

## Kendall Walton, *In Other Shoes* Review

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*In Other Shoes* is a companion to Kendall Walton's other essay collection, *Marvellous Images*, published seven years earlier. The volume's subtitle, 'Music, Metaphor, Empathy, Existence' will raise suspicions about its thematic unity (Calvin Klein execs will be pleased to have found names for their next four perfume lines). But careful study reveals considerable coherence; Walton reprises the same *motifs* throughout, though with different combinations and inflections, the book's reverse chronology revealing how some of these ideas developed. Moreover, every paper exhibits the same accessible, sometimes homespun ("by golly" (101), "care beans" (219), "gosh" (279)) style typical of Walton: unburdened by needless technicality, yet deft. This style's downside is perhaps that insufficiently careful readers may misread him. A quarter-century of Charles and faithful sidekick The Slime not so much *evading* critical fire as watching it spray harmlessly across the pages of philosophy journals is testament to this.

Some of the papers, especially the newer ones, feel freed from dialectical convention, more detective's pinboard than courtroom argument. Partly, this is because Walton is always in investigator mode, exploring in his prose, turning over and connecting clues as they arise. But his unapologetically positive philosophical approach is also responsible; engagements with the literature are never about tearing opponents down, but about bolstering the theoretical edifice.

Since 12 of the 15 essays have been fully published and critically discussed elsewhere, I will spend more time summarizing than criticizing the book.

The book opens with two somewhat counter-Waltonian papers. The first shows where the imagination is surprisingly *not* needed, the second dislodges Walton's long-standing account of fictionality. In 'Empathy, Imagination, and Phenomenal Concepts', Walton argues that empathy doesn't require the imagination, as is widely assumed, and can provide propositional knowledge, as is widely denied. Some have supposed that *imagining being* (sufficiently like) a potential empathizee could turn one otherwise engaged in mere "parallel imagining"—imagining herself in another's situation and judging *that* he feels panic—into one who truly empathizes, feeling *his* panic. But, Walton argues, this just-add-imagination move is problematic.

True empathizers, Walton argues, use their mental states as a "sample", some aspect of which functions much like a predicate. The predicate picks out a property—the property of feeling like *this*—via a "phenomenal concept". This phenomenal concept makes propositional knowledge about the empathizee possible. However, since others' mental states could also function as samples, empathizing doesn't consist in the proposition grasped, but in *how* one grasps it; the empathizer doesn't merely think 'I am panicked and so is he', or (pointing to another's mental state) that 'the empathizee feels like *that*'. The empathizer thinks 'he is *as I am*, like *this*'. The imagination is doubly unnecessary, Walton argues, since one can obtain mental samples via emotional "contagion" and real experiences.

Walton considers pointing to mental states whose phenomenology we cannot recall as samples, too, calling the activity on this basis "sort of empathy". But I worry that if *this* (sort of) counts, then pointing to another's mental state should count too, especially if we accept, in a Lockean

spirit, that irretrievable past mental states might as well be someone else's. But now we're approaching mere parallel imagining, which didn't suffice for empathy. Fortunately for Walton, not much hangs on this.

'Fictionality and Imagination...' elaborates a 2013 paper which corrects the analysis of fictionality Walton offered in *Mimesis*<sup>1</sup> as follows: *p* is true in a fiction ~~if and~~ only if the relevant work prescribes that appreciators imagine *p*.

Walton offers three kinds of cases where prescribing that appreciators imagine *p* doesn't suffice to make *p* fictional (true in the fiction). (1) Meta-representations: a picture of a dog-picture prescribes that one imagine a dog in order to see that there is a dog-picture; but it isn't fictional that there is a dog, only a dog-picture. (2) Illusions: a murder mystery makes the butler seem guilty and prescribes that one imagine this without its being fictional that he is guilty or even appears to be. (3) Metaphors: "advertising is the rattling of a stick inside a swill-bucket" the narrator reports in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*. Per Walton, metaphors like this suggest and sometimes prescribe imaginings (see below). But it isn't fictional in the novel that advertising is a literal rattling.

Readers will think of rebuttals, but Walton masterfully demonstrates their limited reach. The picture that emerges shows appreciators effortlessly juggling distinct "clusters" of propositions corresponding to the novel, the metaphor, the depicted depiction, etc. This complicates Walton's original account which typically recognized only a "work world" and a "game world" (the propositions made fictional by the work and by the game an appreciator plays using the work as "prop",<sup>2</sup> respectively)—a complication Walton connects to recent work on the imagination.

'Two Kinds of Physicality...' is the first of several essays tackling musical experience, "personae", and what distinguishes music from visual and literary artforms. Among the volume's more exploratory and speculative papers, it seeks to account for music's peculiar power to move appreciators, literally and figuratively. Walton notes that like other aesthetic media, music invites an interest in how it *appears* to have been produced. This interest is distinct from interests in its *actual* causal aetiology or sonic properties and is often a source of great feeling insofar as it suggests the expressions of an apparent music maker.

But apparent authors and painters matter no less on this score. Peculiar to music is how it moves us *physically*. Walton suggests this is largely down to the fact that sounds literally strike our bodies, permitting "somatic listening". This, he claims, has been overlooked by music theorists myopically focussed on the inner ear. Somatic listening helps explain listeners' tendencies to dance and think of music as "inside" them, and makes music well-suited for make-believe games in which the physiological sensations it induces are, fictionally, emotional symptoms.

Somatic listening's importance seems undeniable. Yet, some considerations run against Walton's conjecture. Music is (plausibly) as touching when heard over headphones as over loudspeakers, or live. Quite possibly it's also as liable to encourage dancing—the recent explosion of "silent" discos supports this suspicion. Were Walton right, however, one would expect music's power to diminish somewhat in these regards (barring confounding factors).

In 'Thoughtwriting—in Poetry and Music' Walton argues that poetry is frequently "thoughtwriting". Much as speechwriters *mention* words for others to *use* in speech, so

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<sup>1</sup> Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-believe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990)

<sup>2</sup> "Prop" is a Waltonian term of art for an actual entity or state of affairs giving rise to fictional truths. For example, a doll is a prop in a game in which, fictionally, it is a baby; actual excitability might be used as a prop making it fictional that one is, say, afraid.

thoughtwriters mention words others can use to express and clarify their thoughts. Poetry is in this respect like bumper stickers and greeting cards, albeit often more sophisticated. The claim offers a (compatible) alternative to theories positing fictional personae—narrators who express themselves through a work’s words—undermining the need for such personae to explain literary expression. Instead of, or in addition to, attributing such expression to a persona, readers can appropriate poetry as though expressing their *own* thoughts in actuality or in imagination. The idea helps explain why we are more apt to memorize and recite poetry than lines from a novel, among other things.

The remainder of the paper discusses this proposal as it applies to music (also the focus of the earlier ‘Listening with Imagination’), whether thoughtwriterly works are fictions, and how they interact with so-called “imaginative resistance”.

‘It’s Only a Game...’ uses the make-believe machinery from *Mimesis* to explain our incongruous attitudes towards outcomes of competitive games: why they frequently prompt intense responses even in those who judge them to be trivial. Walton points out similarities between sports participants—spectators and players—who cry and cheer during the spectacle only to go on afterwards as though nothing happened, and theatre-goers who do likewise. In both cases, Walton argues, make-believe bridges the gap between the (more) indifferent judgement and the enthusiastic behaviour. The paper is short and fun, and highlights a serious philosophical question by offering an answer.

Readers may remember intense sporting encounters and insist with appropriate chest-thumps that Walton has overextended his theory. But this would likely depend upon a misunderstanding. Walton concedes that we *really* care about many sporting outcomes, for instrumental and even intrinsic reasons. But his target here is as much impromptu games of ring toss (where the proposal is most plausible) as the Olympics.

There are more serious grounds for doubt; I’ll mention three. First, accepting Walton’s claim, a competitive game’s fictional world will be fully coincident with (part of) the actual world, except for the proposition that the game’s outcome matters. This seems a slender basis on which to explain spectator behaviour, especially since competitive games come with no ready-made heroes and villains. Second, our interest in competitive game outcomes depends upon players really trying, something lacking obvious analogues in other make-believe games; this calls for explanation. Third, many mundane activities induce similarly incongruous agitation without (as) plausibly involving make-believe: e.g. spotting a teapot topple from the breakfast tray, making a green (or yellow) traffic light, or having the last word in an argument.<sup>3</sup>

Walton identifies a problem for realists about fictional entities in the four-page ‘Restricted Quantification...’. Specifically, the problem afflicts realists who appeal to domain restriction to accommodate the truth of negative existential assertions about fictional entities. The realist’s move is to interpret ‘there is no Santa Claus’ as restricted to the domain of real things. This makes the sentence come out true. However, similar attempts to analyse ‘Santa Claus *does not exist*’, Walton shows, fail. For, while I may truly claim ‘there are no biscuits’ by restricting the relevant domain to my pantry, I cannot truly claim ‘biscuits don’t exist’ in like fashion; the sentence is infelicitous.

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<sup>3</sup> I have developed these arguments elsewhere.

Walton advances his alternative account in ‘Existence as Metaphor?’. Saying ‘*x* exists’ (‘doesn’t exist’), he argues, is to participate in a prop-oriented<sup>4</sup> game of make-believe in which, fictionally, everything either has or lacks the existence property; by so participating one asserts that referring attempts to *x* succeed (or fail). There need be no possible property, *existence*, that fictionally things have or lack, just as *Jabberwocky* makes it fictional that things are *brillig*, though no such property is possible. Walton appeals to this latter point in an excellent postscript showing why Simon Blackburn’s criticism of fictionalism collapses.

For the generalist, the paper’s (if not the book’s) most valuable portions are sections I and II, where Walton offers an excellent, succinct summary of his make-believe theory and his distinction between prop- and content-oriented make-believe games.

‘Projectivism, Empathy and Musical Tension’, by far the volume’s longest paper, tours past numerous attractions—too numerous to fully recount. Among the landmarks are the similarities Walton shows between empathizing and hearing tension in music, his surprising use of these to push *against* the claim that music contains “personae”, and his argument that many acts thought of as simulation aren’t *really* such because they involve memory traces. The paper also carefully distinguishes types of musical tension and identifies their differences from other putatively “secondary” or “projected” properties.

In ‘Listening with Imagination’, Walton begins by showing how even “absolute” music is in many respects representational, despite a long music-theoretical tradition of regarding it as abstract. The remainder of the paper attempts to reconcile this fact with the intuition underlying that music-theoretic tradition. Walton’s carefully worked out answer, in short, is that “absolute” music is representational in *prompting* listeners to engage in multiple disparate imaginings using the feelings it induces as props. It is abstract in *prescribing* no imaginings, in containing no fictional “world” as such.

Some ideas here are familiar from the volume’s other musically disposed papers. Indeed, given the considerable space devoted to a set of deeply related, if not yet totally unified, ideas concerning music in the volume, one hopes Walton will produce a monograph on the topic.<sup>5</sup>

Walton argues in ‘Metaphor and Prop-Oriented Make-Believe’ that metaphors typically involve (or imply) prop-oriented make-believe games. It’s a nuanced account that he uses to elucidate (many) metaphors and to accommodate competing theories thereof.

‘Understanding Humor and Understanding Music’ wrestles with what it is to *get* music as one gets a joke. With a thought-experiment redolent of Frank Jackson’s “Mary’s Room”, Walton shows that causal knowledge is neither necessary nor sufficient for getting humour; we must *understand* what it is we laugh at by deploying our sense of humour—in the case of getting others’ amusement, by empathetically deploying a sense of humour sufficiently like theirs. The same is true *mutatis mutandis* of music. Walton connects this to music theory, suggesting that what music theorists do is introspect their own experience to reveal what makes a piece work. But theorists aren’t restricted to uncovering what listeners in fact *do* experience; at their best, they also suggest new ways of hearing, clarifying these experiences with appeals to structures and indeed causes that go beyond

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<sup>4</sup> A prop-oriented game is one in which our interest in what the game makes fictional depends (at least partly) upon our interest in knowing the state of the game’s props (on props, see footnote above). For example, my interest in learning whether “the ogre is in the cave” in a game in which Geoff being home makes this fictional, may depend entirely on my interest in Geoff’s whereabouts.

<sup>5</sup> Music-theoretically inclined readers should also consult Bryan Parkhurst’s excellent review in the *Journal of Music Theory*, 2016, pp. 295-305.

the experiences themselves. Music theory, he concludes, is in this way less like science and more like appreciation.

‘What is Abstract about the Art of Music?’ anticipates themes in ‘Listening with Imagination’. But here Walton seeks to reconcile the abstractness of (absolute) music (not being *about* anything) with its capacity to sustain our interest. To do so, Walton considers three accounts of musical abstraction, showing their shortcomings, and uniting their strengths to support his own view: musical abstraction consists in the tendency of sounds to give us information *de dicto* (unlike sights), to *prompt* imaginings without *prescribing* them, to embody what is common to very different kinds of things—anger, storms, and nightmares, for instance—in ways that cut across linguistic categories. There’s a lot of good stuff here, though I remain unworried by the supposed tension Walton seeks to resolve, since many activities sustain our deep interest without enjoying “aboutness”.

Walton begins ‘The Presentation and Portrayal of Sound Patterns’ by wondering whether two sonically identical musical performances based upon two radically different kinds of score must exemplify a single work. His answer is ‘no’. The rest of the paper spells out why, explaining what it *is* to be a musical work and a performance of one.

Walton’s view is that musical works are multiple (often) hierarchical sets of sound patterns plus any circumstances that partly determine how the work is to be heard (such as required instrumentation). A performance is of a work just in case its function is to exemplify (some subset of) the patterns partly constituting the work. This account explains how one can erringly play a work while still *playing the work*, why whistling a mere melody counts as performing a work, and why musical works endure so many appreciations, among other things. In one of three postscripts, Walton offers a brief but rich discussion of how his theory of hierarchical patterns compares to Heinrich Schenker’s influential theory of hierarchical musical structures.

Concluding the volume with ‘Fearing Fictions’ and ‘Spelunking, Simulation, and Slime’ is surely Walton’s attempt to have the last word on whether we (A) experience real emotions (B) towards fictional entities and whether he denies that we do in chapters 5 and 7 of *Mimesis*. He does deny this, though the denial is directed toward portion B, not A as Walton’s critics have frequently assumed. Things are murkier on this point in the much earlier ‘Fearing Fictions’, which is by now so famous as to require no comment. ‘Spelunking’, meanwhile, besides correcting the record—including rebuttals to three prominent critics—discusses the affinities and differences between imagining generally and the notion of *simulation* invoked by simulation theorists.

This is a superb collection of essays that specialists and non-specialists interested in any one of its many topics should enjoy.