and feeling. He proposes that poems are similar in that they don't *use* words but *mention* them, allowing or inviting us to use the words to express our thoughts or feelings (or to use musical motifs for expressing ourselves). This means that poems are not fictional in the usual Walton sense: insofar as the words are not used, the prop does not prescribe specific imaginings. But Walton argues that readers nevertheless engage in a game of make-believe. They pretend to use the words of the poem so that it is fictional in the reader's game "that he asserts the declarative sentences in the poem" (Walton, 2015, p. 65). This is a wholly distinctive kind of imaginative experience, one in which we borrow someone else's way of expressing themselves – a form of empathy not with someone else but with their way of expressing themselves.

Hannah H. Kim and John Gibson highlight that Walton's unique approach can explain lyric poetry as expressive without attributing a subject that speaks *to* us fictionally. But they raise the problem that many poems are voiced from a point of view that it would be inappropriate or unauthorized or even impossible to undertake. They argue that this issue can be addressed from within Walton's approach. On their suggestion, the expressive subject can be seen as having "an implicitly plural grammatical function" – it is not so much a particular individual as a perspective or point of view that can give voice to 'multitudes.'

Wolfgang Huemer highlights Walton's view that acts of imagining evoked by works of fiction have a social dimension. Huemer expands on this social emphasis to argue that fictions have an important social or cultural role that derives from the fact that they offer "encounters with recognizable perspectives that can be attributed to concrete (fictitious) persons." Such encounters depend on social norms and allow for greater 'calibration' and 'fine-tuning' with others.

Stuart Brock takes an experimental approach to the puzzle of fictional morality to which Walton has drawn our attention. Walton (1990, pp. 154–156) highlights Hume's 'contention' that we respond differently to moral and descriptive claims in fiction. We cannot 'enter into' moral claims and sentiments that deviate extremely from our own views whereas we readily entertain highly deviant descriptive claims.⁵ Walton (1994, 2006) goes on to distinguish three different puzzles: aesthetic, imaginative, and fictional. The first aesthetic puzzle is that deviant moral claims can be considered to be aesthetic flaws but deviant descriptive claims are not. The second puzzle is posed by imaginative resistance – readers resist imagining certain moral situations even though they recognize that these are fictional. The third puzzle of fictionality is perhaps

the most fundamental: readers ‘balk’ at interpreting deviant moral claims as being true in a story. Brock focuses on the third problem. He carries out an experimental study that carefully distinguishes readers’ responses to a variety of fictional stories with either deviant descriptive or moral claims. His findings support the core fictional problem against alternative interpretations and offer several interesting results.

To explore Walton’s variations on the theme of make-believe further, the second part of this volume examines his distinctive view that pictures and depictions in general are props in games of *perceptual* game-believe. But what is perceptual make-believe? Walton points out that when we read a fictional narrative, we might imagine Lizzie poking fun or even imagine seeing her make fun of the oily suitor, but we don’t imagine seeing the words to be seeing Lizzie. As he puts it more technically, we don’t imagine *of* seeing the words on the page, that we are seeing Lizzie. In contrast, we do imagine *of* seeing a picture, that we are seeing ships on high seas, for example. Walton’s account of pictures exemplifies his view that perceptual make-believe involves imagining one experience to be a different experience. It yields a general notion of depiction that extends across different kinds of props that evoke experiences in different sensory modalities – or complex combinations thereof such as films and theatre.

John V. Kulvicki and Sonia Sedivy probe Walton’s account of pictures. Sedivy examines Walton’s proposal in light of some current theories of perception. Her chapter asks whether the experience Walton posits can be explained by current theories and whether there is something to be learned from the fit or lack thereof between Walton’s account and current approaches. Specifically, she examines Walton’s view in light of theories that explain perception in terms of contents, in terms of relations to objects, and in terms of both contents and relations. Her aim is to get clearer about the specific kind of visual experience Walton posits, one that is both perceptual and imaginative.

Kulvicki offers a new perspective on Walton’s approach to pictures and pictorial realism by focusing on the idea that picture-making involves norms and discussing one that has not been previously identified, namely that “pictures should be convex and hole free.” He argues that only Walton’s approach to pictures and pictorial realism predicts this norm. Walton’s view is that a picture is more realistic if it allows for greater perceptual engagement and thereby more imaginative engagement. Specifically, pictures need to support perceptual actions – such as scanning from left to right – that are similar to the perceptual actions one would perform of the imagined scene. Walton’s approach allows us to understand that pictures without holes or concavities are more realistic because they secure a key similarity in our perceptual actions. Scanning a picture from one point to another “corresponds to a represented path between the corresponding points in the represented space” (this book, Chapter 10). But holes disrupt how we scan a picture in a way that has nothing to do with what we are to imagine.

Walton's account of photographs is highly controversial because it contends that we *see* the photographed objects, albeit indirectly. He argues that photographs are *transparent pictures*, which means that we see through them to the world – much as we see through eyeglasses or telescopes to objects in the world – and we engage in perceptual make-believe with them. As always, Walton's account turns on his explanation of the prop and the nature of the imaginative experience it evokes. He agrees with theorists who hold that photographs are distinctive in that they result from mechanical links to their object, even if the mechanical process is much manipulated. But he argues distinctively that it is because of this mechanical link to the object that one *sees* through the photograph to the object, one indirectly sees Aunt Mabel for example. And he adds the hallmark twist: one also *imagines* seeing Aunt Mabel directly. The distinctive nature of photographic props evokes one experience and evokes and prescribes imagining another one: one indirectly sees the object through the photograph and one imagines seeing the object directly.

Four chapters engage Walton's approach to photographs in this book. Diarmuid Costello argues that in keeping with Walton's argumentation in *Categories*, art photographs fall into different historical categories rather than a single kind characterized by transparency. He discusses a variety of photographs where what we see is very different from the objects on which the works depend. In part his point is to drive home that artists can intervene in the mechanical process to an extent that disrupts any grip on the idea that we see the photographed object. But his point is also constructive: if we recognize that photographs like other works depend on standard, variable, and contra-standard perceptible properties, as Walton suggests, we can appreciate how photographs can differ in their kinds, their etiologies, and their aesthetic properties.

Nils-Hennes Stear defends the transparency of photographs from the objection that we do not see the objects of photographs because photographs do not provide the egocentric information or connection that is necessary for visual perception. Stear examines different views of vision's egocentric nature to argue that Walton's approach can be defended from each one.

Christopher Williams offers a way to keep the spirit of Walton's approach while changing its detail completely. He proposes that photographs are aids to memory – like keepsakes or relics of the past – rather than aids for vision. The connection photographs provide with the past is through memory rather than perception and imagination. This means that photographs are not transparent, they do not allow us to see the past indirectly. But they give us a *trace* that connects our experience to the experience of the person who took the photograph. Williams's argument builds on a Humean approach to memory and on the idea, familiar from work on personal identity, that recall of the past across persons could rest on transfer of memory traces from one person to another.

Paloma Atencia-Linares uses photographs to argue against Walton's recent amendment to his account of fictionality. We have seen that *Mimesis* explains fictionality in terms of prescriptions to imagine – prescriptions are both necessary and sufficient for what is fictional or true in a work – yet that Walton (2015) now holds that prescriptions to imagine are only necessary but not sufficient. His argument focuses on a variety of photographs to illustrate that some of what we see through a photograph prescribes imagining things that are not fictional in the work. He holds out no hope of “a non-question-begging way of distinguishing” between prescribed imaginings that are fictional and those that are not. Atencia-Linares counters that we do imagine seeing just what is fictional in Walton's examples but only insofar as we use an antecedent notion of fiction that guides what we imagine. Thus, her defense of the initial view casts doubts on whether Walton's notion of make-believe can replace the pre-existing categories of fiction and non-fiction that we ordinarily use.

Walton controversially explains music as a form of depiction. This means that like pictures, music evokes perceptual games of make-believe: “music still qualifies as representational in our sense: its function is to serve as a prop in listener's games” (1990, p. 337). Yet, very little music seems to be depictive even in Walton's sense, as he recognizes. For the most part, the listener does not imagine of hearing some music that they are hearing something else like the booming of a cannon or something more ‘abstract’ like ‘arrival’ or ‘conflict.’ Rather, Walton suggests that much expressive music evokes imaginative experiences where it is fictional “not that one sees or hears or otherwise perceives external things but that one experiences or is aware of (one's own) feelings or emotions or sensations or sentiments or moods” (1990, pp. 335–336). His controversial thesis is that:

In place of fictional perception of external objects we have fictional introspection or self-awareness. If I am right, this is likely to be true even of such stalwarts of musical purity as Bach's *Art of the Fugue*; and to whatever extent introspection is analogous to the “external” senses, it will be reasonable to expand our understanding of “depiction” to include it.

(Walton, 1990, p. 336)

Julian Dodd challenges Walton's approach as too inward turning or introspective. Dodd focuses on Walton's argument (2015) that to understand a piece of music is to come to understand the complex intentional content of one's own experience. Walton draws an analogy to understanding humour. He argues that we come to understand a joke as we recognize and acknowledge what we take to be its objects. This is different from just responding to the causes that make us laugh. But it is a process that remains focused on our own experience. Dodd criticizes Walton's

approach to understanding humour and counters with an account of musical understanding and appreciation that is not introspective.

The chapters in Part III of this volume take up larger issues that Walton does not address directly. Gregory Currie examines the repercussions of taking a contextualist or ‘inclusive’ approach to the value of an artwork. He argues that a very ‘inclusive’ account of what determines a work’s value is compatible with a ‘conservative’ account of what an artwork is. Currie uses Walton’s arguments against the cobbler model of art as his point of departure. He agrees with Walton that appreciating art is unlike appreciating shoes. Our appreciation of works of art takes into account how they are made. Indeed, Currie argues that the agency of the artist and “facts about making play a central, organizing role in the identification of [a work’s] context” (this book, Chapter 16). But Currie argues that such contextual facts do not affect the ontological identity of a work of art. He argues for a *conservative contextualism*: works like paintings or sculptures are identical with objects, contextual facts are only relevant for appreciation. Such conservatism opposes *expansionist contextualism*, which argues that contextual facts are constitutive of the identity of works of art. Currie does not locate Walton’s approach among the positions he identifies.

Bryan Parkhurst argues that Walton’s approach provides theoretical resources that can support Marxist art criticism. Parkhurst works with Walton’s view that how a work is made or contextual facts relevant to how a work comes about can be manifest in a work’s appearance. He focuses on new, unpublished work where Walton argues that if a work “appears” to have been made in a certain way, then it has *appearance content* that includes *the proposition that it was created in that way*. This recent proposal can explain the Marxist view that facts about the broader context of production may be part of a work’s veridical appearance.

Monique Roelofs suggests that even though Walton identifies the ‘generative confluence’ of norms, imagination, and make-believe in art, his emphasis on rules doesn’t allow for transgressive imaginings that are both aesthetically and politically important. Emphasis on rules threatens to hollow out Walton’s orientation to historical context because it doesn’t capture the problematic nature of the ‘cultural sites’ where we engage with art. Roelofs details three iconoclastic interpretations of canonical paintings by Raphael, Titian, and Holbein from a short story by Julio Cortázar to illustrate the kinds of imaginative play that emphasis on rules obscures. She argues that instead of mandating or prescribing imaginings, works of art *invite* us to *address* them. Such invitations allow transgressive forms of address that are culturally and politically valuable.

The fourth part of this volume reaches beyond Walton’s work on the arts. As Walton emphasizes “works of art are neither the sole nor the primary instances of representation in our sense” (1990, p. 7). Contributors focus on Walton’s account of negative existential claims and on extending his approach to explanatory models, especially scientific ones.

To explain negative existential claims such as ‘Vulcan does not exist,’ Walton expands on the perspectival shift he proposes for dealing with talk about fictional characters. Assertions about fictional characters are made in pretence. In addition to engaging in pretence, Walton suggests that we can also *allude to* or *betray* or *disavow* assertions we make in pretence. A claim about a fictional character like “Gregor Samsa does not exist” *disavows* attempts at such referential pretence (Walton, 1990, p. 425). A claim like “Vulcan does not exist” does not disavow a particular pretence to refer; it claims that *any* attempt to refer in this way *fails*. Yet, pretence still comes into the analysis: “Vulcan does not exist” indicates unofficial games of pretence and asserts that such fictional uses would be unsuccessful. Walton’s approach is anti- or “*irrealist*.” It suggests that the predicate ‘exists’ does not express a property, it is used to characterize attempts at reference by means of official or unofficial games of pretence.

Walton’s approach to existential claims is an especially fertile and controversial part of the make-believe framework. One principal objection is that the analysis does not capture the ‘phenomenology’ of what we seem to be saying when we deny that something exists – we seem to be saying something about the world and not about our attempts to refer. A related objection is that the analysis misfires because it turns existential statements into claims about claims. Instead of explaining the content of a claim that purports to be about Vulcan, Walton’s analysis suggests that we are really making a claim about claims that attempt to refer in this way.

Frederick Kroon and Stephen Yablo modify Walton’s approach to address these objections. Kroon shows how Walton’s approach can explain negative existential claims without positing “unofficial games of make-believe” about referring expressions. If we countenance that there is some way that reference is fixed (for example through a causal chain of uses derived from an original baptism), then the same way of fixing reference would also hold in make-believe. “Gregor Samsa does not exist” asserts that the normal way of fixing reference does not pick out anyone in the make-believe. The statement expresses that the condition for fixing reference is not met in the fiction rather than asserting that an attempt at reference fails.

Stephen Yablo offers an account “in the same spirit as Walton’s, but different in almost every detail” (this book, Chapter 20). He suggests that we preserve the spirit by modelling negative existential claims on per absurdum conditionals where the antecedent is followed by an absurdity. Consider “If Vulcan exists, then I am a monkey’s uncle.” Entertaining a per absurdum conditional is not very unlike Walton’s idea of pretending to refer in order to disavow or repudiate the possibility of doing so. “Both have us making as if to do something (refer with *Vulcan*, accept that Vulcan exists) as a prelude to critiquing the very act we have made as if to perform.” Yablo suggests that Walton’s approach has trouble providing content for existential claims because it denies that the singular terms in existential claims refer.

But Yablo's proposed route provides such content – content is entertained in the antecedent of per absurdum conditionals only to be denied by showing that it leads to absurdity.

Roman Frigg and Adam Toon expand Walton's make-believe approach to new territory by showing how it helps explain scientific models. Frigg suggests that Walton's approach is important for explaining scientific models because it provides a detailed explanation of the representationality of make-believe props. Walton's approach is especially suitable because it provides an account of fictionality in terms of prescriptions to imagine rather than through an opposition between truth and falsity or between truth and "fictional truth." But Frigg argues that we need to supplement Walton's approach with an account of how the features of the prop or model get us to the target domain and how exactly they figure in scientific representation. That is, Walton's approach explains 'what' scientific models are, while Frigg provides further resources that explain how "the features of the model figure in scientific representation."

Adam Toon uses Walton's work to help argue for *mental fictionalism*. Just as scientific models "represent the world by asking us to imagine it as other than it is," ordinary talk about ourselves as having inner mental experiences and states is a fictional or imaginative way of capturing real complex patterns in our activities. Walton's account of metaphor and prop-oriented make-believe provide the details for reconstruing 'folk psychology' as prop-oriented make-believe. We are the props; folk psychology is another term for the vast array of prescriptions to imagine about one another, and talk of ourselves as having hopes or fears is metaphoric, understood in terms of pretence within a game of make-believe governed by public prescriptions or rules.

III.

With this overview in place, let's briefly consider Walton's implicit stand on two much-discussed issues: whether art can be defined and the ontological implications of contextualism. First, I will highlight how Walton's work implicitly challenges more predominant ways of thinking that hold that art needs to be defined and demarcated from endeavours and objects that are not artistic. Second, I will examine Walton's historicism or contextualism with the aim of clearing away some misinterpretations to examine its ontological implications. I will contrast Walton's work on these issues with his contemporary Arthur Danto. Though both Walton and Danto argue for strong historicist positions – and they both often use indiscernible items in their arguments – their views provide independent and very different visions.

A feature of Walton's work that does not receive much attention is that it steers clear of traditional definitional or ontological questions in a way that offers the implicit suggestion that we should do so as well. Walton

spells out his doubts that art can be defined in “Aesthetics – What? Why? And Wherefore?” his 2006 presidential address to the American Society for Aesthetics. But this view can be gleaned from the make-believe framework from the outset. As we have seen earlier, rather than trying to explain or define a clear-cut endeavour such as art or representation, Walton delineates something else – make-believe representation – that cuts across the arts and non-arts. He is explicit about his aim: he is not trying to map exactly onto what we ordinarily say or to revise our categories. Rather, as he puts it, his theory brings into view what it is a theory of: a large swath of representation that centrally involves imagination and spans across many arts as well as non-arts (Walton, 1990, pp. 3, 7).

Walton’s distinctive contribution on this score is a sharp counterpoint to Danto’s. Though both provide important arguments for historically contextualist approaches to art, they disagree over essentialism.

Danto’s pivotal contribution is to argue that art is both historically contextual and definable. He argues that art’s nature is to embody meanings, and both meaning and embodiment depend on historical context. He shows that a relational definition can capture the nature or essence of art, “eternally the same” “regardless of time and place” (Danto, 1997, pp. 95, 165) while also establishing that art varies because it is related to contextual facts: embodiment of meaning is realized in its specific historical context and indexed to it.

In contrast, Walton might seem to take up shop elsewhere – concerning make-believe or fiction – since he does not address the issue of definition. Most discussions contribute to this impression by addressing his specific accounts. But case by case, his explanations of make-believe representations put in place a framework that does not demarcate art. If the approach is correct, then given its cumulative scope, no explicit argument against definition is needed.

This may be strategic. A philosophical claim that something can’t be done tends to serve as an invitation to try. The supposed neo-Wittgensteinian denial (in the 1950s) that art can be defined spurred Danto to produce a relational definition (in the 1960s) that opened the floodgates to more definitions across ensuing decades. Walton’s framework silently sidesteps dispute over definitions or theories with the battery of specific explanations just outlined. All but silently that is, except for the opening of *Mimesis* where he states that if we needed to explain the category of “representational *art*,” we have the interminable and excruciatingly unedifying task of separating art from nonart” (Walton, 1990, p. 2).

Walton also does not broach ontological issues. He does not explicitly address what kind of entity a work of art is. A univocal answer here might not be possible given the variety of arts that Walton discusses, including music, dance, theatre, novels, and poetry which perhaps raise distinctive ontological issues from those raised by visual arts such as pictures and photographs. Nevertheless, one might wonder whether his work holds

some ontological implications. I will focus only on whether Walton's contextualism holds ontological implications. And for ease of exposition, I will only consider visual art which might seem to be an "easier" case to think about because it can involve objects.

In contrast, Danto explicitly focuses on the ontology of works of visual art, and his work distinguishes two options that historicism or contextualism about art yields. Danto argues for a strong view that hinges on the fact that embodiment of meaning depends on historical context in ways that the identity of an object does not. Danto argues that because the identity of an artwork is determined by the meaning it embodies, the work (i) determines which parts or properties of its counterpart object or 'base' belong to it, and the work (ii) can have properties that the counterpart object does not have and does not determine. If this is correct,

if the work determines which parts and qualities of the bases belong to it, it might be possible to imagine cases in which *no material parts and qualities* are shared by works whose photographs exactly resemble one another, or which to all intents and purposes are totally similar under sensory scrutiny.

(Danto, 1981, p. 102, my emphasis)

Danto's strong view challenges a weaker alternative about artworks. According to the weaker view, artworks are identifiable independently of historical or contextual facts. Works of visual art such as paintings, photographs, or drawings consist in an item that is identifiable independently of contextual factors. Historical factors play a role in the interpretation of the work or in the appreciation of its aesthetic properties, but they are not constitutive for the identity of the work.

Unlike Danto's view, Walton's is implied not stated. I suggest that we can reconstruct the position without going beyond it in terms of extrinsic properties and coincident entities.

But to do so, Walton's view in *Categories* needs to be untangled from some prevailing misinterpretations. His view is often glossed in the following sorts of ways: (i) Walton argues that aesthetic properties depend on non-aesthetic properties; or (ii) Walton argues against formalism by showing that aesthetic properties depend on historical categories of art; or (iii) following Sibley, Walton holds that aesthetic properties supervene on non-aesthetic properties. These are not innocuous simplifications; each is incorrect in a way that obscures Walton's contextualism and the ontological picture it suggests.⁶

Firstly, here is Walton's key claim again about the group of aesthetic properties he is concerned with: "a work's aesthetic properties depend not only on its nonaesthetic ones, but also on which of its non-aesthetic properties are 'standard,' which 'variable,' and which 'contra-standard'" (Walton, 1970, p. 338). As I discussed earlier, this clearly states that these

aesthetic properties do not depend on non-aesthetic properties *simpliciter*, but on non-aesthetic properties that are standard, contra-standard, or variable for the category to which the work belongs. We examined that aesthetic properties like *Guernica's* vividness depend on normative or prescriptive properties that are themselves context dependent or extrinsic. So, the first gloss is incorrect and misleads us that the aesthetic properties Walton is concerned with depend on non-aesthetic properties *simpliciter*.

Secondly, Walton explicitly and quite narrowly circumscribes the categories of art that figure in his argument to *perceptually distinguishable* ones. In the second section of the paper, he specifies the sorts of categories he will be dealing with. "It is necessary to introduce first a distinction between standard, variable, and contra-standard properties relative to *perceptually distinguishable categories of works of art*" (Walton, 1970, p. 338, my italics).⁷ He maintains the qualification throughout the paper either in explicit terms or through his focus on perception. The paper in its entirety is concerned with the question of what aesthetic properties are perceivable insofar as a work is perceived in certain correct categories.

The second gloss is incorrect because it leaves out Walton's restriction to perceptually distinguishable categories. This restriction cannot be left out since it circumscribes the historical facts to those that one might perceive in a work with training. For example, to make this clear, Walton specifies that the argument applies to paintings and not to etchings – though it does apply to apparent etchings.

The *category* of etchings as normally construed is not *perceptually distinguishable* in the requisite sense, for to be an etching is, I take it, simply to have been produced in a particular manner. But the *category* of apparent etchings, works which look like etchings from the quality of their lines, whether they are etchings or not, is *perceptually distinguishable*.

(Walton, 1970, p. 339, my italics)

As Robert Hopkins (2005) puts it, carefully circumscribed categories of this sort make up "Walton's natural territory." Perhaps, Walton's approach could be expanded (Hopkins, 2005). But there is no question that Walton restricts the relevant historical facts and categories to ones that we might be trained to perceive, and his view is that we cannot perceive certain facts of causal origin in a work. His view is that just as we cannot perceive an etching, we cannot perceive a particular work *by Renoir* though we can perceive a particular work in the style of Renoir.

The incorrectness of the second gloss is important. Given that Walton is only concerned with a subset of art categories – those that are historical *and* perceptually distinguishable – the aesthetic properties at issue are similarly carefully circumscribed. His argument shows that

these restrictions go hand in hand. That is why the argument allows for myriad other aesthetic properties and is truly silent about them: there may be aesthetic properties that do not depend on the historical and perceptible category to which a work belongs, or that do not admit of right or wrong, or that are not open to perception even with training. It would be helpful to introduce a term for the group of aesthetic properties Walton delineates akin to other terms that have been suggested for his innovations – *Waltonian mimicry* (Kulvicki, 2006, and this book) or *Walt fiction* (Friend, 2008, and this book), or even *Walton's natural territory* (Hopkins, 2005). But if the phrase *Waltonian aesthetic properties* feels too long, we need to keep qualifying that these properties are both historical and perceptible for lack of a handy term.

Once the argument in *Categories* is untangled from the first two glosses, we can appreciate that it has the following ontological implications. (I will return to the third issue of supervenience shortly.) Firstly, some aesthetic properties are both perceptible and historical. Such aesthetic properties are extrinsic and they depend on extrinsic properties – they do not depend on non-aesthetic properties such as colours or contours simpliciter but on normative or prescriptive non-aesthetic properties that themselves depend on social historical context.

Secondly, works that belong to historical and perceptible categories of art are such that both their Waltonian aesthetic properties and their *determining non-aesthetic properties* are *extrinsic*. (Of course, a painting or a member of another category in “Walton's natural territory” may have various other non-aesthetic properties.)

The account of representational works in *Mimesis* is consistent in that it holds that artworks are props that have the function of prescribing certain imaginings. The identity of a prop is determined by prescriptions to imagine – and Walton is emphatic that prescriptions are dependent on specific social contexts. This means that the identity of the prop is determined by extrinsic properties and is ‘society-relative.’

If we put *Mimesis* and *Categories* together, we get a nuanced picture that emphasizes the *prescriptive* conditions for representational works of art and for certain aesthetic properties and their bearers. *Mimesis* tells us that a representational work is a functional prop that mandates or prescribes imaginings so that it is dependent on a social context. Such a prop may be *coincident* with an entity such as an object which has distinct identity conditions. *Categories* tells us that works – such as paintings or sonatas – that bear Waltonian aesthetic properties are dependent on *extrinsic* normative properties that are themselves dependent on social context. This suggests that such works are *coincident* with entities such as objects. In sum, representational works that belong to historical categories are *coincident* with things or entities whose identity conditions can be specified in terms of intrinsic properties or in terms of extrinsic properties different from those artworks depend on.

I have used the notion of coincident things or entities to capture Walton's view. Here, it is important to untangle Walton's position from the third gloss, which claims that Walton follows Sibley in arguing that aesthetic properties supervene on non-aesthetic properties (simpliciter) like colours or contours. But it is not correct to formulate Walton's view in terms of supervenience for the same reason that it isn't correct to apply the term to Sibley's view.

Sibley argued that aesthetic properties such as being serene or dynamic, trite or sentimental are 'emergent.' They depend on non-aesthetic properties in the following sense. "Any aesthetic character a thing has depends upon the character of the non-aesthetic qualities it has or appears to have, and changes in its aesthetic character result from changes in its non-aesthetic qualities" (Sibley, 1965, 2001, p. 35).⁸

Since Sibley states that "changes in its aesthetic character result from changes in its non-aesthetic qualities," his phrasing seems to capture the core idea of supervenience that "there cannot be an *A*-difference without a *B*-difference."⁹ But Sibley does not take a stand on any of the dimensions of supervenience that were subsequently differentiated as that notion came under intense scrutiny and debate: whether it provides entailment, reduction, grounding or is ontologically innocent; whether it is a purely metaphysical or an explanatory relation; and whether it is local or global.¹⁰ Given the additional fact that Sibley did not choose to use the term 'supervenience,' it is not appropriate to apply the notion to the dependence relation Sibley articulated.

Similarly, Walton's argument in *Categories* predates work that specifies the notion of supervenience and does not commit to that notion. Walton addresses Sibley's view – as articulated in the early- to mid-1960s – with the primary aim of showing the historical nature of the sort of perceptible aesthetic properties Sibley identified.

This is also Walton's view: he would not characterize Sibley's approach or his own in terms of supervenience.¹¹ As that notion has been specified, it does not fit the dependence that either he or Sibley were attempting to capture. To detail the mismatch lies beyond the scope of this discussion. The notion of coincident entities – particular artworks and objects for example – captures Walton's view without going beyond it.

IV.

Empathy, imaginative resistance, metaphor, aesthetic values, sports as fiction – these are just some of the topics that Walton addresses but this book does not. Though the chapters written for this volume cover much ground, the fact that they leave much unaddressed is a testament to the scope of Walton's framework. I hope that the collection will show some of the cumulative effect of his work. Part by part, his approach reconfigures how we think about a large array of human endeavours. Each piece brings

a role of the imagination into view and turns on that role – accumulating to a stunningly extensive and deeply thought exploration of the human capacity to imagine. To be sure, this is not all. In the attempt to say more than a book can, we close with an informal ‘interview’ with Walton. The contributors joined together to suggest a range of questions, serious and fun, focused and broad ranging, which we hope will help us gain more insight into his thought.

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Notes

1. Though I only reconstruct Walton’s *Guernica* example, his view does not rely on switching contexts and it does not suggest that aesthetic properties are primarily determined by the variable properties of categories of art such as the surface colours and contours of paintings as in this illustration. Walton offers a range of examples, most of which stay within one context and illustrate how certain aesthetic properties may be determined by standard or contra standard properties as well as variable ones.
2. Walton continues “it is no use just immersing ourselves in a particular work, even with the knowledge of what categories it is correctly perceived in, for that alone will not enable us to perceive it in those categories. We must become familiar with a considerable variety of works of similar sorts” (1970, p. 366).
3. There is an important change between these two key works but it concerns representationality. Categories includes representational or resemblance properties of visual art among the properties determined by the normative features of a historical category. *Mimesis* provides the new approach to representationality in terms of make-believe which applies to depictive visual art – as I outline in Section II.
4. But see Sedivy (2018).
5. Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste” (1757) in Paragraph 33.
6. One might counter that the first and second ways of glossing Walton’s views are just incomplete. Strictly speaking, this is correct since they could be added to. But my point is that they are typically stated as is without further qualification. Thanks to Derek Matravers for this point.
7. Walton continues: “A category will not count as ‘perceptually distinguishable’ in my sense if in order to determine perceptually whether something belongs to it, it is necessary (in some or all cases) to determine which categories it is correctly perceived in partly or wholly on the basis of non-perceptual considerations” (1970, p. 339).
8. Sibley’s other key point is that uses of aesthetic predicates for such aesthetic properties are not condition governed. The conditions for an aesthetic claim are only sufficient and defeasible (1959, 2001).

9. Yet, see Sedivy (2016, pp. 212–216).
10. McLaughlin and Bennett (2018).
11. See Walton's reply to the first question in Walton in Conversation (this book, Chapter 23). He writes that the notion of grounding best fits the dependence relation Sibley proposed and that on his own view aesthetic properties do *not* supervene on non-aesthetic ones.

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