



Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts

By Kendall L. Walton

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Representations--in visual arts and in fiction--play an important part in our lives and culture. Kendall Walton presents here a theory of the nature of representation, which illuminates its many varieties and goes a long way toward explaining its importance.

Drawing analogies to children's make believe activities, Walton constructs a theory that addresses a broad range of issues: the distinction between fiction and nonfiction, how depiction differs from description, the notion of points of view in the arts, and what it means for one work to be more "realistic" than another. He explores the relation between appreciation and criticism, the character of emotional reactions to literary and visual representations, and what it means to be caught up emotionally in imaginary events. Walton's theory also provides solutions to the thorny philosophical problems of the existence--or ontological standing--of fictitious beings, and the meaning of statements referring to them. And it leads to striking insights concerning imagination, dreams, nonliteral uses of language, and the status of legends and myths.

Throughout Walton applies his theoretical perspective to particular cases; his analysis is illustrated by a rich array of examples drawn from literature, painting, sculpture, theater, and film. *Mimesis as Make-Believe* is important reading for everyone interested in the workings of representational art.

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Editorial Review

Review

Kendall Walton's book is one of the few genuinely distinguished contributions to aesthetic theory published in the last decade or two. It will be essential reading for anyone in the field and contains much that will be of great interest to scholars and critics of the arts. (Marshall Cohen, University of Southern California)

Rigor, ingenuity and arresting subtlety are evident in the detailed working out of Walton's ideas. (*Times Literary Supplement*)

Walton's aim...is to explore and explain the foundations of the representational arts. His theory is one that he has stated and restated with increasing detail and sophistication over the last seventeen years, and in this book it bears all the refinement and subtlety of argument that analytic philosophy can muster. This is an engaging, insightful, and persuasive volume. (*Philosophy and Literature*)

This is philosophy at its best; combining the breadth of concern of the best continental philosophy (but shorn of its often wilful cloudiness) and the precision of the best analytical philosophy...A work of very great importance that will set the agenda for discussions in aesthetics for a long time to come. (*Philosophy*)

Review

Kendall Walton's book is one of the few genuinely distinguished contributions to aesthetic theory published in the last decade or two. It will be essential reading for anyone in the field and contains much that will be of great interest to scholars and critics of the arts. (Marshall Cohen, University of Southern California)

About the Author

Kendall L. Watson is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Michigan.

Users Review

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