

HOW I REALLY FEEL ABOUT *JFK*

Stacie Friend

(Please cite the final version, published in *Imagination, Philosophy, and the Arts*, edited by M. Kieran and D. M. Lopes. Routledge 2003)

Here are some unsurprising responses to works of fiction: pitying Anna Karenina and feeling sad at her death; hoping that Strether remains in Paris and experiencing disappointment when he leaves; admiring Mr Smith and feeling suspense while he filibusters on the Senate floor. Common as they are, however, these reactions are puzzling: how is it possible for us to be moved emotionally by characters we know do not exist and events we know never transpired? It would appear impossible, or at least highly irrational, for you to pity my sister if you believe I do not have one, or to be angry with me for selling your trousers if you do not believe that I did. So it would seem that we ordinarily take beliefs to be requisite to our experiencing certain emotions – which makes our responses to fiction that much more difficult to comprehend.

The most well-known and controversial solution to this paradox of fiction is Kendall Walton's. According to Walton, because our pity of Anna – to take one example – does not involve belief, it is not genuine pity, but rather make-believe or imagined or, in Walton's preferred terminology, *quasi-pity* (Walton 1978, 1990). On the face of it, this claim is rather unintuitive: my pity does not *feel* any less genuine than my pity of actual people, and I am not pretending to have an emotion the way an actor might do. But in spite of what some critics assume, Walton is not making the patently implausible claim that readers of *Anna Karenina* are faking their pity or pretending to feel pity, or that their experience must be less intense than genuine pity, or that they have conscious control over their emotions, or that they are not experiencing anything at all. To the contrary, Walton agrees that readers experience something *essentially related to* pity; what he denies is that this something is full-fledged *pity*. Even so, Walton's opponents argue that we can resolve the paradox of fiction while preserving the intuition that our response to Anna is ordinary, run-of-the-mill pity; and they claim that retaining this intuition explains more than Walton's approach.

In my view, the arguments of Walton's opponents depend on idiosyncratic features of examples involving purely fictional characters like Anna Karenina. Although the debate is usually couched in terms of such characters, the same basic problem arises when the individuals represented in fiction are real. We might detest Richard III as Shakespeare portrays him, even though we do not believe that this portrayal is accurate; and we might hope for the success of the Apollo 13 mission in Ron Howard's film, even though we know that it failed in reality. It would be a mistake, then, to assume that the paradox of fiction arises only when the objects of our emotions do not exist: what is really at issue is the fact that we respond emotionally to fiction in ways that are not explained by our beliefs, but instead by what we imagine. That this is the crux of the paradox of fiction becomes clear only when we consider fictions about real persons and events. And I contend that once we turn our attention to these cases, Walton's theory proves significantly more explanatory than the opposition.

I defend this claim through an examination of our emotional responses to the real-life characters of Oliver Stone's movie *JFK*, arguing that unless we draw a distinction between emotions along Walton's lines, we cannot explain central features of our engagement with the

fiction. In particular, I will argue that the distinction proposed by Walton accounts for important facts about cognitive organization that are easy to overlook when the debate over the paradox of fiction focuses on invented characters. In the opening section I outline the debate between Walton and his critics, whom after Noël Carroll I designate as *thought theorists* (Carroll 1990). Both Walton and the thought theorist accept the general thesis of *cognitivism*, according to which emotions essentially involve propositionally contentful states. In what follows I assume the truth of cognitivism; what is at issue in my chapter is the debate between narrow cognitivists such as Walton who maintain that the contentful state must be a belief, and broad cognitivists such as Carroll who deny this. I then take up *JFK*, arguing that the thought theory cannot resolve the apparent conflict between my emotions in response to the film and my emotions based on what I believe about the real people and events it depicts. I argue that Walton's approach better explains the fact that my belief-involving emotions take priority in my cognitive life – a priority necessary to maintain rationality. I next consider and reject the reply that conflicts between my emotions can be avoided if we accept that my responses to the film are directed, not at the real people portrayed, but instead at fictional characters. Finally, I suggest that the priority of belief-involving emotions, and with it their claim to be the only genuine emotions, derives from their place at the foundations of practical reasoning.

I. Puzzle and Pretense

Walton's solution to the paradox of fiction cannot be understood in isolation from his more general theory of make-believe. Starting from examples of novels, plays, films, paintings, and sculptures, Walton aims to construct a theory of what he calls *representational art* or *fiction*. Walton defines a work of fiction as a work whose function it is to act as props in certain games of make-believe. The connection with children's games of make-believe, where the props may be dolls and toy trucks, is intentional; for Walton there is continuity between the two types of games. The idea is that works of fiction are designed to prescribe imaginings about their content, and imagining what is prescribed is participating in the game of make-believe authorized by the work. What we are supposed to imagine is what is 'true in the fiction'. We must agree that works of fiction are not created so that we can register that such-and-such is the case in some distant fictional world; rather, we are supposed to engage imaginatively with them, making believe that the events narrated really have taken place, that the people described really do exist, and so on.

On Walton's theory our imaginings about the content of the work are generated by the more basic games of make-believe we play with fictional representations, which involve imagining about ourselves. Specifically, we imagine that in engaging with the fiction we are learning about actual fact, and we respond to the fictional events from within this pretense. In reading *Crime and Punishment*, for example, we imagine ourselves to be reading a nonfiction report of actual events, thereby generating fictional truths about our own experiences. In particular, we imagine, *of* our reading the novel, that this very experience counts as learning about actual people and situations. Similarly, according to Walton, in looking at a bust of Napoleon, we imagine, *of* our seeing the bust, that this very experience counts as looking at Napoleon. Our psychological, emotional, physical, and verbal responses within the scope of these imaginings all constitute aspects of our participation in the relevant games of make-believe.

Suppose I find myself pitying Hardy's Tess because Angel rejects her. I am perfectly aware that there are no such people as Tess Durbeyfield and Angel Clare, and no such event as Angel's rejection of Tess. Nonetheless, it is clear that *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* prescribes that I

imagine that there are such people and that Angel rejected Tess. I imagine, of my reading the novel, that I am learning about these real people and their situations. Within the context of so imagining, I learn that Tess has been rejected; in reality, of course, this is not the case. Still, my imagining is sufficiently vivid that I have a sinking sensation, tears well up, I find it hard to turn the page. Facts about my real feelings – specifically, the psychological and physical state I am in due to my imagining that Angel rejected Tess, which Walton terms *quasi-pity* – make it fictionally the case that I pity Tess; from a perspective outside the game of make-believe, however, this experience is not genuine pity. Just as it is the fact that I (really) read a novel that makes it fictionally the case that I read a nonfiction report, it is the fact that I (really) experience quasi-pity that makes it fictionally the case that I experience pity. And because it is *only* fictionally the case that I am reading a true report or that Angel mistreats Tess – the imaginings that explain my quasi-pity – it is *only* fictionally the case that I pity her.

As even this brief overview indicates, Walton's introduction of quasi-emotions is a natural consequence of his theory of make-believe. While the theory is by no means uncontroversial, it is commonly accepted that the concept of make-believe is central to the institution of fiction, and that we can understand truth-in-fiction as prescriptions to make-believe or imagine the content of the work. That is, Walton's critics agree that I imagine, rather than believe, that in reading *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* I am learning about actual events such as Angel's rejection of Tess. At the same time, however, they think that my emotional response to reading the fiction is genuine compassion. By contrast, Walton argues that because this response is based on what I imagine rather than what I believe, it cannot be genuine compassion.

Walton's defense of this claim appeals to a particular version of cognitivism about the emotions (Walton 1990: 200–4). According to cognitivism, a propositionally contentful state constitutes an essential component of an emotion and partially individuates it. This cognitive component is what distinguishes emotions from mere 'feelings', which are just affective states. In paradigmatic cases, the cognitive component of an emotion is a belief: in pity the belief that someone has suffered, in fear the belief that one is in danger, and so on. At least some of these emotional states also have a particular affective component, involving phenomenological and physiological responses, as well as associations with action: for example, fear usually involves a feeling of anxiety and an increase in heart rate and perspiration, along with a desire to flee whatever is feared. The complex of these aspects is what makes the emotion the emotion it is.

Although there is general agreement that in the central cases the cognitive component of an emotion is a belief, consensus diminishes when we come to the question of whether the belief-requirement is conceptually necessary. Narrow cognitivists such as Walton argue that for a particular experience to count as, say, genuine pity, the propositional content that someone has undeservedly suffered must be believed. One reason for adopting this view is the connection between belief and the sort of motivational force that would lead to action: one will not desire to help without believing that there has been undeserved suffering. Another reason is the observation that we typically assess emotions as irrational when they are not explained by a belief: no matter how vividly I imagine that my friend Eric stole my watch, it would be irrational to yell at him. Even if one rejects the constitutive claim of cognitivism – that a propositional attitude is literally a component of an emotion – it remains the case that my imagining Eric to be a thief provides no *explanation* for genuine anger. By contrast, neither feature seems to apply to emotions in response to fiction: our 'pity' of Tess has no motivational force, nor do we count ourselves irrational in spite of the lack of belief; in other words, the response departs substantially from what we ordinarily expect of the emotion.

In spite of these considerations, there remains a conviction that our emotional responses to fiction are no different in kind from the emotions we experience in at least some other contexts. Thought theorists therefore reject narrow cognitivism, holding that if an emotion involves a cognitive component – in the case of pity a thought or proposition with a content like ‘that person is suffering undeservedly’ – this thought could be entertained, supposed, imagined, or whatever, and the emotion would still count as genuine pity. Noël Carroll contrasts a belief, which is “a proposition held in the mind as asserted” with a (mere) thought, which is “a matter of entertaining a proposition in the mind unasserted,” as when we suppose or imagine that something is the case (Carroll 1997: 209).

Moreover, it seems to be indisputable that emotions can be engendered in the process of holding propositions before the mind unasserted. While cutting vegetables, imagine putting the very sharp knife in your hand into your eye. One suddenly feels a shudder. You need not believe that you are going to put the knife into your eye. Indeed, you know that you are not going to do this. Yet merely entertaining the thought, or the propositional content of the thought (that I am putting this knife into my eye), can be sufficient for playing the role in causing a tremor of terror. For emotions may rest on thoughts and not merely upon beliefs. (Carroll 1997: 209)

Thus, on the thought theory, there is nothing out of the way in our terror at the merely imagined thought of plunging a knife into our eye; and similarly, there is nothing problematic in taking our pity of Tess to be genuine even though we know there is no such person who suffered. But Walton can simply accept Carroll’s contention that in both cases, our response is caused by something we imagine; establishing a causal relationship is still insufficient to show that the resultant state is an *emotion*. Because Carroll agrees that “a central component of the emotions is a cognitive state” (Carroll 1997: 209), if one’s ‘shudder’ or ‘tremor of terror’ is to count as a full-fledged emotion Carroll must demonstrate that the propositional content imagined constitutes a component of the experience. A causal connection does not fulfill this task.

There are, however, clearer cases of genuine emotions where beliefs or motivational force are lacking, which can be adduced by thought theorists as evidence against Walton. Thought theorists frequently invoke phobias: while Sally’s phobic fear of Fido is irrational because she does not believe that Fido poses any danger to her, it still counts as genuine fear. In response to this kind of example, Walton stresses the motivational component of the emotion, the fact that Sally always avoids Fido (Walton 1990: 201–2). Thought theorists then point to our emotional responses to nonfiction representations: in these cases there is belief, but due to spatial or temporal distance no motivation to act. If something occurred a hundred years ago or a thousand miles away, we are as little capable of doing anything about it as we are in the case of fiction (Matravers 1998: 69–73; Gaut, Chapter 1, this volume). Thought theorists conclude that if these responses, where one or another central component of an emotion is missing, nonetheless count as genuine examples of particular emotions, so should our responses to fiction.

At this point the debate between Walton and the thought theorist seems merely to be a matter of terminology: one side wants to classify our response to Tess’s fictional plight as one among several species of the genus *genuine pity*, while acknowledging that it departs from the paradigm case involving belief; the other side takes this departure to be sufficient to classify the response as *quasi-pity*. Although much of the opposition to Walton’s theory apparently results

from discomfort about the terminology, what matters is not the choice of label, but whether or not classifying the emotions one way or the other explains the phenomena we want to explain. After all, both Walton and the thought theorist agree in their basic *description* of our emotional responses to fiction: that these responses can have the same physiological and psychological profile as emotions that involve beliefs; that they do not involve beliefs, but only imaginings; and that they lack motivational force. Furthermore, Walton and the thought theorists agree that we need to draw a distinction between those cases where lack of belief entails irrationality, as with phobias, and those cases where lack of belief does not entail irrationality, as with responses to fiction. Walton has a simple explanation of the distinction: only full-fledged emotions require beliefs to be rational, while quasi-emotions do not. The thought theorist cannot have recourse to this explanation, for she maintains that both phobias and responses to fiction are species of genuine emotions. It is for this reason that once Berys Gaut (Chapter 1, this volume) has finished arguing that the emotions are genuine, he must *then* address the problem of how to explain why emotional responses to what we imagine are not irrational in the way phobias are.

To understand the problem this poses for the thought theorist, let's reconsider Carroll's example. One reason that a causal connection between imagining putting a knife in one's eye and a tremor of terror is insufficient to show that the result is an emotion is that causation is the paradigm of a nonrational relation. My reaction to this episode of imagining looks instead to be an involuntary physiological response, a response that provides no reason to stop cutting vegetables. Indeed, if I told you I had decided not to cut the vegetables on this basis, you would think I was either irrational or that I was deceptively trying to get out of cooking. By contrast, if I believed that I might suffer an epileptic seizure and really put the knife into my eye, I *would* be irrational, given the risk, to cut the vegetables. Carroll, like Gaut, must provide some additional explanation of the fact that although I am genuinely terrified in both cases, I am rational to continue cutting when my terror results from what I imagine, while I would be irrational to continue cutting when my terror results from what I believe.

This whole approach misses the virtue of Walton's account. Walton's invocation of quasi-emotions is designed, not primarily to stress the *differences* between these experiences and genuine emotions, but rather to stress the *essential connection* between them. If we take ordinary, belief-based pity and what Walton calls quasi-pity both to be full-fledged emotions in their own right, we have to start explaining why they differ in central respects, for example, why only one kind is irrational when belief is lacking. If, on the other hand, we take quasi-pity to have the relationship to real pity that Walton suggests, we can see just how they are connected. On Walton's theory, one genuinely experiences a certain emotional state, involving an imagined content and just those physical and psychological features that characterize genuine pity, and one imagines *of that experience* that *it* is an experience of genuine pity. Again, this construal follows from Walton's overall account of our experience of fictions. One genuinely reads a novel, and one imagines of one's reading the novel that *it* is reading a true report. One genuinely sees a picture of an elephant, and one imagines of one's seeing the picture that *it* is seeing an actual elephant. Put more concisely, one 'imaginatively sees a real elephant'.

In Chapter 1 Gaut suggests a reason for rejecting this approach to emotions. Addressing a puzzle about how we can learn through imagination, he proposes that having actual emotions toward imagined situations can help us learn what we ought to do. If we accept that our imaginative engagement with fiction gives rise to genuine emotions, Gaut says, we can explain our learning as a case of education through actual experience. Presumably, Walton's insistence that we do not experience genuine emotions in response to fiction leaves him faced with the

puzzle. It is not clear to me why describing my experience in reading *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as 'genuine pity toward an imagined person' provides a better explanation of how we learn than describing it as 'imagined pity toward a real person', given that the phenomenology of the latter is exactly the same as the former. What is clear, however, is that Gaut's construal is unavailable when we consider our responses to works of fiction about real people. As a result, I will argue, such works pose a serious problem for the thought theory. To see why, let us turn to *JFK*.

II. Keeping Cognitive Order

JFK is Oliver Stone's 1991 controversial movie about the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The film takes as its subject Jim Garrison, the real New Orleans District Attorney who prosecuted the only trial related to the assassination, and is based largely on Garrison's 1988 book *On the Trail of the Assassins*. In the movie Garrison (Kevin Costner) is a noble person willing to make sacrifices in the pursuit of the truth: specifically, the truth that Lee Harvey Oswald (Gary Oldman) was merely a patsy in the military-industrial-governmental conspiracy to assassinate Kennedy. The investigation by Garrison and his team uncovers a plot arranged in New Orleans by the civic leader Clay Shaw (Tommy Lee Jones). In the movie as well as in reality, Garrison brought Clay Shaw to trial in 1969 for conspiring to murder President Kennedy. It is more than clear that in response to the film we are supposed to imagine that Jim Garrison is a person of inestimable integrity, whose dedication to the truth is genuinely heroic, and that Clay Shaw is a shady, arrogant individual whose acquittal depends on the continued operation of the conspiracy.

It is important to recognize that imagining in these ways differs from our imagining, in response to Hardy's novel, that Angel rejects Tess. Because Jim Garrison and Clay Shaw, along with most of the other characters in *JFK*, are real people, the movie prescribes imaginings *about* them – imaginings that refer to the real individual. That is, we do not merely imagine *that* there is someone the movie is about, who is named 'Jim Garrison' and who prosecuted someone named 'Clay Shaw'; rather, we imagine, *of* the real Garrison and the real Shaw, that the one prosecuted the other. Compare little Peggy's game with her dolls. Let's say that in Peggy's game, it is fictional – that is, participants in the game are supposed to imagine – that a doll in the sink is a baby having a bath, that a doll in the sock drawer is a baby in her crib, and so on. Imagining, of the particular dolls involved in the game, that they are babies bathing, sleeping, etc., is to be contrasted with imagining that there is some baby bathing, sleeping, and so on. Walton calls the real people, places, things, and events depicted in works of fiction *objects of representation*; fictions generate *de re* fictional truths about the objects they represent. So just as the rules of Peggy's game make it fictionally the case, of a particular doll, that it is a baby asleep in her crib, *JFK* makes it fictionally the case, of the real Jim Garrison, that he was a noble, self-sacrificing individual pursuing the truth.

That Stone would also like us to believe that this is so is obvious; the propagandist element of the film is hard to miss. However, people with any independent information about Garrison are unlikely to change their beliefs as a result of watching the movie. Having read a number of articles undermining Garrison's version of events, I have formed a very different opinion of the man, perhaps "the most thoroughly discredited" of any conspiracy theorist even among conspiracy theorists themselves (Wicker 1991). Garrison and his office bribed witnesses, took statements made under hypnotic suggestion as testimony, and otherwise presented no evidence for the guilt of Clay Shaw, who was acquitted in under one hour. After years of prosecution, Shaw was left bankrupt and died an early death (Epstein 1992).

Let us say that I believe that Jim Garrison's obsession with proving a government conspiracy and his cavalier attitude toward the truth ruined a perfectly respectable man's life. Call the set of a person's beliefs about the world her *belief stock*. It is part of my belief stock that Garrison was a contemptible person. Right now, as I am writing this, such beliefs about Garrison are *occurrent*: that is, I am consciously aware of them. Most of the time, however, the beliefs are *dispositional*: that is, most of the time I am not explicitly thinking anything whatever about Jim Garrison or the Kennedy assassination. Even when I am thinking about something else entirely, though, it would be an accurate description of me to say that I believe that Garrison's theory was false. Most of the beliefs in our belief stocks are dispositional in this way. Now, these beliefs about Garrison and Shaw clearly contradict what the movie prescribes that I imagine about them. This contradiction need not pose a problem: that we are able to imagine that real things are different from the way we believe them to be is basic to the nature of imagination and to the practice of fiction. I imagine that Garrison is admirable, while I believe he was contemptible. If we were unable, in response to science fiction, to imagine the world to operate with different physical laws; or in response to horror films, to imagine that there are monsters; or in response to historical novels, to imagine that we are privy to the secret thoughts of historical personages, the institution of fiction would be difficult to explain. Let us agree, then, that even while watching *JFK* and imagining as prescribed (occurrently), my dispositional beliefs stay constant.

Contrast my case with the response of Naïve Nellie. Nellie is completely persuaded by Stone's propaganda, coming to believe that Garrison was noble while Shaw was part of a conspiracy that reached to the highest levels of government. Both of us engage in imagining that Tommy Lee Jones is Clay Shaw, that Kevin Costner is Jim Garrison, and so on. And, depending on one's theory of film experience, both of us imagine either that we are seeing the real events unfold (Walton 1990), or that we are watching a nonfiction report of those real events (Currie 1990: 92–8; Matravers 1998). (In several parts of the film, of course, we are watching documentary footage, edited by Stone.) But we go on to do different things with the contents of our imaginings. The cognitive difference between us can be described by employing the contrast between *incorporating* and *compartmentalizing* new information (Gerrig 1993: 207–24). Nellie incorporates the content of the film into her stock of beliefs about the world. She includes in her belief stock such propositions as 'Garrison was noble' and 'Shaw was a conspirator'. Of course I form beliefs in response to the movie as well, beliefs like 'in *JFK*, Garrison is noble' and 'in *JFK*, Shaw is a conspirator'. But in my case the contents remain attached to the representation, and are thereby compartmentalized. This is in sharp contrast to my belief that Garrison was contemptible: once I decide that the nonfiction articles I've read about Garrison are accurate, I can forget these sources of my belief entirely and assimilate their contents into my belief stock. If I did the same with the content of *JFK*, my rationality would be impugned, because I would believe both that Garrison was contemptible and that he was noble – and it is a basic constraint on rationality that we avoid contradictory beliefs. Instead I believe that Garrison was contemptible and that the movie portrays him as noble. And though in response to the movie I imagine that Garrison is noble, I continue to believe that he was contemptible. Keeping the beliefs in our belief stocks organized in this way reflects their role in practical reasoning: our actions will not be successful if our beliefs fail to represent the world correctly.

The same kinds of issues arise with emotions as with beliefs. It should come as no surprise that based on my beliefs, I feel contempt for Garrison and disgust at his cavalier attitude for the truth, while I pity Shaw, a good man wrongly accused by an obsessed prosecutor. Most of the time these emotions are not occurrent, because I am not thinking about Garrison; still, even

while I am thinking about something else, it would be correct to say that I feel contempt for him. These emotions thus form part of my *emotional stock*, and they change in predictable ways correlated with changes in my beliefs. If I came to believe that Garrison had, in fact, been nobly pursuing the truth, I would be irrational to continue to feel contempt for him. In other words, there is a rational connection between my emotions toward, and my beliefs about, particular individuals and events.

In response to the film, however, I experience emotional responses contrary to my ordinary attitudes. I sympathize with Garrison and his cause, and I am convinced that Shaw is an evil conspirator. I want Garrison to win and it comes as a shock when the jury acquits. All this in spite of the fact that I already knew, going into the movie, that no one has ever been convicted for conspiring to murder Kennedy. To keep cognitive order, it seems that I must keep these emotions separate from my ordinary attitudes toward Garrison, just as I keep my imaginings about Garrison separate from my beliefs about him. If I do not, I will find myself admiring Garrison for his noble pursuit of truth and condemning him for his disregard of truth, surely an irrational state of mind. Avoiding contradictions among our emotions can be just as important to rationality as avoiding contradictions among our beliefs, because they too play a role in practical reasoning: inconsistent desires will prevent us from attaining our goals. By contrast, Nellie can incorporate her emotional responses to the film into her stock of emotions without inconsistency. Based on the beliefs she forms in response to the movie, she genuinely admires Garrison. Walton has a simple explanation of the fact that I remain as rational in my emotions as Nellie, since there need be no conflict between my genuine contempt and my quasi-admiration: it is *not* literally true that I admire Garrison, but only fictionally true; *really* I detest him.

The thought theorist must describe the case differently. On her view, both my admiration and my contempt are genuine emotions, one of which is explained and partly constituted by what I believe, and the other of which is explained and partly constituted by what I imagine. So I feel admiration for Garrison because I imagine that he is admirable, and I feel contempt for him because I believe that he is contemptible. But this way of putting it implies that imagining, of Garrison, that he was admirable is sufficient to explain genuine admiration of him. That just seems false. Compare the following case. Suppose you believe Nelson Mandela to be a great man and you admire him. Now, if I made up a story in which Mandela tortured kittens, and you knew this story to be pure fantasy, it would be inexplicable for you to change your feelings toward him. Similarly, my imagining that Garrison was a noble pursuer of truth would not explain a change in my feelings toward him. That is, my emotional stock should remain exactly the same, even while I am imagining that Garrison is different from how I believe him to be.

Clearly the thought theorist will have to find some way of keeping apart the contempt and admiration, such that they do not conflict. On the thought theory, the fact that my admiration is explained by what I imagine makes no difference to the analysis; it is just the same sort of emotion I would experience based on a belief. The problem is just that, based on my beliefs, I experience an apparently incompatible emotion, namely contempt. The thought theorist responds that there is no difficulty in principle in admiring and condemning the same person, so long as one is responding to different features of the person (Gaut, Chapter 1, this volume). Thus I admire Bill Clinton for his record in foreign diplomacy, but I feel contempt for him due to his inability to keep his pants up while in office. However, the same sort of approach does not apply to my feelings about Garrison, because these respond to exactly the same feature of the man: his attitude toward the truth. The thought theorist might reply that in one case the feature is real, and in the other case imagined. But then we are back to the problem that imagined features of a

person provide no rational explanation for genuine emotions.

To remove the sense of conflict, the advocate of the thought theory could say that different *episodes* of thinking about Garrison – one imagining, one believing – result in different emotions toward him. This way of representing the situation accords with Carroll’s description of the case where I imagine putting a knife in my eye. We could assume that insofar as I experience genuine terror in response to my imagining, the terror is temporary; once I recall that I am not going to stab myself, I can continue cutting vegetables. In other words, it is only so long as I am occurrently imagining stabbing myself in the eye that I experience terror. Similarly, the thought theorist might suggest, I genuinely admire Garrison only so long as I am occurrently imagining that he is nobly pursuing the truth. The rest of the time I feel contempt for him. Because I do not experience these emotions at the same time, there is no conflict.

However, if I believe that Garrison was contemptible and I feel contempt toward him, there is no reason to think that I *stop* believing he is contemptible and feeling contempt for him as soon as I start imagining him to be as the movie portrays him. Suppose I am watching the film at exactly the moment two of my friends discuss my feelings about the Kennedy assassination. If Lauren tells Anthony that I reject Garrison’s version of the conspiracy theory and that I detest the man, we do not want to say that she has given a false description of my attitude just because I am emotionally caught up in the film. It is better to say that all the while I continue to detest Garrison, even while I am imaginatively construing him as heroic. In other words, my belief-involving contempt has *priority* over my imagination-involving admiration. This is because it forms part of my stock of emotions, the ones that guide my actions in accord with my stock of beliefs. And because it forms part of my emotional stock, it remains constant so long as I continue to believe that Garrison was contemptible. As a result, it is fair to say that regardless of what thoughts about Garrison I happen to be imagining, all the while I *really* feel contempt for him. Walton’s theory explains this feature of my interaction with *JFK*. Because my admiration is experienced in the context of my game of make-believe with *JFK*, it is only fictionally the case, rather than actually the case, that I admire Garrison. This is perfectly consistent with its being true that I really detest Garrison. It is difficult to see how the thought theory can provide an equally satisfactory account.

III. Real and Unreal Individuals

The thought theorist does have another strategy open to her, however. She could argue that my emotional responses to *JFK* are not directed at the real Garrison, but rather at Garrison-as-he-is-in-*JFK*. If this means that I experience genuine admiration only insofar as I imagine Garrison to be as portrayed in the movie, we have not progressed beyond the last option. So it must mean that my emotions are directed at different things: my contempt is for the real Garrison, while my admiration is for the fictional Garrison – a fictional character based on the real person. Similarly, Gaut (Chapter 1, this volume) suggests that in imagining that one’s friendly dog Fido is dangerous, the resultant fear is not of the real Fido, but of “the make-believe Fido, ... a merely imagined being.” Leaving aside the question of what it means to be “a merely imagined being,” let us agree that if the object of my admiration were not identical to the object of my contempt, there would be no conflict. I have argued elsewhere that it is a mistake to construe our emotional experiences in response to fictions about real individuals as directed instead toward fictional characters (Friend 2000a), so I will outline only briefly some of the problems that arise on such a construal.

First, if we agree that my imaginings in response to the film are imaginings about the real Garrison, it is *ad hoc* to say that my emotions – which are supposed to be explained by, and partly constituted by, my imaginings – are directed at a fictional character. On this construal, I respond to the film by imagining, of the real Jim Garrison, that he is nobly pursuing the truth; and as a result of so imagining, I admire a fictional character for nobly pursuing the truth. But if it is (the real) Garrison who is the noble pursuer of truth in my imaginings, then it should be the same Garrison, imagined as noble, whom I admire. The obvious reply to this consideration is to deny that my imaginings themselves are about the real Garrison. According to this reply, we take the Garrison-of-*JFK* to be a fictional character modeled on, but not identical to, the real Garrison, thereby placing him in the same category as Tess, Angel, Raskolnikov, and their ilk.

Yet there are good reasons to reject this approach. To begin with, it would mean committing oneself to the very strong – and to my mind indefensible – claim that works of fiction never prescribe imaginings about actual people, places, things, or events. Consider how one feels about London as it is portrayed in *Bleak House*, or about Napoleon as he is portrayed in *War and Peace*. Should we say that Dickens and Tolstoy were inventing fictional characters modeled on the real city and person, simply to account for conflicts in our emotional responses to the fictions? Clearly not. Second, this solution fails to account for the difficulty people might have in imagining something contrary to what they believe, as with historians of the English monarchy who face a psychological obstacle in imagining as prescribed by *Richard the Third*. It is precisely *because* we recognize that we are supposed to be imagining about a real person that such obstacles arise. Finally, leaving aside these more general considerations, to deny that *JFK* is about the real Jim Garrison – that is, to deny that *JFK* refers directly to the historical individual – is simply to misinterpret the movie. This is not only because Stone wants to persuade us that Garrison was, in reality, a noble pursuer of truth. It is also because the use of documentary footage in the film requires our making the identification:

More than halfway into “J.F.K.,” ... New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison and his wife, Liz, are seen watching a television documentary about Mr. Garrison’s investigation of the events of Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas.

The documentary’s anchorman is heard charging that the District Attorney used improper methods to get witnesses to support his case against the New Orleans businessman Clay Shaw for his part in a supposed conspiracy surrounding the murder of President Kennedy. Kevin Costner, portraying Mr. Garrison, suggests by facial expression and dialogue that the charge is unfair and rigged to destroy his credibility – thus attacking the credibility of the documentary. (Wicker 1991)

In describing this scene, Wicker assumes that Costner portrays the real Jim Garrison, and for good reason. There can be no doubt that the documentary – a real NBC broadcast, which was aired on 19 June 1967 – refers to the real Jim Garrison. But there also can be no doubt that we are supposed to imagine the subject of the documentary to be identical to the man watching it in the living room with his wife. Such aspects of the film undermine attempts to distinguish the Garrison-of-*JFK* from the historical person.

None of what I have said provides a knockdown argument that *JFK* refers directly to the real Jim Garrison and prescribes imaginings about him. And there are, of course, any number of philosophers and literary theorists who deny either that works of fiction refer at all, or that they prescribe our imagining directly about real individuals. I happen to think that if we can resolve

the apparent conflict between my imagination-involving admiration and my belief-involving contempt, while also maintaining that *JFK* prescribes imaginings about the real Jim Garrison, we ought to do so; and Walton's claim that my contempt is a genuine emotion while my admiration is merely a quasi-emotion does just that. But because there is so much controversy over reference in fiction, I would like to indicate why taking Garrison-as-he-is-in-*JFK* to be a fictional character still would not suffice to resolve the conflict.

Consider this question: why do the problems I have outlined for the thought theory seem to arise only when we are dealing with real individuals? That is, why does it seem more plausible to say that I genuinely pity Tess because Angel rejects her than it is to say that I genuinely admire Garrison because of his noble pursuit of truth? Because in the former case there seem to be no conflicts between what I imagine and what I believe. My imagining that Tess suffered and my consequent pity for her appear to function cognitively the same way as my believing that Garrison was contemptible and my consequent contempt for him. If I detached my imaginings about Tess from their source in Hardy's novel and incorporated them into my stock of beliefs, they would not conflict with any other beliefs about Tess – and the same applies to my pity for Tess, which conflicts with no other feelings about her. If this is right, we can say that my imaginings and feelings about Tess are dispositional: even if I am thinking about something else entirely, it would be accurate to say that I pity Tess.

The situation is not so simple, however. First, it is not true that I could assimilate my imaginings about Tess into my stock of beliefs without causing conflicts. After all, one of the things I imagine in response to Hardy's novel is that Tess exists, and I certainly do not believe that. In my belief stock I might have the propositions 'Tess does not exist' and 'In Hardy's novel, Tess exists', but I could not have both 'Tess does not exist' and 'Tess exists' without being irrational. Recall that my belief stock is my set of beliefs about the world: taken together, these beliefs constitute my representation of how the world really is. Nowhere in this representation of the world will we find reference to such people as Oliver Twist or Raskolnikov, to such places as Eldorado or Lilliput, or to such events as Angel's rejection of Tess. We *will* find reference to works of fiction that prescribe imaginings about these fictional people, places, and events; but the contents of those imaginings remain attached to their sources and thus compartmentalized.

Now, some theorists argue that we should include Oliver *et al.* in our representations of the world, as abstract or nonexistent objects. From this perspective, works of fiction inform us about real entities about which we can form beliefs, thereby allowing for smooth assimilation into our belief stocks. There are numerous problems with these approaches (see Friend 2000b), but in the present context the difficult is that they still fail to remove all conflicts among our emotions. When the same character is portrayed differently in different fictions, emotional responses can change: if I admire Odysseus's devotion to Penelope in the *Odyssey*, I will feel quite differently about him in response to Dante's *Inferno* (Canto 26) according to which he preferred further adventures to returning home to his wife. We *could* claim that these are two different characters, but such a move not only appears *ad hoc*, it runs counter to our ordinary experiences of fiction. In the present case, identification of the character across works is necessary to the correct interpretation of Dante's epic: if we did not recognize the Ulysses identified by Dante as the very same one imported by Virgil from Homer, we would not possess the background necessary to explain (and thereby, for Dante, to justify) the punishment he receives in the *Inferno*. And in spite of the changes undergone by James Bond over the course of his career, the popularity of the Bond films depends on our assuming that they are about the

same character. The same can be said for any other serial fiction.

Indeed, the problem of conflict would not be resolved even if we insisted that for each film or each epic poem there are distinct fictional characters, because many individual works of fiction are inconsistent, whether by error – in Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, Katya Odintsov is said to be both eighteen and twenty-one – or by design – in Robbe-Grillet's *Jealousy*, the main character is both a customs official and not a customs official, both honest and dishonest. Just as one might respond differently to the same fictional character in different fictions, one could conceivably experience apparently contradictory emotional states depending on variations in the way a fictional character is represented from one part of a work to the next. What these considerations indicate is that so long as we wish to maintain the view that our affective responses to fiction are genuine emotions, we are faced with the problem of conflicts among these emotions – a problem that does not go away even if we construe all of these emotions as directed toward fictional characters, and even if we take all fictional characters to be real.

More importantly, these cases highlight the distinctive feature of cases involving beliefs about real individuals. If one is describing my feelings about Garrison, there is a clear priority to be given to my contempt over my admiration: this is why Lauren is right to say I detest Garrison even while I am watching *JFK*. By contrast, there is no reason to prioritize either of my feelings about Odysseus, no answer to the question, 'do I *really* admire him or do I *really* detest him?' It is not that I am ambivalent, that I simply cannot decide how I feel about the character. Rather, it is because my different responses to Odysseus occur within the scope of different imaginings; neither can be detached from their sources and incorporated into my emotional stock. Just as the thought theorist must offer some additional explanation of why emotional responses to fiction are not irrational despite the lack of belief, she must offer some additional explanation of why certain emotional responses take priority over others in our cognitive organization. Once again Walton has a straightforward explanation of the data: only my belief-involving contempt for Garrison is a genuine emotion, and this explains why it is the sole feeling that takes priority. By contrast, my feelings about Odysseus and my responses to *JFK* count as genuine *only* within the confines of certain games of make-believe.

Moreover, the kinds of object-directed emotional states on which I have focused so far – contempt for Garrison, pity of Tess – are not the only ones where conflict arises and prioritization is relevant. It will be recalled that in watching *JFK*, I hope that Garrison will win his case, and I am shocked and disappointed when the jury acquits Shaw. These responses are puzzling in their own right. First, it cannot literally be true that I hope the real Garrison will win the case, because the real case is long over. Second, it is not literally true that I hope the *fictional* Garrison will win; to the contrary, I think the film would be much worse, and my experience of it much less enjoyable, if it had a happy ending. On the thought theory, my desire that Garrison win because I am sympathetic to him, and my desire that he lose because that would make a better film, are in direct conflict, though one might outweigh the other (Gaut, Chapter 1, this volume). But it is quite intuitive to say that *really* I want the film to be structured a certain way, and it is only within the context of my imagining that I want Garrison to win. It is a common feature of our experience of fiction that we can experience the same or similar emotional ups and downs each time we see a movie or read a book. On Walton's theory, whenever I see the film I imagine that I am learning about these events for the first time (Walton 1978, 1990: 258-62). This is consistent with its being the case that all the while, I know how the movie ends and do not genuinely wish it to end any differently.

Similarly, it would be incomprehensible for me literally to be shocked and disappointed

when Shaw is acquitted. Because I could not literally be shocked by an event I know already to have transpired, it must be the case that I am shocked that Garrison loses *only* within the context of imagining that I am learning about these events for the first time. To make sense of this, we must assume that I am imagining the events to unfold before my eyes, or at least to unfold concurrently with my watching the movie. But it is not merely that I go from one episode of imagining to another – from imagining that Garrison might win the case to imagining that he has lost – responding to each separately. In addition to imagining about Garrison and Shaw, I must also imagine about myself: in particular, I must imagine that in watching the movie I am *finding out* about the events. Only this can explain how I am shocked ‘when’ Shaw is acquitted. One might think, though, that my shock on the *first* viewing of the film still counts as genuine, because I do not know how the plot will unfold. But this only goes to show that I am shocked that *in the film* Garrison loses his case; in other words, that I am genuinely surprised the film turned out a certain way. Compare Neill’s proposal that Charles, who appears to be ‘terrified’ of the Green Slime in a scary movie, is really just startled by the images and music of the film (Neill 1991). Because this analysis provides a different object for Charles’s emotional state, it lends no support to those who wish to claim that Charles is genuinely afraid *of the Slime*. Similarly, my genuine shock upon finding out that the film develops a certain way – which is just what I am ignorant of before seeing it – lends no support to those who would claim that I am genuinely shocked that Garrison loses his case. To the contrary, the fundamental features of my response lend support to Walton’s claim that I experience only quasi-shock, rather than the genuine article.

IV. Emotions in Practical Reasoning

I have emphasized the priority that certain emotional states have in our cognitive organization, maintaining that because they can be detached from their sources and incorporated into our emotional stock they have a good claim to being the only genuine emotions. But why are this prioritization and incorporation so important? How do they justify denying the status of ‘genuine emotion’ to other experiences? Above, I suggested, briefly, that the answer has to do with the contribution of certain emotions to practical reasoning. We must avoid contradictions among the beliefs in our belief stocks because a failure to represent the world correctly can prevent successful action. Similarly, we must avoid contradictions among our emotions because inconsistent desires can prevent us from attaining our goals.

This explanation, however, seems to leave me vulnerable to one of the charges leveled by thought theorists against Walton. It will be recalled that, in reply to the thought theorist’s appeal to phobias as genuine emotions without belief, Walton stresses the significance of action: “fear is *motivating* in distinctive ways, whether or not its motivational force is attributed to cognitive elements in it. ... Fear emasculated by subtracting its distinctive motivational force is not fear at all” (Walton 1990: 201-2). If this point could be generalized to other emotions, it looks as though on Walton’s account, the importance of belief to emotion is just that it plays a role in explaining motivation. And if that is right, the fact that works of nonfiction often fail to motivate actions should imply that the emotions we experience in response to these works, though they involve beliefs, are not genuine – surely an unintuitive result.

In writing *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe drew heavily on the journal of the real-life castaway, Alexander Selkirk. A reader of Selkirk’s journal could surely be moved to emotion at his suffering. However, the fact that Selkirk was marooned in 1704 (and died in 1721) makes

it impossible – really impossible – for the reader to help him. ... Hence, if the absence of such a connection [to action] is no reason to deny that we feel emotions towards Alexander Selkirk, it is no reason to deny that we feel emotions towards Robinson Crusoe either. (Matravers 1998: 69)

Matravers goes on to argue that motivational force is a characteristic only of our emotional responses to events or situations with which we are *confronted*; when we encounter them instead through representations, whether fictional or nonfictional, there is no motivation to act (Matravers 1998: 69-73). That we may be motivated by Selkirk's journal to avoid sea voyages does not alter this fact; the same can be said of reading Defoe's novel. The issue with which Matravers is concerned is instead whether or not we are motivated by our pity *to help Selkirk*, which clearly we cannot be. He concludes that unless we are willing to deny that our pity of Selkirk is genuine pity, we should not deny that our pity of Crusoe is equally genuine.

I have serious doubts that Walton wants to generalize his claim about the importance of motivational force from defining fear to analyzing other emotions. Some emotions, like admiration, typically do not motivate us to act even when we are confronted with their objects, and most are not connected to action as tightly as fear. If I had met Jim Garrison before his death in 1992, an observer would not question my contempt on the grounds that I failed to spit in Garrison's face; by contrast, if Sally claims to fear Fido but always behaves as if he were the gentlest creature on earth, we would be right to question the genuineness of her fear. There are no grounds for assuming that Walton would move from the case of fear to the implausible conclusion that we only ever experience genuine emotions when we are motivated to action. But does this not mean that Matravers is right when he says that connections to action have nothing to do with whether an emotion should count as genuine? No, because the connection to action need not be direct.

Remember our friend Nellie, who in watching *JFK* comes to believe everything that I merely imagine. We can safely say that Nellie believes that Garrison was a noble pursuer of truth and that she genuinely admires him, that she genuinely despises Shaw, and that she is genuinely shocked and disappointed to learn that Shaw was acquitted. But she is not motivated to act on any of these emotions: there is nothing she can do about the trial, which was over in 1969; there is nothing she can do about Shaw, who died in 1973; and even in 1991, when Garrison was still alive, she was (let us assume) separated from him geographically. Matravers is correct to say that the lack of motivation does not undermine the claim that Nellie's admiration, despisement, disappointment, and shock are all genuine emotions. But this does not mean that these emotions have no connection to action whatsoever.

To the contrary, because Nellie incorporates the beliefs she forms in response to *JFK* into her belief stock, and because she incorporates her emotional responses to *JFK* into her emotional stock, they form part of the foundation for her practical reasoning. Even if Nellie is prevented from acting directly on these emotions because the events depicted in the movie are long over, they still play a rationalizing role with respect to other actions she might take, a role that distinguishes them from the quasi-emotions I experience. For example, if Nellie were passionate enough, she might join the ranks of conspiracy theorists and try to defend Garrison's reputation. Her decision to do this would be explained by her genuine admiration for Garrison. By contrast, the fact that I admire Garrison in the context of imaginatively responding to *JFK* would provide no rational explanation of my taking the same action. My contempt, on the other hand, would explain why I write letters to the editor denouncing Nellie's campaign.

It is true that in response to works of fiction we are often motivated to act in ways

indirectly connected to the people or situations represented in the fiction. Thought theorists sometimes point out that fictional portrayals of poverty might be just as likely to motivate me to donate to a charity as nonfiction portrayals, and in both cases my response may be very indirect: “my pity for a particular starving person on the news may cause me to send a cheque to a famine relief agency which may not even operate in the relevant part of the world” (Matravers 1998: 70). But I *could* decide to send a check to a famine agency that would help the particular starving person I pity; I could even decide to fly to the region, find that person, and give her food. The point is not that I probably will not do these things; the point is that if I did, only pity founded on the *belief* that that person is suffering would provide an explanation of my behavior. Contrast this with my response to a television advertisement in which an actress playing a starving person appeals to the viewer for donations to a famine relief agency. Suppose that I am moved to tears by the portrayal. Even so, it would be irrational, if not incomprehensible, for me to fly out to Los Angeles, find this actress, and give her food, all on the basis of my feeling of pity in response to the advertisement. And a good explanation of this fact is that I do not *really* pity her: my experience is just quasi-pity, and counts as genuine pity *only* within the context of my imagining that the actress is a starving person.

It makes sense to give priority to those affective states that play the role in our practical reasoning that only belief-involving emotions do – to reserve the classification *genuine emotion* for them. While these emotions may not motivate us to act in direct response to the situations that cause them, the fact that they form part of an emotional stock rationally correlated with our set of beliefs about the world means that they explain certain actions in a way that imagination-involving affective states cannot. Only those emotions that can be detached from their original contexts and incorporated into our emotional stocks can contribute in this way to practical reasoning. And the importance of this function is reflected in our descriptions of how people really feel. As we have seen, in any case where there is a conflict between an emotional state involving belief and an emotional state involving imagination, the former takes priority: it is how one really feels so long as one continues to have the relevant beliefs, and regardless of what one might be imagining at the moment. Thus, I genuinely feel contempt for Garrison even while watching *JFK*. By contrast, there is no priority to be given to either of my quasi-emotions toward Odysseus, because neither can be detached from its game of make-believe and assimilated into my emotional stock.

I conclude that Walton’s distinction between genuine and quasi-emotions accounts for defining features of our interaction with works of fiction that are not explained by the thought theory. His claim that my response to *JFK* constitutes genuine admiration for Garrison only within my game of make-believe captures the sense in which this response shares features of real admiration, while also recognizing that it does not play the same role in my cognitive life as the genuine emotion. For each puzzle posed by the assumption that imaginings are sufficient for genuine emotion – how to distinguish the rational from the irrational emotions, how to account for the priority of certain emotions – Walton has a solution that follows naturally from his larger theory of make-believe. At the center of his account of our engagement with fiction is the claim that we do not stand outside the fictional world looking in, learning about distant fictional events and experiencing emotions as a result; rather, we engage in imaginings about ourselves, and only within the context of these imaginings do we respond emotionally. This explains why our quasi-emotions do not conflict with the genuine emotions that rationally motivate many of our actions.

Acknowledgements

David Hills first drew my attention to such ‘epistemological attitudes’ as shock and surprise in our experiences of fiction. In developing the ideas in this chapter, I have benefited from numerous discussions with Kendall Walton, as well as informal conversations with several participants at the conference *Imagination and the Arts*. I have also profited from the comments of Dominic Lopes and Matthew Kieran.