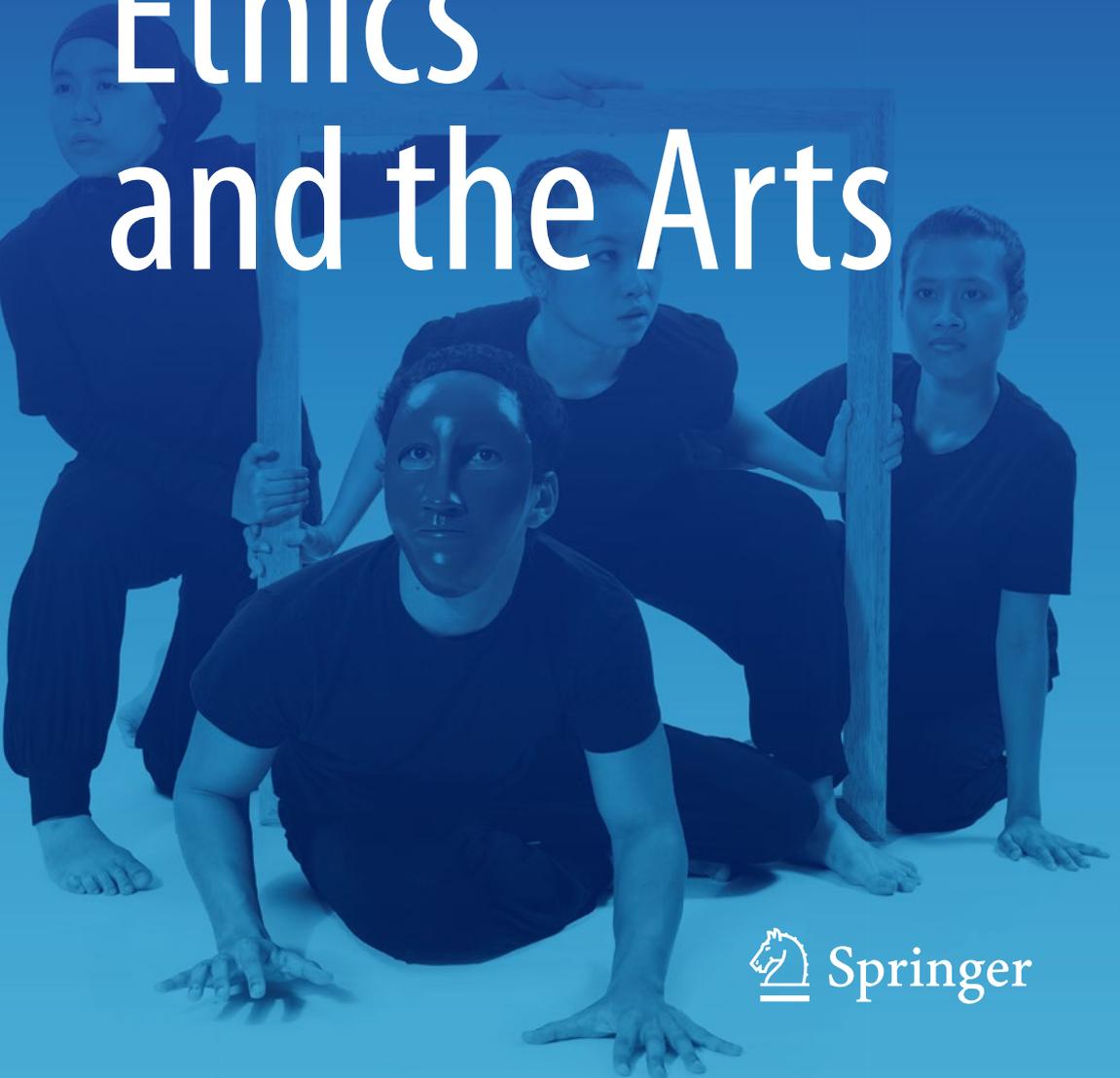Paul Macneill
Editor

Ethics and the Arts

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Cover Photo: Clockwise from left: Muzaiyanah Bte Mohd Ali, Chua Lynn Anthea, Nadirah Bte Jani, and Shahdon Mohammed Jamil—Actors from 'Is that it?' (Nov. 2013); NIE Nanyang Playhouse; Visual & Performing Arts, Drama; National Institute of Education, Singapore. With thanks to Dr Jane Gilmer, 'Is that it?' Director, and Drama Course Lecturer.
Photo by Paul Macneill (with assistance from Zulfadli Icksan).

This book is dedicated to the memories of two people who gave me a deep feeling for the arts:
My friend, clown and neutral mask teacher, Francis Batten (1940–2006)[1]
My father, a passionate painter,
C. Ivan McNeill (1913–2003).

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[1] Francis Batten, The New Zealand Herald, Feb 4, 2006. http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10366780. Accessed March 2014.

Preface

There are two threads from my life that come together in this book. One concerns ethics and the other is about the arts. Delight in the arts began with my father. After being jailed during World War II as a conscientious objector, and mixing with artist-conscientious-objectors in jail, he came out as an oil painter. It was part time for him. It had to be as he and my mother (eventually) had seven children to support. His 'day job' was in sales but he was far from enthusiastic—unlike his approach to painting. He worked as an obsessed painter whenever he could. Yet he was too embarrassed to exhibit the paintings he produced. On one occasion I swapped—for a magnet, with a boy across the street—one of his small canvasses. My father was not upset that I had parted so easily with one of his paintings. He was embarrassed that the neighbouring family had an example of his work. His first exhibition was a one-man show in the Canterbury Society of Arts (Christchurch, New Zealand—in the early 1960s) and it was galling for him. I was too young to learn what had upset him most about the experience. On their side, the Society probably did not appreciate receiving oil paintings, the day before an opening, that were still wet. I still remember Dad touching up paintings on an easel on the front lawn, before packing them into the car to take them to the gallery.

While he subsequently hid his paintings from the world,[2] he nevertheless revealed a great deal to me (and my siblings). It was with my father that I learnt to discriminate. Although he refrained from actively directing my tastes, at the end of every visit to an art gallery, he would ask me which paintings I liked. At first I didn't know, but gradually I could point to one or two and say why I liked them. It was his influence that led me (and still does) to visit galleries in major cities—and see the originals of paintings he loved, but only ever saw in reproduction. And I still have the practice of going back to those few standout paintings, to explore further why they appeal to me. Often it is colour. Painting was a visceral thing for him, and became so for me.

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[2] With the exception of an exhibition of a dozen of his paintings in a gallery in Sydney in the late-1970s.

He was a *fauve*. Heavily influenced by Matisse, Cézanne, Raoul Dufy, van Gogh, and Georges Rouault. He painted like a passionate *fauve*. He was a *fauve* in his emotional life also, veering from singing-whistling joyfully to himself, with passionate absorption in his art; to sullen moods, and outbursts of anger. In putting this book together, and particularly in preparing my chapter on 'Modern painting and morality,' I have found a capacity to re-own and re-love my father and to accept both sides of his passion. There is a photograph of Mark Rothko that was pivotal. It shows Rothko sitting on a garden chair in front of one of his big red paintings in his garage studio at East Hampton in the summer of 1964 [2, p. 95]. It reminded me so much of my father Ivan—who would sit for hours in front of one of his paintings, contemplating. Seeing the photo of Rothko gave me a warm appreciation of my Dad: a flawed human being like Rothko—like all of us—and absorbed in his art. Although I dearly wanted to find an 'expert' to write the chapter on painting and morality, my lack of success was an unanticipated gift. It was a chapter I needed to write.

The other 'arts' influence was theatre. Not repertory theatre, but street theatre, the clown, mime, *commedia dell'arte*, bouffon, and neutral mask. My teacher, Francis Batten, had trained with Jacques Lecoq—a master of mime—in the Le Coq international school of theatre in Paris. Francis, as teacher and subsequently dear friend, introduced me to a world of spontaneity, improvisation and presence. I loved the world of the clown, and the 'truth' I found there. It was more than spontaneity. I learned that (in the best moments) one could be both inside the action on stage, immersed in the drama, and—in parallel—blissfully watching, detached, yet masterfully directing. It was a taste of what Stanislavsky meant (I believe) by '*experiencing*' in "dividing of oneself" as a character on stage and, at the same time, observing oneself as performer [1, pp. 142–143]. The 'experiencing' for me was integrated. I felt completely at one. I wanted to be a clown, to go to *Le Coq école*, but unfulfilled academic desires and a mortgage kept me from moving to Paris.

The other thread is ethics. I have been teaching 'bioethics' in medical schools in Australia, and now Singapore, for the last 22 years. The major influences on bioethics—a sphere of applied ethics in medicine and other health professions—have been philosophy and law. The field is overly theoretical, philosophical, and legal—if not downright juridical. Even practising clinicians, who publish in bioethics, are obliged to pay respect to philosophy and the law, rather than found their views on clinical experience. For some time, I've been dissatisfied with this approach and prefer more practical methods of research—including watching what physicians actually do. These observations have led me to a conviction that medical practice is an art form. Whilst it is a truism that medicine is an *art* and a *science*, there is little substantive material on medicine as an *art*. It is not easy to research or write about. So much of this art is a synthesis of theory and practice, individual nous, and the experience of dealing compassionately (as most doctors do) with real patients in the midst of life's crises.

My background of ethics in medical schools may make sense of the selection of some of the topics and contributors to this book. It is most obvious in the choice of chapters relating the medical humanities, movies and medical ethics, and myths

of medical progress and in the chapters on bioart. At a personal level, this book is a part of a larger project of tying the threads of ethics and the arts together. I am hopeful however that the book is more than personal, and offers to all readers insights into the arts, the arts and ethics, and perspectives on ethics from a vantage point of the arts. Some of the chapters, at least, may also offer insights into ethical practice.

The people I most want to thank for their support in editing and writing this book are the contributing authors. Each of them has been a pleasure to work with and to correspond with and I owe a great deal to them all in adding to my own understanding. The contributors include long-standing friends—among whom I include Rachael Swain (a dear friend from Sydney) and George Annas—a colleague and friend who accepted me as a visiting academic to his Department at the University of Boston, back in the 1980s. Other colleagues and friends who have contributed as authors include Debora Diniz, Claire Hooker, Ruth Little, Philipa Rothfield, Ionat Zurr (and her partner, Oron Catts). They also include Henri Colt whom I met here in Singapore at a 'grand rounds' presentation he gave on 'medical ethics goes to the movies' in the National University (teaching) Hospital. Following his talk, he readily agreed to contribute a chapter on this topic. The contributors also include newfound friends and colleagues who responded generously to my request—arriving out of the blue—to provide a chapter. These include Philip Alperson, Brian Bergen-Aurand, Sarah Sentilles, James Thompson and Joanna Zylinska. They also include Phillip Zarrilli whom I have had the good fortune of spending time with in person, after he completed his chapter on the ethics of acting and actor training (Chap. 3). Phillip has offered me guidance and comments on my two chapters on theatre and ethics, invited me to observe one of his classes, and—with T. Sasitharan (Sasi), Director of the Intercultural Theatre Institute (Singapore)— invited me to participate in an intercultural Symposium in Singapore that I mention in the Conclusion chapter (Chap. 22).

I am grateful to Iain Bamforth, who wrote Chap. 2 on Flaubert's *Madam Bovary*. I came to know Iain through his literary presentations at the Centre for Biomedical Ethics in the National University of Singapore. He has since guided me to broaden my horizons and given me suggestions for a number of apposite writers who have addressed problems I was facing at points in preparing my own chapters. I am very grateful to Miles Little—a surgeon poet, who—on retiring from his position as Head of Surgery at one of the Teaching Hospitals in Sydney (and from active surgery)—was so concerned about values in medicine that he set up the Centre for Values, Ethics and the Law in Medicine in the Sydney Medical School, University of Sydney. Miles is a font of wisdom and encouragement to all who know him. Earlier work of his, on the relation between ethics and aesthetics (which is the subject of his Chap. 16), was pivotal to my desire to produce a volume of readings on ethics and the arts. He has been helpful in suggesting authors (including his daughter Ruth, who wrote Chap. 21). Miles also reviewed two of my chapters, and guided me away from the precipices I was heading toward. He has continued to offer encouragement and wry humour to the end.

My wife Maja has given me both support and encouragement, not begrudging the long hours I have locked myself away, or my vacant screen on emerging from the study. Subterranean writing goes on even when one is apparently spending time

with the family—and Maja has been patient and tolerant. The Director of the Centre for Biomedical Ethics, National University of Singapore—Alastair Campbell—has been encouraging and gave me valuable comments on one of my chapters. I am also appreciative of the ready support and encouragement from the staff at Springer, Amsterdam, who accepted a skeletal outline for this volume, long before there was any meat on the bones, and have patiently waited for the manuscript to be delivered to them.

Singapore   Paul Macneill
December 2012

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Part V   Conclusion

Chapter 1
Introduction: Ethics and the Arts

Paul Macneill

This book sets out to explore many facets of a relationship between ethics and the arts in (almost) all the arts: literature, music, painting, photography, film and documentary, dance and theatre. There is a section dealing with the relationship between ethics and the arts from philosophical perspectives—and a chapter in that section considers the role of the media in framing ethical issues. Ethics and the arts are also explored in relation to bioart—a new mode of art that draws on the biological sciences and techniques for manipulating life forms. The final section considers uses of the arts in relation to science and medicine. In particular: the arts as they are employed within the medical humanities; rhetorical devices in supporting 'medical progress'; and artists and their works in response to climate change.

The contributing authors write from many different disciplinary perspectives and discourses. These include discourses from within the various arts, and the authors' different philosophical positions and commitments. Many of the authors are both academics and practitioners. Philip Alperson, for example, is both a philosopher and a saxophonist. Debora Diniz is an anthropologist and documentary-film maker. Rachael Swain is a theatre director who drew on her own work for a doctoral dissertation on theatre practice. Both James Thompson and Phillip Zarrilli are university professors and theatre practitioners. Zurr and Catts are artists within an academic research laboratory.

The book is inter-disciplinary in approach and composition: drawing on the arts in practice and theory, philosophy (from analytic and European perspectives), and many other disciplines. This, I claim, is one of the books strengths. However, such diversity may attract criticism from purists who stand firmly in any one of the fields covered: which is the fate of many interdisciplinary works. However the collective strength of these chapters is that they relate the arts—including a broad range of current and original work—to aesthetic philosophy, science, medicine, perceptual

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psychology, cognitive science, and (to some extent) law and politics. This is to take a broad approach to what counts as knowledge by including both cognitive and experiential approaches. A possible outcome is that *ethics* itself could be re-conceived (at least in part) as *aesthetic practice* and *experience*, informed by this wide-ranging theoretical discussion.

Throughout the book, the terms *ethics* and *morals* or *ethics* and *morality* are used interchangeably. Whilst some authors draw a distinction between these terms (as may be appropriate for their purposes) the approach adopted here is to treat them as addressing much the same thing. These are words that derive from Latin or Greek and the original terms have similar meanings in both languages. The origin of *ethics* is the Greek ἠθικός, which has the sense of manners and character, and the origin of morals is Latin mōrēs meaning habits, or modes of conduct (OED). This usage is similar (especially if we accept that character is formed in part by habits). There are two reasons for distinguishing *ethics* and *morals.* One is that the word *moral* has an association with moralising and sexual morality, which the word *ethic* is relatively free from. However at no point is a more prurient meaning for *moral* or *morality* intended or implied in this book (unless directly referred to). The second is a tradition within academic ethics, to distinguish *ethics* as an abstract study of morality and *morals* as concerning norms of behaviour. Walker traces this distinction back to Henry Sidgwick's *Method of Ethics* [1]. I am persuaded by Walker's rejection of the notion that *ethics* is an abstract and separate discipline (and her rejection of Sidgwick's *Method*) and prefer to understand *ethics* and *morality* as an aspect of engagement in life (and art).[1]

The book has four parts: The first and largest part of the book contains chapters from a wide range of the arts including literature and film, which are two art-forms amenable to 'considering' ethical or moral dimensions. It also includes chapters where the relationship is less apparent. Music for example, is not obviously related to ethics until one considers (as Philip Alperson does in Chap. 3) how music plays a major role in all our cultural events, and at significant times in our lives. Dance is another area where a relationship with morality is not immediately apparent yet Philipa Rothfield (in Chap. 9) draws on Spinoza's philosophy to consider dance as an ethical expression of 'the good' manifested through a dancer's body.

Chapter 2 begins with an account of how the novelist Flaubert was summoned to court to face charges that his novel *Madame Bovary* was a moral affront—a summons that was dismissed by the court. In this way Iain Bamforth opens a discussion about moralising in literature, and Flaubert's refusal to morally judge his characters and to subordinate a work of literature to moral or political causes. Literature, following Flaubert, was influenced by his stance toward moralising.

Philip Alperson observes, in Chap. 3, that philosophers have had little to say about music and morality. Their focus has been on purely musical features and this has obscured an appropriate recognition of the many functions that music serves in

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[1] In both Latin and Greek there is a meaning relating to 'the science of' (either morals or ethics respectively) so there is no good etymological reason for restricting ethics to the study of morals and morals to moral behaviour (OED).

our moral, social, cultural, and political lives. He also brings a moral focus to the process of music making itself.

Following this are two chapters on the visual arts. In Chap. 4, I discuss modern painting, in its movement away from 'moral storytelling' in early modern painting, and increasingly toward abstraction in the twentieth century—which provided little basis for any moral reflection—and back to figurative works in the late twentieth and early part of this century. Not all figurative works have moral undertones but there is an openness to moral questioning in the enigmatic works of some contemporary painters. In Chap. 5 Sarah Sentilles explores the paradox of photographic images that appear to capture the 'real' when, on closer analysis, the subjects of photographs are elusive. She takes an observation of the 'unknowability' of photographic images as a basis for advocating a different kind of looking that allows for ethical relationship to emerge from mystery.

In the first of three chapters on film (movies and documentary film), Brian Bergen-Aurand traces a turn toward studying film from a number of different ethical perspectives. Whilst there are many ethical pathways discussed in Chap. 6, Bergen-Aurand focusses on two film theorists who examine what is good about films that are concerned with redemption. Henri Colt, in Chap. 7, discusses the use of movies for highlighting social issues and for teaching medical ethics. His chapter outlines the many advantages of using film and he offers examples of particular films, and practical approaches to teaching in this manner. Debora Diniz's Chap. 8 is about her film 'The house of the dead' which is a documentary that gives an insight into institutions of incarceration for the criminally insane in Brazil. Diniz is an academic and a filmmaker and, in making this film, she faced a number of ethical and aesthetic quandaries. She traces her own process as a basis for considering the broader ethical implications of making activist documentaries that are aimed to stimulate political action.

Chapter 9 by Philipa Rothfield (already mentioned above) is the first of two chapters on dance and ethics. Rothfield draws on Spinoza's ethics, and discusses dance as accessing the body's energy toward expressing and experiencing empowerment and (potentially) virtuosity. Ethics and 'the good,' from this perspective, is an experienced quality of expression in the 'corporeal moment' rather than a determination according to normative principles of good and bad. Rothfield's essay is followed by Rachael Swain's chapter, which comes from her work in producing and choreographing dance theatre performances within an Aboriginal community in Western Australia. Swain's focus in Chap. 10 is on the ethics of 'art making' and 'culture making' that requires 'listening differently' to Indigenous approaches to meaning and knowledge and she illustrates this approach from her field notes recorded in the making of the dance-performance piece, 'Burning Daylight.'

There are four chapters on the performing arts and theatre. Phillip Zarrilli, in Chap. 11, gives an overview of the literature on theatre and ethics as a basis for looking at one of his own plays 'Told by the Wind' from an ethical perspective. He discusses the interaction between the two actors (himself and Jo Shapland) in phenomenological terms as 'intersubjectivity' in which each of the two actors 'awakens' to the 'Other'—a relationship he considers from the ethical perspective

of Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy. James Thompson works in 'applied theatre' as a socially engaged art form in marginal areas such as prisons and war zones. He argues in Chap. 12 against assuming that large public events should be given priority over participatory theatre in more intimate workshop settings. He takes Levinas's call to responsibility for the other and re-considers that call in affective terms as being sensitised to another through beauty and aesthetic engagement. My two chapters on performance discuss 'presence' in performance. Chapter 13 responds to philosopher Jacque Derrida's influential critique of 'presence.' My claim is that, notwithstanding Derrida's deconstruction of presence, it continues to be a significant element in performance. Chapter 14 draws on discourses within perceptual and cognitive studies to propose that 'presence'—as a created (or 'enacted') quality— identifies a 'moral ideal' in art that has relevance to encounters in life. This notion suggests a different understanding of ethics as dynamic and creative activities whereby ethics itself is enacted.

Part II offers two chapters that are more philosophical in orientation. Chapter 15 is a 'critical review of the new moralisms.' These 'new moralisms' are the views of philosophers of art who have in recent times argued that there is a relation between morality and the aesthetic quality of works of art in some circumstances. One version of this argument is that a moral quality may add to the aesthetic value of a work of art. Equally, moral 'flaws,' expressed in a work of art, may detract from the work's aesthetic value. There are counter views explored, that moral 'flaws' may be the substance of a work of art and contribute positively to its aesthetic value. The position I take in Chap. 15 is that there is no theoretical position that can adequately capture the contribution (or otherwise) of morally relevant aspects to an assessment of the aesthetic worth of a work of art. In Chap. 16 Miles Little proposes that aesthetic and ethical judgments relate to different discourses that may overlap at times, but are distinguishable. Nevertheless they tend to intrude on each other and this is most apparent through the persuasive and manipulative power of the media in using aesthetic techniques to frame ethical issues in particular ways. In postmodern times we are beset by images creating a nexus between aesthetics and ethics, and need to be aware of this and to maintain a critical sensibility.

Part III contains two chapters on 'bioart' and ethics. Bioart is a more recent genre in which biological materials, and bio-scientific technologies, are used in creating works of art. In Chap. 17 Joanna Zylinska considers a different order of challenge posed by bioartistic experiments. Bioartists not only challenge life and our metaphysical understandings of life, they also challenge the adequacy of traditional humanist value-based frameworks of ethics for evaluating artistic projects that seek to manipulate life forms. What is required, Zylinska argues, is "a different ethics of life"—a re-conception of norms for taking responsibility for life that includes reflecting on how we value new life forms and any inter-relations between them. Zurr and Catts, two artist-researchers at the coal face of such art work, have provided a chapter that illustrates the challenge of bioart in meeting the need for approval according to a humanist value-based framework of ethics of the kind Zylinska

refers to. Research ethics committees function by considering proposed research projects according to guidelines, or codes of ethics, that prescribe what is ethical and what is not. When faced with proposals for bioart research projects, the guidelines are clearly inadequate, and the committee members charged with applying them, appear to be confounded. In Chap. 18 Zurr and Catts give examples of art-projects presented to committees, and the committees'—sometimes amusing—responses. The authors argue for alternative evaluative frames of reference for artistic research of this kind.

Part IV comprises a group of three essays dealing with art and ethics in relation to science and medicine. Two of the chapters relate to medicine—medical education, and the claims for medical progress—and the third chapter considers a collaboration of artists and scientists in responding to climate change. In Chap. 19 Claire Hooker discusses the medical humanities: an arena of medical educators who find value in the arts as a source of material for broadening and enriching medical education. She is concerned to identify a conceptual framework for the field, and is attracted by a notion of 'rich responsibility' from philosopher Martha Nussbaum and from Rita Charon (a doctor of medicine with a subsequent PhD in English literature). Hooker however is critical of the shortcomings of the medical humanities in not addressing the cultural hegemony of its sources within European literature and art. She advocates combining the medical humanities with postmodern scholarship and a questioning of the romantic and humanist moral traditions on which the medical humanities have been founded.

George Annas, in Chap. 20, tackles the myths and metaphors of medical progress that would have us believe in the human genome project, personalised medicine, and the quest to cure cancer and defy death. Opposed to these myths is the reality of dysfunctional health care systems, which are badly in need of stories to bring home the suffering of people who are denied adequate care. His point is that literary devices—quest myths, metaphor, and narrative—used in relation to new technology, can be employed for both ethical and unethical outcomes.

In Chap. 21, Ruth Little approaches climate as a cultural phenomenon as much as a physical reality. She describes projects in which artists engage with scientists to convey an aesthetic experience of transformations taking place in the oceans, landscapes and climatic systems. The artists in these projects take a role as agents of change in conveying the data and conclusions from climate science through the affective power of art. Some of the projects aim to promote a greater sensitivity to place; and others focus on cultural practices and their relationship to climate. Little proposes that climate art, in its collaboration with scientists and openness to different cultural practices, is contributing to a new contextualised ethics with the purpose of renewing our ecologies, technologies and societies.

The assumption I have made, in producing and editing this book, is that any relationship between ethics and the arts is two-way. Ethical concerns are considered in relation *to* the arts—but so too is ethics considered from the vantage point *of* the arts. This is to explore what the arts may have to 'say' about ethics. The concluding chapter takes up this theme in discussing the approaches taken by various authors

toward ethics and the arts and considers how these may enrich our understanding of ethics more broadly.

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Part I
The Arts and Ethics

Chapter 2
Literature and Ethics: Learning to Read with Emma Bovary

Iain Bamforth

2.1 Introduction

In January 1857, Gustave Flaubert received a summons at his address in Croisset to attend court to face charges that the publication by instalments of his novel *Madame Bovary* in the journal *Revue de Paris* was an "affront to public and religious decency and morals"[1] [11, pp. 251–257]. At the end of the preceding year the editors of the journal had been assailed by a growing number of indignant letters from provincial subscribers "outraged" at the novel's immorality, as well as a notification from Napoleon III's official censor that the Department of Justice was investigating the novel with a view to prosecution. Flaubert, who usually kept at a studied distance from the press, plunged into the case, preparing his own defence and soliciting help from friends in high places. "It is all so stupid that I have come to enjoy it greatly," he wrote to his brother Achille[2] [12, p. 226]. The leading trial lawyer Antoine-Marie-Jules Senard, who had been a friend of Flaubert's doctor father, offered to defend him. In the event, Maître Senard made much of Flaubert's family connections and the support of distinguished public figures, aided no doubt by Flaubert's diligent trawl for "embarrassing quotations drawn from the classics." His closing argument also made sophistic capital from the fact that Emma dies at the end of the novel: she had expiated her crime in death and readers had duly been encouraged to be virtuous through fear of what might happen if they themselves were to quit the straight and narrow. It was, in Maître Senard's summing up for the defence, "an incitement to virtue through horror of vice" [12, p. 227].

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[1] "Outrage à la morale publique et religieuse ou aux bonnes mœurs": Flaubert's correspondence around the time of his trial is gathered in its entirety in volume II of his *Correspondance*, published in the Pléiade edition [11], and abridged in translation in Steegmuller's indispensable book, *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert* [12, pp. 217–235]; see also Florence Vatan's reception history in *Pensée morale et genre litteraire* [5, pp. 139–157].

[2] Letter to his brother Achille, c. 20 January 1857.

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The case was dismissed, and Flaubert retreated to his study to reflect on the strange effects of publicity. In view of the press coverage which his novel had attracted it was almost certain to be a commercial success on its publication in book form, but it infuriated him that the trial had drawn attention away from what he felt was a work of genuine artistic merit. It was also his boast to friends, no doubt salted with a dose of wry irony, that he had written a book that was "moral by its effect as a whole"[3] [12, p. 222]. But Flaubert's understanding of morality certainly wasn't shared by his provincial readers. His impulse had always been iconoclastic. At the very beginning of his creative life, aged 18, he had announced his credo in no uncertain terms: "If I ever do take an active part in the world it will be as a thinker and demoralizer. I will simply tell the truth: but that truth will be horrible, cruel, naked"[4] [12, p. 9]. Four years before he published *Madame Bovary*, he had told his former mistress and correspondent Louise Colet that moralising should not be part of a genuine artistic creation: the critical gaze should take form as if it were describing "natural history, without any moral preconception… When we will have become used to treating the human soul with the impartiality that goes into the study of matter in the physical sciences we will have taken a great step"[5] [11, p. 450] He was greatly disturbed by what he called the 'moralising rage' of his contemporaries—"la rage moralisatrice"[6] [11, p. 543]. To be a 'moralisateur,' the kind of person who presumes to offer others moral instructions and lessons was no commendation, certainly not on Flaubert's lips.

Flaubert knew that a particular kind of morality worked itself out in the act of writing. He was after all a French writer, and keenly aware of the illustrious tradition of 'moraliste' writing from the time of from Montaigne, Pascal, La Fontaine and La Rochefoucauld, and to which he himself was to contribute with his pithy set of commonplaces and platitudes *The Dictionary of Received Ideas*, which he started collating in 1849,[7] at the time he was writing his great novel. The French adjective 'morale' is close to its Latin root *mores*, which implies in the widest sense human usages and customs, even styles of life—in short, human behaviour. It even embraces what we now understand as anthropology. Flaubert, after all, had given due warning: he subtitled his

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[3] Letter to Edmond Pagnerre, 31 December 1856.

[4] Letter to Ernest Chevalier, 24 February 1839: even at this young age Flaubert seems to have sensed it would be his life's calling to "épater les bourgeois" (shock the bourgeois), irrespective of the fact that he was an arch-bourgeois himself, not least in socio-economic terms. It is as well to remember however that Flaubert, like all artists, had an investment in a unified culture; and that only a decadent civilisation could possible consider it the function of social institutions to foster subversion.

[5] Letter to Louise Colet, 12 October 1853 (my translation): this attitude would be taken to its logical conclusion in Emile Zola's project of the 'experimental novel,' around 1890, in which the experimentation is meant to be taken straight. But this assumption hides a morality of its own, as I suggest in the Conclusion. Zola's mistake was to think that as a novelist he was contributing to science rather than the more diffuse activity called 'literature.'

[6] Letter to the Princess Mathilde, 1 July 1872.

[7] *Le Dictionnaire des Idées Reçus* was published posthumously, in 1911. Its aphoristic form brings it squarely within the French *moraliste* tradition, which is conventionally dated from the publication of Montaigne's *Essays* in 1580, and can be either digressive, as in Montaigne or Voltaire's writings, or pithy and lapidary, as in the maxims of Rochefoucauld or Chamfort.

novel 'Mœurs de province.' It was an announcement that he was offering a new kind of novel: provincial customs and manners were going to be put under the microscope. And to do that he had to devise a new narrative style. "There really is a time before Flaubert and a time after him," writes James Wood [21, p. 39]: what we think of modern realist narrative form is his discovery. Flaubert used the French imperfect as past tense, as Marcel Proust noted, in a way that allowed him to mix the important and the unimportant; he stepped back from what he was describing, deferring emotion and even judgement. Such was the indeterminate nature of the famous indirect free style ('style indirect libre'). Even here, in his manner of writing, Flaubert was thumbing his nose at the prosecutor or, better said, at the 'legal model' itself—insofar as readers expected the author to signal to them how they ought to feel and think about the behaviour of his characters, and judge their various intrigues and manoeuvrings.

And where morals are at issue, there are women involved. Emma Bovary is a scandal. Her education hasn't prepared her for the life she is going to lead. The age of miracles is long gone but it is for miracles that she pines—and what she learns from books turns her head. Like Cervantes in that great European classic *Don Quixote*, Flaubert in *Madame Bovary* shows us there is no such thing as 'pure' imagination; the imagination is always the plaything, for better or worse, of a collective game. And sometimes nature imitates art; for a novel never simply presents, it represents. In both novels, as Jean Starobinski observes, the novelistic imagination takes as its theme the ravages of an imagination corrupted by its very receptivity to novels: we have to read simultaneously on two different levels [17, p. 228]. Emma is aroused only if her imagination works on her, and tells her what she is doing is part of her great ideal of self-sacrificing love. She *wants* to feel, but it is precisely that element of volition that falsifies her feelings. So she has her first giddy love affair with the young boarder Léon and then a second one, more desperate, with the Paris fop, Rodolphe, who rapidly treats her "like any other mistress." She becomes sexually aggressive and loses her idealism, returning to her first love Léon, who is taken aback by her desperation: she is now what used to be called a 'fallen woman.' She is the only high-stakes gambler amongst calculating rationalists and prudentialists. Confined to her room with the symptoms of sexual cloistering her maid tells her of a woman she knew with similar symptoms which had ceased on her marriage. "Mine," replies Emma, "didn't come on until I got married."

It would take a blind man not to recognise that Emma Bovary is patently the first 'desperate housewife'—taking her cue from books and magazines, caring for her possessions more than her child, looking for solace in the arms of a lover.

2.2   The Historical Background

Madame Bovary marks a significant turning point in the triumph of liberalism: censorship would no longer be the same. But what did Flaubert's contemporaries expect of the novel? Why were so many people indignant at its depiction of marriage? And why did Flaubert feel so sure he would win his case?

To understand these questions we have to return to the nineteenth-century, and breathe the slightly stuffy atmosphere of the French Second Empire, which in many respects was not overly different from the Victorian era. One of the defining events of the nineteenth-century is the success of the novel itself, which had gone from being a picaresque, fantastic and often droll adventure of objects as well as persons to a genre which seemed to reflect modern conditions and dilemmas far more faithfully than any other art-form: it was not slow in finding a widespread and dedicated readership, especially among female readers.[8] But where Diderot had defended the novel in his article 'In Praise of Richardson,'[9] [7, p. 1059] as being the broad road to moral elevation precisely because it appealed not only to arguments of reason but to the imagination, it had, barely over half a century later, become suspect—and precisely on those grounds. Charles Dickens' tenth novel *Hard Times* (1854), whose publication history is contemporaneous with that of *Madame Bovary*, opens with Thomas Gradgrind's booming defence of 'Facts,' which alone deserve to be taught. "Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!" [6, p. 1].

Physicians were quick to denounce novels as one of the major causes of hysteria, and a contributory factor to the calls for emancipation that rippled through the social order. Emma's own problems in the novel were attributed to her avid reading of sentimental novels, and her mother-in-law describes the booksellers where she acquires them as "poisoners." Just after its appearance in book form, Madame Bovary was described by the literary critic Gustave Vapereau in an annual review of new novels as "the history of a young woman in whom a convent education and the reading of popular novels have developed her taste for luxury and pleasure and her instincts out of proportion with her birth and the position in society to which she can rightfully aspire" [19, p.48, cited in 5, p. 141]. Emma's behaviour in the novel was a threat to the social order. Female desire was subversive. The fact that she took pleasure in the act of adultery was the mark of a grossly ungoverned sensualism: she was neglecting her duties as a mother and spouse. She was lascivious and the novel consummated "the shipwreck of art and that of morality." Flaubert was accused of writing 'brutal literature'[10] whose truths were all physiological, and which showed no understanding of the "psychology of intellectual and voluntary forces that

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[8] It is not without interest that the first two translations of *Madame Bovary* into English were by women: the first (unpublished) was made by the English governess of Flaubert's niece Caroline, Juliet Herbert, and the second (published, in 1886) by Karl Marx's daughter Eleanor, who was herself to die, like Emma, of self-poisoning. As discussed by Julian Barnes in his long essay-review, *Madame Bovary* is the most *re*translated novel in English, appearing most recently in a reworked version by the American novelist Lydia Davis (2010) of which Barnes is not uncritical [1].

[9] Diderot's important essay 'Eloge de Richardson' first appeared in *Journal étranger*, 1762.

[10] The title of Jean-Jacques Weiss's contemporary review [20, p. 1].

sustain the good fight against the shock of sensation, and check the assaults of desire" [4, p. 191].

Readers of Madame Bovary complained not only about the mediocrity of Emma's surroundings and her behaviour, the prevailing moods of boredom and eroticism, but the lack of any countervailing force. There was no virtuous figure to stand against this vapid woman, nobody of superior morals whose force might console the reader. Emma's husband Charles is an incompetent ignoramus at the bottom of the medical ladder whose attempt to restore some kind of social respectability to their marriage goes badly wrong when he botches an operation to remedy the village idiot's clubfoot. The local pharmacist Homais—in many ways Emma's true foil—is an intellectual fool who feeds his vanity on exactly the kind of opinions Flaubert went on to satirise in his *Dictionary of Received Ideas*. There is, however, one character in the book, as Allan Bloom noticed, who might be the author visiting his own creation, although his appearance in the novel is so fleeting and incidental it could easily be overlooked. It is the character of the great surgeon Dr. Larivière, who is called in at the end to treat Emma when she is writhing in agony from the arsenic she has taken: he is described by Flaubert as being "hospitable and generous, like a father to the poor, practising virtue without believing in it, he might almost have passed for a saint had not his mental acuity caused him to be feared as a demon" [2, p. 299]. This is surely a whirlwind passage of the artist who, as Flaubert famously suggested, must be "like God in his Creation—invisible and all-powerful: he must be felt everywhere and never seen"[11] [12, p. 230]. "Practising virtue without believing in it" sounds like an agnostic's confession. The novelist can't turn away from his characters since he, like the God of Genesis, is their creator; but at the same time he mustn't seduce them with the prospect of a backdoor to paradise if only they will they recognise his omnipotence. Nor will he sit on judgement on them. He is a *clinician*.

It was precisely the impartiality of this figure of the physician—there are three in the novel: Charles, Emma's husband, the lowly medical officer, Dr. Canivet from Rouen, a vulgar surgeon who gets called in to perform an amputation subsequent to Charles' bodged job of clubfoot repair, and the aforementioned Dr. Larivière—which was cast back in Flaubert's face by the critics of the time. Flaubert was accused (particularly by those who knew his father had been a doctor in practice in Rouen) of being a surgeon who had missed his vocation: it was perfectly acceptable for medical reports to appear in professional journals but the novel ought not be the arena for an anatomist-clinician who wished to shove his readers' faces in the blood-and-guts reality of operations. "We should no longer talk of literature," wrote the critic Alfred Nettement, "we are in a dissection room and we have just read an autopsy report" [13, p. 129 and cited in 5, p. 145]. Flaubert had transgressed the rules of good taste, and committed a contextual sin. Not only had he not included a morally exemplary character to counter the flightiness of Emma, but he as author had shirked the task of telling readers how to judge this "provincial tale."

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[11] Letter to Mademoiselle Leroyer de Chantepie, 18 March 1857.

As Flaubert himself insisted, this was precisely the form impartiality and detachment *had* to assume. One of his fundamental aesthetic principles was that the artist should not subordinate his conception of the work to a cause, whether it be political, moral or instructive: "there is no literature of good intentions: style is everything"[12] [11, p. 507]. Subjecting a work of art to an extrinsic morality was, for him, the true contextual sin. By defending the autonomy of art, Flaubert uncovered the complexity of what normally constitutes "evidence", and the real difficulty of drawing moral judgements.

2.3   The Work

Flaubert's strategy was to turn terms on their heads. The good should not be the precondition for a work of literature; it ought to be an effect generated by the work itself or—to use the term beloved by the spiritualists of his century—an 'emanation.' A work successful in its own terms cannot be bad. Works written with the express intention of being edifying are, on the other hand, doomed from the outset to aesthetic failure; they are obliged to foreshorten the riot of the human scene to a narrow perspective reflecting the stance of a narrator or personage whose sole function in the work is to give voice to contemporary morality. That was precisely his criticism of the book which appeared as he was writing his own great novel, and would go on to become the best-selling book of the nineteenth-century, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). The submission to an extrinsic code also applied, in Flaubert's view, to writers who wrote out of a desire to preach to the masses, like the social reformer Henri de Saint-Simon, whose followers advocated a state-technocratic form of socialism and wrote books with a 'message' (as in the *diktats* of Socialist Realism a century later), as well as to the hordes of successful contemporary writers who wrote syrupy, wholesome novels for which, as he told Louise Colet, he knew the exact formula: "Lend it a sentimental ending, a mock nature, virtuous peasants, a few commonplaces about morality, with a touch of moonlight among the ruins for sensitive souls, the whole thing intertwined with banal expressions, tired comparisons, stupid ideas—and I'll be hanged if it doesn't become popular"[13] [11, p. 251]. It is a choice irony that it is precisely this kind of 'noble' novel which Emma and her first lover imagine they are acting out in their adulterous liaison among the 'disappointments of life.'

There was more. If the good is something that emerges from the work itself, then the logic of impartiality can be driven further. The morality to which Flaubert felt he was expected to conform was itself immoral, being based on a contrived, artificial, dichotomous notion of morality, as if there was a clear dividing line between the material world and the spiritual, the bad and the good. In a letter to his mother, Flaubert denounced in particular what he saw as the musty bigotry of the 'moral

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[12] Letter to Louise Colet, 15 January 1854.

[13] Letter to Louise Colet, 27 February 1853 (my translation).

corset' imposed on young women. The censoriousness, stuffiness and rigorism of traditional morality often hid a prurient interest in the lewd and salacious: Flaubert was amused to hear, some years after his trial, that the chief prosecutor had been exposed as the pseudonymous author of lubricious poems. Clearly it wasn't only the fictional inhabitants of Yonville l'Abbaye in his novel who exhibit the hypocrisy of a bourgeois morality that tolerates vice under the mantle of virtue. Flaubert's provincial characters are experts in lip-service and sham, full of good intentions but ultimately self-interested and manipulative in securing their own 'interest': the pharmacist Homais—the prototypical man of today—seeks to win the favour of Emma's husband Charles, so that he will turn a blind eye to his illegal practice of medicine (for the sake of 'advancing' Science); and Emma's two lovers are ready to drop their mistress the moment the whole masquerade of their adulterous relationship with her threatens to jeopardise their social standing.

What Flaubert suggests, in his endless curiosity at the diversity of human wheeling and dealing, is that where vice can prosper under the disguise of a clear bourgeois conscience, it becomes more difficult to grasp a character like Emma in the traditional categories of good and bad. Her actions and thoughts are, in fact, as hard to decipher as the intentions of her creator. She is *irresponsible*, which was precisely the quality Henry James hoped for his work in 1885 when he complained that George Eliot (whose masterpiece *Middlemarch* bears essentially the same subtitle as Flaubert's [9, p. 1]) was altogether too knowing in the way she wrote: characters should have their own life within novels.[14] Indeed, at those moments in the novel when Emma displays charity and generosity she is also in the grip of envy, rage and hate. "She had such tender words and such lofty looks, so many ways of her own, that one could no longer distinguish egoism from charity, nor corruption from virtue" [10, p. 333]. Like those around her, Emma has middling, quite conventional thoughts; she distinguishes herself from the mediocrity of her entourage only in one respect: she has an overwhelming passion, a thirst for the absolute, like St Anthony, the desert anchorite whose temptations preoccupied Flaubert for much of his writing life.[15] That is why she holds no charms for Homais, the comically self-satisfied rational man whose first words are "You've got to keep up with the times!" Emma is a provocation to the novel's readers to feel differently—to avoid the decorum,

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[14] Flaubert is significantly absent in Martha Nussbaum's magisterial *Love's Knowledge*, although her remarks on Henry James's way of being responsible to his created story (*The Golden Bowl*), even when its characters are ungovernable "in the old plastic, irresponsible sense", and the reader's way of responding to the text are germane to my argument: "We notice the way we are inclined to miss things, to pass over things, to leave out certain interpretative possibilities while pursuing others" [14, p. 144].

[15] Anybody who encounters Flaubert's last book *The Temptation of St Anthony* (1874) will have no difficulty at all accepting his contention that he was not a realist: seven dramatic tableaux present a night of ordeals in the life of the fourth-century anchorite Saint Anthony, who withdrew from society to live a life of prayer in the desert. Flaubert was obsessed with this Christian anchorite, completing drafts of his book in 1849, 1856 and 1872 before final publication. Flaubert though it was a masterpiece; it was a critical disaster. The spectacle of a saint tempted by false beliefs and worldly treasures is of course wildly suggestive in terms of Flaubert's own career—"Saint Antoine, c'est moi!" is what he ought to have said about himself.

pieties and perceptive automatisms which govern moral judgement and broaden their experience of the world that surrounds them, whether it happens to be the stony streets of provincial Normandy or, more improbably, the sands of the Egyptian desert.

The 'moral' of the art which Flaubert advances aims to cultivate a new kind of receptivity in the reader; it seeks to break with what he saw as the bourgeois order's 'autolatry,' its conviction in the rightness of its own moral sensibility, its cult of the self. And that includes any attempt by the author to make his work a showcase for his own personality. It is necessary "to have sympaty for *everything* and for *everyone*," he wrote to a correspondent[16] [11, p. 785]. Indeed, as a logical extension of this conviction, a writer's ethics can only mean not falling into an idolatry of the act of writing itself.[17] What counts is the work, and not the way taken to get there, however agonisingly 'heroic' it might seem in retrospect. As Marcel Proust, a close reader of Flaubert (and a successor often regarded as the emblematic 'heroic' writer), put it, criticising the aestheticism of the English writer John Ruskin, in *Time Regained*, "It would be absurd to sacrifice to the symbol the reality that it symbolises" [15, p. 795]. This kind of sacrifice is a writer's perpetual temptation, especially in France where the love of literature is more likely than anywhere else, according to the philosopher Jacques Bouveresse, to assume "the trappings of a religion" [3, p. 56]. We can see the monastic Flaubert struggling with this paradox himself in his letters, one of the most fascinating documents in the entire literary corpus of a writer's effort to express the truth. After all, the truly ethical writer might just be St Anthony, who wrote nothing at all. What remains is the sacerdotal image.

The classic French moralists of the past were great writers not only because of their stylistic assurance but because they were free of any narcissistic urge to defend their place in the scheme of things: they were clear-sighted, forthright and unforgiving, including with themselves. Attentiveness to the perceptual world stands in opposition to the routines of the ordinary world of wear and tear: it is able to surprise and astonish. Rodolphe, the serial seducer in Madame Bovary, embodies its obverse: his practised dedications to Emma rapidly dull and fade. After the fervour of his first meetings with Emma, she becomes a somewhat indistinct presence in his life—she is just another name on a seducer's list of conquests. She has lost her novelty. Flaubert's own aesthetic strategy to combat habituation and monotony is to draw out the emotional context behind conventional feelings by attending to the hardly perceptible but telling detail. Gaps and blanks become as important as the explicitly pictured. A tissue of banalities can suddenly reveal a tiny fleck of discord, unnoticed by all except the narrator. When Léon one evening in the company of Homais spies the teeth of Emma's comb "biting" the hair piled up on her head, the minor detail seems ominous beyond the very ordinary reality it represents. Emma's "Ah!" which concludes their dialogue when Charles tells her of his grief about his father's death, says everything

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[16] Letter to Mademoiselle Leroyer de Chantepie, 12 December 1857.

[17] Asked in an interview by Georges-Elia Sarfati what the phrase 'ethics and writing' suggested to him, the contemporary French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut replied: "Off the cuff, I'd say ethics consists of not falling into the idolatry of writing" [16, p. 72].

about mutual solitude within the marriage: she cannot console her husband because he is incapable of expressing his own feelings, unable to declare himself to her. And he has no inkling of her inner life either. Each talks past the other. And another famous little phrase—"everything and herself had become unbearable"—points, as Julian Barnes remarks, in its simple but unidiomatic deployment of the conjunction, to the deed that will ultimately dislocate Emma's self from the world entirely [1, p. 10]. Flaubert is appealing to us to respond to a sign not apparent in the usual envelope of symbolic experience. No wonder he once told Louise Colet in a letter that "it is possible to put an immense love in the story of a blade of grass"[18] [11, p. 558].

2.4 Conclusion: The Ethics of Reading

This restitution of felt experience, the illusion of things being present in their immediacy requires great artistry, is what he called "the alchemy of style." To be an artist was to adopt a professional ethics that requires the artist to turn away from easy options, to develop a taste for a thing well done, to work without a thought for gain or glory, and to learn a kind of patience—"talent is a long patience," as the famous French naturalist Comte de Buffon had said in the previous century. Needless to say, all these characteristics were Flaubertian traits: he was famous for his perfectionism and tirelessness in his pursuit of the right word ("le mot juste"), telling Louise Colet that he had once spent a week trying to finish a single page. It was as if the responsibility towards the work in progress outweighed any other kind of moral or social task. While this purist attitude towards what he was writing might suggest a writer willingly removed from the cares of the world (Flaubert was not above portraying himself as an ivory-tower recluse), his work was no apology for an art-for-art's sake aesthetic, or for an indifference to worldly concerns. Literature was about discovery, as much as it was about the recognition of experience.

And if that is an accurate depiction of Flaubert's writing, the corollary of his ethics of writing is an exacting ethics of reading. After all, that is precisely what besets Emma: she discovers that the commonplace activity of reading—an act universally regarded as a mere means for passing the time or assimilating information—may save or damn you, depending on *how* you read. To assume, like the later French novelist Emile Zola—who took Flaubert's 'natural history' thesis to the point of dissociating judgements of fact entirely from those of value—that characters are not responsible for their actions, being subject to the determinism of physical laws, is itself to adopt a moral stance, not just an experimenter's 'point of view': Flaubert on the other hand still has a creator's residual sympathy for his fallen creatures, and concern has its limits. He is just as finite and fallible as Emma, a guilty agent in the midst of his own creation. "Rabelais, Michelangelo, Shakespeare and Goethe," he wrote in a letter while composing his novel, "seem to me *pitiless*… They are bottomless, infinite, manifold. Through small apertures we glimpse abysses whose

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[18] Letter to Louise Colet, 22 April 1854 (my translation).

sombre depths turn us faint. And yet over the whole there hovers an extraordinary tenderness. It is like the brilliance of light, the smile of the sun; and it is calm, calm and strong"[19] [12, p. 198]. While literary historians now doubt whether Flaubert ever uttered the famous phrase "Madame Bovary, c'est moi," we could certainly all say "Madame Bovary, c'est nous": Emma Bovary is the first literary character of our contemporary consumer culture, spending her way out of disillusion until she falls into the hands of the shady debt-collector M. Lheureux, who, as Allan Bloom points out, is "the nineteenth-century prefiguration of the Visa card" [2, p. 224]. Emma has discovered that "all the platitudes of marriage" exist in adultery, for it has been an assuagement too, one of the paraphernalia she has acquired on credit. But her ability to defer dissolution until the bitter end by assigning a quasi-novelistic significance to her actions, and to persons she favours, by dint of consumer goods, makes her the first literary character of our contemporary consumer society. After all, she commits suicide only when the money finally runs out.

When a final judgement has been suspended, when it is no longer possible to be prescriptive in a work of art, then the reader is compelled to face a text that offers no code for its deciphering other than a respect for internal structure and inner necessity: what Flaubert in a letter of 1869 to George Sand called "la poétique *insciente*"—a manner of seeing internal to the text itself (which might well escape the conscious intentions of its author, even as Flaubert's other unsuccessful novel *Salammbô*, set in historical Carthage, never conformed to his plan for it). Against the illusion of an objective realism, Flaubert sets what might be called 'subjective realism' [8, p. 53]. The Peruvian novelist Maria Vargas Llosa has memorably described Flaubert's style as always "employed to give an account of intimate facts (memories, feelings, sensations, ideas) *from the inside*, that is to say, to bring the reader and the character as close to each other as possible… By relativising the point of view, the style indirect libre finds a way into the character's innermost depths, little by little approaching his consciousness, drawing closer and closer as the intermediary—the omniscient narrator—appears to vanish in thin air"[20] [18, p. 18]. This movement into the recesses of his characters implies not merely perceiving consciousness before it expresses itself in the doings of a novel; it also applies to the narrative itself. Flaubert was also arguing for a radical autonomy centred on the work itself. He might not yet have got wind of any concept as absurd as the death of the author, but he had certainly intuited the birth of the reader.[21]

The ethics of reading requires the reader to assume the full privilege of his freedom and face up to the demands it imposes upon him. The text "constrains [him] to think, requires him to put in work," he told his disciple Guy de Maupassant in one of

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[19] Letter to Louise Colet, 26 August 1853.

[20] The quote is from Mario Vargas Llosa's *The Perpetual Orgy* (*La orgia perpetua: Flaubert y Madame Bovary*), first published in 1975 and published in English (translator Helen Lane) in 1986.

[21] A notion which the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986) somewhat impishly took to a logical extreme: if the public process of becoming a writer is increasingly absorbed by rites of expressiveness, celebrity cults and the imperious demands of the market (defined above as 'idolatry'), then reading is actually the more radical activity. Good readers are more rare than good authors.

his last letters [11, p. 840]. It would be entirely a mistake to assume that the morality inherent in the work itself is a lesson to be learned, a list of catechisms, an account settled, or indeed any kind of certitude extricable from the substance of the novel itself. Flaubert detested the urge to wrap things up, to move towards 'closure' in today's psychological language: "stupidity lies in wanting to draw conclusions" [12, p. 128]. He is much more likely to leave the reader in an uncomfortable state of perplexity and indeterminacy, marked by the difficulty of inferring any kind of final state. The moral of his art is not to hand out prizes and punishments, but to teach readers not to be moralising. That was the original thrust of Christ's teaching too. What it seeks to do is to transform the reader by the adventure of reading, and show the reader how it relates to his or her own experience of life. And this is a liberating strategy: as the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu pointed out in a discussion of Flaubert's work, it would be a further mistake to assume that this autonomy of the novel demands that its texts be read solely from a *literary* standpoint. After Madame Bovary, the future was open.

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Chapter 3
Music and Morality

Philip Alperson

3.1 Music, Morality, and Philosophy[1]

Philosophical discussion of the moral significance of music has ancient roots. Since the time of the pre-Socratics philosophers have endeavored to understand the meaning of musical practices in the context of moral action. Pythagoras and his followers (sixth century BCE) investigated the mathematical bases of harmonious sounds and the possible connections between the idea of *harmonia* and its relation to the deep structure of the cosmos and the souls of virtuous human beings. Damon of Athens, Plato, and Aristotle (fifth—third centuries BCE) extended this line of thinking to the hypothesis that certain styles of music (specifically certain musical modes) were so firmly connected to the character or *ethos* of individuals and national temperaments that particular music modes could be utilised as means of moral indoctrination. Medieval philosophers, incorporating ancient Greek philosophical work on music into the service of Christian theology, continued to treat music as morally significant if not always morally beneficial. St. Augustine (fourth century), for example, worried about the sensual and seductive allure of music while acknowledging the profound religious use to which music could be put. Boethius (sixth century), on the other hand, praised the moral significance of music insofar as the harmony of audible music (*musica instrumentalis*) might be thought to mirror the deep structure of human virtuous thought and behaviour (*musica humana*) and the cosmic order of the universe (*musica mundane*). Baroque theorists developed a 'doctrine of affections,' employing terms and strategies of the theory of rhetoric to explain how music could symbolise or arouse the passions and thereby influence behaviour. Rousseau saw the co-development of music and language as

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indicative of the close connection between music and the expression of feeling. This notion was thematised by many Romantic theorists including Herder, Goethe, Richter, Hoffmann, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, to whom music seemed to be the apotheosis of spiritual and moral significance, emblematised musically in the famous choral setting of Schiller's *Ode to Joy* in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony which was adopted subsequently as the Anthem of Europe by the Council of Europe, the European Community, and the European Union.

Given this long history of placing music philosophically at the very centre of human affairs and morality, it will come as a surprise, perhaps, that contemporary philosophical discussions of music in the so-called Anglophone tradition—that is, philosophical discussions of music written in the English language primarily from the perspective of the analytic philosophical tradition—have largely rejected this heritage. Anglophone analytic aesthetics of music has, for the most part, avoided questions posed by philosophers in the past about the possible metaphysical, cosmic, social, and ethical meanings of music.

Analytic philosophy in the last 50 years or so has instead focused on music as a kind of *aesthetic* practice centred on the creation of certain sorts of *objects*—musical works of art—construed as entities whose specifically musical features are thought to consist in their disposition to present aesthetic qualities appropriate to modes of attention and evaluation involving disinterested aesthetic experience. That is to say, Anglophone philosophy has by and large sought to understand music primarily insofar as music—like poetry, painting, sculpture, and dance—is regarded as one of the Arts with a capital 'A.'

There are several interrelated historical and methodological reasons why analytic philosophy has taken this turn away from reflecting on music from a moral point of view. The first reason is related to the intellectual heritage of thinking about music as a 'fine art' which was underwritten by the birth of the so-called Modern System of the Arts in the eighteenth century, when it was proposed that there existed a group of arts—the 'fine arts'—that possessed a common thread by virtue of which they formed an affinity group [13]. The original proposal for the grounds of the affinity was the idea that the fine arts were said to be involved in the imitation of the beautiful in nature, a notion that fits comfortably with the arts of literature and poetry, sculpture, and painting.

The rise of absolute or purely instrumental music as the most important form of music posed a problem for the Modern System of the Arts, however, since the great masterworks of instrumental music, say, for example, Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier,* could not be convincingly described as imitating nature or, indeed, as imitating anything else. Instrumental music seemed in some sense to be abstract, not 'about' anything in particular. How, then, could one reconcile the increasing prestige of music as an Art, much less that art to which, as it seemed to some, all the other Arts aspired?

Modern philosophy, with its penchant for essentialist definitions, was well positioned to take on the challenge of answering the question of what determines inclusion in the Modern System of the Arts by articulating and defending possible criteria for inclusion in the system. One way of handling the matter was to expand the idea of imitation from its concern primarily with the imitation of beautiful nature

to include the imitation of human emotion. This move enabled music to gain entry into the system by virtue of its supposed ability to express human emotion by means of musical features and structures which were thought to be especially well suited to represent or arouse human affection.

A second, more expansive and, in the end, more enduring strategy, was to tie the idea of works of Art to the notion of 'the aesthetic.' With the contemporaneous rise of performance venues such as court salons and the concert hall, musical composers, performers, and listeners were seen as engaging in the activity of creating and appreciating repeatable works created for the express purpose of presenting autonomous objects to be apprehended in a 'disinterested' manner, for their own musical, intrinsic aesthetic properties. This emphasis on the appearance of objects was classically formulated in a discourse stretching from Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Baumgarten to Kant [5, 7, 10, 11]. Throughout this history, whether the relevant properties of the fine arts were thought to be mimetic, expressive, or aesthetic, the created objects at the centre of artistic activity were conceived of as autonomous, designed to be appreciated for their own sake in a 'disinterested' manner, largely independent of any other use or value the object might have. Experience valued for its own sake is virtually by definition conceptually independent of any other ends, whether those ends are construed as useful, utilitarian, cognitive, social, or moral. In this way, aesthetic value becomes disconnected from other sorts of value. To the extent that questions about the relation of music to the emotions, to knowledge, or to morality are raised, they are typically considered in connection with the idea of absolute music in which context such concerns are seen to be *extra*-musical matters, outside of the realm of music properly so-called. By way of shorthand we may say that aestheticism—the autonomy of art thesis—provides at once a conceptual instrument for the definition of Art and a prime reason for severing art—and music in particular—from other social endeavors.

Contemporary analytic philosophy of music is very much a child of this line of thinking. Analytic philosophers have focused on a particular domain of musical meaning, especially questions concerning the ontology of the aesthetic object (the musical work of art), the nature of formal, expressive, and aesthetic properties that constitute the aesthetic object, the musical practices of composition, performance, understanding, and criticism relevant to aesthetic considerations. Thus, composers are construed as the agents who create the works. The repeatability and transmission of musical works are made possible by the development of musical notation and scores which in turn enable performers to present the works. The concert hall provides the space in which musical works are presented. Listeners and critics are understood pretty much as Hume put it in *Of the Standard of Taste* in 1757, as people aspiring to the ideal of taste: true and disinterested judges possessed of a delicacy of imagination and practised in making judgments appropriate to musical works of art.

This understanding of music was congenial to several tendencies of analytic philosophy, most especially a positivist or naturalistic orientation toward observable entities and their properties, and the rigorous analysis of concepts and statements that might be clearly and meaningfully asserted about these sorts of objects. Analytic

philosophy has produced many impressive, fine-grained analyses about music considered from this perspective, including discussions of the connection between music and emotion with an imposing literature on resemblance based, simulation-based, and causal-based models of musical expression, discussions of the bases for interpretation and evaluation of musical works of art, and an impressive literature on the ontology of musical works of art. On the connection between music and morality, however, analytic philosophy has largely stayed silent. This is not surprising since, to the degree that absolute music is taken as the model of music in general, and absolute music is taken to lack propositional content, it is hard to see how music might have the cognitive content or other resources requisite to represent or arouse the emotions in a regular way, to discover or impart knowledge or profundity, to guide moral behaviour, or to shape moral character [12].[2]

3.2   The Deep Diversity of Musical Practices

The problem, however, is that the arts are not divorced from the rest of our cultural practices. Most music, considered transhistorically and cross-culturally, has not been absolute music. With its heavy focus on absolute music and musical purism, analytic philosophy has taken an overly narrow approach to the full range of musical practices. If we look to philosophy to explain things, it is essential that we start with an adequate account of the explanandum, the phenomenon to be explained.

Let us therefore reorient our inquiry into the connection between music and morality by canvassing something of the range of diversity of musical practices. We shall look at the matter functionally, concentrating on some of the main ways in which music functions in the moral world in particular. What follows, therefore, is not an exhaustive account of the manifold functions of music but rather, more modestly, a set of examples that will be useful in indicating how philosophy might develop a more robust analysis of the connection between music and morality in the complexities of real life.

Music may be used, for example, to regulate behaviour and to enforce compliance with social norms and mores. Chants and bells call the faithful to mosques, temples, and churches around the world. In Pyongyang the government wakes its citizens up with music broadcast on loudspeakers, just as the reveille bugle call in many countries wakes up soldiers in the military. Muzak affects the psychological states of people encouraging them to purchase items or to temper their frustration while on hold

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[2] There are some exceptions to the general pattern described here: Kathleen Marie Higgins, *The Music of Our Lives*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), Constantijn Koopman and Stephen Davies, "Musical Meaning in a Broader Perspective," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 59(3): 261–273 (2001), Aaron Ridley, *The Philosophy of Music: Theme and Variations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper Than Reason: Emotion and Its Role in Literature, Music, and Art*. (Oxford University Press, 2005), and Roger Scruton, *Culture Counts* (New York: Encounter Books, 2007).

in phone queues. Lullabies calm restive children and teach them basic skills of interaction. Music is used to foster states of consciousness in religious contexts, perhaps in virtue of the presumed similarity between aesthetic experience and religious experience. The long melodic elaborations of Gregorian chant, for example, seem suitable to the solemnity and peaceful frame of mind appropriate to religious devotion while Handel's triumphal *Hallelujah* chorus is fitting to the affirmation of the kingdom of the Lord.

Music can help integrate society by marking or celebrating important events in the life of a community. Music plays a central role in Carnival celebrations around the world marking simultaneously the last day of eating meat before the Lenten period of prayer and penitence and the opportunity for a community to come together and celebrate in a giant secular party. The Philadelphia New Year's Day Mummer's Parade brings together thousands of musicians and dancers in a celebration of civic and ethnic pride culminating in a daylong pageant of neighborhood supported 'string bands'—large ensembles with the traditional but unusual instrumentation of saxophones, banjos, accordions, violins, upright basses, glockenspiels, and drums. Funerals, weddings, graduations, have their characteristic songs, many of which are identified precisely in accordance with the occasions they mark: Chopin's Piano Sonata No. 2 is 'The Funeral March;' the bridal chorus from Wagner's *Lohengrin* is known as 'Here Comes the Bride;' Elgar's 'Pomp and Circumstance,' Op. 39 is 'The Graduation Processional.' In Vietnam ethnic minority cultures in the Tây Ngûyen highlands have for centuries marked births, marriages, pregnancies, deaths, and other significant agrarian, animistic, ancestral events in their lives with village-specific performances of gong music. In these ways music is intertwined with a collective sense of occasion, contributing to the stability of society. It must also be said that music can serve to challenge or disrupt the structures of society, though even this can help to establish a sense of community. Some forms of acid rock in the 1960s, for example, encouraged detachment from society ('Turn on, tune in, and drop out,' as Timothy Leary put it) while simultaneously providing a cultural touchstone and a common music for people who saw themselves precisely as members of a counter culture community. In both its integrative and its disintegrative functions, music has affinities with sets of behaviours Ellen Dissanayake calls "making special" [8].

It goes without saying that music can play a role in courtship and love. It can, in the best of all worlds, enhance and deepen personal relationships. Orpheus charmed nymphs and retrieved Eurydice from the underworld with his singing and lyre playing; nowadays youth trade iPod tunes. In any case, as Duke Orsini remarks in *Twelfth Night*, music may be "the food of love." Songs learned at one's mother's knees may trigger a memory of maternal love. The 'our song' phenomenon reminds us of romantic loves, past or present. The allure of music may not of course always lead to interpersonal harmony, bliss, or understanding. The songs of the Sirens were sweet and seductive but deadly.

Music may also have a healing or restorative function in medical, educational, ethical, and social contexts. In many cases, the functions of restoring and preserving physical and mental health are served by the effects of listening to or performing

music, activities which music therapists employ to palliative, rehabilitative, or curative ends. Music has been used by therapists to treat conditions such intellectual and emotional developmental problems, autism, depression, anxiety, alcoholism, anorexia nervosa, labor pain, cerebral palsy, stuttering, and aphasia. Nor is the power of music to heal or restore limited to institutional contexts. One witnesses the effect of music just as easily when one adjusts one's temperament and distances oneself from everyday cares by listening to soothing music with a cup of tea in hand.

The restorative function of music plays out not only at the individual level but also in the public sphere. We see this in the case of musical elegies, dirges, and requiems for the dead. Music may memorialise individuals as in the case of Purcell's *Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary*. Music can be part of a liturgical service, as in the case of requiems. Music can signal the death of a soldier, as in the case of the playing of 'Taps' at a military funeral. The typically slow and solemn character of such music is appropriate for the mournful, melancholic, or nostalgic frames of mind one associates with such occasions. But the lively pace of the music from the cemetery to home in New Orleans funeral music is equally appropriate, celebrating the affirmation of a life. In all these cases, music serves both memorial and cathartic purposes, helping people to come to terms with the meaning of the ends of lives.

Music can promote social and political action in a variety of ways. In some cases music discharges a cognitive function by bringing to attention conditions that call for political action. The African-American female *a capella* group Sweet Honey in the Rock sings songs testifying to the history and traditions of African-Americans and to the ideals of freedom and social justice, themes in African-American music dating back at least to the latter part of the nineteenth century. After President George W. Bush declared North Korea, Iran, and Iraq states constituting an "Axis of Evil" sponsoring terror and threatening world peace, the Norwegian record producer and lyricist Erik Hillestad produced a CD entitled, 'Lullabies from the Axis of Evil,' clearly hoping to offer an alternative to the dehumanisation of the people living in these countries embodied in Bush's epithet. The blues have traditionally expressed feelings of loss, anomie, and alienation of the underclass as well as articulating oppressive endemic conditions. Some songs, such as Woody Guthrie's 'This Land is Your Land,' Jerome Kern's and Oscar Hammerstein's 'Ol' Man River,' Neil Young's 'Southern Man,' Bob Marley's 'Get Up, Stand Up,' Yusuf Islam's (a.k.a. Cat Stevens's) 'Peace Train,' John Lennon's 'Give Peace a Chance,' Joni Mitchell's 'One Tin Soldier,' Edwin Starr's 'War—What is it Good For?,' Stevie Wonder's 'Living for the City,' and Wonder and Paul McCartney's 'Ebony and Ivory' have become emblems of opposition to economic disparity, racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination, and militarism.

It is not only that music may point to conditions of inequity or prejudice by virtue of the words in songs that pick out these conditions. Performing particular songs or pieces of music may in itself be regarded as morally or politically symbolic action. It is not a coincidence that people make public gestures such as standing or placing a hand over one's heart when singing or listening to national anthems or music iconically associated with particular regions such as 'My Old Kentucky Home' and 'God Bless America.' In these cases musical action itself has political significance,

indicating one's patriotism, one's sense of respect for nationhood, one's membership in a political, cultural, or social community, or one's commitment to certain political or social ideals. The scope of public participation in such activities can be staggering. In 1939 the African-American contralto Marian Anderson performed on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial for an audience of 75,000 and a radio audience of millions more in protest of the whites-only policy of the Daughters of the American Revolution. In 1969 500,000 music fans participated in 'Three Days of Peace and Music' at the Woodstock Festival in Bethel, New York. In 1985 Bob Geldoff staged Live Aid, a multisite rock music festival in Philadelphia and London, simulcast to an estimated 1.5 billion viewers in 100 countries, raising $250 million for famine relief in Ethiopia. Finally, it should be pointed out that music can be a means to political *in*action, apathy, or lassitude. And of course a decision *not* to act in a moral situation is itself a moral act. Lenin is reported to have said that he preferred not to listen to Beethoven sonatas because it weakened his resolve to terrorise people into supporting the revolution.

In these examples we have seen that music functions in a wide variety of contexts in the moral domain. Music reflects and affects moral conditions, it regulates behaviour in the service of supporting social norms, it integrates the social fabric by reinforcing senses of community and identifying shared values, it enhances interpersonal relations, it provides healing or restorative functions in times of sorrow, anxiety, and loss, and it identifies social problems, often encouraging action to address those problems. And of course these functions may be served individually and in combination.

3.3   Musical Resources and Morality

To this point we have seen that music is married to a wide range of human activities and concerns that have moral import and we have argued that a comprehensive philosophical understanding of music must take these phenomena and activities into account. But a philosophical account of such things must also indicate how such things are possible. That is to say, it must indicate what there is about music that enables it to contribute to the ethical life in the ways that we have described. Let us now turn to that question.

Rhythm is often an important contributing factor to the ways in which music can move us, physically as well as emotionally. Most music has a pulse that induces feelings of movement in listeners, so much so that it is a common occurrence for people to nod, tap, clap one's hands or snap one's fingers in time with or against the musical beat. We may feel this rhythmic movement on the strong first beat of the measure as in most of James Brown's pulsing soul music. We may feel the pulse as syncopated on the second and fourth beats as in much jazz swing. Or, we may feel the rhythmic movement over the span of a long form piece of music such as Ravel's *Bolero*, the arc of which usually runs to about 15 min. It is not a coincidence that the musical term stipulating that a passage be played at a moderately slow

tempo—*andante*—is derived from the Italian *andare*, to walk. The connections between musical rhythm and movement are natural, visceral, and neural as is shown by brain scans of the cerebellum, a region of the brain connected to movement, while people are listening to music [14].

It is important to note that the connection between musical rhythm and movement frequently has a social dimension. Our responses to the pulse of music may converge with the responses of others, a phenomenon that has been called "muscular bonding" [15]. This provides a basis for understanding, in part, ways in which music can help to coordinate concerted action in ritual and political processions, social dancing, marching, and other harmonised movements in morally significant projects and activities.

Music can also incite common moods among listeners, thereby promoting shared fellow-feeling amongst the group and helping to foster shared feelings that can move people emotionally to act in concert to achieve particular aims. One sees this in the way that the bugle charge can infect a cavalry squadron with the feeling of potency and forward motion just as an electronic organ version of the same figure can move fans and players in a hockey arena. Here again, one finds correlative neural substrate activity [6, 14].

Melody, too, may play a role. The inflections of a caregiver's voice in a lullaby can soothe—or upset—an infant. Here too the effect may be felt by a group. There is a pronounced effect of the stepwise melodic movement of the Gregorian chant, *Dies Irae*, which retains its power to move even through such a radical transformation as the use of the theme in the fifth movement of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. Philosophers often distinguish between 'expressing' emotion via the direct *arousal* of affect in listeners and the 'expressiveness' of emotion by which is meant the manifestation of affect that may be *recognised* or otherwise understood. No doubt there are cases where one or the other of these operations prevail and cases where they occur simultaneously. And once again, there seem to be neural correlates to the affective effects of music which in many cases seemed linked to pleasure and displeasure centres [14]. In any event there is no denying the emotional force of music, much of which comes not only from melody but also from many of the other features of musical sound: harmonic movement, volume, timbre, orchestration, and so on. We may not be able to isolate the effects of individual musical features in the experience of listening but we can see that these musical features, taken together and in combination, can serve as a basis for social cohesiveness and thereby as a means to enhance the prospects of group undertakings in morally significant projects.

We have to this point been speaking of instrumental features of music. But music may also lend its power to social projects through song, where we have the combinatorial effect of (1) the emotional dynamic of the music, (2) the affective tone of the human voice in musical utterance, and (3) the meanings of words, which bring to music definite concepts, propositions, and proposals. These features interact with one another in a variety of powerful ways. Hymns such as 'Ave Maria' may inspire religious exaltation and the sense of community that may accompany religious expression. National or militaristic sentiments may be articulated and aroused by song,

as in the case of 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic' and 'Over There.' The persistence of hope for a better future is a frequent theme of many African American spirituals and religious or folk hymns such as 'Amazing Grace' and 'We Shall Overcome.' In a sense, in song, the words and the music complement and reinforce one another, supplying elements of 'aboutness' that the other lacks. Language alone does not have enough words for all the subtle, imaginable variations in emotional states. Music without words lacks the capability of representing definite objects or other elements of definite subject matter. Together, words and music can present subtle and powerful emotionally inflected portrayals and exhortations with deep significance. The song, 'Brother Can You Spare a Dime,' for example, communicates a sense of moral indignation that grabs the body and the mind, expressing a poignant recollection of better times and a plea for help, in a languid, chromatic melody in a sorrowful minor key. Copeland's *Lincoln Portrait* articulates moral claims and a sense of patriotism by combining narrations of Lincoln's words with music of monumental earnestness that echoes and reinforces the moral and patriotic claims.

3.4   Music, Ethos, and Education

When bodily movement, word, and music are mobilised together for a concerted effect so many dimensions of the person are engaged that the resulting states of bonding and affective affiliation can be nearly irresistible. Vocal music may express for us the experiences of loss, betrayal, aging, love, anger, resolution, and so forth, thereby aiding us in organising and cultivating our life of feeling. In this way, songs are a means to educate people in the ethos of their culture. Songs often serve as a mnemonic for the founding and enduring values, ideas, and events that a culture makes its own. The epics of the Greek and Indian civilizations were sung. Much of the memory of the generation of Americans who lived through the tragedy of the Vietnam War is passed on through the music of the time. Songs are a major cultural vehicle for giving our feelings shape and definition, helping us to understand and come to grips with our personal and social histories. The moral education disseminated by song—which can be found worldwide and transhistorically—serves the moral life of peoples by deeply ingraining the ethos of their culture in their very being, where it is readily available for retrieval, guidance, and application. Music, especially vocal music, is therefore strongly connected to ethics in the broad sense of ethics that Aristotle had in mind, as encompassing the whole of life, for it is the emotions that imbue our lives with meaning or significance. This is not to say that people will necessarily become morally better people by creating, listening to, or participating in music. But it seems undeniable that music is or at least can be a component in the morally good life.

There is a final consideration that bears mentioning. To this point we have been concerned with the relation of the practice of music to moral thought, action, behaviour, and character, all considered as external, as it were, to the practice of music making. But there are moral dimensions *internal* to the world of the musical

practices of composing, performing, and otherwise producing music. Consider the example of improvised music. Improvised music, especially improvised jazz, is a collective endeavor involving the joint activity of multiple agents simultaneously. In such a setting there are social protocols that have their own norms of behaviour that can be observed or violated. There is no strict rule, for example, about how many choruses to take when it is your turn to improvise but it would be poor form to solo for 12 choruses when the 3 players before you have taken 2 choruses each. One can behave badly by playing something that is stylistically incongruous. If, for example, a group is playing a ballad and the first three soloists play quiet, reflective, dreamy improvisations, it would be a mark of musical—and moral—boorishness to jump in with a loud, blistering display of 64th notes. Rhythm sections have a musical obligation to 'comp' behind soloists, that is to provide sensitive and appropriate rhythmic and harmonic accompaniment to the soloist. We see these situations as *both* musical and moral because they occur in the context of actions, decisions, and judgments where there is a collective understanding that there exists an overriding goal of the group: to keep the musical conversation going. To violate this precept is to act against the tacit norms of the practice [3, 9]. The concept of musical 'authenticity' is another area matter in which matters of musical and moral obligation coincide.

What should be clear in any case is that, even when music is considered for its alleged 'purely' musical value, as for example in the case of 'absolute,' 'pure,' or 'instrumental' music, there is no escaping what I have elsewhere called the "instrumentality" of music, the ways in which music is inescapably situated in concrete human and social contexts, worlds of intentional meanings, and the full range of social, cultural, human, and moral purposes [1]. That is a truth that runs across musical styles, genres, national identities, and historical periods.[3]

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Chapter 4
Modern Painting and Morality

Paul Macneill

4.1   Introduction

The relation between painting and morality was relatively straightforward up to the mid-nineteenth century. In the European world, painters represented the world-view of their patrons: whether that patronage came from the Church or wealthy aristocrats. There were qualitative differences in the depth of moral richness between paintings and not all paintings could usefully be considered from a moral perspective. Nevertheless, for most painters and their patrons, there was a coherent and shared moral universe.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, these relationships had changed dramatically. There were few patrons, and painters were dependent on attracting buyers for their work. Artists, who had previously worked within traditional schools and supported conventional values, were now associated with the avant-garde as heralds of the new in opposition to tradition and conventional culture. There was a renewed vitality in painting, new movements, and widely varying styles of expression. Modern painting became characterised by a shift away from representation and toward the abstract, which left little opportunity for paintings to deal with moral issues or express moral concern. For a while abstract painting was in the ascendency, then abstract painting gave way to minimalism and to Pop-art, with a return to expressionism and figurative work in art in the late 1970s. In this century we have seen a return to prominence of painters working figuratively, and some of them paint morally related subjects.

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4.2   Morality in 'Early Modern' Painting

Moral themes in 'Early Modern' painting (1500–1800 C.E.) were most evident in 'narrative' paintings such as those illustrating stories from the Bible, Roman antiquity and Greek mythology. During this time painting fulfilled a didactic role as public art [14, pp. 366–367]. In this section, I consider two reviews, by Armstrong and Gaut, each of which draws attention to an artist whose painterly skill gave greater moral depth to stories the artists took as their subjects. Although it was not their primary purpose, both reviewers also draw attention to the moral universe of painters of the mid-seventeenth century.

4.2.1   *The Moral Universe: Gathering of the Ashes*

John Armstrong, in 'Moral depth and pictorial art,' compares two paintings: one by Sassetta showing St Francis giving away his clothes (1440), and the other by Nicholas Poussin (1648) entitled 'Landscape with the Gathering of the Ashes of Phocion.' By comparison with Sassetta's painting Armstrong regards Poussin's work as morally rich and substantive and he draws out the close relationship between the aesthetic and moral qualities of the painting. It depicts a scene from the story of the Athenian General Phocion from the fourth century CE who was falsely condemned as a traitor and forced to drink hemlock. His body was not allowed to be buried within Athens, and was taken to a nearby city-state where it was burned beyond the walls of the city. Poussin's painting shows 'the widow' collecting ashes from the pyre. Armstrong invites us to see both the widow as central and her "loyalty to a good man, and refusal to bow to an unjust proscription" as "the moral foundation of the city." What gives this painting moral depth, for Armstrong, is the manner in which the "the visually eminent features of the work" support the painting's moral significance and content, as well as its aesthetic composition, in giving "grandeur" to the woman's action [1, pp. 178–180]. Morality for Armstrong is to do with moral values and a morally worthy painting conveys those "values we espouse" as attractive [1, p. 175]. A painting's moral worth is a measure of the extent to which it serves to reinforce those values by making them compelling in experience and understandable, not just as concepts, but also in an emotional register.

   However, with modern eyes, this is a story of a moral wrong and an unjust civic administration, not one of harmony between city-state and individual virtue as represented by Poussin. Nor could it be said of a modern painting, that a measure of its aesthetic worth is the extent to which it reinforces conventional values. This reads as anachronistic.

4.2.2   *Two Bathshebas*

In a similar manner to Armstrong, Berys Gaut compares two paintings and finds one of them to have greater moral depth and understanding. His comparison is all the

more compelling because both paintings are of the same subject 'Bathsheba with King David's Letter' and painted in the same year (1654). One is by Rembrandt and the other by his pupil Willem Drost [9, pp. 14–25].

Drost's painting displays a centrally lit Bathsheba against a dark background, with her chemise down from her left shoulder and her breasts exposed. She appears to be in her early twenties and, in Gaut's view at least, "available, ready and willing for sexual adventure." By contrast, Rembrandt's version of Bathsheba is a woman "perhaps in her thirties," fully naked and being attended to by a servant manicuring her feet. It is a domestic scene, not overtly sexual. Bathsheba's gaze in Rembrandt's painting is down and pensive; the letter from King David is prominent in her right hand. Both paintings relate to a story from the Bible in which King David, having seen Bathsheba bathing from the roof of his palace, sent messengers to bring her to him and he slept with her. When she became pregnant to him he arranged for her husband Uriah to be killed, by having him stationed in the thick of a battle and withdrawing supporters.[1] This is a moral tale of David's usurping an innocent woman, and betraying her husband, a loyal warrior. Yet the traditional depiction of Bathsheba was (up to that point) as a seductress. Drost's painting follows that convention, whereas Rembrandt's painting broke away in "conveying a sense of [her] inner life… lost somewhere in the interior space of her own thoughts and feelings as she contemplates what the letter has told her." Gaut acknowledges that both are great paintings, but he makes a convincing case for why Rembrandt's is the more morally insightful of the two and how this moral quality adds to the work's aesthetic value [9, pp. 22–23].

Gaut's larger point, in critiquing these two paintings, is that treatment of morally relevant issues in works of art may contribute or detract from the work's aesthetic value.[2] The moral tale, relating to the abuse of power, is one that we can readily identify with today. What is different however is that a painting of this kind—which offers moral insight into a Biblical story—is anachronistic. Painters might wish to illustrate and enlarge on a moral narrative, but it is unlikely that the work would be accepted as great art in our time.

4.3   Modern Painting to 1980

In this section, I discuss modern art from the end of the nineteenth century up to 1980. An overview of modern painting from the late nineteenth and into the early twentieth century, is followed by a discussion of two painters: Mark Rothko and Andy Warhol. These two painters illustrate some of the movements in art following World War II, particularly in the United States. The aim of this section is to highlight major preoccupations of modern painting during this period. While moral and political concerns were represented, they were not a central focus for most of the prominent painters—with some notable exceptions.

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[1] *Bible*, New International Version, 2 Samuel 11:2–16.

[2] See Chap. 15 for a discussion of Berys Gaut's moral theory 'ethicism.'

The choice of 1980 is because, around the late 1970s and early 1980s, there was a move back to figurative representation and expressionism in painting, which is a relevant factor in allowing for a return of moral themes in painting (as is discussed in Sect. 4.4). Also Robert Hughes' book *The Shock of the New* was published in 1980. It is a book that provides an overview of modern art (and includes copies of significant paintings of the period). I have drawn on Hughes' book in this section and Sect. 4.4 of this chapter as he brings a moral and political awareness to much of his discussion of modern art [14].

4.3.1 The Beginnings of Modern Painting

Dramatic changes in styles of painting are evident from the mid-nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century. One of the most clearly identifiable shifts was away from the realism of pre-modern painting, in which the world was presented as 'out there' and in three-dimensional perspective. By the twentieth century, the 'point of view' had changed radically to include the artist's "process of seeing" as an essential element in the work of art [14, pp. 17–18]. One of the first movements of modern art to gain prominence, from the 1870s, was Impressionism, which focussed on the play of light as perceived by the painter.[3] A further significant step was taken by Paul Cézanne, at the end of the nineteenth century, in capturing within painting his own feeling and changing relationship with the objects in his perceptual field. His paintings portray trees, rocks and houses as soft and tentative—as do his portraits (for example, of his gardener). He is quoted as saying, "Painting from Nature is not copying the object; it is realizing one's sensations." His impact was far reaching as "one of those rare artists who influenced almost everyone" [14, pp. 124–125]. This included Henri Matisse—who echoed Cézanne in declaring, "My purpose is to render my emotion" [14, p. 141]. Matisse's colour-saturated interiors and portraits display such emotional intensity that Matisse and his co-exhibitors were described as "*fauves*" (wild beasts) [14, p. 132]. This term stuck and became the epithet for a loose grouping of artists including Matisse, André Derain, Raoul Dufy, Georges Rouault, Vlaminck, Braque—all of whom were influential in the development of modern painting.

One of those Cézanne influenced was Georges Braque who "identified with Cézanne almost to the point of obsession." He stood where Cézanne had stood in the south of France and painted some of the same scenes—although in his own way—turning houses and rocks into "prisms and triangles" displaying the beginnings of "Cubist… forms stacked up the canvas in a pile" [14, p. 27]. Cubism emerged fully in a collaboration between Braque and Pablo Picasso as a style of painting that broke subjects apart and reassembled them in an abstract form to represent multiple perspectives—both visually and as the artist's projection. It took painting a long

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[3] Impressionism was more than "merely retinal" however and was "an art grounded in working-class or populist ideology that nonetheless appeals largely to the bourgeoisie" [18, pp. 48 and 50].

way from its 'realist' origins and was a major influence on art in the twentieth century, paving the way for Surrealism with its focus on dream images as a means for revealing the unconscious. The artist's psyche was now centre stage. It was but a short step to abstract art with images having fewer, if any, references to the visual world. Greenberg highlights this last factor—this "turning [of the artist's] attention away from the subject matter of common experience" as definitive of modern art. The important point for Greenberg was that in shifting attention toward the "nonrepresentational or 'abstract'," the "artist turns it in on the medium of his own craft" [11, 12, pp. 8–9].

Even this barest outline of the genesis of modern art is sufficient to illustrate a significant shift from away from the 'realism' of previous eras and toward a focus on artists' perceptual processes as well as to the craft of painting itself. Relative to these concerns, which were more to do with an artist's vision and the nature of painting, moral concerns were not a major preoccupation. There were some painters who continued to represent moral and political issues (as is discussed in Sect. 4.4) although there was no longer a moral consensus however, and it was no longer the role of a painter to enlarge on moral tales of the world.

Another reason for a diminishing focus on moral issues was the impact of the momentous events of the times. World War II—and the horrors from the Nazi death camps revealed at the end of the war—was a factor in shifting away from the early expressionism of modern painting. As Hughes points out, any further distortion of the human body by painters risked comparison with what was revealed in gruesome photographs from Auschwitz and other concentration camps. Added to this, the illustrative role artists previously had as war correspondents was supplanted by television and news media [14, p. 111]. By the end of the War, a number of prominent artists were working predominantly on abstract works.

In the following two sections I take two artists—Mark Rothko and Andy Warhol—as examples of shifting positions in modern painting following World War II. Rothko represents many features of 'modernism' within modern painting and Warhol represents the Pop-art that followed American Expressionism.

4.3.2 Rothko

Mark Rothko's output was prolific and spans 46 years up to his death in 1970. During this time he experimented with many different styles ranging from German Expressionism, Surrealism, interiors, urban scenes, and primitivism. From the end of World War II however his work became more abstract, evolving from paintings with 'multiforms' to 'floating rectangular fields of colour': which Hughes describes as "colour rectangles, soft-edged and palpitant of surface, stacked vertically up the canvas." He adds that Rothko eliminated "nearly everything from his work except the spatial suggestions and emotive power of his colour and breathing intensity of the surfaces" and gave a luminous quality to these paintings by "staining the canvas like watercolour paper and then scumbling it with repeated skins of

overpainting" [14, p. 320]. From 1964 to 1968 Rothko explored painting in dark magenta, purple, burnt sienna, dark browns and blacks (especially in working on paintings for the 'Rothko chapel' in Houston). There was a subsequent lightening in his 'black-on-grey' acrylics, and a return to oils and to full colour "for the last three canvasses of his lifetime" [23, p. 98].

Rothko's abstract works made no direct allusion to moral concerns, although his paintings (from 1949) are often taken as religious,[4] spiritual or transcendental. Rothko's own statements on the transcendental quality of his paintings are ambiguous however.[5] Even the critics are divided.[6] Nevertheless Rothko maintained a broad concern for humanity. He said, in 1958, that "My current pictures are involved with the *scale* of human feelings the human drama, as much of it as I can express" [24, p. 126].

Rothko however had strong moral views about the power of the rich and the injustices of poverty in society. He was antagonistic toward the bourgeoisie and the impact of commercialism on art. This is well illustrated by the story told by John Fischer of 'the artist as an angry man.' Rothko had accepted a commission for paintings to be mounted in the new 'Four Seasons' restaurant in the Seagram Building in New York. He revealed that he originally accepted the commission out of "malicious intent" toward the "richest bastards in New York" who were the only people who could afford to dine there. He intended to paint something that would "ruin the appetite of every son of a bitch who ever eats in that room." He wanted an "oppressive effect" to make "the viewers feel that they are trapped in a room where all the doors and windows are bricked up." However, after working for some time on a number of paintings, he withdrew from the commission. As Fischer puts it, "the murals… were never hung in the dining room which he so despised" [7]. Jones commented that, "Rothko was trying to revive the idea central to modernism—that art can shatter our assumptions" but he must have come to the realisation, "That art could not change anything. That his paintings would just be decoration after all" [16, reprinted in 24].[7]

This story captures two characteristics of American Expressive painters like Rothko and Clyfford Stills, who retained 'modernist' beliefs in a capacity of art to

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[4] Hughes describes Rothko as "theological" and "obsessed with… religious meanings" [14, pp. 314 and 320].

[5] For example, in 1947 Rothko wrote of "transcendental experiences" for the artist [22, 24, p. 58]. In the 1950s, he wrote: "there is no yearning in these paintings for Paradise, or divination" [24, p. 143]. Fischer, noting Rothko's "contradictions" wrote that "in spite of his denial" he saw in Rothko's paintings "an almost religious mysticism" [7].

[6] Hughes is acerbic toward those who find the sublime and the ineffable in Rothko's work [15, pp. 233–243]. Fellow critic Peter Schjeldahl differs from Hughes in finding an "almost preternatural beauty" in Rothko's paintings, experiencing them as both 'ineffable' and 'sublime' [25, pp. 9–18].

[7] Rothko regarded a critic's comment that his paintings were "primarily decorations" as "the ultimate insult." Fischer notes: "Rothko… deeply resented being forced into the role of a supplier of 'material' either for investment trusts or for [the critic's] aesthetic exercises" [7, 24, pp. 130–138]. See Schjeldahl on Rothko as *not* decorative [25, p. 16].

affect the viewer (in a visceral and a transcendent sense[8]). They also maintained a rage against the wealthy. One way of reading the Seagram story is that Rothko was typical of the avant-garde artist in opposing the bourgeoisie—the property owning, monied-class. He wanted, "to bite the hands of those who had made him rich" [16]. The obvious paradox is that he needed them to survive (and he was on the verge of becoming wealthy himself). He, like the avant-garde in general, betrays an ambiguous relationship to the bourgeoisie. However it is ambiguous on the side of the bourgeoisie also. The relationship is reciprocal, as Mann points out: "Modern culture can only sustain itself by a kind of internalized violence; it must continually attack itself in order to survive and prosper. Hence the peculiar duplicity of the avant-garde [it] is first of all an attack on a tradition, but an attack mandated by the tradition itself" [18, p. 11].

Whilst there may be moral issues surrounding painting—such as the power of money to influence art—non-figurative abstract painting is *not* a medium for conveying moral views or attitudes. Nevertheless, Berys Gaut claims that ethical assessment can be extended to abstract painting and he takes Rothko's abstracts as his example. In his *Art, Emotion, and Ethics,* Gaut discusses the trajectory of Rothko's paintings from the "glowing early abstract works" to the "literally black works" near the end of Rothko's life. He sees in these 'black works' a despair that he links to Rothko's suicide in 1970. Whilst he is not alone in this reaction to Rothko's later works, this interpretation is disputed, for example by Kate Rothko Prizel, Rothko's daughter, who presents this "late work as just that—late work" which we might "relish it for its own sake, the way we might the distinctive late bloom of any other artist." She does admit that, "Even I have to step back from the biography at times… From my father as I knew him. Because, sometimes, that leads to misinterpretation" [3]. What is disturbing about Gaut's position however, is that he conflates a psychological assessment of Rothko's darkening mood, with a *moral judgment* (an "ethical assessment" in his words) of an "attitude toward life in general" that he finds expressed in Rothko's paintings. On his theory, this is to take an attitude of despair—apparent, on his view, within the paintings—as a moral flaw that may be taken into account in determining the aesthetic worth of these abstract works of art [9, p. 229].[9] There are two mistakes in his argument. The first is to ascribe "responsibility for the 'Black on Greys'" to "Rothko's worsening circumstances"—an attribution that Anfam warns against [23, p. 97]. The second is to regard depression or despair as a moral flaw. This is not to say that Rothko's depression and suicide are not relevant to understanding his late work, but even if they are, they provide no ground for a moral judgment of Rothko's attitude unless one is to judge depression and suicide as morally wrong. This brings me back to my claim that non-figurative abstract

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[8] Rothko said that, "I'm interested only in expressing basic human emotions—tragedy, ecstasy, doom and so on—and the fact that lots of people beak down and cry when confronted by one of my pictures shows that I *communicate* those basic human emotions… The people who weep before my pictures are having the same religious experience I had when I painted them" [24, p. 119].

[9] Gaut's theory is outlined more fully in Chap. 15.

painting is *not* a medium for conveying moral views or attitudes. Gaut, in his analysis of Rothko's late paintings, is pushing too hard to find a basis for extending "ethical assessment… to abstract works" [9, pp. 68–69].

4.3.3   Andy Warhol

What is significant about Andy Warhol is that his art represents a complete shift away from the idea that art should resist the power of commerce to dominate. He is quoted as saying "Business art is the step that comes after Art" [2, p. 468]. Warhol was a commercial artist with apparent style. He brought a canny understanding of modern art and the avant-garde to his commercial work.[10] Similarly he brought commercialism to 'high art' (which he succeeded in breaking into in the 1960s). Nor is he without admirers among 'high art' critics [21, 27]. He is known for his "trade mark registered" Coca-Cola bottle, his repeated images of Campbell's soup cans, and various screen prints of Marilyn Monroe [2, p. 474; 31]. He openly embraced commercialism with no concern for the influence of money on art. He flouted conventions including the notion of creative originality, much as Dada artists— including Marcel Duchamp—had before him.

Warhol's 'Death and Disaster' series—featuring an airplane crash, car crash scenes, suicides, and the electric chair—are repetitive images that mirror the daily repetition of images in the media. However Walter Hopps suggest that one can also read into these images "an underlying human compassion that transcends Warhol's public affect of studied neutrality." Whether or not there was "empathy underlying his transformation of these commonplace catastrophes," the impact was to bring images of moral concern back into prominence within art [19] (quoting from [30, p. 9]).

Although Warhol has been seen as neo-Dadaist, Paul Mann is sceptical. He describes Warhol as occupying "a key position" in the avant-garde but "hardly a surrealist and only vaguely dada" [18]. Hughes saw him as (at best) slightly subversive, and credited Warhol's success to the market and its inflated projections on to a "bland translucency" [15, pp. 244, 248]. Mann similarly describes Warhol as a "blank slate." He could "not have cared less about his ideological entanglements with the institution of art, except in respect to their glamour." In Mann's estimation however, "Warhol cannot be rejected on the basis of his personal banality or venality: what must be comprehended is the banality and venality of the culture he transparently represents" [18, p. 138].

There are moral and cultural issues captured here: both in the contrasts between Rothko and Warhol, and in what these stories reveal about money and art in the United States and beyond. Hughes expressed considerable concern about the extent to which painting is corrupted by its relation to money and power [15, pp. 235–237]. Despite Warhol's nonchalance, the power of capital to overwhelm art remains an issue. This issue was of on-going importance to the avant-garde, at least up to

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[10]This is apparent from his advertisements "for elegant shoes by I. Miller" [2, pp. 477–478; 31].

Warhol's time. The issue is also played out strikingly in Indigenous communities with the sudden rise (for example) in popularity and value of Aboriginal paintings in Australia. This was a major factor in a resurgence of Indigenous art, and has brought much needed money into Indigenous communities—but not without untoward effects [25, pp. 303–306]. While it may not be possible to reverse the effect of capital, there is an increasing divide between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'— equivalent terms to the 'proletariat' and the 'bourgeoisie'—that concerned the early avant-garde. This concern extends beyond art, and of course includes art. In the sphere of art, we can at least be aware how money can "distort the way we experience painting" [15, p. 236]. Mann however, draws attention to the contradictory role of avant-garde discourse in this struggle, in both opposing the status quo and serving its needs—thus providing the means "by which it can be captured and cancelled by such double binds" [18, p. 46].

4.4 Modern Painting from a Moral Perspective

Given the ascendency of the American Expressionist painters, and the Pop-artists who followed them, moral issues had been side-lined. As discussed above, abstract art is not a medium conducive to raising moral concern. Regarding Pop-art, one could justifiably read an empathic disquiet into Warhol's 'Death and Disaster' series (see Walter Hopps above), but it was the *de*-moralising effect of the repetition of "gruesome" images, rather than their confronting subject matter, that was important to Warhol [19].

Nevertheless there have been paintings, from the early 1900s, by predominant painters concerned with moral and political issues. The best known work of this kind by a major artist, is Picasso's 'Guernica,' which Hughes discusses along with moral-political paintings by other well-known artists such as Mexican muralist Diego Rivera. Picasso's 'Guernica' (1937) was widely taken as "the most powerful invective against violence in modern art." It takes its name from a city, then capital of the independent Basque Republic, that was destroyed in 1937—at the request of Spanish Nationalist forces—by bombs from German Luftwaffe aircraft and from airplanes supplied by Mussolini. The painting depicts a fallen soldier with a broken sword; a "shrieking" woman with a dead child in her arms; a horse, seemly stabbed with a sword that protrudes from its mouth; and the image of a bull (perhaps symbolic of General Franco) unmoved by such suffering. Hughes is sceptical however that the images in 'Guernica' were prompted by the war as they include motifs that "had been running through Picasso's work for years before Guernica." Nevertheless Guernica is taken as an anti-war painting and, for Hughes, it "was the last modern painting of major importance that took its subject from politics with the intention of changing the way large numbers of people thought and felt about power" [14, p. 110].

Prior to this, many paintings presented moral and political themes. Paul Gauguin's (1897) 'Where do we come from? What are We? Where are we going?' was plainly moral in its intent [14, pp. 129–131]. Max Ernst's 'Murdering Airplane' (1920) shows a bi-plane in mid-air with human hands emerging from the fuselage and, on

the ground, two soldiers assisting a wounded comrade [14, p. 72]. Otto Dix's 'Cardplaying War-heros' (1920) is a macabre depiction of the effects of war on three card players who have lost limbs, sight and hearing: one has an iron cross on his uniform. Dix himself had won an iron cross in 1918 but his experiences of World War I led him to represent the brutality—not the heroism—of war. He also rendered in paint, harsh depictions of Weimar society. George Grosz's many images of the same era satirise capitalism, women, politics and the church [14, pp. 73–78]. German artist John Heartfield (1891–1968) used photomontage as political ridicule. 'Adolf the Superman: Swallows Gold and Spout's Junk' (1932) is typical of his anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist statements [14, p. 72]. However modern artists "could serve almost any ideological interest," as Hughes points out, and he presents political paintings supportive of the revolution in Russia (from the early 1920s); propaganda works by major Russian artists [14, pp. 93–97]; and leading artists in Italy and Germany who, in the 1930s, supported (respectively) Mussolini's and Hitler's fascism [14, p. 99].

However, in 1980 Hughes claimed that all the "calls to revolutionary action and moral renewal" through the period of modern art were "ultimately futile" and that there was "very little" left of the "art of dissent" [14, p. 371 and p. 108]. He was concerned about the failure of the avant-garde project to morally improve the world, and he was sceptical that—following Guernica (1937)—"an artist… could insert images into the stream of public speech and thus change political discourse." His reason was that, "Mass media took away the political speech of art," a thesis that also explained why Mexican artist Rivera's murals, featuring images of the revolution, were effective in a subsequent era. As he put it, "Mexican masses… were pre-electronic, low in literacy, and used to consulting popular devotional art as a prime source of moral instruction" [14, p. 111 and p. 108]. The same circumstances could explain the impact of Columbia's Pedro Nel Gómez's murals. Gómez had been strongly influenced by Rivera and the Mexican mural movement, and he painted murals depicting the struggles of Columbian peasants at a time when few could read in Columbia.

However, Hughes' focus on art that could "change political discourse" set the bar very high if this was to be the standard for defining what is political or moral in art. There have been many paintings with "political references" since the late 1930s as Hughes notes [14, p. 111]. Robert Motherwell's 'Elegy to the Spanish Republic' from the 1950s is an example he provides, and through into the 1960s "Not all artists… shrank from polemic" [14, p. 162 and p. 375]. Edward Kienholz's (1966) painting 'The State Hospital' shows two, almost identical, naked figures strapped to their bunk beds in the squalor of a bare hospital room: a powerful critique of psychiatric hospitals of the time. The sculptural work of George Segal's displays "an unremitting earnestness" and "a moral concern with the voids between people" [14, pp. 376–377]. Also, in a reverse way, Francis Bacon's paintings concern morality—or at least *a*-morality. Hughes writes that "all moral relationships are erased from the world" of Bacon's paintings, although Andrew Graham-Dixon takes a more sympathetic view and sees Bacon as finding "a way of painting a human being as a malleable, immensely vulnerable creature—full of pathos and… full of the capacity for affection" [14, p. 296; 10]. Another artist not included in Hughes *Shock of the*

New—who nevertheless fits the genre of a figurative painter who was concerned with moral issues—is Ben Shahn (1898–1969). Much of Shahn's work portrayed socially disadvantaged people in the USA. His 'Thou shalt not idly stand by' (1965) makes this point succinctly with the image of a white hand extended to clasp a black hand [28]. Listed in this way, it is apparent that there continued to be paintings through the 50s and 60s that were concerned with moral issues. Although this was not the pre-occupation of prominent artists of the time, moral themes continued to be the subject of paintings—and all of them are figurative works.

Since the 1980s there has been a "revival of realist painting" [14, p. 402], a "resurgence" of neo expressionism [26], and a return to moral themes in some painting. Botero for example has, in this century, painted a series on the violence of drug cartels in Colombia, and a further series on the torture of prisoners in Abu Graib [20]. Paintings by Belgian artist Luc Tuymans refer to the Holocaust and to atrocities in the Belgian Congo but in a detached way. His painting 'Maypole' for example, could be suggestive of Hitler Youth, but it "is strangely empty: void of sympathy or moral… the viewer is left to engage with the painting on a purely instinctive level; being drawn into the evils of history, he adopts his own role as a silent and willing observer" [29].

A notable figurative painter to come to the fore is Marlene Dumas: a South African-born painter who lives and works in Amsterdam.[11] She expresses moral concern: in part, by her choice of subjects, but also in her portrayal of her themes. Yablonsky described her subjects (in a 2008 retrospective) as, "The dead, the dying and the grieving… though her portraits give equal time to newborns, strippers, prisoners, prostitutes and herself" [32]. Schjeldahl's review of the same exhibition, notes that "almost all" of her work is "based on photographs of corpses, torture victims, terrorists (Osama bin Laden looking crafty and sensual), pornographically posed nudes, gawky children, and endless anonymous, discontented faces" [26]. An essay, by art historian Richard Shiff in the Exhibition Catalogue for the retrospective, begins by addressing Dumas's "moral insecurity" and the difficulty for her of knowing "if one has done the 'right' thing"—especially knowing that rational demands can be swayed by one's desire, and that images can mean whatever anyone wants them to mean. In an interview she gave at the time of her retrospective, she said that, "all aesthetic judgments are culturally biased and context-sensitive" [4]. Shiff claims that, for Dumas, "painting is a decisive moral act" in the sense that "decisions made in a painting" are "concrete" and one must take responsibility for one's choices [6, p. 145]. To put it more simply, as Dumas does, "All choices lead to ethics" [6, p. 158].

Dumas brings a post-modern, or post-structuralist, sensibility to her images. As Shiff says of her approach, "all media are unstable, unreliable, subject to manipulation and simple error, but… a medium can [also] be used to control and limit meaning" [6, p. 146]. It is apparent, from her paintings and her discussion of her own work, that she deliberately plays with images. White can mean black, and black

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[11]Although I do not accept that auction values for paintings are definitive of a painter's standing or worth, it is nevertheless of interest that Dumas was ranked in the top 20 'living artists' in 2005 on this measure [8].

white, and by disturbing these attributions one is opened (in Dumas's words) to "broaden one's ways of looking at all the easy type of things that a certain culture has taught you" [5]. Shiff writes that, "Her images shock viewers out of the customary intellectual and emotional abstractions that would shield them from the problematic features of ordinary life, its sexuality, social contracts, and political conflict" [6, p. 154]. At the very least, Dumas demonstrates that there has been a return to prominence of paintings expressing moral concern, although with respect for the enigmatic nature of images.

4.5   Conclusion

Robert Hughes died in August 2012 just as I began work on this chapter [17]. Following news of his death, I was prompted to view on line the video series of his BBC documentary *The Shock of the New* [13] and to subsequently read the book of the same title that came from the series [14]. As was indicated (above), his book provided a platform for much of the discussion in Sects. 4.3 and 4.4 of this chapter. Hughes was passionate about modern art, and also about the role of art in dealing with moral and political issues. He was concerned about the influence of money on art as has been discussed. He set a high standard for a moral role that art could play in society, although he expresses regret that art was unable to fulfil that role. For example, he wrote that, "It is hard to think of any work of art of which one can say, *This* saved the life of one Jew, one Vietnamese, one Cambodian. Specific books perhaps; but as far as one can tell, no paintings or sculptures," and he adds that, "it is certainly our loss that we cannot" [14, p. 111]. This was a high hope, and—from hindsight—too much to expect. More than 30 years on from his documentary series, and the publication of *The Shock of the New,* the story looks different. There are many more sources of media available and no one source of influence. Whilst it may still be possible for a single work of art—a movie or a documentary perhaps—to have a major impact, it is too much to expect that a painting, or any piece of artwork could—or even should—bring about "revolutionary action" or "moral renewal" [14, p. 371]. Furthermore, in a postmodern world, with increased suspicion and awareness of the multiplicity of meanings of images, the most that we can expect is that moral issues may be raised by a painting and portrayed in a different light, as for example in Dumas's work. We might be challenged without being offered any one definitive meaning.

Just as in early modern art, when some paintings dealt with moral issues, it is true again of painting in these modern or postmodern times. There was a lacuna—when abstract painting, minimalism and Pop-art were in the ascendency—but even during that time there were artists who painted figuratively and conveyed moral concern. What is different about the treatment of moral subjects by current artists, if we take Tuymans and Dumas as examples, is that there is no longer one unambiguous moral story to be told. Painters may allude to moral themes, but it is up to the viewer to provide a perspective and give them meaning. Whilst the story

of morality and modern painting has its particular features, the broader outline is true of all the arts and their relation to morality. It is no longer the artist's role to offer moral instruction, and we can no longer assume a single cultural context of moral interpretation.

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Chapter 5
The Photograph Not as Proof but as Limit

Sarah Sentilles

> For Levinas, then, the human is not *represented by* the face. Rather, the human is indirectly affirmed in that very disjunction that makes representation impossible, and this disjunction is conveyed in the impossible representation. For representation to convey the human, then, representation must not only fail, but it must *show* its failure.
>
> —Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*

Photographs have been doctored, falsified, and manipulated since their invention, yet the notion that a pictured person is somehow captured by a photographic image persists. This myth of indexicality—the legacy of the view of the photograph as containing a trace of the subject, as having a special relationship to the real—runs throughout photography discourse, specifically discourse about photographs of suffering and how viewers might respond ethically to them. In this chapter, I engage Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida* and the work of artists Josh Azzarella and Trevor Paglen as examples of an alternative view of photography as limit rather than proof. I then turn to different approaches to 'unknowability' and mystery—found in the work of Judith Butler, Emmanuel Levinas, and Gordon Kaufman—to frame this limit as a resource for ethical responses to photographs of suffering. Rather than understanding photography as proof, I argue that photography can be viewed as a mode of representation that fails to capture its subjects and that also makes its failure visible. Photography exists at the limits of representation, revealing there is more to the subject than can be contained by the image. I contend that understanding photography this way provides resources for constructing a mode of looking that maintains a form of otherness based on unknowability. It is out of this unknowability— this recognition of the limits of one's knowledge of the other—that the possibility for ethical relationships emerges.

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5.1   Roland Barthes's Camera Lucida

Throughout *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes appeals to theological language to describe photography—what it is, how it works, and what happens when viewers look at photographs [9].[1] He uses words like revelation, resurrection, ritual, grace, transcendence, and the soul. Photographs, Barthes writes, appeal to the "religious substance out of which I am molded" [1, p. 82]. They function as an "experiential order of proof," "the proof-according-to-St.-Thomas-seeking-to-touch-the-resurrected-Christ" [1, p. 82]. They are like "icons which are kissed in the Greek churches without being seen" [1, p. 90]. Ultimately, Barthes compares looking at photographs to a kind of private meditation practiced by believers in the Middle Ages [1, p. 97].

Though theological terms are pervasive in *Camera Lucida*, they have been largely ignored by critics. I turn to this language not to make an argument about what the use of Christian symbols and language suggests about Barthes's interest in religion, or about his own faith practice or lack thereof. I propose, instead, that attention to the theological metaphors Barthes engages uncovers something about how Barthes understands photography in *Camera Lucida* that might not be visible otherwise. *Camera Lucida* is animated by the argument that photography can falsify reality by implicitly arguing for our ability to know others. Against this false knowledge, Barthes proposes an understanding of photographs as both incarnate and transcendent, a view that provides useful tools for constructing a model of ethical viewing that trades seemingly definitive knowledge of the other for a mode of relation in which the photographed *other* is essentially unknowable [10, p. 509].

Part two of *Camera Lucida* is a meditation on death—Barthes's mother's and his own—and on photography's relationship with death and resurrection. Barthes turns to one photograph in particular, a picture of his mother as a child, the 'Winter Garden Photograph.' Barthes insists that the photograph of his mother in the Winter Garden incarnates a paradox: the paradox of one who is dead and one who is going to die [10, p. 513]. Barthes writes, "I tell myself: she is going to die. I shudder, like Winnicott's psychotic patient, *over a catastrophe which has already occurred*. Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe" [1, p. 96]. Barthes see the inevitable death of the pictured subject when he looks at photographs, and he also sees his own, which renders him silent. He writes, "The horror is this: nothing to say about the death of the one I love most, nothing to say about her photograph, which I contemplate without ever being able to get to the heart of it, to transform it. The only 'thought' I can have is that at the end of this first death, my own death is inscribed; between the two, nothing more than waiting" [1, p. 93].

Barthes has a similar feeling when he has his photograph taken. When he stands in front of the lens, he is "neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object: I then experience a micro-version of death (of parenthesis): I am

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[1] I explored Barthes's use of theological language in 'The Photograph as Mystery,' which is referred to throughout this chapter [10].

truly becoming a specter" [1, pp. 13–14]. Because Barthes feels that photographs contain "this imperious sign of my future death," looking becomes something that is done in private, something he calls "under-the-breath-prayer" [1, p. 97]. He writes, "Toward the end of the Middle Ages, certain believers substituted for collective reading or collective prayer an individual, under-the-breath prayer, interiorised and meditative (devotio moderna). Such, it seems to me, is the regime of spectatio. The reading of public photographs is always, at bottom, a private reading" [1, p. 97]. Barthes makes photographs "private" by creating a relationship between himself and the person in the photograph: when looking at historical photographs, he calculates the age he was when the photo was taken; when looking at family photographs, he traces his ancestral lineage of which he is the "final term"; and even when looking at photographs with which he seems to have no "link," he reads them as "the private appearance of its referent" that connect him to the "Intractable of which I consist" [1, p. 98]. In other words, public photographs become the "explosion of the private into the public," and Barthes seems to challenge the viewer to look at them in such a way that the private—"the absolutely precious, inalienable site where my image is free"—is not violated [1, p. 98].

Barthes draws a distinction between *punctum* and *studium*, perhaps the most well known terms from *Camera Lucida*. Barthes defines *studium* as "a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment, of course, but without special acuity" [1, p. 26]. The *studium*, for Barthes, is "of the order of *liking*, not of *loving*"; it is a "vague, slippery, irresponsible interest one takes in the people, the entertainments, the books, the clothes one finds 'all right'" [1, p. 27]. Contrasted to this general interest with which Barthes engages most photographs is the *punctum* that "lightning-like" will "break (or punctuate) the *studium*" [1, p. 45 & p. 26]. Barthes chooses the Latin word *punctum* to describe this second element of photographs, a word that carries multiple meanings, designating "this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument," referring to punctuation ("the photographs I am speaking of are in effect punctuated, sometimes even speckled with these sensitive points; precisely these marks, these wounds, are so many *points*"), and signifying a "sting, speck, cut, little hole—and also a cast of the dice" [1, pp. 26–27]. Barthes concentrates on *punctum* as wound, and in *Camera Lucida*, it is both what wounds the viewer and the wound itself [10, p. 516].

When Barthes notices particular details, partial objects, time itself, or the inevitability of death in photographs that wound him, the *punctum* becomes for him a "'thinking eye' which makes [him] add something to the photograph." He describes this "additional vision" as "in a sense the gift, the grace of the *punctum*" [1, p. 45]. This "grace" requires both silence and a kind of looking that is not looking at all. Barthes writes, "Ultimately—or at the limit—in order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes" [1, p. 53]. He continues that, "The photograph must be silent (there are blustering photographs, and I don't like them): this is not a question of discretion, but of music. Absolute subjectivity is achieved only in a state, an effort, of silence (shutting your eyes is to make the image speak in silence). The photograph touches me if I withdraw from its usual blah-blah: 'Technique,' 'Reality,' 'Reportage,' 'Art,' etc.: to say nothing, to shut my eyes, to allow the detail to rise of its own accord into affective consciousness [1, pp. 53–55].

The challenge photographs pose depends on whether there is a part that remains "unanalyzable," what Barthes calls "the *air* (the expression, the look)," "that exorbitant thing which induces from body to soul" [1, p. 109]. The air is connected to Barthes's sense that the subject of the photograph "seems held back by something interior" [1, p. 113]. Because people in photographs look at something that cannot look back—the camera, the inanimate "piece of black plastic"—they retain something of themselves for themselves [1, p. 113]. Strangely, it seems to be this *withholding* in the subject that creates the sense that the viewer is seeing the subject as she is. In other words, the subject is captured precisely when it is most obvious that it is impossible to capture her [10, p. 524]. In the moment of recognising the other—the moment when Barthes declares, "There-she-is!"— Barthes also understands the other can never fully be known. No matter how closely Barthes looks at the Winter Garden Photograph, he cannot find what it is that he sees; it is a kind of failure of representation that shows its failure. He writes, "to scrutinise means to turn the photograph over, to enter into the paper's depth, to reach its other side (what is hidden is for us Westerners more 'true' than what is visible). Alas, however hard I look, I discover nothing: if I enlarge, I see nothing but the grain of the paper: I undo the image for the sake of its substance" [1, p. 100]. He continues, "Such is the Photograph: it cannot *say* what it lets us see" [1, p. 100].

The photograph that gives Barthes the "splendor of her [his mother's] truth" is precisely the photograph that "does not look 'like' her, the photograph of a child I never knew" [1, p. 103]. Barthes insists "a photograph looks like anyone except the person it represents," yet photographs can also make visible what could never be seen otherwise: "the Photograph sometimes makes appear what we never see in a real face (or in a face reflected in a mirror): a genetic feature, the fragment of oneself or of a relative which comes from some ancestor" [1, p. 102 & p. 103]. There is in photographs both the absence of the object and proof that the object existed [1, p. 115]. "The Photograph then becomes a bizarre *medium*," he writes, "a new form of hallucination: false on the level of perception, true on the level of time: a temporal hallucination, so to speak, a modest, *shared* hallucination (on the one hand 'it is not there,' on the other 'but it has indeed been'): a mad image, chafed by reality" [1, p. 115]. Photographs are evidence that "*this-has-been*," what Barthes calls the "fundamental belief, an 'ur-doxa' nothing can undo" [1, p. 107]. He continues, "But also, unfortunately, it is in proportion to its certainty that I can say nothing about this photograph" [1, p. 107]. The combination of absence and presence, of the seen and unseen, of evidence and speechlessness, of inaccessibility and intimacy, dictates how Barthes approaches photographs [10, pp. 524–525].

5.2   Josh Azzarella and Trevor Paglen

I turn now to two artists, Josh Azzarella and Trevor Paglen, whose work makes visible the mode of representation explored by Barthes's meditation on the Winter Garden Photograph, an image he does not reproduce in *Camera Lucida*. I chose to

examine work by these artists in particular because both Azzarella and Paglen created series of images responding to torture and to US policies that sanction torture. My interest in photography discourse, and in ethical resources for constructing responses to photographs of people in pain, began in the spring of 2004 when I first saw in the *New York Times* a photograph taken at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq—the now-iconic 'Hooded Man' standing on a box, arms outstretched, electrical wires attached to his body. Many people insisted the photographs from Abu Ghraib be published and distributed because they assumed the photographs would elicit an emotional response that would lead to political action against the torture depicted in the photographs, and indeed the photographs have had that effect. But this has not been the only response to the photographs. Their publication was met with a wide range of response—moral outrage, empathy, triumphalism, warmongering, indifference, sexism, sexual fantasy, humor, racism, and humiliation. This varied reception exposes as false the assumption many photography theorists make that viewing representations of violence *necessarily* leads to empathy, and that empathy *necessarily* leads to beneficent action on behalf of those pictured. I suggest that rather than the false proximity and definitive knowledge of the other that can be generated through both empathy and viewing photographs as proof, a sense of the limits of the viewer's knowledge of the other—like limits described by Barthes in *Camera Lucida*—must be created. Azzarella's and Paglen's work can be read as doing just that.

Erasure plays a central role in many of Azzarella's images. He edits out key components of iconic photographs and videos—the assassination of Martin Luther King, the shootings at Columbine, the portrait of Lee Harvey Oswald, the My Lai massacre, and the lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith on August 7, 1930 in Marion, Indiana, to list just a few—and then reproduces the images in that altered form.[2] For example, in 'Untitled #20 (Trang Bang),' he erases from Nick Ut's photograph Kim Phuc and the other Vietnamese children running from the South Vietnamese's napalm attack, and only the soldiers walking on the road remain.[3] In the video 'Untitled #6 (W.T.P.2),' an airplane continues to fly past the towers of the World Trade Center without hitting them.[4] In the Abu Ghraib series, Azzarella removes the prisoners from the photographs. Gone are the 'hooded man,' the prisoner and the leash, and the line of naked men. Instead, the viewer is confronted by photographs of a cardboard box in an empty room and a man looking through images on his digital camera, of Lynndie England standing, of Lynndie England smiling and giving the thumbs up.[5]

Although I am worried that he participates in the logic he is trying to critique, I also think by erasing the prisoners, Azzarella possibly challenges and expands 'representability.' In *Frames of War*, Judith Butler writes, "The critique of violence must

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[2] For more examples of Azzarella's work: http://www.joshazzarella.com. Accessed March 2014.

[3] Azzarella, Josh. 2006. DCKT website. http://dcktcontemporary.com. Go to 'artists'/'Works also available by'/'Josh Azzarella'. Accessed March 2014.

[4] Azzarella, Josh. 2004. Vimeo. http://vimeo.com/21674069. Accessed March 2014.

[5] Azzarella, Josh. 2006–2008. DCKT website. http://dcktcontemporary.com/artists/1768/collections/175. Accessed March 2014.

begin with the question of the representability of life itself: what allows a life to be visible in its precariousness and its need for shelter, and what is it that keeps us from seeing or understanding certain lives in this way" [5, p. 51]. By erasing the figure of the prisoners who are being tortured, I propose that Azzarella makes visible the political erasure that preceded and followed their torture—the fact that the prisoners are tortured in part because they are not seen as human beings. By enacting that erasure, Azzarella invites viewers to face, in Butler's words, that "it is our inability to see what we see that is also of critical concern" [5, p. 100].

Because many viewers are familiar with the photographs from Abu Ghraib, they know what is missing when they look at Azzarella's re-visioning of the photographs. In Levinasian terms, the photographs simultaneously work "to *give face* and to *efface*" [5, p. 77]. Viewers see an empty cardboard box, and yet they know a man is standing on it, hooded by a blanket and with electrical wires connected to his body. When viewers see England smiling and giving the thumbs up, they know she is standing next to a line of naked men being sexually assaulted and tortured. Viewers 'see' the prisoners because they can imagine them, but the prisoners are simultaneously hidden from viewers, protected from our gaze. Viewers, therefore, have the sense, as Butler writes, that "Something exceeds the frame that troubles our sense of reality; in other words, something occurs that does not conform to our established understanding of things" [5, p. 9].

Something similar happens in Trevor Paglen's photographs. Paglen—artist, investigative journalist, photographer, and experimental geographer—"visually exposes never-before photographed US sites used either for torture or for the transportation of prisoners to places where they will be tortured" [2, p. 62].[6] Paglen turns telephoto lenses and technologies used for astral photography on "black sites"— military and prison industrial complexes, including chemical and biological weapons proving grounds, secret detention centers, and secret spy satellites [2, p. 63].[7] In "Hitching Stealth with Trevor Paglen," Bryan Finoki writes, "Paglen somehow finds a way to hijack the panopticon and stare back at the warden through his fortress glass" [quoted in 2, p. 63].

Because Paglen's photographs are often, by necessity, taken from long distances, his images are ambiguous (blurry, vague, hard to decipher), raising questions about the ability of photography to represent "truth" and generating a sense of "doubt and uncertainty" [2, p. 62]. This creates a "delay," Karen Beckman writes, and she claims that, "This delay in turn causes us to ponder, in the temporal space created by the photograph's complex and uncertain relation to knowledge and truth, what activism would look like if it were founded on ambiguity, incomplete understanding, doubt, and obscurity, rather than slogans, unity, loyalty and coherence—if it began from a recognition of the limits of the visible and of our concomitant inability to render the world transparent" [2, p. 62].

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[6] Paglen, Trevor. 2005–2007. Bellwether website. http://www.bellwethergallery.com/artistsindex_01.cfm?fid=149&gal=1. Accessed March 2014.

[7] Paglen, Trevor. 2006–2012. Paglen website. http://www.paglen.com/?l=work. Accessed March 2014.

Anti-war photography usually depends on representations of human suffering, showing the very violence photographers wish to protest. The effectiveness of photography's role in depicting human suffering to 'mobilise shame' has been questioned (most famously by Susan Sontag in *Regarding the Pain of Others*). Paglen's art continues that questioning and offers "representational alternatives… for those wishing to intervene in acts of atrocity," what Beckman calls a "shift from face to space" [2, p. 63]. Beckman proposes that Paglen's art models a kind of "political art" that is based on the *limits* of ideas and knowledge rather than on definitive knowledge. Paglen asks the viewers to question what photographs actually show, which is important work, "[a]t a time when acts of torture and degradation seem to be shamelessly staged for the camera," when images/photographs were used to start a war (by Colin Powell and George Tenet, for example), and when "ambiguity and otherness constitute two of the targets of the war on terror" [2, p. 66]. Paglen, Beckman suggests, "resists a paradigm of total understanding and offers instead a limited and blurry view of ourselves as the starting point for the acts of thought, speculation, imagination, and care; recognising that, as Judith Butler has argued, 'the question of ethics emerges precisely at the limits of our schemes of intelligibility'" [2, p. 67; 4, p. 21].

5.3 Unknowability, Mystery, and Ethical Viewing

In *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Butler argues that the ethical surfaces not when we think we know the most about ourselves and each other, but rather when we have the courage to recognise the limits of our knowledge. For Butler, there are two essential ethical questions—"Who are you?" and "How ought I to treat you?"—and both questions reveal the fact that "there is an other before us whom we do not know and cannot fully apprehend" [4, p. 25 & p. 31].

Butler is interested primarily in interruptions and is wary of coherence, in particular of narrative coherence that may "foreclose an ethical resource—namely, an acceptance of the limits of knowability in oneself and others" [4, p. 63]. Butler proposes an "ethics of relation" that does not depend on "empathy, identifications, or confusions" [4, p. 34]. "Rather," she writes, "this ethic desires a *you* that is truly an other, in her uniqueness and distinction. No matter how much you are similar and consonant, says this ethic, your story is never my story. No matter how much the larger traits of our life-stories are similar, I still do not recognise myself *in* you and, even less, in the collective *we*" [4, p. 34][8].

Many versions of Christian theology center on the unknowability of God and the limits of theological knowledge and constructs. Might these theologies provide resources for thinking about how to be in ethical relationship with, in Butler's terms, a "*you* that is truly an other"? Are there resources for constructing an ethical practice for looking at and responding to photographs of others in the work of theologians whose work consists of articulating what standing in and living from a

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[8]Butler is referring to Adriana Cavarero's *Relating narratives: Storytelling and selfhood* [6].

place of not knowing might look like? Unknowability and mystery have functioned in (some) theologies to trouble human authoritative practices, and yet have also functioned as sources of mystification and domination. Can unknowability and mystery trouble authoritative practices in the case of photography/art as well? In the case of torture? What might be the drawbacks of an ethic based on unknowability and mystery? What might be the benefits?

In *Precarious Life*, Butler engages Levinas to articulate how we are bound morally to others because "we are addressed by others in ways that we cannot avert or avoid" [3, p. 130]. She writes, "This conception of what is morally binding is not one that I give myself; it does not proceed from my autonomy or my reflexivity. It comes to me from elsewhere, unbidden, unexpected, and unplanned. In fact, it tends to ruin my plans, and if my plans are ruined, that may well be the sign that something is morally binding on me" [3, p. 130]. Butler quotes Levinas at length:

> This approach to the face is the most basic mode of responsibility… The face is not in front of me, but above me; it is the other before death, looking through and exposing death. Secondly, the face is the other who asks me not to let him die alone, as if to do so were to become an accomplice in his death. Thus the face says to me: you shall not kill… To expose myself to the vulnerability of the face is to put my ontological right to existence into question. In ethics, the other's right to exist has primacy over my own, a primacy epitomized in the ethical edict: you shall not kill, you shall not jeopardize the life of the other. [3, pp. 131–132][9]

For Levinas, to see the face of the other—"The face as the extreme precariousness of the other. Peace as awakeness to the precariousness of the other"—means both to recognise that you could kill the other and to choose, instead, to protect the other at all costs, even at the cost of losing one's own life [9]. Levinas's notion of 'the face' as the most basic mode of responsibility centers on a passivity at the limits of passivity that is ultimately a form of protection. Something is required of, demanded of the person who lets him or herself see the face of the other, an action that is ultimately not an action: thou shall not kill.

I engage Levinas here because his project centers on a way of *looking* at another human being that leads to the protection of the other's life not because the other is like me, but precisely because the other is *other*. Levinas is interested in developing an ethical system that does not depend on sameness but rather emerges at points of difference and fragmentation. Some have described Levinas's notion of being held hostage by the other, of protecting the other even if it means losing your own life, as extreme. Others have argued that it is impossible to move from his theoretical encounter with the face to an ethical or moral system one can practice in every day life. But I find resources in Levinas, both for stopping political violence (which often justifies itself by defining the 'other' as a threat to 'us') and for developing a mode of looking that might help people practise responding to otherness in ways that are more life-giving than destructive.[10] How then, might viewers move

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[9]Butler is quoting Levinas in conversation with Richard Kearney [8].

[10]Editor: the reader is referred to Thompson's discussion of otherness as both a demand for interpretation and as an affective starting point for an ethical relationship in Chap. 12.

from a radical, emotional, theoretical confrontation with death and the limits of human knowledge to concrete political action? What might an ethical response to a photograph of an other look like?

Theologians like Gordon Kaufman, whose work is rooted in the ultimate mystery of God and the corresponding finitude of human beings, and who are at the same time committed to human agency and accountability and to living in more just and life-giving ways, offer a model for turning confrontations with photographs and images of others into a conscious ethical practice, pointing to the need for further exploration of the contribution theology might make to photography and visual theory. Kaufman, for example, conceives of mystery as an ethical category. Because Kaufman takes God's mystery seriously and believes we must always acknowledge our "*unknowing* with respect to God," he understands theology as human construction. The words used to talk about God are *human* words, infected with our own limitations, interests, and biases. We must engage, therefore, in relentless criticism of our faith and its symbols, always knowing we might be wrong [7, p. 53].

My hope is that looking in a way that leaves room for the unknowability of another person—for mystery—is contrary to interrogation, although I am worried that it might also reinscribe problematic notions of 'otherness,' the very notions used to justify and condone torture and war. Rather than turning the other into the person the viewer wants or needs him/her to be, I propose a kind of seeing—whether of person or photograph—in which the viewer remains ever aware of the limits of her understanding, allowing herself to be challenged by the other's *otherness*, by the fact that the other can never fully be known. Out of this unknowability ethical relationships can emerge when a viewer recognises that the other human being is different, yet then chooses to see this difference as something that must be protected rather than harmed, erased, assimilated, tortured, or killed.

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Chapter 6
Of Redemption: The Good of Film Experience

Brian Bergen-Aurand

6.1 Encountering Cinema

Two questions have dominated the history of film studies: 'what is cinema?' and 'how do we understand it?' The first is the question of film essence or ontology. The second is the question of cinematic meaning or epistemology. More rare has been the question of film ethics, of 'how does film provoke responsibility?' Film critics and theorists have done an outstanding job of asking 'Who is speaking and to whom?' or 'Who is spectating? Who is reading this text?' Yet, we have only some-times asked how this speaking or spectating might relate to a primary responsibility even more fundamental than 'the politics of representation' or 'the authenticity of voice.' More recently, there has been a significant turn in film studies toward just such questions of the deeper relation between film and ethics.

To be clear, in this chapter, the question of film and ethics centers on the encounter between the self and the other. In the cinema, this encounter plays out (1) between filmmaker and subjects or characters, (2) between subjects or characters themselves, (3) between the subject or characters and the rest of the world, and (4) between the film and filmgoers. (These four locations of the encounter, of course, intersect with the three looks of the cinema: the look of the camera, the looks between characters on screen, and the look of viewers.) Previously, theorists have reduced these encounters to aesthetic, social, or psychological situations and addressed them through political, phenomenological, psychoanalytical, cognitive, and analytical approaches. However, in such instances, questions of ethics have been treated only as problems to be solved and determined either by outside rules or codes or by a return to the self as the center of the moral universe, not by the immediate encounter with the other. Questions of film ethics, until recently, have

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been made secondary to questions of film ontology or film epistemology. The turn toward the question of film ethics (as the first question) challenges these totalising foundational assumptions and approaches and demands film ethics and the ethical encounter be addressed through all its permutations specifically by maintaining it as a question of ethics, of the encounter.

Although the key thinkers to influence contemporary questions of film ethics include Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek, Alain Badiou, Gilles Deleuze, and a number of feminist and queer theorists, many film theorists writing recently have turned to Emmanuel Levinas. It is the specific turn toward the primacy of the singularity of the other that makes Levinasian ethical inquiry unique. For Levinas, ethics is "an optics," a "calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other", and "a non-allergic relation with alterity" [15, pp. 23, 43 & 47]. It is a way of looking at the world that is embodied and visible but also beyond the embodied and visible that opens systems and selves to critique as I "encounter the indiscreet face of the Other that calls me into question" [15, p. 171]. Here, ethics immediately arises through encountering the other; therefore, it cannot be based on prior rules and cannot be used to found a system of law as its immediacy delimits it. In its freedom from intermediate or intervening phenomena, ethics comes before ontology and epistemology and cannot rely upon them for its essence or certainty. Furthermore, this encounter provokes a response exterior to myself rather than a return to self-assuredness as the other is seen as exterior to me, 'irreducibly different,' unique, and incomparable rather than as 'different from' me, like a different version of me or my alter-ego. This description of the *encounter* (sometimes referred to as *the face-to-face*) and of *responsibility* engendered through this encounter with exteriority have led some theorists to consider closely the intersection of filmic specificity and ethical immediacy.[1]

6.2   Intersecting Ethics

Since the mid-1990s, a growing number of thinkers have been working to better describe the intersection of film and ethics without reducing either to the same or collapsing them to a third concept. In 2000, Laura U. Marks raises issues about ethics, art, and politics in her study of intercultural cinema and embodiment [17]. In one chapter of *The Brain is the Screen*, Peter Canning writes on Deleuze, immanence, and cinema ethics. More recent work on Deleuze has also taken up the question of an ethics and cinema [7]. My own work on Pedro Almodóvar, Michelangelo Antonioni, Derviş Zaim, and Jay Rosenblatt asks about the connections between genre, pornography, ethics and scepticism, the call for a 'new ethics' for a 'new man,' the ethics of interruption, and 'remaining human' [2–5]. Michael Renov explores the ethics of documentary subjectivity—the one area of cinema studies

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[1]Edtior's note: the reader is referred to Chapters by Sentilles (Chap. 5), Zarrilli (Chap. 11), and Thompson (Chap. 12), who also discuss Levinas (in relation to photography, performance, and applied theatre respectively).

where discussions of film and ethics has always played a prominent role [18]. Judith Butler and Susan Sontag analyse the ethics of televisual and photographic images as testimony of torture and suffering—asking which bodies matter and how we regard the pain of others [6, 21]. In her 2005 study, Joanna Zylinska proposes a plan for further linking ethics and cultural studies [24]. Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake, in the second edition of their *Film Theory: An Introduction*, include short sections introducing new social and ethical concerns within film studies [14]. Interestingly, Lapsley and Westlake provide the most sustained discussion of the debates and rejoinders of any film theory introduction. Frances L. Restuccia outlines the relationship between modern novels and films, Lacanian 'ethics of desire,' queer theory, and 'authentic acts' challenging heteronormativity [20]. Portions of Barbara Gabriella Renzi's collection *From Plato's Cave to the Multiplex* introduce issues behind studying film and ethics [19]. In 2006 Sarah Cooper published *Selfless Cinema?* and in 2007 edited a special issue of *Film-Philosophy* [8, 9]. Both are cited as breakthrough moments in the history of film and ethics debates.

In *Selfless Cinema?* Cooper (following Levinas's concern over the ethics of encounter) asks what it might mean to maintain the separation between self and other, *not* to see the face of the other as my own but to value and valorise separation from the filmed subject. She asks after encounter as an asymmetrical responsibility toward the other rather than recognition between the self and the other. How might encountering the other interrupt my self-assuredness, my certainty? What might it mean to ask after the other first, without expecting reciprocity? What might it mean to ask how I am responsible for the other? And what might this mean in terms of the cinema and the separation the cinematic apparatus creates but cannot thematise? Cooper examines how filmic looking is always a looking through the eyes of an other at an other and how my experience of cinematic time is always the experience of a time not my own. Through these two experiences, Cooper explains, the cinema affects ethical encounter. She then looks at how we might experience this ethical encounter through the work of Jean Rouch, Chris Marker, Raymond Depardon, and Agnès Varda. All the while, Cooper cautions, separation is what makes the ethical encounter possible because the encounter displaces the ground beneath cinema, the filmmaker, the filmed subject, the film goer, and the ethics of responsibility. In this light, ethics remains the center of Cooper's study of cinematic experience.

The special issue of *Film-Philosophy* covers a diversity of topics and approaches to film and ethics and raises the possibility that film and philosophy might generate something new, "a commonality in spite of their differences," while also making plain the problems and barriers that arise when embarking on the study of film and ethics *as film and ethics* [9, p. vi]. The authors develop concerns over the gaze, look, and representation in general—reminding us of the uneasy history between ethics and mimesis (as imitation, mirroring, or mimicry of reality in art). They raise the specter of diminishing film to an allegory for philosophical ideas or reducing philosophy to a lens through which 'to read' movies as they highlight the status of the image and sound in cinema. Finally, they focus on the concepts and concerns that remain between film and ethics: the face (*visage*), the caress (*caresse*), the other, difference, art and aesthetics, responsibility, time and movement, and the feminine

and embodiment. Throughout this collection, the authors remind us to attend to the dialogic and dialectic relationship between film and ethics—responding to the specific rigors of both as well as the line between them. Through careful attention to filmic specificity and ethical immediacy, these writers provide an excellent starting point for further discussions of film and ethics.

What remains central to Cooper's engagement with film and ethics is the spatial-temporal intersection at the core of cinematic *mise-en-scène*, which opens film to "the ethical mode" [8, p. 91]. (This focus is not surprising as Levinas so often used the word, although not necessarily in a filmic sense, to describe the ethical encounter.) *Mise-en-scène* is a term borrowed into film studies from theater. It originally meant the 'staging' of a set but came to refer to the overall arrangement of space and time before the camera. A film's *mise-en-scène* is everything experienced on screen—setting, lighting, costume, color and contrast, makeup, character placement and spatial relations between characters, character movement and gesture. Thus, it refers to the space of the film on screen as well as the movement of characters and props through that space. For Cooper, some images, because their *mise-en-scènes* provoke us to see film in the light of other films, compel an "interfilmic mode of viewing" that resists "the reflective mechanism that would refer one back to oneself or one's own world" [8, p. 8]. This excess escapes the filmmaker and the viewer, distancing them from the filmed subjects. When what we experience exceeds what we expect, the limitations of film-making, the inability of films to completely objectify and totalise the world, disturb us, dislodges us with an encounter of the face and skin of the other not as our own. Thus, as she writes at the end of *Selfless Cinema?*, in film "fully situated in relation to the filming/viewing I/eye, the ethical cuts through the certainties of the subject who sees, creating a selfless encounter through which we might begin to see differently both the cinematic space and beyond" [8, p. 93]. This focus on the relation between the specificity of the filmic *mise-en-scène* and its provocation toward something 'beyond' became a central concern for many of the critics working on film and ethics. In this light, arguments about film ethics have become arguments about filmic uncertainty, or filmic interruption of the status quo. Ethics here is not about openness, liberalisation, or plurality. It is not about being open but about being opened, wounded, dislodged. Ethics is not about accepting the other but about being challenged by the other, as when someone or something interrupts your train of thought, disrupts your self assuredness. In this, way, all these writers concerned with ethics are also concerned with excess, with the affect of excess. The filmic experience exceeds our desires.

Following the publication of the *Film-Philosophy* special issue in 2007, a number of authors began focusing on specific cinematic aspects and filmmakers who are particularly open to questions of film and ethics. Michele Aaron writes at the intersection of psychoanalysis, cultural studies, and reader-response theory to reconsider the history of spectator agency in the wider realm of a visual culture filled with pleasurable and unpleasurable images [1]. In 2008, Jane Stadler discusses the intersubjective experience of narrative film [22]. John Drabinski pursues the question of the relation between film and philosophy as he compares and contrasts the thought of Godard, Derrida, and Levinas [11]. Likewise, Catherine Wheately writes on the

ethics of the image in Michael Haneke's films while Joseph Mai's [16] book examines the ethics at work in the cinema of the Dardenne brothers [16, 23]. Finally, in their 2010 *Film and Ethics: Foreclosed Encounters* Lisa Downing and Libby Saxton consider a range of films and filmic elements in the light of the ethical discourses of Levinas, Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan [10]. This substantial body of work provides close analyses and engaged discussions of a wide variety of films, across a spectrum of perspectives, all of which strive to encounter film and ethics without reducing film to ethics, ethics to film, or both to a third term.

6.3 Redeeming Cinema and Ethics

In his 2010 book, *Levinas and the Cinema of Redemption: Time, Ethics, and the Feminine*, Sam B. Girgus carries forward Cooper's focus on *mise-en-scène* while looking back to questions of cinema and redemption. In particular, Girgus's work recalls Siegfried Kracauer's [13] *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* and responses to *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940) [12, 13]. While Girgus and Kracauer approach the question of cinema and redemption differently, putting the two in proximity shows how ethical questions of film experience might diverge from, and also return to, questions of ontology and epistemology. Girgus concentrates on a cinema which reveals redemption, Kracauer on a cinema which redeems. Girgus analyzes images of characters and character development within narrative; Kracauer examines the relation among world, camera, and spectator. Girgus looks at the determinate, designed elements of the film experience; Kracauer focuses on the indeterminate, contingent aspects. In comparing their competing regards for questions of cinematic redemption, we can sketch an interesting picture of the complexity of film and ethics. For both thinkers, again, the excessive aspect of film is crucial in that film reveals, but also reveals that it does not always reveal what we would like it to reveal. It reveals something excessive to our desires. This excess is a key for Girgus and Kracauer, even if they address it differently.

In the epilogue to *Theory of Film*, Kracauer asks: "What is the good of film experience?" [13, p. 285]. Moving from the ontological and epistemological questions of film's essence—What is cinema?—Kracauer asks after the experience of film, the lived, embodied reaction and response to cinema—What is the good of experiencing cinema? Here, in a question that might be read in more than one way, Kracauer asks what good is it and what is the good in it. In raising the question of film experience, Kracauer raises the issue of the connections between film experience and those of film ethics (founded in the cinematic encounter) even if he is not able to address all that these connections entail. In the modern world, Kracauer argues, the primacy of inner life—made up of "the beliefs, ideas, and values"—has been reduced by the "declining hold of common beliefs on the mind and the steadily increasing prestige of science" [13, p. 286]. These twin challenges on the primacy of inner life have resulted in a culture of 'abstraction' that removes us ever-further from the particularity of the physical reality around us and our

encounter with it. The good of film experience, though, is precisely its movement against this abstraction/thematisation, according to Kracauer. Film, precisely because of its link to photography, because its encounter with reality renders reality as it happens, especially its accidental or unintended, singular moments, redeems reality. *Mise-en-scène* is always constructed, but its very construction from photographic imagery allows for gaps and fissures that open the image to contingency, indeterminacy. This is Kracauer's argument regarding contingency. Despite all intentions, despite all attempts at rationalisation, thematisation, or totalisation, film, more than any other art form, precisely because of the dynamics between its recording and projecting capabilities, has the potential to let something slip through, interrupt its totalisation.

> Film renders visible what we did not, or perhaps could not, see before its advent. It effectively assists us in discovering the material world with its psychological correspondences. We literally redeem this world from its dormant state, its state of virtual nonexistence, by endeavoring to experience it through the camera. And we are free to experience it because we are fragmentized. The cinema can be defined as a medium particularly equipped to promote the redemption of physical reality. Its imagery permits us, for the first time, to take away with us the objects and occurrences that comprise the flow of material life. [13, p. 300]

According to Kracauer, "In acquainting us with the world we live in, the cinema exhibits phenomena whose appearance in the witness stand is of particular consequence. It brings us face to face with the things we dread. And it often challenges us to confront the real-life events it shows with the ideas we commonly entertain about them" [13, pp. 304–305]. The good of the film experience is that it restages, with a difference, our encounter with the world we live in. And through this encounter (which restages another encounter) film's particular images of physical reality challenge our ideas, come from the outside to challenge the primacy of our inner life. Cinema redeems the physical world by confronting us with it, by reinserting the particular between us and our abstractions/thematisations/totalisations. It makes us encounter what we do not ordinarily experience, even what we do not want to experience. It is neither ambiguous nor ambivalent, but definitive in its rupture of self-control and self-assurance. In this way, Kracauer concludes, we can see the true nature of the cinema as a movement from surfaces to something beyond surfaces: "The cinema is materialistically minded; it proceeds from 'below' to 'above'" [13, p. 309]. The good of the film experience is that it leads from below to above, from physical reality to something higher. Kracauer suggests perhaps something spiritual that might reflect and endorse "the actual rapprochement between the peoples of the world" [13, p. 310]. Where that destination lies for certain, however, Kracauer asserts in the last line of his book, "is no longer a concern of the present inquiry" [13, p. 311].

The Grapes of Wrath is an important example for Kracauer. Early in *Theory of Film*, he cites it as an instance when the inanimate becomes active within a film. He points toward the "powerful presence of environmental influences in *Grapes of Wrath*," where the inanimate becomes a full-fledged actor; a fragment, a bit of matter, becomes an active witness to the world in the way he concludes in the epilogue

[13, p. 45]. Later in the book, he remarks that the film's overall composition, when linked to its story of social justice, makes it an especially powerful example of a successful adaptation. First, the style and substance of John Steinbeck's novel were cinematic enough to allow director John Ford to adapt it faithfully "without betraying the cinema" [13, p. 240]. Second, according to Kracauer, crowds and groups are especially cinematic in their visibility, and "through his very emphasis on collective misery, collective fears and hopes, Steinbeck meets the cinema more than halfway" [13, p. 240]. Finally, the novel's focus on the suffering of migrant workers and the abusive system that controls their lives meets a key potentiality of film to bear witness. As Kracauer posits, "In recording and exploring physical reality, the cinema virtually challenges us to confront that reality with the notions we commonly entertain about it—notions which keep us from perceiving it. Perhaps part of the medium's significance lies in its revealing power" yet it is the excess that revealing cannot contain that is crucial [13, pp. 240–241]. For Kracauer, film's witnessing of suffering, even suffering we seek to avoid, is the force of its staging of the ethical encounter. Its very witnessing calls us to witness and redeem reality, through what we experience—the intended and the debris that accompanies it.

Like Kracauer, Sam Girgus also pursues the question of redemption in relation to the good of the film experience. Like Kracauer, as well, Girgus argues that filmic discourse can signify otherwise than by signifying a theme. It can stage an encounter between the world and the filmgoer that does not return to abstraction/thematisation/totalisation. Like Kracauer, Girgus proceeds from below to above, from physical reality and the cinematic engagement with that reality to something higher—here the actions of redemption—such as self-sacrifice or paying retribution for one's debts. In *Levinas and the Cinema of Redemption*, he does not discuss particular films as if they were *about* ethics, as if they simply revealed a moral point we might follow. Rather, he discusses how they enact or perform ethics, how within these films we encounter the ethical, how these films dramatise ethics through an engagement with a Levinsian *mise-en-scène* or what Sarah Cooper calls "the ethical mode." Like Kracauer, Girgus focuses on how films call us to witness their witnessing redemption. Throughout the study, Girgus's focus is on films in which, "the mise-en-scène of ethical transcendence does not displace the mise-en-scène of poverty, despair, inequality, and injustice" [12, p. 38]. His concern is for films that not only address the material and transform it but also connect the immanent to the transcendent, never leaving behind the materiality of the filmed world, but making visible the connection between these two realms.

When he turns to *The Grapes of Wrath*, Girgus highlights the filmic elements that work in combination to express this ethical *mise-en-scène*—constructed through the combination of narrative, characterisation, theme and symbolism, cinematography, and acting. The material of the filmed world—through this *mise-en-scène*— signifies a theme and beyond a theme. Again, the excess is crucial. The visual and verbal language of the scene dramatise the ethical through the combination of elements: film authorship, narrative, composition, and performance. And this dramatisation directs us toward something beyond this one event. We encounter the filmic specificity of the elements working together, of scenes related—immanent and

transcendent—in relation to redemption. This is not representation of a theme, however, as Girgus is careful to point out. The filmic specificity, in fact, highlights the inadequacy of the representational model, recalling Kracauer's emphasis on gaps and fissures: "Thus, the range of elements in film art of mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, and narrative all work brilliantly to suggest their ultimate failure to portray the impossible. But the same elements succeed magnificently in suggesting the gap between the visual image and ultimate, absolute ethical responsibility for the other" [12, p. 88].

This failure that signifies a theme and beyond a theme is marked here by the scar near Tom's left eye. This scar marks Tom and reminds filmgoers of the ethical responsibility Tom bears and that we bear toward Tom, according to Girgus. And yet, the relation between film and ethics continues here beyond the make-up applied to an actor, in that, "Fascinatingly, throughout the scene Fonda projects an ethical vision that goes beyond his audience just as it goes past Ma and even exceeds Tom's own total comprehension. He speaks to the idea of the other. So Fonda suggests Tom's immersion into another kind of temporal realm of serious ethical commitment as he prepares to leave the family with a kiss on the forehead of his sleeping father and his memorable good-bye speech to Ma" [12, p. 88]. Most importantly, for Girgus, it is a matter of comparison of the scenes at play here. It is a matter, for example, of the relation between *visage* and the face on screen, of the gap between them. For Girgus, this scene is not simply an illustration of the ethics of Tom Joad. Henry Fonda is not Tom Joad, and it is in the gap between Fonda and Joad that we experience the ethical encounter. It is precisely in Fonda not being Tom Joad that the film dramatises the ethical. The gap between the face of the actor and the face of the character *compares* to the gap between the face and *visage*, according to Girgus.

> The gap between Fonda's physical face and the face of the fictional Tom compares to the space between the face and the Levinasian *visage*. Fonda as Tom vivifies that tension into an ethical experience. Fonda shows that through a complex construction of the elements of film, the innocence, nudity, and vulnerability of the face can be made to suggest the Levinasian face of infinite ethical engagement. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, shot, image, and narrative—in conjunction with the documentary delineation of conditions and the development of all the characters—converge in the aura of Fonda's face. … Fonda, in his portrayal of Tom, becomes the face of redemption. As Tom Joad, the face of Henry Fonda insists on an answer for the meaning of life and human relations that remains at once simple enough for a child to understand and yet so incomprehensible as to challenge ordinary knowing [12, p. 89].

This relation between elements remains comprehensible and yet incomprehensible precisely to mark the relation between the filmed world and beyond it. Through such an engagement with the filmic elements, Girgus approaches the ethical enactment rather than the thematic signification of the cinema. He strives to draw out the beyond-the-immanence of the cinema, that which signifies even before it means something. Faces, scenes, narrative arcs, camera angles, lighting, costuming, lighting signify thematically, but they also signify otherwise than thematically. They mean differently, and as Tom Joad says, "I'm not even sure what it means."

Like Sigfreid Kracauer's movement from below to above, then, Girgus's analysis of the cinema concerns a movement from surfaces to something beyond surfaces, from the materiality of the images and sounds and what lies behind them 'below' to what is before them 'above,' from the filmed world to something redemptive, if not spiritual. In this way, Kracauer and Girgus parallel each other, even as they disagree on specifics. The difference between the two and, the need for drawing from both thinkers lies in their emphases of the four locations where the ethical encounter plays out in film. As I stated at the start of this chapter, in the cinema, this encounter plays out (1) between filmmaker and subjects or characters, (2) between subjects or characters themselves, (3) between the subject or characters and the rest of the world, and (4) between the film and filmgoers. While, Girgus's discussion of film elements and the possibility of the cinema signifying otherwise than by signifying a theme addresses the first three locations, Kracauer's analysis focuses on the fourth location especially. In other terms, Girgus brings the first two gazes into the conversation and carefully examines the specificity of filmic elements that enact or dramatise the ethical encounter in the cinema. Simultaneously, Kracauer's emphasis on the third gaze connects those filmic elements to the filmgoers and the possible effects such an encounter may have on them. Both thinkers give us a way to consider the good of the film experience that moves from below to above.

6.4   Risking Redemption

As important as discussions of redemption are for film ethics, though, I want to end on a cautionary note regarding the excess involving the act of redemption itself. While redemption refers to elevation, deliverance, atonement or restoration, especially in a criminal, religious, spiritual manner, it also signifies a buying back, reverting, restoring, or ransoming. Invoking redemption risks invoking an economics of exchange or return, especially a return to a pre-ordained essence or understanding. Kracauer and Girgus consider the relation between film and ethics in terms of film's ontology and epistemology in order to break from grounding ethics in ontology or epistemology. By focusing on film experience and the film encounter, they move beyond debates over film's representational or formative essence. Through their phenomenological methodologies, they engage with a more complex, embodied spectatorship. The question remains as to the relation between redemption and restoration in their work. In discussing film and ethics through redemption, then, Kracauer and Girgus provide valuable sites for redeeming the excessiveness of cinema and the complexities of embodied cinematic encounters. They also provide a starting point for still more questions regarding ethics and cinema.

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Chapter 7
Movies and Medical Ethics

Henri Colt

7.1 Introduction

Movies showcase our society's value system and prejudices, history, and ways of being. Because of the way they illustrate human interactions, scientific endeavours, and moral issues crucial to the health care profession, movies are used as educational tools to ignite enthusiasm, illustrate signs and symptoms of illness, recount medical history and scientific progress, and enhance our understanding of research, pharmacology, and clinical practice. As a major cultural art form, film is representative of individual narratives and social structures. Drama, action and comedy, among other genres, help film makers tell stories about relationships. Biopics portray heros who may serve as role models to the medical scientific community [5]. Futuristic films and those that sometimes stretch reality provide thought-experiments to advance philosophical knowledge. Movies thus highlight contemporary social issues, portray society's perception of health care and disease, interpret bioethical claims, and foster discussions of complex moral issues.

By turning us inward, many feature films not only entertain, but also challenge us to learn more about ourselves. Film critic Pauline Kael wrote that "the revelation of human character is the highest function of movies" [7]. They prompt us to explore reasons as to why we think and act the way we do. Set in context, scenes from motion pictures provide powerful examples of ethical dilemmas and their resolution. They serve as springboards for debate, discussion, and showcase the phenomenology of illness. They place medicine in its historical perspective, relate the trials and tribulations of scientists, healers, patients, families, and civilizations, demonstrate cultural differences and relational challenges, or provide examples of conduct that is right or wrong; behaviors to be emulated or avoided.

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Outbreak (1995, Wolfgang Petersen),[1] for example, is a fictional film about whether to quarantine the town of Cedar Creek and perhaps kill its 2,600 innocent citizens in order to contain a deadly virus that, 25 years earlier, had prompted the US Army's systematic annihilation of an African village. Viewers can debate the moral reasoning that might sometimes justify sacrificing individual rights and freedoms in the name of social justice and public safety, also interpretable as the public good. More specifically, this film asks if there are limits to such actions. Would it ever be acceptable to kill a few in order to save the many and prevent the outbreak of an infection likely to decimate a nation's population [1]?

Judgments about right and wrong usually reflect a society's perspective of what ought to be done in certain circumstances. These form the basis for what constitutes normative behaviors subject to the effects of diversity, culture, time and moral reasoning. If ethics is defined as a system of moral principles or rules of conduct recognised in respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group or culture, and "medical ethics" as the study of what might be considered proper conduct for health care providers but also of a moral philosophy, then a film that raises questions becomes an extraordinary conduit for reflexion and debate.

7.2   Film as a Starting Point for Studying Medical Ethics

Films allow us to think along the lines of moral principles and to consider how to resolve ethical dilemmas revealed through motion picture story-telling. Film is one of the most popular and widely distributed art forms in the world today and is consequently an attractive starting point for studying medical ethics. In considering various moral theories and perspectives to help differentiate right from wrong, or desire from responsibility, one must also ponder the political, behavioral, economic, legal, and psychological implications of any actions [15]. Situations can be viewed from the provider, patient, observer or societal perspective along with the rules, rights, virtues and principles that help resolve them. Physician-patient interactions might be framed using deliberative, paternalistic, interpretative or informative models. Narrative typologies such as chaos, witness, restitution, compromise, resistance or transcendence, relied upon in response to ethical dilemmas, can be identified when scenes are integrated with the viewer's personal and communal memories or experiences.

In *Article 99* (1999, Howard Deutch), a frustrated black man wearing a combat jacket and black wool cap is surrounded by other patients in a busy Veterans Administration Hospital waiting room. Standing at the registration counter, he requests information about his health benefits. "I keep telling you," he is told over and over again by the obstinate white nurse who, positioned behind her countertop, seems to represent an unsurmountable barrier. "We cannot approve your eligibility until we have *complete proof* of disability (italics mine)." He reminds her that he has

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[1] In parentheses the year of film's release is followed by the name of the film's director.

filled out emergency disability forms three times, and that his medical records have been lost repeatedly during the last 8 months. The tension mounts as he is told again and again that "without certification there is no *actual* proof that you are disabled." Finally losing patience, he bends over, shouting "You need some proof, all right, I'll give you some damn proof!" He proceeds to remove his artificial leg, banging it repeatedly on the astonished nurse's desk. One cannot help but commiserate with this fellow, and with all patients; because each of us at one time or another has probably had a similar experience facing recalcitrant administrators. The language of film allows us to sense the effects of disrespect for patients, possible racial discrimination, and inequalities of health care access without being personally subjected to the horrors of experiencing them.

As a visual art form, films are projected to large audiences, viewed in the comfort of one's home, or nowadays, anywhere there is a computer screen or mobile device. Entire films or selected scenes help launch group discussions about particular practice situations; a dying patient, unwanted pregnancy, or family dysfunction. Portrayals of disease and its effects on persons and society are powerfully depicted, as are physician behaviors such as breaking bad news, narcissism, or impairment from drugs, alcohol and disease. Other times films are used to point out issues that affect social and public policy, showcase cultural bias and discrimination, or recount important facets of medical history. These illustrate many applications of the culture of medicine, including principles, values, codes, and norms transmitted through generations of medical practice, yet modifiable based on experimental thinking.

Choosing from among theoretical perspectives such as virtue ethics, contractualism, Kantianism, utilitarianism, social contract theory, and feminist, communitarian, religious or rights-based ethics to provide a frame of reference that supports moral reasoning however, is challenging. One effective alternative for supplementing discussions of ethical dilemmas is to apply the four-principles approach to health care ethics developed by Childress and Beauchamp more than 30 years ago, and still commonly used today in ethics consultation. These principles are *Beneficence* (the obligation to provide benefits and balance benefits against risks), *Non-Maleficence* (the obligation to avoid the causation of harm), *Respect for autonomy* (the obligation to respect the decision-making capacity of autonomous persons), and *Justice* (obligations of fairness in the distribution of benefits and risks) [2].

For example, in *Wit* (2001, Mike Nichols), Emma Thompson plays Vivian Bearing, a tough, intensely rational, middle-aged English professor and literary scholar whose area of expertise is the metaphysical poetry of John Donne. After learning she has advanced ovarian cancer, she undergoes high-dose chemotherapy as part of an experimental treatment plan proposed by Dr Kelekian, a medical researcher played by Christopher Lloyd. Viviane suffers enormously from the side-effects of therapy. As she nears the end of her life, her pain has become overwhelming. In one scene, her nurse suggests a self-controllable analgesic system that will allow her to self-treat as needed. Dr. Kelekian however, insists that what she needs is respite from her pain, and prescribes instead high doses of morphine that quickly

render Viviane unconscious. The nurse is unsuccessful in convincing the doctor that their patient may have preferred to make decisions herself regarding pain control and level of consciousness.

This scene could prompt discussion and debate about (1) the principle of beneficence, including whether beneficence justifies imposing one's will on a patient, (2) the principle of autonomy and self-determination in regards to the extent to which Vivian has a right to control her pain and medication use, (3) the practice of terminal sedation which aims at keeping a severely suffering patient unconscious until the time of death, (4) the principle of double effect for justifying the administration of drugs to alleviate suffering despite their possibly leading to an unintended albeit foreseeable death, and (5) the extent of a nurse's role as patient advocate. From a different educational perspective, the scene can also be used to transmit knowledge regarding ethics consultative services. By explaining how principles must sometimes be balanced against each other, or against other considerations about what might be morally proper or improper, a reflective equilibrium is defined in which one principle trumps another without rendering obsolete the principle that is outweighed, and that continues to undeniably exert an influence on feelings, behaviors, and decision-making.

7.3 Engaging Viewers and Delivering Messages Cinematographically

Much of the experience using feature films in medicine is related to efforts at enhancing the viewers' capacity for compassion, empathy, understanding, communication, and recognition of patient suffering. In *Yesterday* (2004, Darrell Roodt), for example, a young black South African mother named Yesterday is infected with HIV by her husband. During the course of the film, she learns to understand her HIV/AIDS and acts in her own best self-interests as a consequence of her understanding [16]. After projecting the film in its entirety in a medical school classroom, a group of medical students reflected on the appropriateness of the way informed consent for HIV testing was obtained from her, about her reactions to the matter-of-fact tone of voice used by the doctor who told her she was infected with the deadly virus, and questioned why Yesterday's disease was so devastating when AIDS had become a controllable, chronic disease in most Western countries. But students also wanted to discuss the film's aesthetics. They wondered, for example, whether the filmmaker had intentionally used landscape, time, and colour to portray a sense of loneliness, despair, human pride, beauty, dignity and courage in the film's protagonist [13].

Every part of a feature film, including the opening credits, is intended to contribute to a film's narrative and message, as well as to its entertainment, intellectual, commercial, and artistic value. Cinematic techniques such as dialogue (or lack thereof), motion, lighting, camera angles, image-frames, special effects, and musical soundtrack are used collectively to evoke feelings and reflection. "The fact is, I am quite happy in

a movie, even a bad movie," says narrator Binx Bolling, in Walker Percy's 1961 novel *The Moviegoer* [12]. Whether in the theatre or in the comfort of our living rooms, alone or in the company of friends and strangers, the moments spent absorbed in film are cherished because of emotions intensely lived, experiences revived, fears identified without danger, or dreams acknowledged. We are engaged yet, the game of life is played out, gambled on, observed and experienced without personal risk. Lessons are learned and imaginations flourish as stories told, through the cinematic process, become exposed to our moral, aesthetic and personal judgments.

Films are also an enchanting and particularly effective vehicle for illustrating values and concerns of our times. We may wonder, of course, whether increased popularity for violence and vitriolic video games overcomes our fears of global annihilation by infectious diseases. After all, *The Hunger Games* (2012, Gary Ross), based on Suzanne Collins's 2008 best-selling young adult science fiction novel depicting teenagers brutally murdering each other in a futuristic world, generated a record breaking 152.5 million dollars in sales during its first weekend in theatres in the United States. This is more than six times as much as a recent medical thriller, *Contagion* (2011, Steven Soderbergh), which generated 22 million in first weekend box office sales. This fictional film, released shortly after the H1N1 swine flu scare, depicts relatively realistic medical, scientific and social interventions during a Meningoencephalitis virus pandemic that kills more than 26 million people worldwide.

Cinematic techniques and film genres (such as science fiction, horror, biopic, war, adventure, animated, historical, film noire, comedy, action, and drama) are for the most part intentionally used to empower a film and its message. They can occasionally create unintended effects beyond the film-maker's intention and become a vehicle for social commentary or discussion of public policy. One possible example is the popular comedy *Multiplicity* (1996, Harold Ramis) [14]. Probably geared first towards providing good entertainment, great laughs, and unique visual effects (with modified split screen, on set compositing, and other visual effects), the film is about Doug Kinney (Michael Keaton), who has three nearly (and therein lies the plot) identical clones created for him by Dr. Owen Leeds. The director's use of humour tends to downplay the seriousness of the cloning debate [9]. The film was released in July 1996, the same month as Dolly the female sheep, and first mammal to be cloned from an adult somatic cell, was born after more than 200 failed attempts. The timing of the film's release put a light and humourous movie into a very different (and unanticipated) context.

Another hazard related to using motion pictures in the study of medical ethics is that films can be misleading, either in the way heros are portrayed, science is interpreted, or when films are biased or grossly misrepresent real-life situations. Sadly in these cases, notions of stigmatisation, stereotyping, and discrimination are often reinforced [3]. Many examples of bias or misrepresentation are in films representing persons with mental illness or disabilities. Compare the late Oscar winner Heath Ledger's depiction of the Joker as a psychopathic schizophrenic clown in Christopher Nolan's 2008 *Batman-The Dark Knight* with the more docile and realistic portrayal of schizophrenia by Russell Crowe playing mathematician John Nash in Ron

Howard's Oscar-winning 2001 film *A Beautiful Mind* [10]. Compare also the comical but unrealistic portrayal of dissociative identity disorder by actor Jim Carrey in the Farrelly brothers' 2000 comedy *Me, myself and Irene* with the realistic portrayal of borderline personality disorder in *Girl Interrupted* (1999, James Mangold). In order to counteract the audience's reliance on preconceived notions of disease or disability, the dangers of misrepresentation should probably be pointed out using a preamble that encourages the viewer's reflective engagement. This means that lecturers must engage in substantial preliminary reading, not only about the film and the disorders being portrayed, but also in preparation for discussions about the ethical issues being addressed. Clint Eastwood's acclaimed 2004 film, *Million Dollar Baby*, for example, reinforces preconceived negative notions about disability, particularly as compared to films that more accurately depict the personal journey of a person facing newly trauma-induced paraplegia such as *The Waterdance* (1992, Neal Jimenez). This critique of the film can, of course, be a springboard for discussion of a number of issues, not the least of which is society's depiction and understanding of disability [17]. But *Million Dollar Baby* can also be used to reflect on a variety of other medical ethics subjects such as individual and social perceptions and treatment of disabled persons, quality of life, self-determination, respect for patients, human values versus religious doctrine, and perhaps most significantly, voluntary euthanasia. The film shows the life of champion boxer Maggie Fitzgerald, played by Hilary Swank, who, as a result of a boxing accident, goes from being portrayed as a physically active and vibrant athlete-hero to that of a despondent, ill-appearing, bed-ridden, ineptly cared for amputated quadriplegic. The film's imagery however, falsely associates disability with worthlessness, loss of dignity, sustained total dependency on others, illness, and impending death. Furthermore, many elements pertaining to laws in connection with disabilities, medicine, and end-of-life care are either ignored or misrepresented. At the end of the film, Maggie relies on her friend and trainer Franki Dunn (played by Clint Eastwood) to bring an end to her life. After some soul searching (although he never seems to really doubt that he is doing the right thing), Franki injects adrenaline[2] into her intravenous line, disconnects her from the ventilator, and leaves the hospital without telling anyone.

7.4 Extracted Sequences Illustrate Memorable Moments of a Film's Narrative

In addition to using full length feature films, short movie scenes can be used quite effectively in the study of medical ethics. Logistics, time constraints, rules and regulations, film unavailability, and lack of material resources frequently prohibit

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[2]Adrenaline (probably epinephrine), is a stress hormone that stimulates heart rate and accelerates respiration. Such an injection is completely contrary to acceptable practices with well established protocols of physician-assisted death by removal from mechanical ventilation where anxiolytics and sedatives are used to avoid suffering from air hunger.

watching an entire motion picture, making the selective display of short film sequences a requisite alternative, especially in the classroom or lecture hall. Scenes are viewed as a running narrative in the context of an entirety that includes motion, framing, dialogue, soundtrack and special effects. Selectively identified and extracted, they can be used to illustrate facts, events, ideas, emotions, or prejudices. While this may be efficient for showcasing particularly memorable moments of the narrative, it does not necessarily do the selected film justice in respect to its aesthetic, academic and commercial significance. Furthermore, extracted scenes can amplify the challenges of using motion pictures to promote reflection on ethical issues. Scenes must be appropriately and accurately placed into context by lecturers, who, while introducing the overall sense of the film, might inadvertently or intentionally garnish their preambles with editorial comments, judgments, or personal biases. Because film relies very much on emotive manipulation, and because affect and cognition are interwoven at both conscious and subconscious levels, scene selection predisposes to a situational bias that can be very persuasive in the absence of powerful counterarguments.

Addressing the controversial and emotion-laden issue of unwanted pregnancy, for example, one might choose a visually impactful scene from *If these walls could talk*, a made for television movie (1996, directed by Nancy Savoca and Cher) that tells the abortion stories of three different women in the 1950s, 1970s, and 1990s. In the story set in 1952, a time when abortion was illegal in the United States, widowed nurse Claire Donnelly (played by Demi Moore) discovers she is pregnant from an affair with her brother-in-law. Unable to find help from her medical colleagues, she very graphically attempts to make herself abort using a knitting needle, and ultimately dies after a clandestine procedure. A very different perspective of unwanted pregnancy is found in *Knocked up* (2007, Judd Apatow), where a drunken young woman named Alison Scott (Katherine Heigle) and goofy, irresponsible male acquaintance Ben Stone (played by Seth Rogen), have a one night stand, following which they go their separate ways. Alison later suspects she is pregnant however, and informs Ben of the news. They venture together to the doctor's office, where they are addressed erroneously as Mr. and Mrs. Stone. They see their "baby" during the ultrasound examination that confirms Alison's pregnancy. Alison's mother tries to persuade her to have an abortion, but Alison refuses. We follow Alison until she gives birth to a little girl, with Ben surprisingly choosing to be at her side. The film ends with Alison, Ben and their infant happily moving in to a Los Angeles apartment together. An anti-abortion argument can readily be presented by lecturers selecting these two particular scenes as example topics pertaining to unwanted pregnancy because the emotive imagery graphically presented in both films; close ups of a moaning Demi Moore introducing the knitting needle into her vagina in the first, and images of fetal movements on pelvic ultrasound in the second, are very persuasive.

Scenes serve as effective springboards for discussion and debate, illustrate the phenomenology of illness, place medicine in its historical perspective, relate the trials and tribulations of scientists, healers, patients, families, and civilizations, demonstrate cultural differences and relational challenges, and, as mentioned earlier,

provide examples of behaviors to be emulated or avoided. Psychologists have shown that a person's normal attention span is about 20 min, and for online videos, it is closer to about 60 s! About 5 % of viewers will have abandoned an online video within 3 min [8]. Limiting film sequences to no more than 3 min, therefore, allows sufficient time for discussion and helps assure the audience's attention throughout the sequence.

7.5   The Value of Informed Awareness

While it is beyond the scope of this essay to describe technical issues in depth, there is no doubt that informed awareness about how a scene works or why a scene is shot a certain way contributes additionally to an appreciation of the art of film-making. Information about how some cinematic techniques add to a scene's effectiveness, also helps enhance the viewers' understanding of many of the finer points of a movie's message that might otherwise be missed.

In *Malice* (1993, Harold Becker), medical narcissism is perfectly illustrated by Dr. Jed Hill's (Alec Baldwin) famous "I am God" monologue. The movie is about Andy and Tracy, a happily married couple who would like to have children. Jed finds himself operating on Tracy order to remove a ruptured ovarian cyst. Suspecting torsion of her other ovary, he feels obliged to remove it, rendering her unable to bear children in the future. A lawsuit ensues. During the pretrial deposition with opposing attorney Dennis Riley, (Peter Gallagher), he answers a question against advice of counsel. The scene cuts from one individual to the other, lingering on facial expressions as we alternately see and hear Hill's arrogant outburst. Bluntly reciting his own qualifications and insidiously mocking the attorney, Hill ends his monologue saying "You ask me if I have a God complex: Let me tell you something, I am God."

In other instances of film making, the best is sometimes left unsaid. Early in the film *Live and Become* (2005, Radu Mihaileanu), a mournful soundtrack written by Armand Amar accompanies a slow camera shot that ends in a powerful, still portrait reminiscent of photos by Kevin Carter or Sebastião Salgado. Set in a Sudanese refugee camp sheltering Ethiopians displaced during the 1984 civil war, a doctor is shown gently closing the eyes of a malnourished young child cradled in his mother's arms. The camera moves between close-ups of the dying boy and the handsome, grief-ridden yet accepting gaze of his mother. There is no dialogue; the imagery is slow, the lighting is discrete. The scene sets the stage for a film about racism, love, identity, and service.

In addition to cinematic techniques such as close-ups, wide angle views, rapid cut sequences, lighting, action scenes, silent pauses or the use of violence, humour, and drama to name but a few, an actor's manner for portraying a role will also affect how viewers think and feel about a subject. Consider the smug, Scotch-sipping ICU director Dr. Butz's (played by Albert Brooks) tirades about health care finances in *Critical Care* (1997, Sidney Lumet), the slightly over the top satire of the

American health care system; or witness the restrained acting of Robin Williams as the compassionate Dr. Malcolm Sayer advocating for human experimentation with L-Dopa to treat encephalitis lethargica patient Leonard Lowe, whose rage, frustrations, and dystonia are expertly portrayed by Robert De Niro in Penny Marshall's 1990 film *Awakenings*.

Informed awareness might also include several other elements. Before projecting a movie sequence, for example, one could (1) share enthusiasm about the film, the actors, or the director, (2) explain why the particular sequence was chosen, (3) provide some background history that might help the audience connect with the sequence, (4) frame the scene in the context of the film, (5) furnish a background story about the characters represented in the scene, and (6) point out what the audience might pay particular attention to in the sequence.

In James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931), the monster, played by Boris Karloff, has been mistreated since his creation, especially by Dr. Frankenstein's fiendish assistant Fritz, who the monster ultimately kills. Able to escape, it rushes through the woods towards a nearby village. Emerging from the bushes, the monster sees little Maria, a farmer's lovely young daughter, who takes its hand and sits with it by the edge of a lake. She offers him some flowers; bringing a strange smile to his lips and making us wonder whether he isn't human after all. No longer a victimised research object, the monster has become humanised in the viewers' minds though the delicateness of the setting. As Maria and the monster sit by the lake together, each in turn toss a flower into the peaceful waters until none is left. Staring with surprised sadness at his empty hands, the monster seems to have an idea, and gathering Maria into his arms, playfully throws her into the water where she drowns. The horror! The monster has needlessly killed an innocent little girl! Whatever compassion many viewers might have felt has either disappeared, or been transformed to pity as the monster runs from the scene in dismay.

Viewers might be intrigued to learn that because Maria drowns, censors in 1931 felt the sequence was too violent. Suggestions were made to cut the scene before the monster throws her into the water, but legitimate concerns were raised that this might leave the impression that Maria had been molested: the scene was removed and not shown in the film's original theatre release. In fact, this marvellous sequence was not restored until 1986! Another interesting tidbit of information is that James Whales, the film's British director, had spent 2 years in a German prisoner of war camp during World War I. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the monster's first tormentor is called Fritz, a name allied soldiers used to refer to Germans. Finally, the word "monster" is actually an older term from the life sciences whose etymology derives from the old French *monstre* (to show or demonstrate) used to describe a person, animal or plant with a marked structural deformity [4]. With his deformed features, originally grotesque demeanor, flat head and scar-covered face, Boris Karloff's personification most certainly fits this description. *Frankenstein* is rich in scenes that might be used to illustrate ethical issues relating to research and creation, but this one in particular, especially if coupled with scenes from other movies such as *The Elephant Man* (1980, David Lynch) or *Freaks* (1932, Tod Browning), powerfully introduces audiences to discussions of monstrosity and human dignity.

7.6   Aesthetics; A Valuable Addition to the Message

Film, unlike most other art forms, is able to personalise even the most arcane philosophical commentary. Through its heterogeneous combination of image, sound, movement, storytelling and special effects, it uses the visual, aural and theatrical to offer viewers a fabricated, true-to-life, exaggerated or virtual reality that is experienced as our own, and provides images that renew emotions, create ideas, or foster thought-experiments. Having some knowledge of the filmmaking process helps establish a measure of intent in the cinematic image and additionally aids in the analysis of cinema [6]. Reflecting on how a scene's aesthetics might contribute to the effectiveness of its message, therefore, becomes a natural subject of any post-projection discussion.

Some questions one might ask are (1) how is the viewer involved: is the scene relying on the viewer's affective engagement with the visual image or with the narrative structure of the sequence? Are the viewer's personal experiences and sensitivities being engaged? (2) How was the scene composed? What is actually seen in the frame? What has been left out? (3) How are the characters framed? What does the film maker want the viewer to focus on? (4) What camera movements and angles were emphasised? Was the camera stationary, or was it moving, and if so, how quickly or slowly? Did the lighting direct attention on a particular area of the frame? Does a particular person own a certain colour? Is anything of significance happening off camera? (5) Were rapid cuts used to move between characters and objects in the scene? How does this affect the viewer's intellectual or emotive reactions to the sequence? (6) Does the scene incorporate pictorial realism or fantasy? Does this contribute to the viewer's active or passive engagement? (7) How is music, background, colour, sound effects, voiceover narratives, or dialogue used to complement the frame? Is this done to enchant, excite, sadden, mystify, horrify, alienate, or question the viewer?

For example, in *Extreme Measures* (1996, Michael Apted), Dr. Lawrence Myrick, played by Gene Hackman, is a reputable physician researcher who as it turns out, severs the spinal cords of deceived, unconsenting homeless people in order to use them as guinea pigs in his experiments with nerve regeneration. His objective is to make wheelchair bound, paralysed people able to walk again, but many of his "research subjects" have strange symptoms, remain permanently paralysed, or die as a result of his interventions. These wrongdoings are discovered by a young emergency room physician, Dr. Guy Luthan, (Hugh Grant), who in the course of his investigations is briefly made to believe he too is paralysed. The cost of quality health care, research misconduct, and the moral dilemma (is it?) of exploiting patients for the greater good, are just a few of the ethical issues that can be addressed from a scene towards the end of the film in which a white-coated Dr. Myrick defends his clandestine and unauthorised human experimentations to a bloodied, but fully recovered gun-brandishing Luthan.

A series of medium shots show a confident and perfectly in-focus Myrick. These alternate with close-ups of an obviously troubled Luthan. Occasionally, the camera

shoots Myrick perfectly, including within the frame a head shot of a young, wheelchair bound woman employee of the hospital. As the subject of his thesis transitions away from what he does to what might be in the best interest of his "patients," an out of focus Myrick is suddenly framed with the in-focus face of the woman, teary-eyed but approvingly hoping to be cured by his experiments. Bland background scenery and the absence of music help focus the viewer's attention on what is being said. At one point during Dr. Myrick's lengthy monologue, he rhetorically asks Luthan: "If you could cure cancer by killing one person, wouldn't you? Wouldn't that be brave? One person and the cancer's gone tomorrow. When you thought you were paralysed, what would you have done to be able to walk again? Anything."

7.7 Conclusion

Our perception of what is seen on camera, and experienced off-camera feeds our imaginations because cinema represents a structured realism that is experienced intuitively. Its language connects both consciously and unconsciously with viewers compelled to become active participants in the art form, if only through their hearts and minds. As a means of expression and understanding, therefore, motion pictures are a powerful vehicle with which to comment and reflect upon societal issues and the effects of individual narratives. Furthermore, the interpretation of a constructed and sometimes fabricated or virtual reality creates opportunities for self-examination, recognising that perceptions are processed by our personal experiences, memories and judgments. We search for what we do not know, and we project, as if film were a mirror, all that we are, have been and might become during our individual life journeys.

   As Jean Mitry suggests, a universe of forms and relationships are created *through* images, not illustrated *with* them. "The image is objectified perception" he writes, "supplied directly by my consciousness, it is the product of a permanent relationship between the external world and myself, between my observation and the objects I observe." [11] Cinema is thus able to reconcile reason and emotion into a visual art form that is at once entertaining and thought-provoking. What we learn from movies is readily transported into our daily lives, and for those involved in the health professions, bridges the gap between cinematographic illusion and the realities of patient care.

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Chapter 8
The House of the Dead—The Ethics and Aesthetics of Documentary

Debora Diniz

8.1 The Poem

"I wrote a poem for your film. It is called The House of the Dead," declared Bubu, a man who had been committed to an institution for the criminally insane 14 times.[1] When I read it, I understood that I was not reading a poem, I was reading a literary testimony written in 96 verses, written by an author who embodied his perspicuity and defied the sentence of criminally insane. In an update of the drama in three acts, the poem traced the destinies of anonymous characters that live in forensic hospitals. 'Of the dead without mourning bells' (Act 1—The Bells); 'The usual and—so called—legal overdoses' (Act 2—The Deaths); 'Of the lives without changes out there' (Act 3—The Forgotten) are the titles of the film's interludes, based on three characters created by Bubu in the poem. 'The Cemetery of the Living,' by the Brazilian writer Lima Barreto (1953), and 'Memories of the House of the Dead,' by the Russian Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1862), are intertexts in Bubu's allegory about the meaning of the forensic hospitals, institutions that are half way between care and punishment [2, 6].

When I first visited a forensic hospital in 2006, I had already decided to make a political documentary film about these institutions. I visited several hospitals in Brazil, talked to directors, doctors, nurses, security staff, and patients. I heard stories and collected excerpts of narratives from the patients' judicial and psychiatric

[1] Institutions for the criminally insane in Brazil are forensic hospitals where individuals who suffer from psychiatric disorders or mental illness and have broken the law are treated.

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records. Everywhere I visited I heard cases of men whose crimes had been a bicycle theft in their youth. The story of the bicycle thieves had a deep effect on me: a narrative image with the power to be permanently fixed in my memory, similar to what Susan Sontag expects to be the "bite" from a war picture [13]. Brazil has 26 institutions that shelter the criminally insane who have committed a crime, with a population of 3,800 individuals. The institution for the criminally insane in Salvador, Brazil, where the film was recorded, was founded in 1928, and is one of the oldest in the country, with a population of 158 individuals at the time of filming. My original idea was an ethnographic study of the life of the whole institution, starting with the daily routine of an old man, sick and forgotten after committing a bicycle theft.

When Bubu showed me his poem, the camera was already on and following the daily routine of the institution. The records classified Bubu as a man with a schizophrenia diagnosis and successive committals to the forensic hospital for crimes of public disorder, later translated by him "as outbreaks of *brejinhotic* madness, referring to my home town, Oliveira dos Brejinhos."[2] The records about his life report that his main offences were political campaigns and public riots against his mother, a city councilwoman in the city of Oliveira dos Brejinhos, in the countryside of Bahia state. The confrontation between the archived records and the poem caused ruptures to the initial plans for the film.

According to the judicial-psychiatric archives, Bubu was a dangerous threat to society, a schizophrenic person that should be removed from social life. His mother, relatives, and neighbors feared him, for he was a strong young man, with aggressive outbreaks. The poem, however, declared a lucidity that was thoughtful and resistant to medicalisation. Bubu described himself as "lucid and translucent." It was this overlapping between lucidity and transparency that allowed Bubu to throw himself into the film as a narrator of an unknown reality, whose characters would be his companion inmates. The poem was like a fissure in the strict regime of control of what could be said: it was a critical act of political resistance with a strong force of insurrection over a madness described as abject. The task left to me was to look for other characters in order to embody the poetic ethnography present in 'The House of the Dead.'

This is the story of what emerged from the making of the film. As a project of political documentary, there was no established script, filming lists, or characters defined by exploratory interviews. Everything I knew was limited to what the judicial-psychiatric records considered should be immortalised by the files: criminal history, highlighted by psychiatric classifications about the dangers of madness [7]. Just a few registrations escaped from the "infamous men's murmurs" as Michel Foucault puts it. Voices reduced to disconnected and minute sentences, something similar to what Foucault summarised as "speech fragments carrying the fragments of a reality which they are part of" [8, p. 206]. Rare are the files in which the individual's voice escapes from the control of the judicial-psychiatric archive and appears as it is, be it in letters, pictures or diaries. The poem, and now the film, are discursive fragments of Bubu's archives.

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[2] Oliveira dos Brejinhos is a city in Bahia state, located in the Northeast of Brazil.

The aim of this chapter is to describe how the visual narrative, more specifically the ethnographic documentary, can be an instrument of ethical approach to social questions relating to issues where there is a strong moral prejudice, as is the case of madness and crime. The images do not have the power to change reality or to directly alter oppressive regimes, but they can become indelible images in the mind of those who watch a film and offer new understandings of criminal madness, and may (in turn) stimulate political action. The images from this documentary 'The House of the Dead' are of unknown men, who do 'not exist' in ordinary social life: people without personal bonds or biographies. The documentary brings them 'to life' and 're-members' them. As Sontag suggests, I believe that "remembering is an ethical act" of nearing others' pain, afflictions, and sufferings [13, p. 90].

In the following section of this chapter, I present the film and the main ethical and aesthetic decisions involved in the production of an activist documentary. The section is organised in three acts around three characters, mirroring Bubu's poem. In the third section, I discuss some characteristics of the activist documentary, especially the ethnographic roots and the concept of a 'call for action,' and then, a discussion about some of the ethical and political tensions involved in this type of visual narrative.

8.2 Three Characters—Jaime, Antonio and Almerindo

Bubu was the first person to watch the film. "This poem is my life," he said in reaction, with a sigh that indicated his disquietude over the inclusion of Jaime and Antonio, two anonymous characters, in a story that Bubu thought to be only his. The transference of the poem to the script expanded the senses imagined by Bubu for the three acts of the film: the three chapters of his life became fragments of a destiny shared with those who enter the forensic hospitals. However, as a film-maker, the voice and the text of Bubu allowed me to search for characters that would embody the performance of the three acts: 'the deaths,' 'the bells,' and 'the forgotten.'

8.2.1 Almerindo Act 1: 'The bells'

The first character was Almerindo, a 51 year-old black man, illiterate, with an intellectual disability, without family ties, and abandoned at the hospital when he was 18 years-old after having chased a child away with a stone in order to ride the child's bicycle. His crime was defined as a joyride, preceded by aggression. Almerindo presented himself as "The Government of the United States of America" between brief chants and escapes to smoke corn husk cigarettes. He was considered to be a *social problem* for the hospital, a neologism that describes the individuals who are placed in a regime of permanent confinement. The embodiment of a *precarious life* in the fullest sense, Almerindo didn't know his name, walked barefoot and lived

without possessions or documents [4].[3] In the documentary, a public defender describes Almerindo's predicament by saying: "he is dead and will only leave this place in a casket." Almerindo faces her with uneasiness in his eyes. The camera and the questioning about his name, his family, and his plans for the future seemed to be something inopportune.

Almerindo was the person who motivated me to make the film, but also the one person who most challenged me to tell a story that could be believable to an audience that does not dissociate madness from fear. The first story I heard about these institutions for the criminally insane was the one about people who had stolen bicycles and were abandoned in mental institutions for life. There was a lament shared by these narratives: these were lost lives, lives whose afflictions were not noticed by the hegemonic norms of recognition. A few times I noticed something tantamount to a feeling of mourning in the narratives about the 'dangerous lunatics,' but the case of the bicycle thief imposed a feeling of sorrow in the person who told me the story. The bicycle lunatic provoked the threshold of classifying madness as dangerous and abject. He represents the individual who is deprived of his own history.

If Almerindo was my 'call to action' he was also a character who provoked personal anguish in me over society's distancing of 'the abject' which feeds a stigma against criminal madness. This was my inspiration to tell a particular story that blends with a political cause. There is a hegemonic understanding that would oppose my reframing a 'dangerous lunatic' as simply a bicycle thief: the culture of *fear* has madness as one of its gears, in a more and more complex system of risks and protections. This same psychiatric and penal ontology sustains the criminal lunatic as the enemy, and creates victims who could be any one of us. That image is captured by Jaime (discussed below) who appeared as the typical character to describe the psychiatric-penal environment: the dangerous lunatic who kills without memory of his actions; whose deeds and fables are blended in his reality and his records. If Almerindo was my 'sympathetic' character who called for political action, and was likely to remain in the minds of those who watch his story, Jaime provided an encounter that directly confronts the fear of dangerous madness.

8.2.2   Jaime Act 2: 'The deaths'

Jaime was one of the first patients that I 'met' through the archives. His report described him as psychotic, resistant to medication, and with a tendency to murder.

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[3] I adopt the sense of precarity proposed by Butler: "precarity designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support" [4, p. 25]. This concept is not the same as the bare life of Giorgio Agamben because the precarious life survives the effects of illegitimate political coercion. Precariousness is a human condition that goes back to interdependence for survival, "precariousness as a generalised condition relies on the conception of the body the fundamentally dependent on/conditioned by the sustained and sustainable world" [4, p. 34].

He was the only person kept in a solitary confinement cell, an indication of a spatial organisation that has its roots in forensic hospitals as prisons (as they were originally). The bars were removed from most of the forensic hospitals in Brazil, in the last update of Pinel's allegory on breaking the chains for the lunatics. However, in all of the units at least one solitary confinement cell reserved for an 'out of control violent lunatic' can be found. When I visited Jaime in his prison cell for the first time, he was catatonic from the medicines. He wandered, gesticulated, and talked to himself. His body was free to walk, but his movement was limited by the bars and by the medication.

The meeting with Jaime presented in the film happened during his first outing to get some sun after a long period of segregation in his isolated cell. His story was one of drug use and homicide. Jaime committed suicide a few days after our conversation on the patio. According to his file, before being closed by the death certificate (suicide by hanging), Jaime was accused of three homicides. Jaime embodies the 'dangerous individual' in psychiatric files, for his inmates and for the audience. He was a fabulous character, about whom the few facts known inspired creative rumors. Different from those who pose for pictures, Jaime rarely blinked when looking at the camera. He does not anticipate the image, unlike most of us who become the image of the one who sees us when posing for pictures [3]. That haughtiness (as it appears) is disturbing for those who see him on the screen. Even the torturers of Abu Ghraib prison posed for the camera before their victims, whereas Jamie's unresponsiveness to the camera gives him a sovereignty over the symbolic order imposed by filming that comes across as awkwardness [10, 12].

Jaime's appearance and his cruelty cause a rupture in the narrative. His entrance is almost unbearable: he challenges the glance of his audience; he narrates his deadly deeds without sighs of remorse. "I was out of control. I was here for a homicide. I left here, started to take medication, started to drink *cachaça*, to use drugs and then I committed another homicide," he tells us, producing immediate rejection by those who see him on the screen. The ones who can stand to continue watching the film consider Jaime a remarkable character, not because of his tragic end by suicide, but because of his disturbing glance, and by finding comfort in imagining him dead. Jaime is outside of the intelligible frame imposed by the culture of fear and I am uncertain the film is capable of provoking any different reaction from those who watch it. He represents the 'deaths without mourning bells' described by Bubu: Jaime commits suicide and his story did not cause sorrow in anyone.

Jaime does not provoke the audience's sympathy, but he gives me grounds to introduce Almerindo, the bicycle thief. Without the 'dangerous man,' Almerindo would simply be the representative of a *naïve lunatic*. It is the 'dangerous Jaime' who dissipates the suspicion that the film is a romantic fable about men abandoned in forensic hospitals. Jaime and Almerindo are the thresholds of the narrative. They are two men who represent the paradoxes of these institutions: the *dangerous lunatic* and the *naïve lunatic* living together under the same regime of segregation in which all of them collectively represent the enemies of social peace.

8.2.3 Antonio Act 3: 'The forgotten'

Antonio is a typical character in the forensic hospitals. He is black, poor, illiterate, without family ties, and with a history of madness, illegal drug use and crime. Different from other patients, he was sent from the scene of his crime directly to the hospital— his previous institutional archives gave hints about his madness. Antonio's appearance is one of the highlights of this ethnographic film. Antonio landed the main role in one of the acts in Bubu's poem. He represents madness without a place in the world; with a single lapse, he crosses the border between disorder and crime: there is no surprise seeing him quickly wearing a yellow uniform (the institutional garb for inmates).

When Antonio appears on screen, the film records a portrait of the hospital. The daily extremes are shown: parties and religious preaching, medical actions and legal rites. Universal and particular stories are captured in this picture of life within the walls of the asylums. A unique feature of the hospital in Salvador is music.[4] It accompanies the parties, softens the sunbathing on the patio, and acts as a substitute for the patients' silence. If, on the one hand, music brings the patients together without the mediation of danger and fear, on the other hand, it was an additional challenge during the film editing. The patients sang copyrighted music, and the reproduction of lyrics, no matter if sung in a lunatic's voice or by a professional singer, is under copyright. The stigma of a film packed with crazy criminals resulted in a copyright refusal, which was a significant obstacle to the editing. This is an indication of how difficult it is to resist traditional framings in a power regime, commonly portrayed in the dualism *enemies* and *us*. Such an *us* does not exist as an entity; it is a permanent moral counterpoint to any attempt of a re-description of criminal madness as non-abject to the culture of fear.

Jaime, Antonio and Almerindo are the three characters in the acts lived and imagined by Bubu about himself. Jaime is the one who kills or is killed, the individual who challenges his own existence in madness and the sense of separation in the institution for the criminally insane. 'The deaths without the bell toll,' or 'the deaths without mourning,' as described by Judith Butler while thinking about war, are embedded in Jaime [4]. Antonio is the lunatic 'without changes out there,' the one whose path means successive entries and exits from institutions for the criminally insane. Antonio's fate is to become Almerindo, a forgotten, nameless man torn by the 'usual and—so called— legal overdoses.' Almerindo is the one whose life is already dead while it is being lived—one of Foucault's *missing persons*. In Louis Althusser's words, he would be the one who is "neither dead, nor alive, not buried yet, but absent of work" [1, p. 21].

8.3 Activist Documentary Making

I believe that films are an effective means to trigger a hegemonic framing about the pain, anguish, and suffering of those who are not fully recognised as humans. There is a narrow bond between representation and humanisation that one single film will

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[4] The city of Salvador is famous in Brazil for its musical atmosphere.

never be able to challenge and change, due to recognition practices in which not all individuals are represented as humans. Butler's questions about the role of images: "Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? What makes for a grievable life?"—from a context of war in which the enemy's mourning experience is not acknowledged—are also relevant to madness [4]. For Bubu, the 'deaths without mourning bells' are a religious and existential update for the deaths that have not brought sorrow to those who could avoid them.

Along with Butler, I do not consider mourning to be the objective of political action. However, the lack of capacity to grieve the death of the one who embodies 'abject being' (the mad-criminal) illustrates how one's life can be of no value. Death can be physical, as in Jaime's case, or existential (a state of suspension awaiting physical death), as for the *missing persons* Almerindo and Antonio. Mourning is about our capacity to describe loss as the loss of somebody, according to Butler. In order to mourn, one needs to pre-exist as human; and to exist is to be visible. In her first essay on photography in the 1970s, Sontag acknowledged the question of mourning and photography as strategic to the politics of recognition in war: the images denounce our geopolitics of recognition [11]. A *missing person* is no longer human, but an inexistent being deprived of mourning.[5] Stories about mourning and grief for *missing persons* are overlooked by the hegemonic framing that keeps them under a strict regime of invisibility. Bubu's poem causes an uncomfortable disturbance to human intelligibility, which rules out madness from the horizon of reality. Turning a lunatic into a *missing person* calms, as well as feeds, the tension of culture and fear.

The regulation of what can be shown as evidence of pain; suffering or human affliction is important for the political acknowledgment of individuals or groups. According to Butler, the frame of intelligibility produces norms of recognition that develop forms of recognition: including apprehension, recognition, and acknowledgment. There are gaps to be covered. There is not a continuum among such political and ethical movements [4]. A precarious life is not easily recognised. It should be grasped or found, and it is within such an ethical movement that art can be a means to challenge the hegemonic narratives. There is an ontology of fear that defines criminal-madness as the representation of an abject enemy and ignores a precarious existence that is not a fate of madness, but the result of a political system which consistently makes the insane person vulnerable.

Bubu's poem denounces the intelligibility system that excludes and dominates him. The ruptures are produced within it. The title 'The House of the Dead,' given by Bubu, is a political accusation. We live under a "differential allocation of grievability." The cries for the dead soldier killed on the battlefield are different: his

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[5] The missing persons are also individuals who torment the history of military dictatorships in Latin America. Argentinean writer Martin Caparrós, in his work 'A quien corresponda' (2008), states that the concept of 'desaparecidos' was the most important linguistic legacy of the Castilian Spanish (the Argentinian language) for the political world [5]. The missing persons are political partisans whose bodies were never identified and whose murders were never acknowledged by the military regime. They are individuals who survive in the grief of families as 'political missing persons', but haunt history due to their lack of a body or a recognised burial.

origins matters to the acknowledgment of grief and mourning as a civic duty [4]. Sontag's restlessness about the power of war photographs and, more recently, Butler's restlessness about the framing of war images were questioned as "who counts the livable life and the grievable death?" Jaime dies without grief. Almerindo agonises over an existential affliction of the culture of fear that controls him.

The film, with the poet's voice as narrator, gives Bubu a sovereign place in the narrative—he commences the film with the writings on the sidewalk and finishes it by delivering his verdict on the house of the dead. The surprise appearance of the body at the end of the film challenges the usual sovereign character of the 'narrator's voice' by recognising Bubu's native poetic authorship. Bubu's face is the unknown embodiment of madness that accuses the audience of abandonment and segregation. Only an inmate poet could describe the forensic hospitals as 'Dante's hells' without being accused of emotive exaggeration. The reality of such an institution is embodied in the images, but is preceded by the narrator's voice, which announces the transition between acts.

An activist documentary is a visual narrative with politically driven identity and goals.[6] The concept of 'activism' is central, because images, script and editing should be politically committed. An activist documentary is of an ethnographic nature, but the film cannot be an end in itself. The ambition is to provoke the hegemonic framings of what can be said and seen. The film should be a piece of art for political action. In such an ambitious move, the film becomes a piece of the political action machine based on a tension between the arts and political action. On the one hand, the film needs to exist as a visual narrative—it should be beautiful, sensitive, and solid—and on the other hand, it should be an accessory to political action. In this exchange between art and politics, the narrative should be reasonable in order to acquire new understandings about human beings and their afflictions. The characters need to be authentic—the *missing persons* are embodied in Jaime, Antonio, Almerindo, and Bubu.

'The House of the Dead' was based on feelings of anger toward the regime of exclusion in the forensic hospitals and on feelings of sadness caused by the stories about the lunatic men and their bikes. Ethnographic films depend on a description of the social order so that they are not just exotic pieces about the pain of the other or shock-images. The film maker who documents the state of human rights has, therefore, two creative drives: not only to tell a story inspired by dense ethnography, but mainly to show violations of human rights that are shared by the characters in the story. In the end, both drives need to be strong and sensitive in order to adhere in the minds of the audience and move them to political action.

There are several challenges in the making of an activist documentary. Like textual and oral narratives, visual narratives have their own ethical and aesthetic rules for their status as a film. Images of human rights violation alone do not define an

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[6] The genesis of the documentary genre as a narrative style through images is political. This, therefore, is a thin line to be drawn within the documentary genre. A reference guide for the activist documentary (video advocacy) is produced by Witness, a non-governmental organisation specialised in making videos about human rights [9].

activist documentary: this is probably the principal misunderstanding about human rights films. An activist documentary is a film with political ambitions; however, it cannot be effective as rough images of human rights violations, as so-called 'shock-images.' In war photojournalism, this remained an historical tension: would the images of atrocities make the victims closer to or more distant from us? Which evidence would best trigger a sympathetic and concerned response in the audience about the precariousness of the lives portrayed? These are not just tactical questions about how we should move toward political action, but deeply aesthetic questions about how to represent the other in a state of deep suffering and affliction.

There is a narrow relationship between what can be portrayed and what turns out to be 'visible' in the universe of images. The forensic hospitals are institutions that are unknown to society not only because they shelter *missing persons*, but also because they are seen as necessary for public security. If 'The House of the Dead' fails to capture the attention of the audience and, therefore, create an ethical bond that allows the recognition of the vulnerability of madness, it might have another ethical role. It can be a statement of the actual suffering of all individuals who live in forensic hospitals. There is a complex relationship between our capacity to represent the pain of the other and to acknowledge it as legitimate and human. I believe that political documentaries—and art in general—can be tools to improve our sense of humanity in response to pain and human affliction, as the field of the visible and the intelligible is broadened.

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Chapter 9
Embracing the Unknown, Ethics and Dance

Philipa Rothfield

> Where you are when you don't know where you are is one of the most precious spots
> offered by improvisation. It is a place from which more directions are possible than any-
> where else. I call this place the Gap. The more I improvise, the more I'm convinced that it
> is through the medium of these gaps— this momentary suspension of reference point—that
> comes the unexpected and much sought after "original" material. It's "original" because its
> origin is the current moment and because it comes from outside our usual frame of reference.
> Nancy Stark Smith [15, p. 3]

9.1   Introduction

Nancy Stark Smith is one of the founders of 'Contact Improvisation,' a group dance
form that continually exceeds the individual plans and intentions of its participat-
ing dancers. Having too many plans can be a dangerous thing in contact because it
interferes with being alive to the present moment. At its best, the unfolding of
Contact Improvisation is a surprise to its participants and audience alike. That is its
joy. The New York choreographer, Susan Rethorst also speaks of a certain kind of
unfamiliarity with regard to "that stranger, the unmade dance" [12, p. 28]. For
Rethorst, the work of choreography is, "not a well lit activity; decisions happen in
the semi-darkness… Staying with nerves of steel in that poorly lit place, not in
spite of its lack of light, or any other lack, but for its own singular reality…" [12,
p. 29]. Improviser Eva Karczag speaks of the disorientation that occurs: "There are
situations where you're totally thrown out because you've changed, you've become
a little different and how can that continue to support what you've done before" [6,
p. 49]. What these dancers share is a state of not-knowing, not as a temporary blip
in the course of knowledge building but as a requirement, a pre-condition for the

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art of making dance. The point that they all make is that putting themselves into a state of physical not-knowing is (kin)aesthetically productive, necessary even.

There are two perspectives on this process: one, the subjectivity of the dancer (which includes the dancer's awareness); and two, the body that creates. They are intertwined, one facilitates the other. Nancy Stark Smith's reference to 'the Gap' is an acknowledgement of the first aspect, which I call the dancer's state of not-knowing. Susan Rethorst uses the metaphor of light to depict the choreographer's groping towards the creative moment. In both cases, the artist places herself in the dark so as to allow something to occur. The second perspective belongs to the body, as the site of (kin)aesthetic creativity. It's the body that produces the sought after original material, the body which renders the dancer "a little different," bringing subjectivity along in its wake. According to these artists, the subject-dancer needs to make room for the body by getting out of the way.

Deborah Hay's *In the Dark* (2010) encapsulates these two elements and puts them on stage for all to see. Three soloists have spent months preparing to get up in front of an audience. They do not know what they are going to do. This a pre-requisite of *In the Dark*, that the performer must remain in the dark at each and every moment of the dance, an attitude which is in stark contrast to the ballet dancer's relation to her familiar repertoire. Hay's dancers are perpetually poised on the abyss of their own cultivated ignorance. By putting themselves into that state, a certain kind of space is made for something new to emerge. *In the Dark* allows an audience to watch dancers take their not-knowing into movement, to use it as a means to create.[1] Audience and performer discover together that which follows. Fiona Bryant taps a cowboy boot on the floor. Each tap has its own singular rhythm as if commanded to differ from the timing of the previous tap. Bryant's face is intense but open.

Hay seeks the body as the principal agent in her choreography. She disperses the sovereignty of consciousness by invoking the notion of a body in constant flux—"23 trillions cells changing all at once."[2] Her choreography challenges the performer to resist his/her habits, while remaining in a state of not-knowing, balancing "at the edge of the unknown" as Eva Karczag would put it [7, p. 48]. In short, the distinctive tenor of Hay's choreography challenges and occupies the dancer's subjectivity, while trusting the body to compose the dance.

The idea that subjectivity is no longer central and that the body holds the key is not new. Nietzsche is renowned for preferring the body to consciousness, and for looking towards corporeal becoming as the means by which life can be affirmed. His notion of (self) overcoming could be thought of in relation to the subject-dancer's being in the dark. But it's Spinoza who takes this odd couple—the 'creative body' and the 'subject in darkness'—into an explicitly ethical domain. His famous dictum that "we don't know what a body can do" identifies the twin elements discussed above: the subject who doesn't know, in relation to a body which acts. However, it is one thing to acknowledge that dimming the lights on subjectivity can be aesthetically fruitful, another to call it *good*. Spinoza's understanding of goodness introduces an ethical perspective on dance. This is made possible through a common focus on the body's creativity, in movement. For Spinoza, goodness is a matter of creative

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[1] For my review of *In the Dark*, see [13].

[2] Personal communication, 1998.

self-differentiation, according to which a body develops through its own activities. A body that becomes better, changes for the good. This in turn produces joy in the heart of the subject. Adapting Spinoza somewhat, we might say that joy is the mark of the dance well done, of a body that surpasses itself in action. This is something that dancers intuitively understand, for dance is their art and the body their wherewithal.

In this chapter, I claim that the activity of dancing affirms Spinoza's ethics. The joy inherent in the dance well done is entirely compatible with Spinoza's conception of the good. Not only does dance affirm the value of corporeal activity, dancers are more willing than most to tolerate not-knowing in the name of their art. They are willing to do what it takes to allow the body to excel. They are experienced in allowing the body to come to the fore by way of 'backgrounding' their own sovereign subjectivity.[3] Spinoza wants to affirm the body's achievements, as a momentary accomplishment. This resonates with dance to the extent that a body aims to make something of itself, to become something more in movement. Despite the desire to improve, however, there is no established pathway to the good. This is because 'we don't know what a body is capable of,' even our own. In this respect, the body is the teacher.[4] Dancers allow for that. They look to the body as the medium of their art. While Spinoza's ethics offers no formula for success, I want to suggest that Spinoza might nonetheless acknowledge the dancer's endeavours as a mode of ethical improvisation.

9.2   Spinoza's Ethics

Spinoza puts his faith in what a body does. His ethics is centred upon the relation between the uniqueness of a body (its essence) and its activity (what a body does). The more a body expresses its essence in action the better. This is what Spinoza means by the good. Spinoza's key claim is the idea that the good inheres in the body's increasing power. At first glance, the enhancement of power appears an unlikely mark of the ethical, for what exactly is *good* about becoming more power-ful? Much depends upon how we understand power. In Spinoza's case, power inheres in the body's activities, in what a body does and how that relates to its essence. While essences don't change, what does change is the extent to which a body draws upon its essence by way of its own agency. The more agency a body expresses, the greater its power. Ethics is thus about empowerment in the singular rather than domination over others. The challenge of this way of thinking lies in its refusal to fix any particular *content* for the notion of the good.[5] Rather, the good arises as a difference in *this* body, through *its* becoming active.

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[3] Drew Leder offers a characterization of the typical sovereign subject who experiences his/her body mostly as an absence [8]. The idea that the dancer reverses this position through 'backgrounding' subjectivity is reflected in Leder's exemption of dancing from his general claim that the body is liminal to our lived experience. In other words, the dancer's body enjoys a corporeal prominence not usually felt.

[4] Deborah Hay's book, *My Body, The Buddhist* looks to the body as the source [5].

[5] This is where Spinozan ethics differs from moral principles that depend upon universal notions of the good.

However, it's not *just* this body. Ethics typically concerns relations between individuals. In Spinoza's case, it's about encounters between bodies. Bodies are big and small, simple and complex. When a body encounters another, two possibilities arise. A body may become more or less powerful as a result of the encounter. Deleuze, in commenting on Spinoza, writes: "The good is when a body directly compounds its relation with ours, and, with all or part of its power, increases ours" [2, p. 22]. The good arises from the singularity of this body, in its encounter with another. It emerges because of the body's particular qualities, which enable it to become more capable, more powerful and because that particular body expresses those qualities in action. Of course, the encounter may go the other way, producing a decrease in power as a lessening of capacity. Any increase in power leads to joy, and conversely, any decrease leads to sadness. Power grows through the body's increasing ability to act [16, p. 116]. This is not because some external value is satisfied. Rather, it has to do with what a particular body becomes as a manifestation of its own singular essence. This is its joy, the joy of expressing a greater sense of agency in the world.

The idea of a dynamic increase or decrease of power thus poses the good (and bad) in relation to change. Spinoza looks at the notion of change through his theory of affect: "By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections [16, p. 70]." The notion of affect represents those changes embedded within corporeal becoming, that is, when one bodily state becomes another.[6] The ethical moment in Spinoza's thought arises as a distinction between *kinds* of becoming. When a body encounters another, it can be affected in one of two ways: either actively or passively. Actions are a matter of bodily agency, whereas passions are external in origin. Passions act upon us, they produce passive affections. The distinction between active and passive corporeal qualities (affections) turns on the different role that each body plays in the encounter. Active and passive affections are relational and event-based. Whether a body is active or passive is not fixed for all time but depends upon the relation between what a body does and its particular powers. There is a sense in which this power is fixed: for every body has a unique and unchanging essence. What changes is the body's expression of that essence, whether active or passive.

Deleuze speaks of a body's power in terms of capacity; the capacity "to be affected" [3, p. 93]. Although the capacity itself is stable (constant), a body's 'affections' will vary, depending upon what a body does, its behavioural qualities. He writes that, "the power of acting (or force of existing) 'increases' and 'diminishes' according to the proportion of active affections contributing to the exercise of this power at any moment" [3, p. 93]. This is a question of agency. To discern a body's activity or passivity, we must seek the corporeal encounter. The encounter between bodies is an event. Something happens in the exchange between bodies, whereby each participating body expresses or undergoes a dynamic corporeal change. This

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[6] Notice also that, for Spinoza, changes in the body also produce shifting modes of thought. Spinoza resisted Descartes' mind/body distinction through arguing for one substance. The two qualities of substance, thought and extension, are two attributes of a single ontology. Thus, the enhancement of the one quality implies a correlative enhancement of the other.

is where the qualitative difference between active and passive affections arises, depending upon whether a body acts or is acted upon (suffers action). To actively participate in an encounter—to exhibit bodily agency—is to increase one's power inasmuch as a 'new' activity has been performed by this body.[7] Conversely, an encounter that is wholly caused by another body is also an event but one which is not due to my body's activity. To that extent, it represents a diminishing power of activity on my part. The encounter is thus always conceived as expressing a qualitative difference: either a body acts for itself or it is acted upon.

These qualities may appear in quick succession. For example, Ramsay Burt refers to an event that occurred within a Steve Paxton piece entitled *Magnesium* (1972) [1]. One performer (Curt Siddall) dropped another (Nancy Stark Smith). According to Burt, instead of trying to take responsibility for a 'mistake,' Siddall allowed the body of the other to deal with the encounter, to find a safe way to roll onto and over the ground. This happened quickly. Burt argues that the performer's getting out of the way enabled the bodies involved to respond in the moment and to take the lead. In other words, Siddall did not try to consciously 'fix' the situation. Rather, he allowed Stark Smith to negotiate her own body's dynamic response. Burt speaks of the body's "relatively autonomous motor actions" as something beyond conscious control [1]. He draws on the distinction between the dancer's subjectivity (as conscious control) and the body's skilful expression, arguing that the latter came into play through this encounter. We might say that, for Burt, the body which rolls out of the fall becomes more capable in virtue of the encounter. If the first moment involves a passive affection—being dropped—the second moment consists of a creative corporeal act—an arm cradles the back as its rolls across the floor. Bodies in dynamic relation, flickering between active and passive affections, following the body's lead. *Australian Rules Football* could be seen as a series of active and passive affections: gaining the ball, being tackled, climbing onto another's back to get the ball, falling down, becoming injured, avoiding a punch and so on. The qualities of active and passive affections belong to each body in turn, depending upon whether or not that body manages to exert an active agency within the ongoing context of the game.

Counter-balancing is another instance of dynamic corporeal activity. In the counter-balance, two or more bodies combine to create movement which neither body alone could achieve. Two dancers hold hands and lean out: the weight of the other body 'counter-balances' each individual body. The challenge of this work is to deal with the subtle shifts of weight that inevitably arise. Let us conjecture the momentary shift as a passive affection, as the work of an external body. The challenge for each participating body then is to actively manage this shift and not destroy the counter-balance. In the course of the counter-balance, bodies have to find new means of activity (micro-adjustments) to manage shifting relationships. A particularly challenging version of the counter-balance occurs when the centre of gravity (formed between two bodies) shifts. For example, two dancers lean out holding onto each other's arms and walk in turn along a single line.[8] To walk is to shift a mutually

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[7] Deleuze underscores the importance of the new by arguing that activity is the only "real, positive and affirmative form of our capacity to be affected" [3, p. 225].

[8] This example is taken from the work of Russell Dumas (see Artist Profiles).

created centre of gravity while actively managing the unpredictable changes inherent in this volatile situation. A body that creatively and actively manages the shift could be said to increase its agency. If the action fails (as it often does), then the counter-balance is lost. The body here does not increase its capacity but merely reacts to a change of circumstance. We might think of the body created within the counter-balance as a single entity composed of two constituent bodies. Thought as a unified body, the question of empowerment devolves upon whether or not this body-complex exerts an increasing agency within the course of the movement.

The 'attainment' of active affections produces a shift from dependence upon external causes to a mode of corporeal agency. The body that can do things exhibits an active mode of affection, whereas the body that depends upon the activity of another inhabits the domain of passive affections. This implies a certain conception of the good individual. Deleuze puts it thus: "The individual will be called *good* (or free, or rational, or strong) who strives, insofar as he is capable, to organize his encounters, to join with whatever agrees with his nature, to combine his relation with relations that are compatible with his, and thereby to increase his power. For goodness is a matter of dynamism, power and the composition of powers" [2, p. 23]. This dynamic conception of the good situates ethics in the very gap of change, in the body's becoming otherwise in combination with other bodies. What changes is the way in which a body exhibits its singular essence, the extent to which a body actively expresses its power. The good thus pertains to the particular body. It is situated in the moment and felt through the dynamic of corporeal becoming.

A body which moves entirely due to external causes expresses a passive affection and to that extent 'diminishes' its powers. Although there is an emphasis on what a body does as a matter of its own agency, it is important to acknowledge that bodies can enhance one another in myriad ways. Deleuze describes the joy that a body may feel as it passively combines with another to create something more [3, p. 239]. This is encapsulated within teaching at its best—the good teacher is the one who can facilitate the enhancement of power in the body of the student. Such a body becomes more powerful because it expresses (engages in) a new form of activity. Perhaps we could look at dance training in ethical terms, such that goodness arises in the body that becomes more capable by way of its own activities.

9.3 Training and Technique

Dancers often talk about technique as something a body 'has,' as if training inculcates technique in the body. Spinoza's view is somewhat different. Each body has a singular essence. This is fixed. While the body's capacity to be affected doesn't change, what does change is the expression of that capacity within the encounter. A body increases or decreases its power either through acting or through 'suffering' action. Gains are not permanent but are dynamically manifest within the specificity of each and every encounter. What does this mean for the notion of training which tends to be thought of as a cumulative asset?

Training promises an ethical horizon of corporeal empowerment. Thought of as corporeal capacity-building, training could be conceived as an ethical affair, an organised encounter between bodies which aims to prepare a body to dance well. If the encounter enhances a body's power to act, we would say, along with Spinoza, that this manifests as the good. The ethical question turns upon whether facility, according to a particular technique, enhances this body's ability to dance in the particular instance. Certain styles and approaches towards dance commit to a specific character of work. This is a cultural matter, a question of aesthetic and kinaesthetic taste, culture and tradition, whereby certain qualities and modes of activity are selected and made available according to the concerns of the particular field. Training in this context is oriented towards a given sphere of kinaesthetic and aesthetic values which endures via body-to-body modes of transmission. So the question is whether the skills embedded in a tradition could be said to increase a particular body's 'power of acting.' In a sense, this is a variable state of affairs, a question whose answer is embedded in the event. Only the dancing will tell. This may be difficult to determine in the particular instance, as Deleuze notes: "And no doubt, when one goes into the details, the situation becomes more and more complicated. To begin with, we have many constituent relations, so that one and the same object can agree with us in one respect and disagree with us in another" [2, p. 33]. Perhaps we could think of training in idealised terms, as a process which, at its best, leads to skilful dancing, and which produces the virtuosic dancer.

Virtuosity is dancerly facility expressed in action. While the specificity of tradition and technique pre-determines the kind of power a body may acquire, it could be argued that a body which acquires and demonstrates this power nonetheless increases *its* own power. This capacity is sometimes evoked by virtuosic dancers in the subtlest of ways, in the pause before movement ensues, the anacrusis of action. The Australian choreographer Russell Dumas sometimes speaks of keeping open possibilities in relation to dancing phrase material.[9] The point is not to foreclose the ensuing movement by committing a body too soon, but to suggest a horizon redolent with possibility. The power of suggestion is an activity of the body. It takes a plastic, evocative skill set to suggest the possibility of more at each moment. In this sense, the virtuosic body is not victim to the dictates of choreography but rather dances in excess of requirement. The virtuosic dancer here is the one who can summon and keep alive a moveable feast of kinaesthetic potentiality. The ethical arises because the virtuosic body manages its encounters—with the floor, over time, in space, in relation to constituent body parts and functions—*actively*, so as to manifest a breadth of activity.

Dumas recalls Margot Fonteyn's ability to evoke the force of an arabesque way beyond the limits of her actual body. This power of suggestion is made manifest within the dancing. It is a demonstration of ethical virtuosity which produces joy in the dancer and audience alike. The increase of power is, here, the child of restraint, a mature subtlety that does more by doing less. In traditional Korean dance, improvisation is both valued and kept alive within fluid relations between the dancer and

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[9] Erin Manning writes of preacceleration in a related manner, as the space of creative possibility opened up within the dancing [9].

the musician. Virtuosity resides in the interstices of this relation, in the elastic moment of timing. This may be felt in the multiplicity of momentary relations felt between the foot and the floor; as the foot feels for the floor and the floor embraces the foot. I have watched Korean audiences applaud and acknowledge master dancers' exquisite sense of timing, and have been personally counselled as to the merits of waiting for the moment to commit; for time is the existential domain within which the 'power of action' is made manifest. Each tradition and style will have its own candidates and features, horizons of master activity that enable a body to enhance its capacity for being affected at the level of action/dance. This is not fully determinable in advance and yet may ensue from the inculcation of technique in a body. Virtuosity is ethical potential made manifest.

9.4   Conclusion

Spinoza offers a dynamic conception of corporeal becoming in terms of the increasing or decreasing power of action, felt in the passing moment. The world changes and we change within it. A body that becomes more powerful by way of its own activity is a joy to behold. This is the lure of performance. We see a body risking itself in the moment. I heard recently of a ballet dancer who had fallen off her point shoes in the middle of a show, suffering a flash of anxiety and fear, then getting up to finish the dance. The audience applauded her recovery. With Spinoza, we might acknowledge her courage in ethical terms, for she didn't know how to go on, yet found a way. Kim Sargent-Wishart speaks of the improviser's need to open up the space of improvisation, and that this raises a question for the subject-dancer: how to open oneself up to that space of possibility. This is where the dancer's not-knowing comes to the fore. Anneke Hansen speaks of 'vacating yourself' when performing. Likewise, for Sara Rudner, "When it came right down to it, and you were there to do the dance, the best thing that happened was the body took over and the dance happened" [14]. Rudner brings to the fore the two elements I have been emphasising: the dancer's not-knowing and a body that leads. The subject's ethical task is to accept not-knowing as a strategic orientation so as to make way for the body's active enhancement.

Ethical development requires a kind of beginner's mind. Intuitively grasped by many dancers and practised by many good teachers, it implies that we don't know beforehand what will work in the particular instance. Some dance styles, such as postmodern dance, undermine the knowing subjectivity of the dancer. Russell Dumas' postmodern choreography constantly challenges his dancers to put aside their knowing. He writes for example, that: "This practice involves distracting the conscious mind with detailed complex physical activities. In the best scenario, the mind abdicates control over how these tasks are achieved within the body… As trust and confidence in this body wisdom increases, development occurs 'behind your back.' And so the dancer matures as an artist" [4]. But there is no guarantee that a body will become active in the moment. The best a dancer can do is to 'organise' her encounters towards an increase of agency.

Spinoza's ethics is challenging. It dethrones the sovereign subject, eschews universal principles of good and bad, focussing instead on each body as the source and site of goodness. To take up Spinoza's challenge then is not merely to set aside our pre-conceptions of the good, it is to acknowledge that the good is a variable and momentary quality. To affirm this form of the good is to take joy in the corporeal moment. If we don't know what a body can do, we can nonetheless embrace the experiment and follow its lead. This is Nietzsche's hope: "We are experiments, let us also want to be them" [11, p. 457]. Nothing to hold onto, striving nevertheless to maximise the body's active affections, dancing could be conceived as an ethical endeavour *par excellence.* Deleuze speaks of the need to concretely try in the midst of our not-knowing, to open ourselves to the endeavour [3, p. 225]. The term 'concrete' requires more than attitude however. 'Concrete trying' is a form of attitude made manifest in practice. It represents a body aiming to raise itself to a higher power, hoping for that flash of joy that accompanies the dance well done. Here today, gone tomorrow, we might well agree with Nietzsche that, "slipp'ry ice is paradise, as long as dancing will suffice" [10, p. 14].

Artists' Profiles

Russell Dumas is the Artistic Director of *Dance Exchange*, Australia. He has performed with many European Ballet companies, including the *Royal Ballet* (UK). He also danced with *Trisha Brown Company* and *Twyla Tharp and Dancers* in the USA. Dumas' choreography is highly complex and original, requiring a great variety of skills on the part of his dancers.

Deborah Hay is Director of *Deborah Hay Dance Company*. She has over the years, developed a distinctive choreographic style which is perceptually focussed, score-based yet does not predetermine how a dancer will physically look when following the choreography.

Anneke Hansen has been creating dance works in New York City since 2002. Her work is concerned with dancing and dancers and strives to create meaning through evocative, sensuous, and sophisticated movement. Questions of what the body and mind are capable of, in terms of coordination, texture, and timing, are central to the studio explorations that serve as the source for performance works.

Eva Karczag has performed as a member of *Trisha Brown and Dancers*. Her performance work and her teaching are informed by dance improvisation and mindful body practices (including T'ai Chi Ch'uan and Qi Gong), the Alexander Technique (certified teacher), Ideokinesis, and Yoga.

Steve Paxton emerged from the Judson Dance Theatre in New York to become one of the founders of Contact Improvisation, a collective mode of improvisation which has spread throughout the world.

Susan Rethorst is a New York based choreographer. Her work has been presented at the Museum of Modern Art, The Kitchen Center, Dance Theater Workshop,

Danspace Saint Marks, The Downtown Whitney Museum, among others, as well as at various dance theatres, universities, and festivals throughout the U.S.

Sara Rudner is one of the leading figures in American postmodern dance. She was a principal dancer in *Twyla Tharp and Dancers*, and has been choreographing, teaching and showing her own work for a number of years.

Kim Sargent-Wishart has trained in Body Mind Centering with Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen. She is completing a PhD exploring relationships between embodiment, emptiness and creative acts through the lenses and practices of Body-Mind Centering® and Tibetan Buddhism.

Nancy Stark Smith is a founding member of Contact Improvisation and a co-editor of *Contact Quarterly*. She works extensively with Steve Paxton.

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Chapter 10
Burning Daylight: Contemporary Indigenous Dance, Loss and Cultural Intuition

Rachael Swain

10.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the choreographic process developed to create the intercultural dance theatre production *Burning Daylight*, produced in Broome in the far North of Western Australia between 2004 and 2006. The large-scale outdoor, dance-video production, produced by Marrugeku, premiered in Broome in August 2006, was presented by Zürcher Theater Spektakel in Zurich, Switzerland in 2007 and toured nationally in Australia in 2009.

In reflecting on community research and rehearsal processes I will propose that, for new forms of intercultural-Indigenous storytelling to emerge, alternative approaches to 'listening' are required. The chapter presents a practice-based approach to new forms of intercultural-Indigenous storytelling that emerge from new and nuanced approaches to 'listening,' practiced by theatre makers and audiences alike. It outlines a collaborative intercultural process for performance making in a series of case studies presented from my perspective as director of the work. Drawing on an analysis of preparations and rehearsals, I outline a method for actively 'listening to place' and community in remote Indigenous Australia which is discussed as 'Listening to Country.'[1] This aim

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Warning This chapter contains references to deceased people that may be sensitive to some Aboriginal people from communities in Western Arnhem Land and The Kimberley. Please consult with knowledgeable local people before sharing it with members of these communities.

[1] 'Country': (Ab English) an area of land formations and at times stories which a group or individual may have custodianship over. Indigenous leader Professor Mick Dodson explains that, "When we talk about traditional 'Country'… we mean something beyond the dictionary definition of the word. For Aboriginal Australians… we might mean homeland, or tribal or clan area and we might mean more than just a place on the map. For us, Country is a word for all the values, places, resources, stories and cultural obligations associated with that area and its features. It describes the entirety of our ancestral domains" [1].

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of the chapter is to present a model that identifies an 'ethics of listening' in intercultural-Indigenous art making and 'culture making.' As a multi-vocal attempt to document and archive artistic and cultural processes and outcomes the chapter includes descriptive accounts from the subjective view of the artists, directly reflecting on complex processes leading to and emerging from the rehearsal room.

10.2   Marrugeku

Marrugeku is an intercultural performance company working at the nexus of Indigenous and non-Indigenous experience, creating large-scale dance theatre productions in remote Indigenous communities. Each production tours to remote communities, urban Australian and international arts festivals. The work enables the Company to explore cultural difference and, by extension, parallel issues of intersubjectivity, which share some commonalities with the discourse of reconciliation. Marrugeku's current base in Broome, Western Australia, is geographically and culturally located in close proximity to South East Asia.[2] As a consequence mapping Asian Indigenous experience in remote Australia has become central to our practice.

Marrugeku's dance theatre is negotiated with Indigenous elders, community leaders and law men and women, created wholly within Indigenous communities, and practiced by a devising cast, three quarters of whom identify as Indigenous. The Company works in an Indigenous frame of cultural production that is also an intercultural frame, in a state of continuous negotiation. I have adopted the term 'intercultural-Indigenous' to describe the Company and its work, which Maxwell describes as follows:

> Marrugeku has made a decision that an ethically appropriate way to access and to make art with those resources requires that the company place itself in those "remote communities" for extended periods, to negotiate and observe protocols, and to steep themselves in the sensibilities in which those resources have developed. The company in a real sense, becomes part of the place in which it is working, and this allows the work to speak to, with and for the concerns of that place. Rather than community being a fixed idea to be placed into a relationship with art, place, artistic and ethical commitment are brought together to produce community, a community of which Marrugeku is part. [4, p. 31]

10.3   *Burning Daylight* Production Outline

Burning Daylight takes its inspiration from journalist's descriptions of the bar scene in Broome around the turn of the last century where it was described as an 'Asian Wild West.' The performance re-graphs this into the present, setting the

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[2] Marrugeku was based in Kunbarllanjnja, Western Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, from 1995 till 2002; and has been based in Broome, in the north of Western Australia since 2003.

Fig. 10.1 *Burning Daylight* Zürcher Theater Spektakel 2007. From *left to right* Antonia Djiagween, Sermsah Bin Saad, Yumi Umiumare, Katia Molino, Dalisa Pigram, Owen Maher (Photo: Christian Altorfer)

production in the streets outside a notorious pub on a Broome-style karaoke night. Inspired also by the 'constructed' or 'painted world' of the filmic and photographic style of Australian artist Tracey Moffatt as well as by her use of cultural subversion of genre, *Burning Daylight* takes place on a site which is part 'Noodle Western' set, and part contemporary remote town transit zone (Fig. 10.1).

A group of young people are kicked out of a bar around closing time. A series of contemporary dance scenes unfold expressing the friction, cultural collisions and local humour in the part of Broome known as 'The Bronx.' A lone cowboy comes to town, stirring up the ghosts of the past and as the long night unravels he provokes the street gang into a surreal collision of past and present in the darkest hours.

Burning Daylight, which means 'wasting time' in local Aboriginal English,[3] uses popular culture forms of karaoke song and video, rap and rock as well as contemporary dance to explore the experience of young people in Broome.

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[3] Australian Aboriginal English languages vary regionally. Broome Aboriginal English is informed by the town's history of immigration and contains words in a variety of languages as well as Australian Pidgin.

10.4   Contemporary Dance in a Context of Loss and Forced Removal

The Broome Indigenous community's particular relationship to place is forged in part by the history of atrocities carried out by the Western Australian Government's so called 'Protector of Aborigines.' With the adoption of the WA Aborigines Act in 1905, the Chief Protector was made legal guardian of every Aboriginal and 'half-caste' child under 16, giving him and his staff far-reaching powers to remove children from their families. "I would not hesitate for one moment to separate any half-caste from its aboriginal mother, no matter how frantic her momentary grief might be at the time. They soon forget their offspring" (quoting 'Travelling inspector' James Isdell [2, p. 11]).

In 1937, the first Commonwealth-State conference on 'native welfare' adopted 'assimilation' as national policy, on the grounds that, "The destiny of the natives of aboriginal origin, but not the full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption" [2, p. 11]. The children who were removed from their families under the 1905 Act (and subsequent legislation) are known as 'The Stolen Generations.' The 'Bringing Them Home' Report on the findings of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander children from their families estimates that "not one Indigenous family has escaped the effects. Most families have been affected in one or more generations by the removal of one or more children. Nationally, the Inquiry concludes that between one in three and one in ten Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities between 1910 and 1970" [2, p. 4].

These genocidal policies resulted in loss of connection to parenting, family, the practices of song, dance and language and the transmission of Indigenous knowledge systems and direct ceremonial connection to country. The policies had far reaching consequences in Broome and the surrounding areas. Large numbers of forced removals in Broome and the Kimberley area resulted in the loss of many traditional songs, dances and stories and with these losses, connection to country took on very specific meanings. Further to this was the complex mixing of cultures under government control that came about with Broome's exemption from the White Australia policy due to the pearl shell industry. Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian and Filipino workers were allowed to enter Broome but as indentured workers their lives were strictly controlled by the Federal and State governments. The complex and painful history of these issues meant that the development of a dramaturgy and choreography for *Burning Daylight,* grew out of very particular relationships to country, steeped in loss, removal, deportation and the ghostly presence of multiple cultural traditions and stories. 'Listening to Country' and stories in Broome, has taken the form of 'listening' for multiple memories and multiple losses. This listening requires an understanding of an ephemeral 'memory of tradition' as a valid and important place to create from as an artist.

The creation of a contemporary intercultural dance practice in an Indigenous context of loss is the subject of this chapter. I propose the complex terrain of

contemporary Indigenous art generates its own meanings and own audiences as it develops. The following Case Studies draw on rehearsal notes from the very early research stages of *Burning Daylight*.

10.4.1   Case Study: Researching Burning Daylight

In early 2004 in the wet *season* heat, Dalisa Pigram, co-Artistic Director of Marrugeku, and I were researching our proposed new production for the Company. We used the quiet of the wet season to visit elders, traditional owners of both sides of Rubibi (the Broome peninsular), cultural workers, young people and other local artists as we attempted to bring the community consultation to a point where it was possible to begin rehearsals.

The Rubibi Native title case before the State Court was at the forefront of everyone's minds, effecting modes of thinking about culture and ownership as well as access to story and country. Issues of major industrial land development, the traditional stories for the country that was being claimed and the dislocation of the Broome youth from their cultural practices were constantly brought up in conversations with the elders.

Despite the urgency we felt to gather the narrative content for the production, there was no going against 'Broome time.' The rhythm of our work had to stay in tune with the wet season heat, the rains, Native Title Court sessions and there was no time for 'business' when the tides were right for fishing. As stories, observations and cultural perspectives were put forward, we filtered the propositions through our perspectives as theatre makers. Our task was to decide which memories to summon forth, which ghosts to stir and which were best left to the elders, social workers or native title lawyers to deal with. From Marrugeku's perspective, there were multiple questions to process with both practical and conceptual implications: What could the position of local traditional myth narratives be in a contemporary work reflecting Broome now? How might we stimulate and develop a contemporary dance language that reflects Broome's multi-ethnic nature? What connection might this have with the Yawuru dance forms of the traditional owners of Rubibi? What position would memory take in the piece? How far could we push issues of land development in the light of the native title claim without losing the project to local and national politics? How could the piece bridge the gap between the concerns of the elders and the concerns of the young?

Patrick Dodson, senior Yawuru Law man and Traditional Owner, and Dalisa's 'Pop' had told us to make a cake and come around for a cup of tea on Sunday morning to discuss the project. We sat around for some time with Pat and family members while they relaxed after working on the block in the early morning cool. Slowly, all in good time, we got around to the project.

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(continued)

Patrick has the habit of replying tangentially, or answering a question of mine with another question. I focus on the detail of his comments, even when I don't understand their relevance at the time, knowing from a decade of work in Arnhem Land, an answer to a question from a law man can reveal meaning to you over time, once you are ready to understand it.

After we outlined fledgling ideas for the new work, Patrick responded by telling us there are significant stories for Rubibi, the Broome peninsular, which are 'inside stories' which we can't know but which will underpin what we do with the project. They are Bugarrigarra, The Dreaming, creation stories. He also said there are stories which sit on the top of those, which are currently public and we can know. This idea that there are stories which underpin our work but which we cannot know as uninitiated, young or non-Indigenous community members is central to my developing ideas about appropriate dramaturgy for contemporary Indigenous performance. The role of a cultural consultant like Patrick connected to an experimental dance theatre process such as this is to know the stories on our behalf and to steer us in the right direction. Our task, in part, is to listen for what we are *not* being told.

We proposed the development of a new dance theatre language inspired by Broome's multi ethnic-indigenous histories. Patrick responded by talking about the current status of the native title case. He said the government are trying to tell the Yawuru they don't exist. In the court case this week the state government's lawyers had said that the Yawuru men were impotent which was why the Yawuru woman slept with the Malay, Japanese and Chinese. He talked at length about how the government can't handle the cultural complexity which has been navigated by the local community for generations. Patrick reiterated the stories I have heard from some of the elders about the so-called Protector of Aborigines making Asian-Indigenous marriages illegal through the cohabitation laws. Despite this, life carried on behind closed doors and there are now many 'mixed breed'[4] offspring in Broome. The government has informed them that they have lost their culture and their right to native title. Our mixing of traditional and contemporary dance and the intercultural dance forms we are researching has to sit within these issues. This is Patrick's answer to my question.

Patrick went on to discuss the '12-Mile' boundary fence, built 12 miles from the centre of Chinatown and how the local mob[5] were told they couldn't enter town without a permit stating they were working for a white man; a system which was practiced in much of Western Australia including Perth, until the late 50s. This forced the Yawuru to move their ceremonial dance grounds from the centre of Broome out beyond the 12-mile boundary.

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[4] 'Mixed breed': (Broome Aboriginal English) People of multi-ethnic descent.

[5] 'Mob': (Ab English) A group of people.

(continued)

Now the government is informing the Yawuru that they have no right to native title in Broome because they do not have continuous ceremonial connection with their land. Patrick scoffs at the Government offering money for land, saying the issue is not money at the moment, the issue is extinguishment of Yawuru culture. The very existence of Yawuru dance is therefore currently a volatile political issue in the community and by extension politicises our choreographic process.

The days were passing and Dalisa and I were still trying to find our way into the core concepts of the show. We drove round Broome, pulling into driveways, slowly ambling up to houses (always displaying an air of 'Broome-time'—no rush despite our urgency). We wandered around air-conditioned supermarkets waiting to bump into people, sat down with old girls[6] (often accompanied by their daughters) to introduce the idea of us working in town. We made and remade appointments trying to fit in with the busy schedules of law men and women. We made cakes, brought diabetic biscuits, ran errands, brought around fish or other bush tucker after fishing trips and handed out money for groceries.

Dalisa and I sifted through the breadth of the information, searching for interpretive pathways into the material whilst we waded through the suspicion brought about by the conditions of the native title case. In retrospect the key to actually managing to complete a production in this climate was that we allowed ourselves to take on board the complexities without needing to resolve them outside of our practice, knowing that we would process the material 'on the rehearsal floor' in the detail of improvisation, character, choreography and design. Art making has always been a site for paradoxes, for poetic and multifaceted expression that can contain both a personal and a political gaze. This lengthy research process took me five trips to Broome before we could contemplate beginning rehearsals in May 2004.

10.5   Negotiating the Contemporary in the Native Title Era

In the context of Australian land rights and native title legislation, questions regarding the representations of the past in relation to present conditions have acquired a wide-ranging social, political and economic significance. Broome's culturally complex, and at times painful history, and its current interrogation under the Native Title Act was clearly having a significant impact on our work. Static definitions of culture seemed to be eroding the community's confidence in the ways it had negotiated shared ground between separable cultures over the past century and the interwoven

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[6] 'Old girls': (Ab English) Senior Aboriginal women. Can refer to law women.

life-worlds of those of Yawuru and those of non-Yawuru and multi-ethnic decent. As we navigated these issues from our perspectives as artists, I was aware of a parallel interrogation of the challenges confronting anthropology. In anthropologist Benjamin Smith's view:

> the ambiguous resonance of tradition in native title processes is generated through on going differences between European-Australian understandings of tradition based in fixity and stability and Aboriginal practice in which knowledge and law provide templates for the dynamic forms of Aboriginal existence… In the native title era it is vital that anthropology moves beyond reifying accounts of Aboriginal tradition and grasps and articulates more nuanced and complex understandings of Aboriginal cultural production…. It is only by taking up this challenge that anthropology can be considered to be truly doing its job. [7, p. 231]

Our processing of notions of 'interculturalism' and the cultural production of contemporary art sat within these debates. The challenges facing anthropology, outlined by Smith above, echo challenges facing the role of the performing arts created in Indigenous contexts. How we process notions of the 'traditional' in our performance making is directly effected. Looking back on this period, I believe that the repercussions of the native title case meant that many of the elders were too busy, cautious or 'hurting' due to the proceedings, which left us in the streets of Broome at night, talking to ghosts. Burning Daylight became a dialogue between the young Broome locals now, confident in their cultural diversity, yet negotiating the presences and absences of access to their own Indigenous culture, and the intergenerational ghosts who haunt them as they wander the streets at night.

In a discussion of Walpiri kinship, Anthropologist Michael Jackson states,

> the link between people and the Dreaming is entirely reciprocal since without the concerted effort of human beings in the here and now the Dreaming remains latent and moribund…. What then of someone for whom the intimate bond between biography and mythology has attenuated or slipped away? Someone who may have a mental map of his country but lacks any first hand knowledge of it. Someone unsure of his place of conception and birth, his past, his patrimony, and even his name? Someone who cannot follow the ancestral tracks without getting lost? What story might such a person tell to locate and define himself. [3, p. 133]

Within *Burning Daylight* one response to Jackson's question is Dalisa Pigram's solo. This is the site of Dalisa's 'reciprocity' with her country and it is also one of the forms the project found, along with other scenes to 'dance back' to the pain caused by the State Government's handling of the Rubibi Native title case. Dalisa has described her solo as 'crying for her country.' Her dance is an example of how I see loss as an expression of Indigenous belonging to country in contemporary contexts.

In his revealing discussion of the Pintupi artist, Linda Syddick's dot painting 'ET Returning Home,' art historian Fred Myers suggests that Syddick, as an artist, has identified with Spielberg's recurrent Jewish themes of exile and return. He adds that, "Linda's painting suggests that separation/ longing/ recognition are fundamentally encoded or activated in the transmission of relations to place…. Syddick's paintings extend and discern in painting practice a particular formation of identity, loss, and replacement that must have had long standing in Western Desert life" [5, pp. 21,22]. This 'particular formation,' I would argue, is prevalent in much contemporary Indigenous live performance as it navigates a process of reconnection within

the political history of Australia. A shared political history and navigation of loss and longing is one of the few defining elements which unites Indigenous artists in Australia. This is exemplified in the following Case Study.

10.5.1 Case Study: Rubibi

Dalisa improvised physical scores for herself around the notion of 'if Broome was a woman, how would she be, move, look and walk across country.' She drew on improvisations based on one of her aunties, on her well-honed physical actions of throw-net fishing, the way she moves through the tidal area and looks at country when fishing. She added in ghostly fragments of Yawuru dance moves taught to her by her elders during the projects' research and bursts of narration in Yawuru language about her connection to Rubibi—The Broome peninsular (Fig. 10.2).

Fig. 10.2 Dalisa's solo, Broome 2009 (Photo: Rod Hartvigsen)

(continued)

In the culmination of the scene, Dalisa wraps herself in the red and orange striped construction barrier fabric which has ringed the stage area since the beginning of the show, leaning forwards, taut with strength and resistance, she pulls it from its attachment poles, tumbling into the space. She holds the barrier fabric high above her head, releasing it to cascade down over her body as she performs a fusion of the hip hop popping and locking techniques inflected by her own dance style. With increasing momentum, her acrobatic moves propel her across the floor with the barrier fabric trailing in her wake. It flies behind her, swept up, or perhaps devoured, in a danced reclamation of her country. Her country, where the government forcibly moved the ceremonial dance ground out past the 12-mile fence line. This same government was now trying to prove cultural extinguishment due to the loss of continuous ceremonial land in the township of Broome in the Rubibi native title case.

Her self-devised choreography was deeply imbued with her own yearning for connection with the ceremonial dance practices of her own culture. In his article, 'Rhythm Sticks,' which comments on the ceremonial dance practices of the Top End of Australia, Australia's leading journalist on Indigenous art, Nicolas Rothwell states that, "the pure dance of ceremony at the heart of this sound-world is almost invisible: it is the refined, complex essence of the indigenous realm and it remains largely unknown, a gap in the nation's wider understanding of itself and its past." He goes on to cite researcher, Allan Marett, who estimates that 98 % of Indigenous Australia's song tradition and the associated dances have been lost, and he views what survives as desperately vulnerable, adding that, "For Marett and the recorders, the dance traditions are the libraries of the Indigenous realm, where knowledge is crystallised; they are the hospitals where wellbeing is maintained; they are the banks where its culture is stored. But there is another, almost paradoxical way of seeing dance: as a kind of life line into the future" [6].

The yearning in Dalisa's solo and her embodied anger at the impact of Australia's political history on the dance practices in her community, as well as her work of connecting to the memory and actuality of public dance practices available to her is another kind of 'life line into the future' in the form of her contemporary dance. Arts journalist, Rosemary Sorrensen's review of *Burning Daylight* in Broome describes Pigram's solo: "Like every one of the cast, she seems to move in entirely her own way, a body that is memory and future tense" [8]. It is this embodied reclamation of memory as a place, a foundation from which to create as an artist and its projection into the future which is the essence of *Burning Daylight* and the Company's danced search for new and appropriate performances languages.

In one of the final scenes of *Burning Daylight* it became necessary to create an 'Indigenous space' within the intercultural space of the production. The dancers' personal experiences of creating contemporary Indigenous dance in Australian contexts were contrasted and expanded on by choreographer, Serge Aimé

Coulibaly's insights of parallel choreographic issues in West Africa.[7] Serge Aimé's provocations alongside one of the devising performers, Trevor Jamieson's comments that his elders had asked him not to dance his traditional dances in contemporary performance anymore and Dalisa's constant subtle facilitation of the Indigenous choreographic issues within the Broome cultural, historical and political environment prompted the dancers to begin working from a place understood as one of 'memory of tradition.'

10.5.2 Case Study: Memory of Tradition

As they began to work actively with this notion, the dancers identified open public traditional dance moves which they had been taught and had been given permission to perform in public. Some of these were from their own cultural material whilst others were moves taught by cultural custodians of other tribal groups and given for use in rehearsal. Once these 'signature moves' had been identified, Serge Aimé facilitated a process whereby the dancers improvised with a particular move allowing it to become a 'memory' in their body. He asked them to let go of the visible form of the move and which parts of their body it engaged but to hold onto its essence and translate from this into new movement patterns in different planes, tempos and methods of articulation. In practice terms this choreographic process was akin to other improvisational tasks the performers had been given where the performer 'workshopped' a physical or theatrical idea in a spirit of play and experimentation, utilising their professional intuition and skill as devising performers. However, this was now taking place within a consciously negotiated cultural frame, sense of rhythm and purpose. The dancers built new phrases out of the material they had developed through the improvisations. After the days spent building material in this way, alongside ongoing Company discussion, Serge Aimé in association with Dalisa, went on to construct a draft version of the scene we titled *Memory of Tradition*. During a discussion whilst making the scene, Serge Aimé suggested that, "We are not traditional artists, but the traditional is always there—behind us—underneath us." It was from this place, from the embodied memories of the traditional signatures that they began to investigate new forms that forged a new choreographic idiom.

   The results of this process were then shown to the law women of the Edger family, traditional owners of specific aspects of public Yawuru dance in Broome. The Company travelled out to Elsie Edgar's family's country on Roebuck Bay to perform the scene *Memory of Tradition* 'in country,' as is

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[7] See interviews with Serge Aimé Coulibaly, Trevor Jamieson and Dalisa Pigram on the Burning Daylight documentary for further discussion of these issues [9].

(continued)

their custom. This was done in order to have the experimental choreographic process the Company had developed in *Burning Daylight* approved.[8] The 'old girls' watched intently as the scene was run on the pindan[9] dirt and after discussion, approval was given to continue working in this way. This was followed by traditional owner Noreen Edgar, her daughter Colleen and some of the grandchildren teaching an open Yawuru dance to the whole Company for future use in ongoing choreographic processes.

In the structure of the performance *Burning Daylight*, this scene occurs towards the end of the production, notionally towards the dawn after a long night in the streets. Dalisa has just finished her solo and steps into the space she has 'cleared.' The scene becomes an embodied expression of the negotiation of tradition and change, of what can be created out of a context of both 'listening' and 'loss' and as a celebration of Indigenous culture in the here and now (Fig. 10.3).

Fig. 10.3 The scene *Memory of Tradition*, Zurich, 2007 (Photo: Christian Altorfer)

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[8] See documentation of this in the documentary on the making of *Burning Daylight* [9].

[9] The red dirt that makes up the country around Broome.

10.6   The Art of Listening

The development of the scene *Memory of Tradition* provides an example from the production process of how regimes of cultural value and notions of open public forms of Indigenous cultural practices can be negotiated and interpreted in dynamic, experimental and ethical methods of 'culture making' in dance-theatre. I would suggest, after Myers, that this is, "art-ethnography, sort of one and sort of the other. It is traditional and not really so" [5, p. 11].

Within Marrugeku, after years of negotiating processes of creating contemporary dance, song and music in direct yet experimental associations with so-called traditional forms, we take the position that our approach is based on ethics, not protocols. There is no fixed or stable method to the work with which to set entrenched protocols for any cultural context. Every specific negotiation must be treated as a unique expression of the factors and individuals and their histories which make up the lived experience of culture in each specific milieu. This is an ethics of listening to the past, present and future—an ethics of paying attention.

Journalist, Rosemary Sorensen discussed the complexity of this work in reporting on the Broome season of *Burning Daylight* and quoted Dalisa as saying, "It's one thing to get permission to re-create something in an obvious way, but it takes a long time to create art in a way that's inspired by culture" [8]. This "art (making) that is inspired by culture," this step into finding a reciprocity with country in the form of contemporary dance and storytelling which 're-thinks' tradition must grow out of an in-depth 'mapping' of a specific place and its history. It does not take place with a simple recognition of continuity between traditional and contemporary modes of cultural expression. It is precise work, ephemeral in its nature, elusive, yet painstakingly achieved through cultural negotiation, on the one hand, and through the 'professional cultural intuition' of artists manifested in their creative improvisational techniques, on the other. The work of contemporary Indigenous art brings into play a potent mix of biography, cultural intuition, and the navigation of a shared political history. It is frequently created in a context of loss, longing and separation and can function as both radical innovation and in dialogue with the way 'traditions' are transformed in intercultural lifeworlds.

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Chapter 11
Toward an Intersubjective Ethics of Acting and Actor Training

Phillip Zarrilli

> Responsibility for the Other[1]… goes beyond what I may or may not have done to the Other or whatever acts I may or may not have committed, as if I were devoted to the other man before being devoted to myself. Emmanuel Levinas [9, p. 83]

> The relationship with the other is a relationship with a Mystery. Emmanuel Levinas [8, p. 75]

Every live performance exemplifies in its own unique way the often stated truism that theatre, as both event and experience, is constituted by the literal co-presence of at least two human beings in a space together where 'something' happens—however minimal that 'something' might be. As I have discussed at length elsewhere, theatre is 'enactive' in that it is materialised in the intersubjective/intercorporeal space 'between' performer/performer, and performers/audience in the moment of its playing [31].

Furthermore, the training of actors and rehearsal processes also take place in the intersubjective/intercorporeal spaces 'between' actor/actor, and actor/director/ dramaturg where the (imagined/potential) audience is always already present. In-depth actor training necessarily involves work on one's own embodied process, but simultaneously engages the actor in how to deploy what they are learning psychophysically in the space 'between.' What are the ethical implications of acting as an intersubjective experience and event?

To address the 'ethical' implications of acting and performance from my dual perspectives as both an artist who makes theatre *and* as a theorist, who reflects on the work I make, *and* to keep this discussion grounded in a specific example, I will

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[1] Translators of Levinas use the capitalised 'Other' (*autrui*) to refer to 'the personal other, the other person' and 'other' *autre* to refer to 'otherness in general, to alterity' [9, pp. 30 & viii]. I use of Levinas' distinction between 'Other' and 'other' throughout this essay.

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begin by describing a recent performance I co-created and in which I was one of two performers—*Told by the Wind.* I then address three foundational issues:

1. What do I mean by intersubjective, i.e., which of several phenomenological approaches to intersubjectivity are most relevant to a discussion of acting?
2. How have ethical issues been raised in relation to theatre and the practices of making theatre, including acting?
3. In a postmodern, intercultural, globalised world, from what 'position' is it even possible to raise the issue of 'ethics' in acting?

I address these questions by providing an account of Emmanual Levinas' radical assertion that "First philosophy is an ethics," and conclude by teasing out some of the ethical implications of intersubjectivity in contemporary acting and performance using Told by the Wind as a reference point [10, p. 75].

11.1 Considering the Intersubjective Space 'Between' in One Performance

In 2009–2010, I co-created with Kaite O'Reilly (dramaturg/playwright) and Jo Shapland (dancer/choreographer/performance maker) *Told by the Wind*[2]—a performance inspired by and responding to string theory and East-Asian aesthetic principles and dramaturgies, especially those of Japanese *noh* theatre. Throughout the 52 min performance, two *'figures'*[3]—a male (Phillip Zarrilli) and a female (Jo Shapland)—are intersubjectively present to one another, and to the audience. These two *'figures'* inhabit the stage space together, sense and respond to one another's presence in the playing space, but never directly interact with, speak to or look at one another. Narrative threads are evoked and 'told' by occasional fragments of text, embodied silences, splintered interactions, and slowed down motion. In her *Guardian* review, Elisabeth Mahoney described the performance as follows:

> Stripped of most elements we associate with drama, this intense meditation in movement revels in stillness [… The co-creators] present something that is beyond linear narrative, character and gripping plot twists. Instead, they offer fragments of memory, speech and gestures, composed in moments that have a haunting, painterly beauty to them. A man and a woman are on stage together at all times but never connect; he speaks a little, tugged at by the past, she remains silent, trying to form words but expressing herself physically as she shuffles, runs and dances in bare soil. With no dialogue or fathomable action to follow, you try and make connections even though everything resists them. Is she in the memory he speaks of? Is she a character in the music he is writing, or the dance he appears to choreograph? … It's all very hypnotic, with repeated small movements and shards of sentences,

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[2] *Told by the Wind* was funded by the Arts Council of Wales and AHRC; previewed at the Tyn y parc (Wales) studio and the Evora, Portugal festival in 2009; premiered at Chapter Arts Centre (Cardiff) in 2010; toured to Berlin, Poland, Chicago, and continues on tour.

[3] The *'figures,'* '*male figure,*' and '*female figure*' from *Told by the Wind* are indicated in this chapter by italics and apostrophes.

Fig. 11.1 Jo Shapland and Phillip Zarrilli in 'Told by the Wind' (Photo Ace McCarron)

and it has the astringent purity of a haiku poem, though haiku seems positively wordy in comparison. The performers have a remarkable presence, even when their movement is barely perceptible. This is a challenging production, but oddly affecting and—quietly cleansing. On the opening night, the audience lingered at the end, as if not wanting to head back out into the noisy, demanding world [12].

Drawing on the implications of 'quietude' in performance [3], on the aesthetic principle of *yugen*—"'what lies beneath the surface'; the subtle, as opposed to the obvious; the hint, as opposed to the statement" [6, p. 472]—we created a dynamic between the two *'figures'* that could be described as an "echo chamber of allusions" [21, p. 14]. The fragments of text, subtle physical actions, movement scores, and a constant perceptual awareness of the 'Other' in the space combined to suggest 'links' between these two *'figures'*; however, these links remained suggestive, never becoming a settled narrative (Fig. 11.1).

In performance, our acting scores constantly engage the question/possibility that an-'Other' *might be present* in that environment. But throughout the performance, 'she' remains a question for me and 'I' for her—possibilities on the edge of materialisation. The fragments of text (spoken by *'male figure'*), such as posing the question, 'Are you there?' are never delivered *to 'female figure,'* but to an 'Other' that might be present. Even when we are literally within inches of each other onstage, we intersubjectively 'sense' each other as a possible presence, *but do not touch, interact, or see one another.* As a consequence, two of our primary acting tasks are to engage 'attentive listening' and 'attentive sensing,' i.e., opening our auditory awareness or the awareness through our 'skin' to the sonority of the immediate performance environment to see if an 'Other' *might* be present.

Unlike most realist drama and performances where characters are presented as fully rounded individuals, the two *'figures'* in *Told by the Wind* are echoes—both simultaneously 'there' in a state of open possibility for the 'Other,' but also '*not* there.' This is reflected in audience member Tony Brown's response to *Told by the Wind*: "we… were creating the action in a web of space, time, movement and sound. Causality was suspended but was in a strange way important. It was very clear that the 'characters' (if that's what they were) had a hugely deep effect on each other but the why, where, when and how of it could only be grasped like the effect of a breeze—invisible but tangible."[4]

In my concluding discussion, I reflect back on this production to address the 'ethical' implications of this 'invisible but tangible' sense of someone being present to the 'other' (otherness/alterity)—'the other' we know to be present, but never 'see.'

11.1.1   *Phenomenological Perspectives on Intersubjectivity*

Intersubjectivity has long been central to philosophical thought, and to phenomenology in particular. The work of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty all explore the nature of our lived experience in the world as fundamentally shaped in some way by the fact of intersubjectivity—the givenness of others within/to our experience. For Husserl: "the very nature of subjective experience implies a world beyond oneself that is, by definition, experienced. In other words, experience is inherently intersubjective, not subjective" [27, p. 6]. Husserl's model of intersubjectivity is in part empathic. As Zahavi explains there is "a specific mode of consciousness, called empathy, which is taken to allow us to experience and understand the feelings, desires, and beliefs of others in a more-or-less direct manner" [30, p. 153]. Other phenomenological approaches to intersubjectivity articulate alternatives to the empathic model. Fundamental to Martin Heidegger's understanding of our lived experience is Dasein—the human condition or situation of 'being there' or being in the world. This is a state of "being-with (*mitsein*) others, regardless of whether or not other persons are actually present" [30, p. 154]. For Heidegger there is an a priori assumption of intersubjectivity as foundational for the individual subject.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work marked a paradigmatic shift in thinking about the role of the body in the constitution of experience. Rejecting the exclusive assumption of the natural sciences and modern psychology that treated the physical body (*Körper*) as a thing, object, instrument, or machine under the command and control of an all-knowing mind, and thereby challenging the Cartesian cogito, Merleau-Ponty (re)claimed the centrality of the lived body (*Leib*) and embodied experience as the very means and medium through which the world comes into being and is experienced. He demanded an account of the "actual body I call mine,"

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[4] Personal email communication, 2010.

that is, the body as "an experienced phenomenon… in the immediacy of its lived concreteness," and "not as a representable object… for the abstractive gaze" [23, p. 130]. He thereby rejected mind–body dualism, and (re)claimed the centrality of the body and embodied experience as the locus for "experience as it is lived in a deepening awareness" [11, p. 62]. For Merleau-Ponty, the focus of philosophical inquiry shifted from 'I think' to an examination of the 'I can' of the body, i.e., sight and movement as modes of entering into inter-sensory relationships with objects, or the world [14, p. 87]. In doing so he laid the philosophical foundation for a more processual account of how our relationship to the worlds we inhabit is constituted by our inter-sensory and inter-subjective engagement with those worlds.

Merleau-Ponty's account of lived experience is central to understanding acting where actors are ideally trained toward an ever-subtler awareness of the shape or feel that is intrinsic to their specific psychophysical practice [5]. The shape and feel of a practice are not derived from or intrinsic to the sensations per se, but rather are gained from what becomes via training and/or experience an implicit embodied, sensory form of knowledge of the organisation, structure, as well as 'the feel' of sensation-in-action.

Touching oneself with a hand, we have an awareness of "self-sensing [*se-sentir*]" where one feels oneself feeling [16, p. 71]. For Merleau-Ponty this type of "self-experience of subjectivity" already contains "a dimension of otherness" and is an intersubjectivity that is inseparable from the concept of embodied experience and perception [30, p. 162]. It is applicable when endeavouring to determine self's relation to others, and the relation between self's experience of others as subject of experience. Subjectivity is incarnated but, "not hermetically sealed up within itself, remote from the world and inaccessible to the other. Rather, it is above all a relation to the world" [30, p. 163]. Merleau-Ponty's account of the lived body will be central to my concluding discussion of ethics and intersubjectivity in acting.

I turn my attention now to a brief overview of how ethical issues have been and continue to be addressed in and through theatre and its practices.

11.2   Theatre and Ethics: A Brief Overview

Until the 2009 publication of Nicholas Ridout's short book, *Theatre & Ethics*, there had been no single volume published in English focused on theatre and ethics [22]. Beginning with the question raised by Neoptolemus in Sophocles' Philoctetes (409 BCE), 'How shall I act,' Ridout's book briefly examines theatre in three periods (ancient Greece, modern, and postmodern) as a set of practices—representational/ dramaturgical, performative, etc.—where ethical action(s) and issues can be initiated and/or reflected upon. As Carole-Anne Upton argues in her opening editorial to the first issue of Performing Ethos—a new journal devoted exclusively to examining ethics in theatre and live performance—that "an ethical dimension is arguably both implicit and essential" in considerations of what theatre is, what it can do, and how it is made [28, p. 3].

The content of drama, especially in the West, has often revolved around and directly explored the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by the main character as an individual, or in relation to society. Unlike Told by the Wind and other examples of theatre of quietude or "postdramatic theatre" where there is no attempt to "aggressively transmit meaning," much Western drama is structured to focus on, debate, celebrate, or parody such issues, problems, or behaviour [3, 7].

More recent forms of drama known as verbatim theatre, documentary drama, and theatre of witness literally bring to the stage the words of those witness to, effected by, and/or perpetrating traumatic events—such as the racist murder of the young black man, Stephen Lawrence (1974–1993), in the UK.[5] At the forefront of these often shocking events are moral/ethical issues of immediate social/political concern. The Tricycle Theatre in London is noted for its verbatim productions, including the 1999 premiere of 'The Colour of Justice' which was a dramatic reconstruction of the inquiry into Stephen Lawrence's murder [18].

Applied drama/theatre refers to the application of tools of drama and theatre-making in educational or social contexts to better engage students in learning, to address social issues, and to potentially effect change, for example, by working with young people socially at risk or with prison populations [17, 20, 26]. Ethical, moral, and often political issues are central to both what is made in applied drama and how its tools are applied in social/educational settings. An ethics of good practice is always central to employing theatre/drama tools in social/educational contexts.

More specifically, with regard to acting and actor training, a number of highly charged ethical/moral issues are implicit in the often unequal power dynamics and hierarchical practices through which theatre has been produced and taught where producers/casting directors, stage directors, and teachers are in positions of power and authority over actors or students—positions of course which are open to potential abuse. The hierarchical model exercised in making much theatre, has long been challenged by the use of alternative models of ensemble work and/or collaboration [4, 32]. These alternative models have often been introduced to counteract and work against more hierarchical modes of theatre making. A recent collection of essays, *The Politics of American Actor Training* edited by Margolis and Renaud, explores a variety of political and ethical issues in relation to acting including type casting, gender, race/ethnicity, and disability [13]. In our post-colonial world, important ethical issues are also raised by any intercultural process of 'borrowing' or 'exchange' of acting techniques, aesthetics, and production practices.

Issues of 'good practice' and care for the overall well-being of the actor in relation to techniques of actor training that have the potential to manipulate student actors have been raised, for example, in the recent work of Mark Seton [24, 25]. These concerns raise important questions about not just the techniques, but also the discourses and metaphors teachers of acting use when training potentially vulnerable young people. The attempt to identify and act upon issues of immediate social/ ethical concern exemplified in these examples provide some sense of the range and

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[5] See Paget on verbatim theatre, and Upton on theatre of witness [19, 29].

almost ubiquitous embedding of ethical issues within the what and how of making theatre. While there can be no doubt that the issues raised above should be considered and acted upon by those making/teaching theatre, they are also inadequate in that they do not necessarily examine the underlying philosophical/phenomenological basis for exploring the possible conditions for any ethical consideration and action under the conditions of postmodernity.

11.3   The Postmodern Condition and Ethics

In 1993 sociologist Zygmunt Bauman published *Postmodern Ethics*—his seminal examination of the problem of ethics raised by postmodernist thought in light of the failure of modern European moral philosophy since the Enlightenment. Bauman outlines seven dimensions of our contemporary 'moral condition' considered from a postmodern perspective: (1) "humans are morally ambivalent" (2) "moral phenomena are inherently 'non-rational'" (3) "morality is incurably aporetic" (4) "morality is not universalizable" (5) "morality is and is bound to remain irrational" (6) "moral responsibility—being for the Other before one can be with the Other—is the first reality of the self" [and] has therefore no "foundation"—no cause, no determining factor; and finally, (7) contrary to the popularly assumed idea that relativism is suggested by some postmodern modes of thought, "the postmodern perspective on moral phenomena does not reveal the relativism of morality" [1, pp. 10–14].

Bauman argues that the variety of ethical/moral codes available within today's globalised, postmodern condition does not mean that anything goes. Rather, he argues that, "Modern societies practise moral parochialism under the mask of promoting universal ethics… by exposing the falsity of society's pretence to be the ultimate author and the sole trustworthy guardian of morality, the postmodern perspective shows the relativity of ethical codes and of moral practices they recommend or support to be the outcome of the politically promoted parochiality of ethical codes that pretend to be universal… It is the ethical codes which are plagued with relativism" [1, p. 14].

For Bauman, attempting to enforce ethical rules from the outside incapacitates or even destroys "the moral self" and leads to a "silencing of moral impulse" [1, p. 12]. Bauman concludes that "postmodernity… is modernity without illusions," and the illusion is "the belief that the 'messiness' of the human world is but a temporary and repairable state, sooner or later to be replaced by the orderly and systematic rule of reason" [1, p. 32]. It is not the grand gestures of rule-writing politicians that make for a moral or ethical life, but rather it is "personal morality that makes ethical negotiation and consensus possible" [1, p. 34]. This re-personalisation of morality places responsibility at the beginning point of any ethical process. To philosophically locate and understand this starting point for a postmodern ethics, Bauman turned to Emmanuel Levinas' radical ethics as 'first philosophy.'

11.3.1   Levinas' Ethics of Ethics[6]

Levinas' path toward establishing an 'ethics of ethics'[7] is to provide his own phenomenological description of our encounter with lived experience, and in doing so to provide a new account of intersubjectivity—the nature of this encounter with the human other—that addresses what Levinas sees as the shortcomings of previous accounts.

Levinas' radical interpretation of intersubjectivity attempts to find an alternative to empathy, Heidegger's Dasein, as well as Martin Buber's I-Thou relationship where the Thou is too often subsumed in a projection of the self onto the 'Other' [10, pp. 59–74]. For Levinas this is not the personal 'Other' (*autrui*), but the 'other' (*autre*) as alterity. That is, "the other is in no way another myself" [9, p. 75; see also 15, p. 337].

The implicit dialectic within Levinas' use of 'Other' (personal other) and 'other' (alterity) is reflected in his sometimes seemingly ambiguous use of the term 'the face' (*le visage*).[8] As Moran explains, the beginning point for Levinas' notion of intersubjectivity is, "the experience of 'the face' (*le visage*) of the other person… the term 'face'… refer(s) to the real concrete presence of another person, as for example when we 'confront' someone 'face to face'" [15, p. 347].

But for Levinas the other must become a face that "is not 'seen'"—a face that "cannot become a content" and that is therefore "uncontainable" [8, p. 86]. In this sense 'the face' is used metaphorically "for all those aspects of human personhood and culture which escape objectification, which cannot be treated as objects in the world." For Levinas the face is ultimately not someone or something we meet in daily life, but rather "the face of the other is an 'enigma'" [15, pp. 347 & 349]. It is this enigmatic face that leads one 'beyond' oneself to that place where 'responsibility' becomes "the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity" [8, pp. 87, 95–96].

For Levinas "there is no moral life without utopianism" since "it is the recognition of something which cannot be realised but which, ultimately, guides all moral action" [1, p. 76]. As an 'awakening' it is a moment where the possibility of morality appears. If this type of radical intersubjective experience emerges or is 'awakened,' it is profoundly 'ethical' in the sense that it is asymmetrical[9] and disinterested: "It is I who support the Other and am responsible for him… My

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[6] For an overview of Levinas' work and philosophy see Bergo [2] and Moran [15, pp. 320–353]. Moran also offers a critique of Levinas' more idiosyncratic and ambiguous discussions.

[7] Bauman is here quoting Jacques Derrida.

[8] Levinas' use of 'the face' is ambiguous and has "given rise to… confusion" because there is slippage in his use of the term [16, p. 347]. I accept at face value this slippage and Levinas' use of the term as foundational to experience of the 'Other,' as metaphor, and as that 'other'/alterity which makes its demands on us by its very presence.

[9] Editor's Comment: The reader is referred to (the following) Chap. 12 where Thompson makes a similar point that, for Levinas, "The relationship between the two people… should not be understood as equal—or as a movement towards equality."

responsibility is untransferable, no one could replace me… Responsibility is what is incumbent on me exclusively, and what, humanly, I cannot refuse" [8, pp. 100–101]. What is the source of this 'awakening'? For Levinas this 'awakening' can not depend on a particular encounter with an 'Other,' or with myself as my brother's keeper. Given his break with both ontology and epistemology, there can be no ultimate, specific source. Awakening reveals itself—it is beyond, it is transcendent—that which is beyond our grasp as the infinite, yet always present to us as immanent in the 'other.'[10]

11.4   Concluding Discussion: Two Modes of Intersubjectivity in Told by the Wind—The Lived Body, and a Call We Can/Not Ignore[11]

Let us return to the example of 'Told by the Wind.' The performance exemplifies the often-stated truism with which I began this essay that live theatre is constituted by the literal co-presence of at least two human beings. At a phenomenological level the actor's work begins with work on the 'self,' but can/should never be defined by our work on 'the self.' Rather, the actor's work is always informed by 'being with/for' Others. Ideally, we utilise and deploy the heightened sensory awareness that arises from in-depth psychophysical training and from the experience of performance to be co-present to one another and to/for the audience as Other—'face to face,' 'body to body,' 'consciousness to consciousness' in each moment of performance. Merleau-Ponty's articulation of the 'lived body' in which the Other is already intersubjectively present is the actor's first point of departure. From an ethical perspective actors are offered a special opportunity in their training and in their work—in-depth psychophysical processes can lead to an ever subtler attunement of one's 'lived experience' of the bodymind that sensitises and attunes oneself by potentially burning away one's 'ego,' and allows one to turn to/for Others with a full and open awareness where there are no expectations, only the responsibility to be there for the other with no expectations at all. This is not a compulsion, but the seizing of an opportunity offered.

But the very public work of the actor, especially in certain contexts, has all too often allowed for, or even invited, a type of indulgent subjectivity that feeds the ego, the big 'I am I.' The actor can become 'lost' when 'I' become the personal Other

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[10] For further discussion of Levinas' notion of transcendence, see Bergo [2, pp. 12–15].

[11] Zahavi critiques the limitations of these and other phenomenological approaches, acknowledging that Levinas' 'confrontation with radical otherness is a crucial and non-negligible aspect of what intersubjectivity is all about'; however, in its over emphasis on 'transcendence and elusiveness of the other' it 'not only denies the existence of a functioning co-subjectivity, but also the *a priori* status of intersubjectivity' [30, p. 165]. I read Levinas' multiple articulations of 'the face' as encompassing a functioning co-subjectivity. I follow Zahavi in arguing for a multi-dimensional view of intersubjectivity that draws from several phenomenological approaches [30].

and I 'lose' my-self in the Other I play. Although not speaking directly of acting, Levinas articulates an 'ethical' pathway for the actor that takes one beyond assimilation in the Other to a place of alterity where the other is "not a character within a context" but "to the contrary, the face is meaning all by itself. You are you. In this sense one can say that the face is not 'seen'. It is what cannot become a content, which your thought would embrace; it is uncontainable, it leads you beyond." [10, pp. 86–87] I would argue that the actor's constant work of 'being'/'playing' Others provides a unique lived, experiential possibility for 'awakening' to this place 'beyond' the ego—a place of absolute responsibility. In the actor's work, the Other/other are both always already present as possibilities.

'Told by the Wind' has no overt 'ethical' content. However, it may be understood as making available Levinas' radical sense of intersubjectivity as alterity at the heart of his 'ethics as first philosophy.' *'Male'* and *'female figures'* sense the possibility of an-Other's presence, but never see this Other. They never 'know' or possess this Other. In the alterity of one *'figure'* to the other, precisely 'who' each might be ultimately remained a question for the onstage *'figures,'* the actors, and the audience. In the dynamic space 'between' *'male/female figures'* on stage, in our search for an Other, the fact that we never 'meet' and never 'see' one another, there is already present a sense of alterity inhabiting the space. In an epigraph at the beginning of this chapter Levinas was quoted as saying: "The relationship with the other is a relationship with a Mystery" [8, p. 75]. From the reviews of the production, it was clear that the audience at 'Told by the Wind' experienced something of this sense of alterity—the 'question' [and 'Mystery'] of what each of these 'figures' might be to the 'other.' As Mahoney explained in her review, "you try and make connections even though everything resists them. Is she in the memory he speaks of? Is she a character in the music he is writing, or the dance he appears to choreograph?" [12]. There are no absolute, certain answers to these 'connections' and questions.

In his conclusion to *Theatre & Ethics*, Nicholas Ridout argues that perhaps the most important contribution theatre can make to an ethical life is not "the investments expressed by enthusiasts for the theatre as a moral institution," but rather when "the event of theatre is approached with uncertainty, with a view to the possibility of surprise, challenge or affront" and when it demands "a labour of critical thought" [22, pp. 69–70]. In 'Told by the Wind' *'male'* and *'female figures'* and the audience were literally 'present' to one another, i.e., they were intersubjectively/ phenomenally present to one another as 'Other,' i.e., 'the other person' (*autrui*), yet simultaneously, the two figures remained unknown—'other' (*autre*)—a 'mystery' one to another and for the audience [9, pp. viii & 30]. As Levinas puts it, "the other [*l'Autre*] that is announced does not possess… existing as the subject possesses it; its hold over my existing is mysterious" [10, p. 75].

Merleau-Ponty's recuperation of the 'lived body' in its a priori assumption of intersubjectivity, and Levinas' radical interpretation of intersubjectivity as alterity, together offer the actor a set of 'ethical' calls or imperatives that are opportunities that can/not be ignored.

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Chapter 12
Politics and Ethics in Applied Theatre: Face-to-Face and Disturbing the Fabric of the Sensible

James Thompson

> The dream of a suitable political work of art is in fact the dream of disrupting the relationship between the visible, the sayable, and the thinkable without having to use the terms of a message as a vehicle. Rancière [8, p. 63]

> Right or wrong, reading the face was here to stay as a type of irreducible folk wisdom of popular culture. Taussig [10, p. 230]

Applied theatre projects, community-based performance or other forms of socially-engaged art making, often take place in small groups, in neighbourhoods that are *off the map*, or within regions that are marginal to the mainstream [5, 11]. In terms of my own practice, applying theatre has meant developing participatory arts programmes in prisons and war zones [12–15]. In these settings applied theatre has involved developing programmes with communities who might want to use the arts to express, debate or celebrate aspects of their lives. The focus on situations outside theatres and in non-traditional venues, of course, does not mean that this work is *outside* our social world but rather it is susceptible to forms of interpretation not necessarily of its own choosing. This liability needs to be met, as is explained in the chapter that follows, by a greater clarity as to the political and ethical aspirations of the practice. Although as a practitioner in applied theatre projects I have tended to advocate for theatre's capacity to enable populations to become engaged with questions of social change, in my writing this optimism has been tempered with a mission to challenge the more hubristic or romantic tendencies in certain accounts. In the 2009 publication *Performance Affects*, from which the following chapter is drawn, this became a concern to examine the constraints facing the practice of applied theatre, and, in particular, question the instrumentality that has limited its sensory, aesthetic or *affective* potential.

A particular priority for the argument in this chapter is to explore the potential political grounds for a participatory performance practice that, while working often

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in those small, perhaps hidden settings, understands and connects with wider *public* actions. The intimacy of the private moment is not to be forfeited in favour of a stronger avowal of more visible practice in this account, but rather the care exhibited in those settings becomes linked to a particular ethics, and in turn politics, of applied theatre practice. A politics that is in danger of being lost in the instrumental implications of the notion of *application* and an apparent eagerness to apply performance *at the service* of the various institutional, social and discursive regimes that surround and contain the communities in which the practice takes place. This emphasis requires a turning away from the effect and impact of the work—away from assertions of *what it does*—towards notions of affect and beauty to suggest a sensate and aesthetic focus for community-based performance that, in turn, can be linked to notions of social justice. The chapter here will develop an account of ethics that will be connected both to this concern with affect and subsequently a particular political aspiration for applied theatre. The debate will draw on Emmanuel Levinas' notion of the *face*, borrowing from discussions of the term in Judith Butler and Simon Critchley, and subsequently suggest how an account of the face-to-face encounter within performance can draw from these arguments. The *call of the face* becomes a motivational force in this discussion. The structure of the performance encounter will then be taken as a starting point for an ethical and radical politics of practice that intervenes in what Jacques Rancière has called the "distribution of the sensible" [8, p. 7].

12.1   Facing the Other

The face has become particularly controversial in relation to recent world conflicts, with the images of prisoners, 'terrorists', and veiled women occupying prime positions in different media. Articles on the hidden face of Afghani women, the lip-sewn faces of Australia's refugees or newspaper images of the faces of the Bali bombers have brought the problems associated with seeing the face to a new form of critical attention [6, 7, 16]. While acknowledging the arguments in these articles, this chapter returns to an earlier concept of the *face* from Levinas, presented in detail in his book *Totality and Infinity*, to explore how meeting the face of the other can be the source of a particular ethics and politics of practice [4, pp. 194–219]. The face of Levinas, for the argument I am making here, is the acute awareness of the body of the other as it impinges on our sense of self. It is the feelings that flow between people as they share space: sensations that exist in one body as a result of the care it feels for the other. And that unfathomable aspect of a person multiplies the depths of the responsibility one has towards them—and makes that responsibility, almost overwhelmingly, infinite.

An alternative to Levinas' vision of the face can be located in the 'science' of physiognomy. In many ways, if Levinas's concept works within what Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht would call a culture of "presence effects," whereas physiognomy is the classic disposition to the face within a culture dominated by 'meaning effects'— that is the demand for interpretation [3, p. 77]. The question is: does the face, as the

presence of the *other*, demand an affective response or, alternatively, present us with a mask that requires deciphering? Michael Taussig has referred to "physiognomic prejudice" that sees the face both as a mask or a "window on the soul", so that the viewer encounters it either as a dishonest obscuring or as a transparent revelation of a true nature [10, pp. 224–231]. I would argue that this prejudice is very apparent in forms of performance, where participants, facilitators or audience members engage with others as an opportunity to see behind their faces in such a way that they are understood as evidence of some inner condition. Although the tendency to read the face is hard to avoid, the argument here is that this approach fails to acknowledge the presence of the face, and, therefore, the possibility of forming an ethics of practice on a more egalitarian basis. A popular hermeneutic response within the arts cannot be simply switched off, but the less remarked affect or touch of the face should be encouraged as an important starting point for the ethics of participatory arts.

An argument against physiognomy can be found in the philosopher Simon Critchley's use of the term 'heteronomy' to argue for a form of subjectivity that is non-autonomous [2, p. 37]. Politics, following this perspective, is not a process of making the individual free or of increasing our ability to act unencumbered by the restrictions imposed by external forces. It is, instead, a process of recognising our direct and felt responsibility to those amongst whom we live. Faces are recognised as examples of our autonomy curtailed by an external demand we cannot refuse. "It is this incomprehensibility in ethics that interests me, where the subject is faced with a demand that does not correspond to its autonomy: in this situation, I am not the equal of the demand on me… ethics is obliged to acknowledge a moment of rebellious heteronomy that troubles the sovereignty of autonomy" [2, p. 37].

The relationship between the two people, in this account, should not be understood as equal[1]—or as a movement towards equality. Within the moment, it has to be unbalanced or asymmetrical as you feel the infinite demand of the other constraining you. Our autonomy is challenged and limited as we are confronted with an individual ethical appeal that is transformed into a universal demand as it is made. The face of a homeless person not only asks that we respond, but makes a claim that people should not have to live on the street. We may pass by but we know that a claim for individual and general ethical behaviour has been made—and we cannot possibly fulfil it in its entirety. In experiencing that claim, there is no equal and opposite claim that the homeless person should be beholden to me. This alters the ground of the relationship between people to a point where the asymmetrical affect of the other becomes a motivating force: a force that is a major propellant for political action because it has this implicit universal assertion structured into it.

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[1]The reader is referred to (the previous) Chap. 11 where Zarrilli makes a similar point that, for Levinas, this relationship "is profoundly 'ethical' in the sense that it is asymmetrical".

12.2 Political Affects

The face-to-face encounter, as explained here, provides a motivation for ethical behaviour that has strong political implications. Critchley calls this encounter a "meta-political ethical moment" that is "at the heart of a radical politics" and for the argument to proceed it is important to discover the shape of that moment [2, p. 119]. Although the premise of Levinas' argument is that the face makes the demand as a pre-conscious auto-affect that is an inevitable result of the relationship between the self and the other, it is important to question again whether this force is definite or desired. Is Levinas making a case for ethics based on what should be, or simply on what is? Critchley, in his account of the 'meta-political', regards Levinasian ethics as emanating from *what is*: that there is something inherent in an encounter with the other than ensures we are dynamically responsible for them. Although, it is important to question his reliance for this position on the idea of 'approval' (see below), I propose that we construe Levinasian ethics in terms of *what should be*. This is to regard any response to the face of the other—in relation to the 'physiognomic disposition' discussed above—as both a demand for interpretation and as an affective starting point for an ethical relationship. This construal is supported by Butler's idea of the distribution of *grievable* faces and by Critchley's idea of 'approval' both of which are discussed below [1, 2].

While the reader might concur that the vision of the suffering of another catches them and forces them to act, or even feel guilty for not acting (which is still an example of heteronomy), I believe that it is harder to insist that this is an inevitable or universal response. Where the work of Butler helps is that she suggests an economy of the face, whereby the visibility of certain faces marks out an acutely political terrain of the acceptance or dismissal of particular groups. The distribution of the face, and which face can make claims—and ultimately which person can be mourned or grieved—demonstrates certain constructions of who is worthy within any specific community. The presence of a face, or an image of a face, does not ensure that it is understood as human but can just as easily mark out its "defacement" [10]. Butler, therefore, creates an urgent task, which is the acceptance of various faces that have had their humanity reduced by contemporary cultural frames that deem certain people as less than human. Levinas' ethic of the face is not a given, but understood as "useful for those cultural analyses that seek to understand how best to admit the 'faces' of those against whom war is waged into public representation" [4, p. xviii]. Butler is suggesting a political project to ensure not only an intensity in the quality of engagement, but that new *forms* of the face are part of a public realm: *new* people become present, participate and are valued. This demands a particular type of meeting with the face and, while Butler presents this as a process whereby "dominant forms of representation can and must be disrupted," she does less to articulate the shape of that disruption [ibid]. My suggestion is that it might be constructed through a careful mediation of the encounter with an image, but it is most *affectively* done in the face-to-face encounter. The political project of "admitting" faces suggested by

Butler, is potentially located within a series of interpersonal engagements. When Critchely argues that "resistance can be intimate and can begin in small affinity groups," I would emphasise that it is in this space that the demand of the face *is more likely* to be felt. And, of course, this is the firm ground on which participatory performance operates [2, p. 114].

As an alternative, therefore, to the idea that the face provides a given or automatic call, this suggests that there is a way of conceiving of the concept as a willed part of a process or project. The importance of this shift, from the inevitable to the planned, is also demonstrated through the problematic notion of *approval*. Critchely asserts that the demand of the face "is only felt *as* a demand for the self who approves of it" [2, p. 18. Italics original] but then proceeds to construct a general theory to overcome 'indifference' to suffering from what I am arguing is not the universal result of seeing the face of the other [2, p. 25]. Ethical experience requires a subject who in meeting a face is affected by "the approved demand of its good" but there is little understanding as to how that approval will be generated [2, p. 23].

The distribution of encounters with the face happens within a social framework that may permit you to see the precariousness of others' lives but not necessarily feel impinged by them. We live in a time where a glance into the face of the other can lead to a mocking disregard quicker than deep appreciation. So while *one might approve* of the demand of the other, there needs to be a process for encouraging that approval. The "meta-political ethical moment" needs, therefore, to be reinterpreted as a contested rather than inevitable experience. The concept of the face allows us to develop an understanding of the structure of its ethical call and the demands that it is *ideally* seeking to make—but this is an ideal for which we need to work.

12.3 Sensitising Through Participatory Theatre

It is here that the starting point for a connection with a participatory performance practice can be made. In a project we do not say 'look into the face of the other' but sit beside people who are both similar and different from you and feel them as a real people who have needs that act affectively upon you. Shifting from disregard to limitless regard requires a movement over time where the defacing effect of contemporary culture becomes transformed into the vision of fundamental responsibility hoped for in the work of Levinas. And this is a process that requires close collaboration and is central to the argument for the politics of performance made here. The 'affect' of co-creating theatre (or other arts) could, therefore, be one means of moving people from an 'anaesthetised' reaction to the face of the other, to feeling the demands that those faces make upon them: it could become the means of creating *approval* [9, p. 1].

Becoming 'sensitised' (*aesthetised*) to the other through a collaborative, artistic process could be based on a gradual recognition of the suffering of another and, in turn, appreciating the precariousness of her or his, and your own life. In Butler's terms, in her discussion of contemporary wars, this is a process of disrupting

a context in which certain lives are deemed worthy of mourning. The face becomes a marker to suggest that our own humanity is diminished by designating some lives to be of less value than others, or less important than own our. This is a resource for a radical politics because once we refuse to accept a particular designation of the worthy and non-worthy, we can only, for example, resist wars (that are constructed around ideas of who can be killed and cannot be mourned) or campaign against poverty (that insists the famine within one community has no bearing on the health of another). The small act of accepting that another person makes an ethical demand, as outlined above, extends to a universal. The applied theatre practitioner in working in a prison with specific inmates—must simultaneously be making the claim that all prisoners deserve at minimum humane treatment. The particular is not particular if the work seeks to encourage an acceptance of the notion of the face proposed by Levinas.

One of the problems of the leap from the intimate to the inordinate is that responsibility can overwhelm. By insisting that the particular call of the face can be experienced as infinite and ultimately as universal, it is easy to see how the subject of that demand can be weighed down by it. We might work with some street children in a short-lived project but the experience is *felt* as a demand that all children should have the right to a decent place to live. This belief, however, in its enormity, might lead to a sense of powerlessness. Our work feels like a 'drop in the ocean' and our response is doomed to be experienced as forever inadequate. Critchley notes this explicitly when he asks, "how can the extremity of the ethical picture I have described be borne without crushing the ethical subject?" [2, p. 69]. His account, however, responds by advocating our inevitable failure "to fulfil the radicality of the ethical demand" as the source not of "dejection or disaffection" but "as the condition for courage in ethical action" [2, p. 55]. The very tension between the specifics of the moment, and the universality of the claim that it makes, sparks the motivation to continue to campaign for social justice.

Even with that spark, however, the 'crush' of felt responsibility can remain and this is where this vision of an ethical demand connects with the arguments about beauty. By working with those street children, I will struggle not to believe strongly in a much broader demand for children's rights and it is a common result of many projects that participants and facilitators articulate an energetic enthusiasm for and commitment to *something beyond* the immediate concerns of the particular initiative. In a context of extreme suffering, and where the thematic material for the project has drawn from those conditions, it is easy to understand how that enthusiasm can quickly shift to despondency. Critchley's answer is to suggest an "aesthetic reparation" where the subject of the demand avoids being destroyed by it through submitting himself or herself to self-deprecating humour [2, p. 69]. The aesthetic for Critchley provides a screen that avoids the "direct glare" of responsibility, and allows us to hold onto our commitment [2, p. 74]. It is maintained through a gentle mocking of our own failures and provides a resource that ensures we are not crushed by our limits. It is easy from this perspective to see where his admiration of the carnivalesque anti-globalisation protests emerges. The frustration of the size of the political task becomes channelled into a joyous, mocking humour—and this

stimulates ongoing commitment to what might otherwise seem an impossible, and perhaps de-motivating, task.

For the participatory or community-based arts, however, this model is not sufficient. I would argue that it is not in humour, but a particular understanding of beauty, and a sensory aesthetic engagement more broadly, that secures a more rewarding screen from the 'direct glare.' This can be understood in two slightly different ways. First, the place of beauty can be within the boundaries of a project itself. It may be that, appropriately, the focus for participants is painful issues in their lives or broader issues of oppression within their community. In this case, attention to delight, beauty or joy, as an integrated or preparatory aspect of the work can actually awaken individuals to each other's needs and perspectives. As suggested earlier, it is conceivable that the call of the face is far from automatic, and openness to its affect might be as much aspiration as precondition. Attention to beauty—to aspects of play, dance, or joy—could be the acts of creating the 'meta-political' moment that prepares people for recognising the face of the other as an appeal that they cannot refuse. Beauty creates both the capacity for being affected (it 'aestheticises') and openness to a call from beyond one's body, but it does so within a framework of pleasure and therefore the feeling of responsibility is less likely to overwhelm.

Second, in a context of great suffering, the project itself can be understood as the 'screen.' The pain beyond the immediate vicinity of the performance process or event might already make huge, perhaps debilitating demands on the participants. In this situation, a project that focuses on pleasure or celebration might be protective. Attention to beauty may distract or provide a respite, but here it is conceived as providing the means for infinite responsibility to be borne in such a way that a struggle for an end to suffering can continue. Critchley's self-deprecating individual who says "I can bear the radicality of the ethical demand because I can laugh at myself" becomes the group or community who bear the trouble of their situation, because they have the capacity to dance, sing and enjoy themselves [2, p. 86]. The struggle to be involved in the arts, to engage with notions of beauty, is the struggle for the resource not to be crushed by the injustice of troubled lives.

12.4   The Fabric of the Sensible

In the argument so far a person's encounter with the face of the other is understood to be the source of inspiration for both a responsibility for that other, and also an infinite responsibility to campaign for social justice. However, in asserting that the ethical encounter stimulates political action, the shape of the political terrain needs to be elaborated in more detail. While I am comfortable with the assertion that "politics is an ethical practice that arises in a situation of injustice which exerts a demand for responsibility," this does not explain the relationship between that initial response and the political field in sufficient detail [2, p. 92]. The question remains how an awareness of the struggles of those street children transforms into political action? Critchley provides a half answer in his belief that the intimacy of

work in small groups can be drawn together, "weaving cells of resistance" so they are combined in a broader political project [2 p. 114]. This, in turn, leads to an enthusiasm for what he calls the contemporary anarchism of street theatres, carnival-style protest and other acts of civil disobedience. To a certain extent, his is a perfect model for developing a necessary interrelation between the small-scale private practice of applied theatre and more public acts of radical performance. While I would endorse this enthusiasm, and believe there are vital links in artistry and politics between applied theatre and these movements, this cannot be the only location of a socially-engaged performance practice. My dissatisfaction is that it ultimately leaves us with two spheres of activity that we could call *the intimate* and *the street*. This, in turn, demands a theory for moving between the two—from the particular or private, to the universal or public. This move, I would argue, suggests a shift in both time and in value, where one happens before the other, and ultimately one is implicitly of higher status. So the very search for the *political field* articulated above, seems to valorise the general over the intimate and the political over the ethical. This is not satisfactory for applied theatre because it makes the workshop or performance only ever pre-political and only ever subservient to an alternative, proper politics of 'the streets.' We must instead consider the fluid interrelation of different sites of practice and resist *value* being ascribed automatically to one realm. The notion of "weaving cells of resistance" to construct *full-bodied* radical action needs to be reworked to see the actual practice itself as already an intervention in the 'distribution of the sensible.'

Rancière proposes the idea of a "sensible fabric" to suggest that patterns of association and practice, are characterised by particular ways of organising who can speak, be visible and participate in society [8 p. 64]. This is simultaneously cultural, social and economic in its reach. According to Rancière, we live in communities that are drawn together by common ways of acting in a "shared sensible world" and this shapes his particular understanding of both politics and art practices [8 p. 42]. It is the interconnection of these two that offers a way through the problem raised above. Politics, for Rancière, "revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time," indicating a realm that cannot be separated between the private and the public or the immediate encounter with the call of the face and subsequent political action [8 p. 13]. Similarly, artistic activities are "ways of doing and making" that "intervene in the general distribution of ways of doing and making" [Ibid]. Here is a position that suggests there is no temporal or value shift between ethical affect and political act. To tie this to the concept of the face used here, on seeing the face of another we are at one and the same time engaged in the politics and the ethical implications of that encounter. The very workshop space, for example, is structured as part of a wider distribution of the sensible, and therefore our actions within it either contribute to the broader system of 'doing and making', or, perhaps, start a process of undoing 'the sensible fabric' in which it is located. Of course, working in any space through the arts can make no automatic claim to being a disturbance of the broader organisation of who speaks, has a part, or is visible, but the argument of

Rancière offers a place to suggest that the ripple of affect can be marshalled as a political act. There is no shift here—the whole of an applied theatre event, precisely because of the place of the participants in any distribution, is already engaged politically. The prison or refugee camp—acutely painful examples of abusive distributions—can have their ways of 'doing and making' both disrupted or constituted by sense-based activities.

The following from Rancière, where he discusses how the 'meaningful fabric of the sensible' can be disturbed, sets out the scope of his political-aesthetic project, in a way that makes politics and ethics simultaneous and refuses to valorise the carnivals in the streets over the intimate moment of the theatre workshop. After expressing his dream of a political work of art, quoted in the chapter's epigraph, he goes on to say: "It is the dream of an art that would transmit meanings in the form of a rupture with the very logic of meaningful situations… political art cannot work in the simple form of meaningful spectacle that would lead to an 'awareness' of the state of the world. Suitable political art would ensure, at one and the same time, the production of a double effect: the readability of a political signification and a sensible or perceptual shock caused, conversely, by the uncanny, by that which resists signification" [8, p. 63]. Here Rancière combines a vision for political art that works strongly in an affective register with a deep suspicion of 'awareness raising' or the meaningful spectacle. He is not dismissing readability entirely, but is suggesting a politics found in what, I would call, a negotiation between *affect* and *effect*.

The significance here is that we are presented with a dream of a 'political work of art' that takes the terrain of the 'sensible' seriously. And it is a terrain that does not respect clear divisions between private and public. The distribution of the sensible, rather than having artificial boundaries which operate at the edges of rooms, theatres, refugee camps or between the intimate and the street, is the sensate organisation of the whole of our social lives. The approaches we choose are connected to every moment, shaping how the workshop room or theatre is built, how the time is organised and who is present, as much as the structure of the carnival, street demonstration or activist performance. Therefore, engagement within one site cannot be 'less' political or 'pre-political'—it is only another form of politics that is working within one particular area of distribution. So when Critchley announces "if ethics without politics is empty, then politics without ethics is blind," he is right insofar as he is describing a simultaneous process, so that we could have empty applied theatre projects as well as 'blind'[2] ones [2, p. 13]. However, we just might have *the shock*—political performances that, at their best, could fundamentally challenge who speaks, where they dance and at what time they play—in a way that redistributes the sensible in favour of those whose faces are excluded, denied or suppressed.

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[2] I put the word 'blind' in inverted commas to echo the previous quotation but also to indicate disquiet about the use of words associated with disability as negative metaphors.

12.5   Conclusion

This chapter has moved from a specific argument about the ethical call of the face to a claim that certain performance events—whether they are applied theatre projects or street theatre—can be interventions in a frequently inequitable organisation of the sensible. The concept of the face has been used to suggest that intimate meetings between people, the primary ground of much performance practice, can create an ethical demand on a person that is both specific and general. Although, the classic conception of the face insists that this is a call that cannot be ignored, I have suggested that through sensory or aesthetic encounter with others, we can become more aware of the demand that it makes. Once felt, we are drawn beyond ourselves in such a way that our autonomy is limited—and although we may be overwhelmed by the enormity of this, it can be an energising source of our commitment to social change. Where the infinite call to act, protect or struggle for rights does overpower, projects involving the beautiful can offer a screen, respite or protection—both from the conditions of difficult lives or the potentially paralysing affect of these monumental political challenges.

In order for performance projects to encourage individuals to see the face of the other, I have argued that a prejudice towards physiognomy needs to be countered. We do not see the face in order to be edified by the story of suffering it reveals. The face should make an ethical demand for our responsibility to that person, and therefore, to all people in a similar situation. This might be through the story they tell, their smile on stage, their playing of a game or through shared acts of resistance. Performance practice following the logic of this definition of the face, becomes a sensitising process which might include the withdrawal of the face, the right to turn it away, as much as a held gaze between two people. These processes are, then, understood as part of a wider political project—that does not denigrate performance as preparation for the real work of political change, but values it as a purposeful part of an intervention into our sensible world. Applied theatre in this argument is one intervention in the fabric of the sensible amongst many—but one particularly adept at working in sites where the distribution is most inequitable. While the argument suggests that the politics of the street is wrongly valued above the 'ethics of the workshop,' the case here is that both are political—and both will fail if they are not ethical.

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Chapter 13
Presence in Performance:
An Enigmatic Quality

Paul Macneill

13.1 Introduction

This chapter explores 'presence' in performance. The aim is to trace the development of 'presence' in the discourses surrounding theatre from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century. 'Presence' has been both valorised and attacked in the last century—and what is revealed in those debates leads to a reassessment of how 'presence' may be understood in relation to performance. Throughout the chapter however I use the word 'presence' within apostrophes to indicate that it is a contested term. The reason for including this discussion in a book on *Ethics and the Arts* is to lay the groundwork for exploring a link between *ethics* and 'presence' that takes account of the debates surrounding 'presence.'

Criticism of traditional theatre at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century was followed by experimentation in training actors for greater 'presence' on stage. Presence was thought of as a valued aspect of performance—if not the essence of theatre. It was understood as something that an actor emanated, and audiences responded to. Later in the twentieth century however, 'presence' was subjected to a sustained and influential critique by French philosopher Jacques Derrida who attacked the notion of a metaphysical entity or transcendent being implicit in the notion of 'presence.' The effect of Derrida's critique was to undermine the value of this term in theatre studies and practice [19, pp. 72–74]. However, far from devaluing 'presence,' I will claim that Derrida's challenge is helpful in liberating it from its reified sense as a metaphysical entity. This allows for a shift away from an actor's 'presence'—understood as a metaphysical *being*, or as an emanation of a force field—toward what it is *enacted* by a performer when an audience responds to her 'presence' on stage. With this understanding of 'presence,' it is

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open to argue (as I do in Chap. 14) for a relationship between *ethics* and 'presence' as acting (or 'enacting') in particular ways.

13.2 Reform of Theatre in the Twentieth Century

The reforms in European theatre during the twentieth century resulted, in the main, from dissatisfaction with the superficiality of theatre and clichéd over-acting (as it was seen by critics). Exaggerated acting and "phony emotions" so concerned drama critic Jacques Copeau that he turned his criticism to "remedial action" by training actors to perform with a natural and unforced sincerity of expression, and without the '*cabotinage*' (playing to the gallery—OED) that he claimed was endemic in Parisian theatres of the late nineteenth century [32, p. 43]. Out of similar concerns about Russian theatre, Konstantin Stanislavsky developed methods for teaching actors to express themselves more truthfully [7, p. 30]. In a more extreme reaction to theatre's frivolousness, Artaud attacked its foundational assumptions and called for a revelatory 'theatre of cruelty' [1].

13.2.1 Artaud

Antonin Artaud (1896–1948) was a French actor, theatre director and writer who was passionately critical of the theatre of his time. Artaud's critique went further than condemning degenerate acting. He wrote that "all current theatre… except for three of four plays… stink of decadence and pus." Theatre was for "Peeping Toms" and for the sake of diversion. He took issue with the "exclusive dictatorship of words" and argued that theatre in the West had been debased by a slavish devotion to dialogue "something written and spoken [that] does not specifically belong to the stage but to books." The way back for Artaud was to rediscover theatre's power to disturb "impelling us to see ourselves as we are" and to question the state of society and whether "this social or ethical system is iniquitous or not." Theatre should ask questions "in as effective and incendiary a manner as is needed." In his vision "theatre, like the plague… unravels conflicts, liberates powers [and] releases potential" [1, pp. 21–29].

Although Artaud's acting and directorial experience was relatively limited, and he did not himself found any school of acting, the 'incendiary' and visionary power of his collected writings sparked an affirmative response in many theatre practitioners and, as a consequence, his influence has been extensive [22, pp. 23–24, 33], leading philosopher Jacques Derrida to comment (in 1967) that, "throughout the world today… all theatrical audacity declares its fidelity to Artaud" [12].

13.2.2 *Stanislavsky*

Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863–1938) displayed an early and avid interest in performing. Similar to critics in France, he thought Russian theatre, near the end of the nineteenth century, was in creative stagnation. Most of the plays performed were melodramas or romantic farces and actors were cast from one play to the next according to stereotype. Merlin reports that the style of acting at the time was histrionic over-acting and 'star' performers were called back on stage, after exits throughout the play, to receive tumultuous applause while the rest of the cast froze in mid-action. There was little time for rehearsal and little attention to production with stage sets recycled for various plays. Actresses depended on patronage to afford lavish wardrobes that accentuated their voluptuousness. From early in his career, Stanislavsky sought to overcome this superficiality by invigorating the craft of acting [26, pp. 1–8].

Carnicke has drawn attention to the importance that Stanislavsky gave to 'experiencing'—as she translates the Russian word *perezhivanie* [7, pp. 129–147]. He used this word in a number of different senses—one of which was to be "fully present on stage" [7, p. 71]. Perhaps, more than any other practitioner of the twentieth century, Stanislavsky offers a way of understanding 'presence' through the various meanings of *experiencing* including: "unbroken concentration" throughout a play, and "states of mind and being" that could foster inspiration and creativity. The word also refers to '*I am*:' a transcendent feeling of being fully aware and present in the moment—a notion that reflects the considerable influence of yoga on Stanislavsky [7, 36].[1] *Experiencing* is to both *feel* and to *communicate one's feeling* to the audience, which is Stanislavsky's assimilation of Leo Tolstoy's view that the "aim of art is to infect people with a feeling experienced by the artist" [34, p. 90]. Stanislavsky's use of *perezhivanie* was idiosyncratic however. Literal translations of the verb *perezhit* as 'to live' or 'to re-live' and *perezhivanie* as 'the art of living the part' or 'to live the scene' (as these words are often translated into English) misrepresent the full complexity and richness of Stanislavsky's meaning and contributed to a failure in the West to understand the centrality of this notion in his System. Within Soviet Russia, deliberate censoring of Stanislavsky's books and an enforcement of 'Socialist Realism' further distorted his ideas in a different way—by limiting an understanding of Stanislavsky's approach to naturalist realism and on-stage physical action (representing only the early and late phases of his work) without integrating these facets with other aspects of his System [7].

As theorist, Stanislavsky regarded *experiencing* as the pinnacle of acting, exceeding both 'craftsmanship' and 'representation'—which were inferior rungs on the ladder. He was however dismissive of craftsmanship which, for him, included the gestures and empty 'tricks of the trade' that actors use to signify (for example)

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[1] Stanislavsky "drew significantly from" translations of books by 'Yogi Ramacharaka,' the American 'lawyer-turned-metaphysician' William Walker Atkinson." Stanislavsky's use of these books is carefully traced by White in 'Stanislavsky and Ramacharaka' [36].

'sorrow,' or 'secretiveness,' or 'dying.' He had more respect for 'representation' by which an actor is both artist and canvas in 'painting' a portrait of a character that has been carefully prepared in rehearsal. But *experiencing* takes this one step further by creating the role on stage.[2] For Stanislavsky, this was true acting, not *playing* an already created part, but enacting "a dynamic and creative process" in each and every performance [7, pp. 135–139]. He contrasts this with the insincerity of craftsmanship and relying on theatrical convention "because convention is a lie" [9, quoted in 7, p. 141].

In practice however, Stanislavsky knew from his own experience that actors not only experience themselves within their roles, they also observe themselves as performer. This "dividing of oneself does not interfere with inspiration. On the contrary one helps the other." Although apparently dualistic, Stanislavsky defined this as "sincere" and "genuine" in that "We also divide ourselves in real life" [Stanislavsky quoted in 7, pp. 142–143].[3]

13.3   Developments During the Twentieth Century

The twentieth century is remarkable for its 'audacious' theatre practitioners, many of whom were influenced (to varying degrees) by Stanislavsky and Artaud.[4] To name just a few, they include Michael Chekov [23], Jerzy Grotowski [22, 23], Joseph Chiakin [4, 8], Jaques Lecoq [23, 24], and Peter Brook [6, 23]. While each of them worked to promote 'presence' on stage, and any of them could serve as examples of this approach, I focus on Grotowski whose commitment to developing this quality was remarkable, even in comparison with the others.

Grotowski (1933–1999) challenged his students to "break through barriers" that stood in the way of self-revelation and authenticity. An actor's work was in "opening up" and "emerging from himself." This method is in keeping with his notion of 'The Poor Theatre' as stripping back to its indispensable elements. Grotowski described this as "the principle of reduction, to see what can be removed and find the essence of theatre…. That is taking away all the rich elements that are unnecessary" [21]. At the heart of his approach is a notion of art as revealing truth and crossing "frontiers [to] exceed our limitations." Acting for Grotowski's is a "vehicle allowing us to emerge from ourselves, to fulfill ourselves." For him the "core of theatre is an encounter" and the effectiveness of this encounter depends on an act of self-revelation in "laying oneself bare… tearing off the mask of daily life [and] exteriorizing oneself." This encounter is also "an invitation" to the spectator to

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[2] Without suggesting a direct link, this is to some extent a manifestation of Artaud's desire for "a play composed right on stage" [1, p. 28].

[3] Although Carnicke describes this as a duality, I have suggested elsewhere that 'immanent' and 'transcendent' experiences come together in practice in a way in which they do not in theory [25].

[4] Apart from those influenced by Brecht and Brecht's rejection of Stanislavsky on ideological grounds.

open to his or her own truth and "experience what is real" [22, pp. 21, 56, 177, 211–218].[5]

The others however should not be lightly dismissed as their work on 'presence' was also remarkable. Chaikin's book is entitled *The* Presence *of the Actor* [8]. Brook works with transparency, openness and responsiveness' [23, p. 184]. Lecoq was interested in an actor's state of being and in cultivating "a point of stillness from which action can spring naturally and spontaneously"—a point of stillness that has been equated with 'presence' [30, pp. 76–78].

13.4 Critique of the Metaphysics of 'Presence'

Although there were many practitioners promoting 'presence' in their work with actors during the 1960s through to the 1990s, the term was already under attack, and a critique of 'presence' impacted on theatre studies and performance practice well before the end of the century. In an essay published in 1985, Elinor Fuchs claimed to "have been witnessing" a failure of 'presence' in contemporary theatre—a failure she related to Derrida's deconstructive philosophy [18]. Derrida's critique was a significant factor (amongst other philosophical and cultural strands) leading to the advent of performances in New York and elsewhere that deliberately played with and proliferated (if not mocked) images and notions of 'presence.' This highly valued attribute of theatre and performance, came—within a short time—to be framed as theatrical illusion and subterfuge [19, p. 12]. However a closer examination of Derrida's critique and the aim of his methodology, reveals the extent to which the reach of philosophy has been exaggerated in framing 'presence' as (merely) an illusion.

13.4.1 Derrida

French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) wrote two essays on Artaud that have been widely read as undermining the whole project of 'presence' in theatre. In the first of these essays (published in French in 1967 with a collection of his essays) Derrida claimed that Artaud wanted it both ways in endeavoring to destroy a tradition of metaphysics whilst "he is still furiously determined to construct or to preserve [those metaphysics] within the same movement of destruction." He argues that Artaud's writing displays a fatal complicity, which it has in common with "all destructive discourses," in that "they must inhabit the structures they demolish, and

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[5] When Grotowski "turned his back on performance" toward "paratheatrical" therapeutic "experiential events" his aim was still to enable "people to overcome their fear of their true selves" and to 'bare themselves' [2, p. 26].

within them they must shelter an indestructible desire for full presence, for nondifference: simultaneously life and death" [14, p. 194].

In the second essay (also published in 1967) Derrida describes Artaud's theatre of cruelty as more far-reaching than a revolution within theatre itself. Artaud's vision "in an absolute and radical sense… announces the limit of representation" and, as such, was a rebellion against "representation, whose structure is imprinted… on the entire culture of the West (its religions, philosophies, politics)." Artaud had proposed a language that draws "its effectiveness from its spontaneous creation… without passing through words" [1, p. 28]. For Derrida this displayed Artaud's concern with the "menace of repetition," and the deadly effects of a "duplication which steals the simple presence of its present act from the theater"[12, p. 247]. Yet, as Derrida observes, repetition is an inescapable feature of theatre and "There is no theater in the world today which fulfills Artaud's desire." Although "Artaud kept himself as close as possible to the limit" Derrida claims that "Presence, in order to be presence and self-presence, has always already begun to represent itself, has always already been penetrated" [12, p. 249].

13.4.1.1 Derrida's Philosophical Project and Methodology

To better understand this critique of Artaud it is necessary to place it within Derrida's broader philosophical project and methodology. He worked by 'deconstructing' texts to expose and undermine the oppositions and paradoxes on which they were based (whether explicit or implicit). Conceptual oppositions within texts—such as 'presence/absence'—were identified in order to expose the way in which one side of a pairing was valorised and the other marginalised or excluded. He drew attention to an ongoing interplay between 'dual oppositions' in order to demonstrate the '*undecidability*' between opposing terms. For example, his invented word '*différance*' connotes both 'to differ' and 'to defer,' in the sense in which 'presence' differs from *absence* and that both defer (in time) any ultimate resolution between them. One of his essays on Rousseau makes just this point [11].

In that essay on Rousseau, Derrida famously wrote "*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*" which the translator rendered in English as "there is nothing outside of the text" (and also more literally in parenthesis as "there is no outside-text") [11, p. 158]. Many have taken this to mean that, for Derrida, *text* is everything in the sense that there is nothing that we can speak of (or even think about) that has not "always already" been infiltrated by text when text is understood broadly as "the entire linguistic structure" that Derrida called '*écriture*' [19, p. 73]. Derrida however claimed that this phrase has been widely misunderstood [15, p. 136]. Reading it in context makes it clear that he is discussing necessary and respectful constraints in critically reviewing another author's writing. A critic does not have licence to refer to some other 'reality' outside of the text as "there is nothing [that is legitimate to refer to] outside of the text." Nevertheless there are certain relationships "unperceived by the writer" that are inherent in "patterns of language" which are legitimate to surface in any critique [11, p. 158]. This is a very different sense from what

is usually implied in quoting "*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*" out of context—as meaning that *everything is text*.[6]

The purpose of Derrida's method was to expose the illusions and sleights of hand (or sleights of language) by which grand metaphysical notions such as 'presence' are substantiated. He would dispossess us of the "longed-for presence" by exposing the "gesture of language by which we attempt to seize it." This is not a problem of expression but a "law of language" in that language both "institutes and deconstitutes me" (or 'presence') at the same time [11, p. 141]. However that is *not* to say that the word 'presence' ceases to have meaning, but that its 'substance' is necessarily (by the laws of language) enigmatic. Presence is always and already penetrated by *absence*. Neither term can take priority over the other and, although they are (in a sense) coexistent, they also differ. Any resolution between them is deferred in an on-going and interminable play.

Derrida gives his motive as to "make enigmatic what one thinks one understands by the words 'proximity,' 'immediacy,' [and] 'presence'" [10, p. 70]. We can accept the enigmatic nature of such words, the limitations of text, and the play, and playfulness of metaphysical terms, without making the *further* negative assumption, that there is *no* meaning beyond text.[7] Transcendent moments are more than just a play of words—even though they defy any attempt to "seize" them in language as foundational truths. O'Sullivan's notes that Derrida's critique is, "a kind of expanded ideological critique" of implicit metaphysical assumptions [28]. Yet, without these assumptions, words like 'presence' continue to be meaningful.

13.4.2 'Self' as Grounding 'Presence'

Auslander locates the "problematics of presence" in the idea that "the actor's presence before the audience is the essence of theatre." Although it was Joseph Chaikin who gave expression to this view—in *The Presence of the Actor* (1972)—it was a generally accepted theory of theatre at the time [2, p. 62]. This problem is acute when 'presence' is grounded in a concept of the "actor's self" and especially so when it is assumed "that the actor's self precedes and grounds her performance and that it is the presence of this self in performance that provides the audience with access to human truths." Auslander finds this approach to 'self' central in performance theory of the major practitioners and theorists including Stanislavsky, Brecht and Grotowski. Although all three "theorize the actor's self differently, [they] all posit the self as an autonomous foundation for acting." For example, Grotowski saw acting as a means to "expose the most basic levels of self and psyche" and for

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[6] Nevertheless, there does remain a suspicion that for Derrida everything is text in the broader sense that text is always in play and there is no escaping text. We are not obliged however to conceive of all experience as reduced to its linguistic interplay.

[7] To put it in the affirmative: we can assert (*pace* Derrida) that there *is* meaning that escapes "the order of the sign" [13, p. 292].

Stanislavsky "the presence of the actor's self as the basis of performance is for him the source of truth in acting." Auslander claims that a "deconstructive philosophy reveals that… the actorly self is, in fact, produced by the performance it supposedly grounds." Stanislavsky, for example, in his commitment to recreating the character on stage, advocates "merging of actor and character" and this "results exclusively in a fresh presentation (or representation) of self." In other words Stanislavsky's "own working out of this idea leads him to posit that the self is produced by the very process of acting it is said to ground." A similar deconstructive reading of Grotowski and Brecht leads Auslander to the same conclusion: that for each of them, self is an outcome of performance rather than its grounding [2, pp. 28–38].

13.5 Political Critiques of 'Presence'

Criticisms of 'presence' in theatre were not solely based on Derrida's deconstruction of its metaphysics. There were political concerns as well. Auslander challenged naïve assumption in the 1960s that "the presence of the actor as one living human being before others is spiritually and psychologically liberating." He drew attention to "the apparent collusion between political structures of authority and the persuasive power of presence" which he illustrated by the 'presence' of charismatic leaders such as Hitler and Nixon. He concludes that "In theatre, presence is the matrix of power; the postmodern theatre of resistance must therefore both expose the collusion of presence with authority and resist such collusion by refusing to establish itself as the charismatic Other" [2, pp. 62–63]. This is relevant to any link there may be between 'presence' and ethics in that 'presence'—and particularly charismatic presence—is no guarantee of ethical conduct.

Another critique of 'presence' was advanced by Rustom Bharucha who was concerned about colonialist appropriation of poorly-understood 'Eastern' ideas and practices. He was critical of Artaud, Grotowski, Peter Brook among others, for trivialising Indian philosophy whilst maintaining a Eurocentric structure of power [3].[8]

13.6 Changes in Understanding 'Presence': Its Many Meanings

Whilst acting theory, up until at least the 1970s, may have relied on the actor's 'self' as preceding performance and have attributed a metaphysical 'presence' to that self, we are not bound by those assumptions. Accepting that 'self' is an outcome of performance rather than a prior metaphysical foundation, allows for a shift in understanding 'presence' as arising in the course of a performance—rather than

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[8] I am grateful to Paul Rae for directing me to these political concerns.

something that an actor brings *to* the performance. From this changed perspective, I propose to re-look at the various meanings of 'presence' and consider the extent to which each these are affected by this changed orientation.

Cormac Power identifies a number of these meanings including 'presence' as "the 'now' of the performance" [30, p. 74]. A good example of this use is theatre director Peter Brook's statement that "The essence of theatre is within a mystery called 'the present moment'" [5, p. 81]. Goodall understands 'presence' in similar terms as "an expression of life force in the moment, so that the moment itself is transformed in a way that has an impact on all who witness it" [20, p. 46]. Brook elaborates on the 'present moment' as a movement that "lead[s] to a glowing moment, and then in turn to a moment of perfect transparency, before dropping again to a moment of everyday simplicity" [5, p. 84].

We can acknowledge that any description of a transcendent 'now' is open to Derridean deconstruction to reveal the 'moment' as having already been penetrated by the past and the future. This is to recognise a limit to the significance we can give to any descriptive account, although it does not invalidate the 'meaningfulness' of an experience of 'the present moment' *per se*. Brook for example describes how in theatre "the very first words, sounds or actions [may] release deep within each spectator a first murmur related to hidden themes" in a process that is not intellectual or rational but "touches an emotional button that in turn sends tremors through the intellect." This may generate "an infinitely more acute quality of awareness" in which transformation is possible "between ourselves as we usually are… and an invisible world" [5, p. 85]. These words resonate with anyone who has had similar powerful moments in theatre—moments that touch some emergence that is beyond the grasp of our words, but are nevertheless meaningful in ways that elude capture. Derrida's warning is against constructing a metaphysical 'reality' or 'absolute truth' on the basis of such descriptive accounts. Nevertheless, as enigmatic and elusive as such experiences may be, they can (and do) have a powerful affect and may be transformative.[9] It would be a dull life without them [16, p. 216].

Another sense of 'presence'—that Power discusses as 'auratic presence'—is 'being present' as a person: a "mode… that is perhaps most difficult to define, but which an audience member may easily recognise and experience" [30, p. 47]. Here again, meaningfulness of the term resides in an experience of 'presence' for an audience. Goodall regards 'presence' in this sense is an outcome of "a quality of control, an attribute of the player who commands, controls and directs forces" [20, p. 187]. It is also an aspect of a performer's "attention to detail, process and technique" [20, p. 33]. Performers are not necessarily aiming at 'presence' *per se* (as is discussed in the following chapter). This is to shift the focus from the outcome—which for an audience may be 'presence'—to the performer's action. Artaud comes close to this in stating that a "gifted actor instinctively knows how to tap and radiate certain powers" [1, p. 94].

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[9] Brook is well aware of this enigmatic quality in asking if the net (theatre) that catches 'golden moments,' is "made of holes or of knots?" [5, p. 85].

A more troublesome meaning of presence is in its association with charisma. Auslander, as noted above, is concerned about the risk of a "collusion between presence as charisma" in politics [2, pp. 62–63]. Goodall explores a relation between '*auratic*' 'presence' and *charisma* but distinguishes them on the basis that 'presence' is a life force flowing through the actor that may not be accessible or even desired "as a personal force in the world". Stanislavsky adamantly dismissed personality and charisma as "a betrayal of art through its skewed emphasis on the person of the actor as star" [7, p. 137]. These concerns about *charisma* collapse, I suggest, if 'presence' is seen as an experience that arises from performance, rather than something that belongs to an actor such as a force or quality residing in her. It allows us to step back from the staged event (including those in political arenas and in religious settings) to consider what it is about those settings, and the actions of the performers, that brings about an experience of 'presence.'

Fuchs discusses 'presence' as "the circle of heightened awareness in the theatre flowing from actor to spectator and back that sustains the dramatic world"—a process Fischer-Lichte has termed "autopoietic feedback" [18, p. 70; 17].[10] Thus far, we have not considered the role of the audience members themselves in constructing 'presence.' Yet theatre producers are well aware that different audiences contribute differently to a performance. Auslander translates Copeau as saying: "An audience is not just a group of people assembled by chance who go here or there in search of more or less heady amusements. There are nights when the house is full, yet there is no audience before us. What I describe as an audience is a gathering in the same place of those brought together by the same need, the same desire, the same aspirations" [2, p. 16]. Bharucha, from an Indian perspective, notes a quality of "open heart" that audience members may bring—giving meaning to theatre by the way in which they "participate (and thereby, create) its phenomenological immediacy" [3, p. 53]. Recognition of 'presence,' as a quality created in performance allows more room for acknowledging that an audience, or audience members, may be active in creating the experience of 'presence.'

Power described 'presence' in this sense as "constructed *in the act* of performance" including "the way in which the actor confronts his audience and engages their attention" [30, p. 49]. Rae however treats this construction more sceptically noting that "the degree of presence" increases when a "performance erases" the reality that actors are "reciting written words" and "moving in ways pre-ordained by directors" [31]. Even so, some actors (with some audiences) do this well and an experience of 'presence' is generated*,* whereas the delivery of other actors is empty and prosaic (though admittedly, in a postmodern context, that may be intentional).

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[10]Autopoiesis, meaning self creation or self production, was a term introduced by Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela to express a fundamental dialectic between structure, mechanism and function. See the following chapter for a discussion of Francisco Varela and 'the enactment process.'

Although we can point to various meanings of the word, many commentators still want to retain a quality of mystery for 'presence' (including Power and Goodall) and describe it in transcendent or spiritual terms [30, p. 49; 20, p. 19]. This takes us back to Derrida's critique and the question of any 'ontological' or metaphysical substantiality that one might attribute to such descriptions. These accounts of 'presence'—including allusions to the mystery of 'presence'—are of concern if they are presuming, or attempting to substantiate, an experience of 'presence' as a grounding or fundamental *being*, *essence*, or *spirit* [30, p. 50]. Zarrilli expresses a concern of this kind in that, "what is marked by 'presence' is problematically reified by some as a kind of 'mysterious,' 'magical' or 'secret' power of the actor's art" [37]. Nevertheless the experience of 'presence' in a performance may be profound (as is discussed in the following chapter) and it is tempting to describe it in transcendental terms.

The issue is what one makes of such accounts. Notwithstanding Derrida, are such experiences indicative of 'something' escaping words? This is no small matter. For example, a major philosophical division between Hinduism and Buddhism falls along the line of their different approaches to the metaphysics of 'self.' In Hinduism *self*, in a 'non-ego' sense, is understood as divine (*ayam ātmā brahma*[11]), whereas in Buddhism *self* is seen as void or empty (śūnyatā) in the sense of lacking intrinsic reality or intrinsic objectivity [27]. In other words, Hinduism gives *self* some metaphysical substantiality as relating to Brahman, the divine; whereas Buddhists (at least in the Madhyamika tradition) understand 'self' as a metaphorical term that is *void* or *empty* of substantive content. Yet Buddhism steps back from denying its existence. Varela et al preface their book with a Buddhist (ninth century) epigram that expresses this idea aptly: "Those who believe in substantiality are like cows; those who believe in emptiness are worse" [35]. In practice, the differences between Hindu and Buddhist metaphysics are of less concern if one accepts (as I do) that both approaches to self are primarily soteriological: to do with attaining enlightenment, rather than ontological and ascertaining the substantive *existence* (or *non-existence*) of metaphysical constructs.

Similarly, one can see 'presence' as transcendental and divine, or as enigmatic and lacking any intrinsic reality in Derridean terms. Neither of these approaches need be taken as implying a material substantiality (either in the positive *existent*, or negative *non*-existent, sense). Auslander, in taking a Derridean 'deconstructive' approach, is sceptical of such terms. Nevertheless he allows that we may speak of 'presence' metaphorically provided "that what we refer to as the actor's self is not a grounding presence that precedes the performance, but an effect of the play of *différence*" [2, p. 36]. If we accept that 'self' and 'presence' are enacted in the performance and (more widely) in life, there is no issue. Something beyond words is captured by art and the experience may be felt as 'transcendental.' Employing terms such as 'presence' and 'self' need not be taken as substantiating metaphysical 'truths' in any ontological sense.

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[11] Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad 4.4.5.

13.7   Discussion

The question of metaphysical substantiality of 'presence' evaporates by a simple acknowledgement that there is no foundational *self* and by accepting that self, 'presence,' and *being* are enigmatic and indeterminable terms. Such a concession does not undermine the value of the work of Stanislavsky, or Grotowski, or any of the major twentieth century practitioners. Poggi observed, in relation to a number of theatre practitioners, that, "We try to apply their theories rigidly, without really knowing their practice. Of course we did the same thing years ago to Stanislavsky" [29]. It was not theory or metaphysics that they were primarily concerned about, rather it was to support students in discovering how to act. We can reframe their metaphysics and still learn from their practice.

So what was the practice? For Stanislavsky 'presence'—in terms of *perezhivanie*—was to be "fully present on stage" which meant both to *feel* and to *communicate one's feelings* to the audience. For Grotowski 'presence' was discovered in "opening up" and laying oneself bare. Goodall noted that 'presence' is an aspect of an actor's "attention to detail, process and technique" and Power spoke of 'presence' as "constructed *in the act* of performance." What I am drawing attention to is 'presence' in terms of actions taken by an actor, rather than 'presence' as a mystery. It is to conceive, or re-conceive, of 'presence' as a *verb* rather than a *noun*: as 'presencing' rather than 'presence' as a metaphysical substance. This is the approach taken in the next chapter in exploring a relationship between 'presence' and ethics.

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Chapter 14
Ethics and Performance: Enacting *Presence*

Paul Macneill

14.1 Introduction

This chapter explores 'presence' in performance as a quality that is both aesthetic and morally relevant. The claim is that 'presence' is an important element in relating to others and in what it means to relate ethically. Continuing from where the previous chapter ended, 'presence' is treated as 'presencing'—as something an actor does and not a metaphysical entity—as a verb rather than a noun. Similarly 'ethics' is not understood in its usual sense. It is taken as encompassing more than ethical principles or normative rules of moral conduct. As philosopher and music critic Michael Tanner has noted, when philosophers discuss morality they "most often… have in mind fairly commonplace acts: they are thinking, though unwittingly, of moral mediocrity." In this chapter, I have in mind "moral ideals" rather than "moral mediocrity" and Tanner's notion that some moral ideals, such as "'sincerity,' 'depth,' and 'integrity'… have both moral and aesthetic employment" [20]. In other words, such terms—and I include 'presence' among them—are expressive of both aesthetic and ethical qualities. In this way *presence*, or *presencing,* is explored in performance and in actor training—to consider what insights may carry across from the theatrical arts to life more generally. This is to view ethics in terms of performative acts.

For more than 20 years, I have been teaching ethics to medical students. In common with many of my colleagues, I approach the subject from a number of perspectives which include principles (such as respecting patients' autonomy—an approach known as 'principlism') [2], virtue ethics (which gives priority to virtuous character) [4, 17], and duty-based ethics (drawing on the philosophy of Immanuel Kant) [10, 15]. I am not satisfied with these different systems for a number of reasons. One is that

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most ethical theories rely on assumptions (such as autonomy, or character) so as to ground ethics on a foundation. In essence, foundational approaches work by providing external standards of character; or they rely on reasoning and determining standards for what is ethical conduct. They function by establishing external criteria to assess one's behaviour, but they do little to promote an inner sense of mastery in acting well in relating to others. Another concern (that has been partially alluded to) is that ethical theories (and particularly Kantian ethics) rely predominantly on reason and discount the role of affect in ethical understanding and practice. A further concern is that practices relevant to ethics, and especially skillful practice (*phronesis* in Aristotelian terms), are given insufficient recognition. To illustrate this last point, doctors learn a great deal about ethics in relating to human beings who are ill and suffering, but there are few discursive tools for recognising and discussing qualitative aspects of 'relating' as they arise in practice. In this chapter I propose that actor training offers insights into these qualities, and a means for identifying what it is that actors do in relating effectively to each other and to their audience. These are qualities that have potential application beyond theatre in promoting mastery in *acting well*.

I hasten to add that I am not dismissing foundational approaches to ethics, minimal standards, or the role of reason. They may all be necessary in assisting to understand ethics, but they are insufficient for *practising* ethics skilfully. The approach in this essay is to regard ethics as an aesthetic—something that can be done very well—and to learn from performance and actor training about how to identify those factors that promote 'moral ideals,' qualities that go beyond following moral precepts.

The remaining word from the title of this chapter—*enacting*—is a reference to a claim that 'presence' of the world—and ourselves as a part of that world—is *enacted* rather than discovered. In contrast to Chap. 13, which discusses 'presence' within a philosophical discourse, this Chapter draws on notions of 'presence' from discourses within perceptual and cognitive studies—and applies the resulting analysis to enactment in performance and ethics. The full claim—from writers within perceptual and cognitive studies—is that, in our interactions with 'whatever-it-is-out there,' we enact—and in this sense create—the world, our consciousness, ourselves, and ourselves as moral beings. This is not to say that, prior to our activities, there was nothing there but that in discovering 'what-ever-it-is' we access it actively. It is not 'something' that is presented to us passively. This field provides further concepts that I will draw into discussing ethics as comprising performative acts.

14.2   Enactment and Presence

As an undergraduate student, I was fascinated by the study of perception. The university bookshop sold *Scientific American* offprints and I bought a paper about perceptual experiments with distortion lenses that turned people's visual world

upside down and inverted their visual field from left to right. Someone wearing those inversion prisms adapted, after a week or so, and perceived the world through the distortion glasses as normal. Yet, when the lenses were removed, their perceptual world was again turned upside down and switched from right to left. Clearly perception was not simply a process of converting visual images from a 'world-out-there' and projecting them from the retina onto the 'mind-in-here.' What was even more fascinating was that people adapted to the distorted images more quickly when they were free to move than when they were wheeled around. What this meant to me, even back then, was that our own physical activities have something to do with how we perceive the world. The paper was by Richard Held (as I have rediscovered) with the apt title, 'Plasticity in sensory-motor systems' [9]. This captures succinctly the idea that our perceptual systems are malleable in responding to sensory input, as well as to our physical movements and interactions with the world. Although Held subsequently modified some of his conclusions, it remains true that perception is not simply a process of registering what is 'out there' but is more like creatively 'producing' the world through our motor-sensory interactions in our surroundings [7].

In the book *The Embodied Mind,* Chilean biologist and neuroscientist Francisco Varela—along with philosopher Evan Thompson and psychologist Eleanor Rosch—wrote of their "growing conviction that cognition is not the representation of a pre-given world by a pregiven mind but is rather the enactment of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs" [23, p. 9].[1] The radical proposal that they were making is that both the world and our minds are enacted through on-going and different interactions in discovering—or, more accurately, enacting—the world. They termed this '*the enactive approach*'—to capture the idea that both the 'world' and the 'mind' are 'enacted.'[2] It builds on the work of perceptual psychologists such as Held, and argues that both perception and cognition are mutually created along with the world as we perceive it. This process, as Thompson was later to elaborate, is one in which living beings enact their own cognitive systems through "the exercise of skilful know-how in situated and embodied action." [21, p. 13] This is not simply a subjective process, but in bumping up against the world, in sensing what is 'out there,' and in interaction with others, we 'enact' that world, including ourselves as a part of it.

Philosopher Alva Noë expands on these ideas to add the challenging notion that *consciousness* is not something resident in the brain, but is something we enact. It "isn't something that happens inside us: it is something we do, actively in our dynamic interaction with the world around us" [13, p. 24]. In a later (2012) book *Varieties of Presence,* Noë extends this idea to argue that *presence* is also enacted in this way. The 'presence' of objects in the world does not come to us in a detached

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[1] Francisco Varela was a practising Tibetan Buddhist, and in writing *The Embodied Mind* all three authors were strongly influenced by, and discuss, "the nonfoundationalist understanding [of] the Madhyamika school of Mahayana Buddhism" [23, p. xx].

[2] "Valera first thought of the name 'the enactive approach' in the summer of 1986 in Paris when he and Thompson began writing *The Embodied Mind*" [21, p. 14 note 9].

way, it "does not come for free. We achieve presence… We achieve the world's presence in all its forms." Activities such as reading, taking a seat in a room, playing games, are all hard-won sets of skills that are embedded "in cultural, conventional, communication contexts." We have to work at these "with the help of others" for the world to have presence for us, and for us to have presence in the world. We are assisted by others in our discovering and, in this process, we are dependent on both our own activity and our interactivity with others. "The world shows up thanks to our mastery and exercise of skills of access. We achieve the world by enacting ourselves. Insofar as we achieve access to the world, we also achieve *ourselves*." [14, pp. 10–13]. This is to say that the world, our perceptual system, consciousness, and the 'self' are not entities that are 'pregiven' and independent of each other, but are 'enacted' through a dynamic and interactive process.

Furthermore, as Noë claims, this process is never concluded: "the porous openness of our ways of doing things" is liable to disruption, "to worries and doubts about what is required of us" and "the need for different, maybe better ways of carrying on" that arise "not at the limit of the framework, but at home." He adds: "And here's the beautiful thing: the having of the conversation—which is really the work of philosophy and of art—is the very process whereby we remake ourselves and enact new skills and new understandings" [14, p. 154].

14.3   Enacting and 'Presencing' in Performance

Theatre director and acting teacher Phillip Zarrilli has taken 'the enactive approach' from Varela et al., as elaborated by Noë, and related it to 'presence' in theatre. In so doing, Zarrilli turns notions of 'enactment' and 'presence'—which were developed in response to questions about how the world and objects in the world have 'presence'—and applies them to the question of how an actor has 'presence' on stage. As he states, "I approach the question of 'presence' phenomenologically, assuming an 'enactive approach' to acting in which the actor as a gestalt optimally engages her bodymind fully in each moment of performance as she creates, encounters, and responds to the performance environment" [26, p. 122]. In a number of earlier publications, Zarrilli has developed what he means by 'engaging one's bodymind fully.' For example, in *Psychophysical Acting* he writes of "working with a fully awakened energy coursing through one's entire body-mind. One's awareness is so fully open that one is totally focussed within a specific action." The performer enacts the "dynamic possibilities" of any situation by extending her awareness to the feeling of her body, the feeling of her words [25, p. 4 & 49].

At Zarrilli's invitation, I observed a class he gave (in October 2012) in the Intercultural Theatre Institute in Singapore. He was teaching students taiqiquan, yoga, and kalarippayattu (a South Indian martial art) as pre-performative preparation for acting. One of his suggestions to them was to maintain their awareness of a point on the wall behind them, and simultaneously, to attend to a point on the wall in front of them whilst also maintaining an awareness of the other students

in the class moving alongside them. He spoke of kalarippayattu training as the "body becoming all eyes" and discussed its relevance to performance [24]. As he put it, any actor can move her hand and speak the lines given to her, but when she does so with full attention—not only in attending to her hand, but to what is behind her, and to the feeling of her feet on the floor—she stands a good chance of capturing the audience's attention. In a later conversation, he said that *presence* is not something that an actor should strive for. The actor's task is to bring attention fully to the bodymind and to the action required within the performative situation.

As I understand his approach, Zarrilli is training actors in 'presencing' which (as is discussed above) is to conceive of 'presence' in terms of what an actor does. His training focusses on developing psychophysical attention in an expanded sense. In a more recent essay, he elaborates on this in writing, "that 'the strong concept of presence' is not singular, but rather multiple—the quality, valence, and intensity of the actor's ability to generate an inner 'energy,' to engage one's entire embodied consciousness in each performance task, to command space and hold attention is always shaped by one's training/experience, as well as the dramaturgy and aesthetic of a specific performance" [26, p. 122]. He is cautious in discussing 'presence' however noting that:

> as a practitioner I have deliberately chosen not to use the term 'presence' when training or directing actors, when discussing acting as a phenomenon in the studio, or when describing my own process or relationship to acting. What for the audience may be experienced as remarkable—'presence'—from the stage actor's perspective should remain *un*remarkable. The actor's job is to stay focussed while deploying one's energy and awareness to the specific work she has to do in each moment of performance. I argue that the actor should not strive to attain 'presence'; rather, *if* 'presence' is perceived by the audience, 'it' emerges in the vortex of the performative moment.[3] Therefore… I use the term 'presence' guardedly and with quotation marks to signal my reluctance to use the term in the studio. [26, p. 123]

A key element of Zarrilli's approach is training actors to bring full attention to the specific task, along with a capacity to draw on an embodied sense, within each moment of performance. Certainly the psychophysical approach he teaches is "common to many systems of actor training and performance," as he acknowledges, including the systems of Stanislavsky, Grotowski, Michael Chekhov, Lecoq, and others [26, pp. 122–123]. From this perspective, a shift from 'presence' to 'presencing' is also redolent of many of those celebrated acting teachers. Much of what they have said in relation to an actor's 'presence,' can also be understood as relating to what an actor *does* rather than to 'presence' as a mystical entity. For Stanislavsky presence—in translating from the Russian word *perezhivanie*—is to be "fully present on stage" which meant both to *feel* and to *communicate one's feelings* to the audience (as discussed in the previous chapter) [5, pp. 129–147].

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[3]Macn: This is similar to Grotowski's advice to his trainees to act without looking for a result, although he acknowledged that this is a paradox in that "you can't ignore the result because… the deciding factor in art is the result" [8, p. 200].

Grotowski took 'presence' further than most in asking actors to 'lay themselves bare' and to tear "off the mask of daily life" so as to 'exteriorise' themselves [8, p. 177].[4] He spoke of a "holy actor" in a secular but "sacred theatre" [8, pp. 48–49]. This was a moral issue for him although not in the sense of following moral precepts. As he put it "I am not speaking of morality in the usual, everyday sense…. To my eyes, morality… is to express in your work the whole truth." He added that, "it is this which creates all that is great in art." Nevertheless, Grotowski preferred to focus on technique. As he put it, one can think of acting "as being very ethical; but I have found that at the base of it a completely objective and technical problem" [8, pp. 48–49, 177, 196 & 201].[5] I would argue then, that even for Grotowski, 'presence' is about what an actor does and how she engages (or enacts) her own awareness.

14.4   An Enactive Approach: Relating Presence and Ethics

To indicate where I am going in this discussion: I am taking notions of 'enacting' and 'presencing' in performance, so as to apply them to ethics as a practice. This is to explore a different understanding of ethics as dynamic and creative activities by which ethics itself is enacted. Noë touches on this in noting that, "we ourselves enact a mode of social organization in which we are not merely present, like animals, but in which we are present as citizens" [14, p. 13]. Rather than being the application of normative rules to situations in life, ethics can be understood as a constantly readjusting adaptive process whereby 'we' develop skills of access and understanding. It is not to deny the place and function of normative rules of conduct, but to recognise a responsive and active relationship to those rules. As Varela et al. express it, "The point is not that there is no need for normative rules in the relative world—clearly such rules are a necessity in any society. It is that unless such rules are informed by the wisdom that enables them to be dissolved in the demands of responsivity to the particularity and immediacy of lived situations, the rules will become sterile, scholastic hindrances to compassionate action rather than conduits for its manifestation" [23, p. 252].

To take this one step further I draw on Zarrilli's ideas and suggest that having greater awareness of ourselves, and more sensitivity to our situation, gives the possibility of acting more sensitively and (potentially) more ethically. In medicine for example, a large part of a doctor's role is in interacting with patients and "lending a sympathetic ear" (as has been recognised for decades) [19]. A more recent study indicates that a doctor's empathy and concern for a patient are major factors in empowering patients to understand and cope with their health and illness [11]. Empathy and patient-centeredness are indicators of an ethical

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[4] Although Grotowski was strongly influenced by Stanislavsky, it is acknowledged that Grotowski's Actors' Laboratory work was very different from Stanislavsky's more traditional theatre approach.

[5] Grotowski adds that, "You may call it ethical, but personally I prefer to treat it as part of the technique because that way there is no sense of being sweet or hypocritical" [8, p. 200].

relationship between health care professionals and their patients. 'Being present' for another person is an important—if not essential—element in this, not just in a therapeutic relationship, but in any caring relationship. The notion of 'presencing' from actor training and performance provides a means for understanding presence in these 'enactive' terms—and adds to an understanding of ethics as expressed through performative acts.

14.4.1   *Not Resolved—Openness to Surprise*

To understand ethics in this way is to see it as an interactive dynamic process that is always being worked on and re-constructed even as we make use of it. As Noë puts it, in relation to perceiving in, and 'enacting' the world, "we are always… *in medias res*"—in the middle of things. "In this sense… our experience itself… is always a work in progress. We turn and squint and peer and take a look again. We hold the curio steady in our hands, we turn it over, and we examine it in detail." A further important element of this process, and one that has particular relevance to ethics, is that even as we perceive the world, we critically examine the tools by which we access it. For example "To be a language-user is perforce to be a critic. And the job of criticism is not to criticize language from without—as if there were practice-neutral rules and regulations—but rather to enact, or maybe just to recommend, ways of carrying on within the practice" [14, p. 11,40 & 3]. Similarly, to be a social being is to interact with others in the world, and also to re-examine the basis and values on which we interact.

We are never in a value-neutral position in relating to others. What this suggests is that our ethical understanding is never settled. This is part of what it means to be alive and to relate dynamically with others. A consequence of this understanding is that ethics—as a body of knowledge, theory, and practices—is always open to fine-tuning. While there may be agreed minimal standards, these are open to critique and enhancement. In practice, embodying ethics and expressing ethical values requires on-going refinement in the art of relating to others in a considerate and attentive manner. This is to propose that in relating to others there are 'moral ideals'[6] and, among them, I have included 'presence.' The link to theatre and performance, is that 'presence' and 'attention'—as enacted—are performative skills that actors are practised in.

Zarrilli writes of, "the optimal state actors *should* embody when performing" as "a state of being/doing where one's embodied consciousness is absolutely 'on the edge' of what is possible… what might come… what might happen… what might be said… in each moment of doing, whatever the dramaturgy." This is to raise another aspect of the aliveness of presence as an enacted quality. Applying this to ethically relevant interactions is to recognise the need to be present in the moment and within the particular circumstances, rather than applying a set of rules in a

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[6] A reference again to Tanner [20].

formulaic manner. Similarly for actors, as Zarrilli notes: "Too often actors are looking for 'answers,' want closure, or simply try to repeat something that seems to 'work' and is successful. Rather than closure, answers, or what seems to work, paradoxically acting should always be considered as a 'question'. Even though actors 'know' as a horizon of possibilities each task/action that constitutes a well-rehearsed performance score, phenomenologically actors should situate themselves in the indeterminate position of being 'on the edge' of *not knowing*" [26, pp. 146–147].

This has application in life as well as in art. I would argue that relating ethically should not be predetermined by what we know of each other, nor by settled ideas and rules about how one ought to behave, but should (optimally) remain indeterminate, in the phenomenological sense of remaining open and fully attentive.[7] Of course there are settled patterns as there are in any cultural activity, but these are always open to question. Moreover, even when there is no disagreement about the rules (as with the lines of text from a play) they need to be followed sensitively within each moment of the interaction. The consequence is that relating retains the aliveness of performance, the aliveness of art. We are present to each other in ways in which we are not if we restrict ourselves to settled paths of interaction, repeating patterns that seem to 'work' and are societally approved.

14.4.2 *The House with the Ocean View*

As an example from 'performance art' (as a broader term than conventional theatre) I draw on Peggy Phelan's review [18] of Marina Abramović's 'The House with the Ocean View' which she describes as follows:

> the public was invited to the gallery to participate in what [Abramović] called "an energy dialogue." This consisted primarily of an exchange of gaze between the artist and her spectators (usually one at a time). This exchange, in turn, was observed by the other viewers. Abramović spent her time moving across three stages, each suspended about six feet from the floor, and buttressed with center ladders with butcher knives for rungs. The stage to the viewer's left had a toilet and shower, the center stage had a wooden table and chair with a large crystal embedded in its back, and the right stage had a wooden platform for a bed… Abramović was theatricalizing the repetitive everyday acts of sleeping, showering, eliminating and sitting at a table. But these acts, each perhaps an homage to the quotidian, did not render the performance a literal treatment of these common acts.

Phelan notes that Abramović has, in previous performances, played with the notion of 'presence,' by creating, "performances in which her conscious presence was both a provocative anchoring point and strangely irrelevant, if not quite completely expendable." The 'House with the Ocean View' performance was created from a "belief that live performance might illuminate the mutual and repeated

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[7]There are parallels here with the approach of Levinas to the 'Other' as a mystery. The difference however is that, by treating the 'Other' as mystery, Levinas *reifies* the 'Other.' This approach is to recognise that we 'enact' one another, without giving either "oneself" or the "Other" any substantive—albeit mysterious—being.

attempt to grasp, if not fully apprehend, consciousness as simultaneously intensely personal and immensely vast and impersonal." Yet Phelan comments that, "I do not think I have begun to approach what really occurred in the performance, primarily because I was a witness to something I did not see and cannot describe." Although, "One can describe the setting and the physical movements of the performance… the art that made this House took place in the spaces between the spaces we saw, in the eyes and minds of the artist and the viewers who sat silently and were transformed" [18].

Nevertheless it is apparent that Abramović was doing something to create this effect, whether intended or not. For example, Phelan recounts that Abramović lived in the Sean Kelly Gallery for the 12 days of the performance "fasting and refraining from talking, reading, or writing." She describes the 'energy dialogues' between performer and spectator as an "exchange of gaze between the artist and her spectators (usually one at a time)." All of this speaks of Abramović's focussed attention. Without meaning in any sense to diminish the power and effect of her performance (or her experience and skill as a performer), part of what Abramović brought was her disciplined attention. To the extent that this is true, it illustrates what Zarrilli was referring to (above) in writing that, "The actor's job is to stay focused… not strive to attain 'presence'; rather, *if* 'presence' is perceived by the audience, 'it' emerges in the vortex of the performative moment."

Phelan's experience of 'House with the Ocean View' was apparently profound. She describes it as "an intimate reawakening to the fragility of life and a more general sense of connection to one another." For her, the "possibility of mutual transformation" was "extraordinarily important, because this is the point where the aesthetic joins the ethical. The ethical is fundamentally related to live art because both are arenas for the unpredictable force of the social event" [18].

This describes what I set out to explore in this chapter: 'presence' as both an aesthetic and an ethical quality. It also relates to the notions of enacting as 'situated in the indeterminate position of being at the edge of not knowing' [26, p. 147]. When an actor brings her full attention, her training and experience, to the aesthetic of a specific performance she potentially commands the space and captures her audience in a way that may be transformative. This is both an aesthetic and a moral ideal.

However not all performances reach these heights, on the stage or in life. Nevertheless, recognising an ideal in this work of art provides an example that we might aspire to.

14.5 An Affective Athleticism

In the Introduction I expressed a concern that predominant ethical theories (and particularly Kantian ethics) rely on reason and discount the role of affect in ethical theory and practice. This provides a further motive for considering 'presence' from the perspective of theatre performance and actor training.

Actors are practised in expressing affect and in responding sensitively to feelings within a performance. Artaud described an actor as "a heart athlete" who develops an "affective athleticism" to arrive at mastery of "the emotions through their powers" [1, pp. 93–94]. Brook emphasises the importance of affect in theatre and its capacity to release "hidden themes" by "sending tremors through the intellect" [3, p. 84]. These aspects of theatrical expression and responsiveness are beyond the easy reach of theory and philosophical analysis—which is why the importance of affect tends to be missed. O'Sullivan draws attention to this in writing, "How could it happen that in thinking about art, in reading the art object, we missed what art does best? In fact we missed that which defines art: the aesthetic—because art is not an object amongst others, at least not an object of knowledge (or not only an object of knowledge)." Nevertheless, the affective power of theatre persists. O'Sullivan notes (contra Derrida) that after the 'deconstruction' of 'presence' in theatre (discussed in the previous chapter), "the art object remains. Life goes on. Art, whether we will it or not, continues producing *affects*" [6, 16]. He defines these 'affects' as "extra-textual… moments of *intensity*." In other words, by their nature they are beyond words, they escape theory. Whilst these can be '*re*presented' in language, "affects are… primarily, affective." He adds that "you cannot read affects, you can only experience them. Which brings us to the crux of the matter: *experience*" [16].

This is the crux of the matter in ethics also as ethical issues can engage in a primal way within human experience. Some of the most charged moments of our lives, around health crises, birth and death, are also moments of ethical intensity. When these are handled well, the effect can be transformative. Yet affect tends to be missed in analysing the issues we face. The reasons for this are perhaps the same: affect can be *re*presented in theory, but the power and importance of these "moments of *intensity*" are diminished. As a consequence we miss what is most important in these experiences by focusing on intellectual conundrums. Ethics becomes defined by an intellectual approach and the potential for incorporating an embodied understanding of affect into our practices is lost.

Affect is a crucial aspect of a performer's 'presencing.' Actors do this by training as 'heart athletes,' by engaging and enacting the power of the emotions. When performers enact and respond to affect they (potentially) engage an audience. This is a part of what audiences respond to in recognising an actor's 'presence.' In this area of relating, we have much to learn from actors.

14.6 Conclusion

My interest has been to explore how 'presence' may be linked to ethics. Threads that indicate this relationship have already been identified. Tanner considered that 'presence,' 'sincerity,' and 'depth' are terms that "characterise expressive states" and refer to both "moral and aesthetic" ideals in life. He claims that to recognise these 'states,' we need to have been there, "we need first-hand experience" [20, pp. 32–33]. This observation supports Phelan's claim that live performance

has the potential to transform both the actor and the spectator because "this is the point where the aesthetic joins the ethical" [18]. O'Sullivan has observed that "this is art's function: to switch our intensive register, to reconnect us with the world." He adds that this "gives art an ethical imperative, because it involves a kind of moving beyond the already familiar (the human), precisely a kind of self-overcoming" [16]. Thompson's view is that *affect* (and he includes experiences of beauty and joy) has the power to transform "in an intimate and sensory key" [22].[8] Brook has suggested that this transformation may result from affect "sending tremors through the intellect."

For some practical pointers we can turn to Stanislavsky, Grotowski and Zarrilli. Merlin describes Stanislavsky as "a man who was passionate about theatrical 'truth'" [12, p. 1]. His ideas about on-stage *experiencing* have ethical resonance in his desire that acting be genuine [5, p. 30]. Grotowski was explicitly concerned with ethics in addressing such questions as: 'what does it mean to act without looking for a result?' and 'who do we act for?' [8, pp. 200–203]. Although he acknowledges the difficulty of answering these questions he offers suggestions that arise from his work with trainees in the Polish Laboratory Theatre. These pointers are valuable, although he makes it clear that it is necessary for each actor to find her own answer in the intense work of improvisation and rehearsal. Zarrilli's insight is that actors create the possibility of an experience of 'presence' for their audience when they bring full attention of their body-mind to the performative task. They should not strive for presence, but rather for a quality of performative enacting. This insight can be extended to 'presence' in other contexts. A doctor, for example, who brings her full awareness, acumen, skills (including those of rational analysis), and experience to an interaction with her patient, opens the possibility of a transformative experience for herself and her patient. This is far from moral mediocrity and comes close to expressing a moral ideal. In this chapter performance has provided an example of a high point of 'presence' in art. However actors have their 'high' moments and some more ordinary performances. Similarly doctors have many encounters with patients without engaging fully with them all—as is true more generally in life. Nevertheless art, understood in this way, brings a quality into focus and a means for accessing that quality at least as an ideal, if not in moments of our lives.

An approach along these lines leads to a very different account of ethics, not one of establishing normative rules of conduct, but an ethics of ideals and aspirations. This is a 'creative ethics' that is developed in practice and rehearsal, the result of which can only be appreciated by 'being there.' From this perspective, ethics becomes a performative art.

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[8] James Thompson describes a re-direction from *effecting* change through applied theatre (which for him has been in theatres of war, disaster zones, and in prisons) toward recognising the value of *affect* in ethical transformation [22].

chapter and for their many suggestions. Paul and Phillip referred me to a great deal of relevant material. In addition Paul invited me to take part in a masters students' class on 'presence' in Theatre Studies. Phillip invited me a drama class at Intercultural Theatre Institute in Singapore, and helped me develop 'the enactive approach' I have adopted in this chapter. Alastair Campbell's comments helped me to bring this enactive approach into a more appropriate balance with normative ethics and standards as they are more commonly accepted and understood. I am fully responsible for any errors, misrepresentations, and failures of reasoning however.

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Part II
What Is the Relation Between Ethics and the Arts?

Chapter 15
Ethics and the Arts: A Critical Review of the New Moralisms

Paul Macneill

15.1 Introduction

The relation of the arts and ethics "has been a recurrent and central concern" in Western culture from the early Greeks through to the present and continues to be of concern to philosophers, artists, writers, politicians and the public [9, p. 5]. Tolstoy's polemical essay *What is Art?* (first published in 1897) argues that art is essentially moral, if not spiritual. Great art could only be created by someone who stands on a "level of the highest world outlook of his time." It "should eliminate violence" and make accessible "feelings of brotherhood and love of one's neighbour" [22, p. 90 & p. 166]. Although his is an extreme view, it was influential in his time.[1] At the other extreme (and derided by Tolstoy) are those who claim that art and ethics are autonomous—a view that can be traced back to philosopher Immanuel Kant's formalism in separating ethics and aesthetics [4; 6, p. 356]. Although there are variants of autonomism (or formalism)—such as 'Art for Art's sake'—all of them claim that morality is irrelevant to an assessment of the quality of the work of art *as art* [14, p. 157]. Autonomism held sway in the arts, and within the philosophy of art, for some time.

In the last 20 years interest in a relationship between ethics and the arts has been revived by philosophers of art who argue that it is appropriate to judge some works of art by moral standards. Jacobson describes this as the rise of a "Humean-style moralism" in that many of its advocates develop their positions with reference to Hume's essay 'Of the Standard of Taste' (1757) [12]. Although Hume argues for tolerance in judging the quality of a work of art from another era, he is relatively intolerant in upholding standards of "morality and decency." For Hume,

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[1] For example: Tolstoy's view influenced Stanislavsky. See Chap. 5

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regardless of the age, "where vicious manners are described, without being marked with the proper characters of blame and disapprobation; this must be allowed to disfigure the poem, and to be a real deformity" [12]. Many of the current commentators broadly agree with Hume that expressions of morality may be a 'deformity' in some artworks, although they distinguish their positions from Hume in various ways.

15.2   The New 'Moralisms'

Noël Carroll, one of the leading advocates in this field, accepts as a minimum that "there are intimate relations between at least some art and morality that call for philosophical comment." He argues this in opposition to those who claim that morality and art are autonomous spheres of interest. Carroll identifies two forms of autonomism: *radical* and *moderate*. 'Radical autonomism' is the position that "art is a strictly autonomous realm of practice. It is distinct from other social realms which pursue cognitive, political or moral value [and as such] it is inappropriate or even incoherent to assess artworks in terms of their consequences for cognition, morality and politics." 'Moderate autonomism' is the view that whilst an artwork may "traffic in aesthetic, moral, cognitive and political value… these various levels are independent or autonomous… from other dimensions, such as the moral dimension." It may be appropriate to comment on these attributes, but any evaluation of the political effectiveness, or moral appropriateness of a work of art "is never relevant to its aesthetic evaluation" [1, p. 224 & p. 231; 20, p. 68].

   Carroll develops a position he terms 'moderate moralism.' His claim is that moral issues may be so central to the structure of some works of art, and particularly those of a narrative kind, that the treatment of these issues is critical to assessing the aesthetic quality of the work of art. Carroll adds that he "does not contend that artworks should always be evaluated morally, nor that every moral defect or merit in an artwork should figure in its aesthetic evaluation." He recognises that the moral dimension of a work of art may not be recognised at the time and in the culture when the work is first available. A highly regarded novel may go with no critique of its racist assumptions when first published. Nevertheless "even where given audiences do not detect the moral flaws in question, the artwork may still be aesthetically flawed, since in those cases the moral flaws sit like time-bombs, ready to explode aesthetically once morally sensitive viewers, listeners and readers encounter them" [1, p. 236 & p. 234]. This point can be illustrated by Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* which is a documentary, set in Nuremberg in 1934, of a rally of the National Socialist Workers' Party. Many critics regard the film as a masterpiece,[2] and it won

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[2] Devereaux regards *Triumph of the Will* as "masterful" [5, p. 231], Sontag as "superb" [21, p. 320], and Kieran acknowledges the film's "numbing beauty" [16, p. 347]. Carroll himself disagrees: "Regardless of its moral standing, the film is aesthetically botched. It is uneven and ultimately boring. It is not the best example for the current debate" [3, p. 83; 2, pp. 379–381].

awards in Germany, Venice and Paris in the late 1930s [5, p. 230]. Yet its staging of Hitler and the Nazi party as heroic and powerful has, in hindsight, been seen as Nazi propaganda and regarded (at least by Devereaux) as "morally repugnant." Devereaux concludes that "the highest aesthetic praise" should be withheld "from works of art that present as beautiful, attractive, and good" when on reflection they "can be seen to be evil" [5, p. 227 & p. 250]. These rallies were spectacular displays of flags, uniforms and weapons, set within cathedrals of light. Hitler and Speer were deliberate in making an aesthetic link between triumph and terror. This larger context must raise moral concern, and—from the perspective of moralism—is a factor in assessing the aesthetic value of this film.

Berys Gaut, another of the advocates in this field, has a similar view to Carroll on the relationship of art and morality and agrees that a moral assessment of some artworks has a bearing on the aesthetic quality of those works. For Gaut "an artwork has an aesthetic merit in so far as it possesses an ethical merit that is aesthetically relevant" [9, p. 10; 8, p. 439]. He has developed his position, which he terms 'ethicism,' into a theory that aims to account for the conditions under which morality relates to aesthetics. In more exact terms: "Ethicism holds that a work is aesthetically flawed in so far as it possesses an aesthetically relevant ethical flaw and aesthetically meritorious in so far as it possess an aesthetically relevant ethical merit. The ethical flaws referred to are intrinsic ethical flaws… Intrinsic ethical flaws are ethical flaws in the attitudes that works manifest towards their subjects. So ethicism holds that works are aesthetically flawed in so far as they exhibit aesthetically relevant ethical flaws in their manifested attitudes" [9, p. 229]. The formulation is worded in this careful way to defend 'ethicism' from any charge of simple moralism, and to specify that the relevant moral quality relates to the attitude displayed in an artwork toward its subject, not simply because a work of art explores immoral themes, events and attitudes. What is important for Gaut is whether or not the 'manifest author' (the author apparent in the artwork—not necessarily the narrator) celebrates, or appears to approve of immoral behaviour and attitudes in a way that is apparently "aiming morally to corrupt its audience." The prime examples of immoral art of this kind (to which Gaut often returns) are Marquis de Sade's novels which are "ethically sick because of the attitudes they display of approving of, celebrating, making positive judgements about and aiming to get their readers to enjoy the sexual torture and multifarious degradation of the characters who suffer through their pages" [9, p. 10].

Gaut advances three arguments for his ethicism: 'moral beauty'; an argument based on 'cognitivist' values of art; and a 'merited response' argument. His moral beauty claim follows Plato, St Augustine and Hume (among many) who perceived virtue as beauty. Gaut regards virtue as a "beautiful character trait" and, conversely, moral vice as "an ugly character trait." This links to the aesthetic value of an artwork in that, "If a manifest author has a morally good character, it follows from the moral beauty view that… the work has a beautiful aspect, in so far as the author has a beautiful character" [9, p. 120 & p. 127]. Gaut's second argument, which draws on 'cognitivist' values of art, recognises that artworks may display insight and understanding about the world, or insights into character, or moral understanding. They may well

teach their audiences, and audiences may learn something from them. This is a central value of art from a humanist perspective. Knowledge gained from art could be propositional, or practical (as 'know-how'), or phenomenal (in other words, experiential). It might also be 'affective-cognitive' in conveying knowledge about the emotions in certain situations and it may lead to empathy, or manifest as appreciating "how to feel" in particular contexts. The argument is that an artwork is, "aesthetically good in so far as it manifests aesthetically relevant moral understanding (and conversely for aesthetic badness and moral misunderstanding or failures to understand)" [9, pp. 136–138]. Carroll makes a similar point that artworks may contribute (positively or negatively) to our moral understanding although not necessarily by teaching something new, but by learning "how to apply those precepts to situations" and by "deepening or enlarging our emotional understanding." Where this occurs, it is "natural and appropriate" for this to influence our evaluation of the work of art [1, pp. 29–30]. Gaut's third support for ethicism is the 'merited response argument.' He argues that "prescribed responses in a work of art are not always merited. One way in which they can be unmerited is in being unethical. If the prescribed responses are unmerited, that is a failure in the work" which may be an aesthetic defect when the prescribed response is of aesthetic relevance [9, p. 233]. For example, if an artwork endorses taking pleasure in the gratuitous suffering of others, that amounts to both an ethical and an aesthetic defect, and establishes a further basis for relating morality to any aesthetic evaluation of the quality of artworks.

15.3 Challenges to 'Moralism': Immoral Works of Art

One of the challenges to both Carroll and Gaut is the argument that 'immoral' works of art may be worthy precisely because of the manner in which the immoral subject is explored aesthetically. Jacobson's paper 'In praise of Immoral Art' argues that "What is properly deemed a moral defect in a work of art can contribute positively and ineliminably to its aesthetic value" [14, p. 162]. He takes an opposing view of Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (as it is discussed above) in stating that "the moral defects of the flim are not aesthetic blemishes, because they are inseparable from the work's aesthetic value." He claims that, "Like all the best immoral art, this film is incorrigible: it can't be sanitized… it can only be expurgated." Jacobson is in "broad sympathy with the idea that… narrative, art can significantly contribute to something like moral understanding" but he questions the assumption that this can occur by "acquaintance with morally felicitous perspectives only." In a world in which "many people are in the grips of some error… we need to know what they think and why" [14, pp. 192–193; 15, p. 347]. Carroll, in responding to these arguments, allows that a "moral defect in an artwork might sometimes contribute to the positive aesthetic value of an artwork," but not in the case of *Triumph of the Will*. At best one could argue that "its cinematic virtues vastly outweigh whatever aesthetic costs its moral defectiveness incurs" [2, pp. 380–381]. Hamilton (in line with Jacobson) does not accept that a work is "aesthically flawed" if it is "morally

objectionable" and he cites a number of "morally reprehensible" artworks which are "aesthetically all the better: for it makes them sparkle and crackle with life and energy." Nor would an argument that immoral art leads people to behave in morally represensible ways (assuming that could be demonstrated) be relevant to the aesthetic value of the work [10, pp. 44–48].[3] Kieran claims that there may be a benefit from opening to 'immoral' art. However, rather than seeing this as a fundamental challenge to Gaut's ethicisim, he proposes 'immoralism' as a qualification to the cognitivist conception of art. When an immoral work enhances our understanding of an immoral attribute, it inverts from a negative to a positive contribution to aesthetic quality. As he puts it, "Where there is a cognitive pay off in virtue of the immoral character of a work, and this is sufficient to outweigh our reluctance to indulge in the responses sought from us, then the immoral character of the work turns out to be an artistic virtue rather than a vice. A morally problematic work can thus, artistically speaking, redeem itself" [17, p. 138]. Jacobson "is amenable to this account of aesthetic value" but he does not limit the assessment of art to "such purely instrumental effects of a work." Rather it is "the significance of the aesthetic experience itself—what the artists can get us to see, think, and feel—that matters" [15, p. 353].

Both Jacobson and Kieran draw a distinction between our responses to events in life and toward similar events portrayed in movies and literature. Jacobson thinks it is "patently absurd" to say we respond to fiction in same way as we do to real life [14, p. 186]. Kieran concurs and illustrates the distinction between life and fiction by our enjoyment of gangster movies, our capacity to sympathise with murderers (for example in the novel *The Postman Always Rings Twice*), and the way we accept the "cruelties or downright unfairness [of] comedies and satires." Nor is this relaxation of our moral prohibitions limited to works of art. It is a feature of our imaginative activities that we sometimes "allow our moral scruples to go on holiday" for example in indulging in sexual fantasies. Kieran's point is that "the fictional or make-believe context of a work allows us to engage with and enjoy putatively immoral imaginative activity." This leaves us "free to contemplate events portrayed as we could or would not were the events themselves real." Crucial however is "knowing whether or not something is fictional" [17, pp. 134–136].

Hamilton has expressed concern about the tendency of theoretical approaches (and Gaut's theory in particular) to reduce the complexity of aesthetic and moral qualities [10, pp. 47–48]. For similar reasons Jacobson takes a strong "anti-theoretical view of the relation between moral and aesthetic value" arguing that there is a false dichotomy between moralism and autonomism in that these positions "fail to exhaust the philosophical possibilities on the relation between moral and aesthetic value in works of art." He contends that there is "no true *theory* of the relation between moral and aesthetic value" that adequately includes all possible artworks [15, pp. 342–343 & p. 346]. There may be a relationship in some cases, but

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[3] Gaut, for different reasons, does not rely on the "causal effects" of artworks in relating morality to aesthetics [9, p. 10]. He does acknowledge however that "ethicism kicks away a prop" of anti-censorship [9, p. 12]. He allows that his moralist position lends potential support to censors and those who would curtail dissemination of artworks.

the evaluations are complex and better discussed as part of any critique of a particular work of art. Kieran disagrees with Jacobson's "anti-theory approach" from a concern that it "seems to be a restatement of the problem rather than a solution to it." He (along with Gaut) claims that "we are owed some kind of account as to how and why the relationship can go differently in distinct cases" [17, p. 138]. He takes this further in justifying a need for theory and, in particular, Gaut's 'ethicism.'

15.4 'Ethicism' and Its Critics

Gaut has rejected both Jacobson's anti-theory and Kieran's qualification to ethicism, maintaining his view that an aesthetically relevant moral flaw in a work is always an aesthetic blemish. If an artwork asks the reader to "to take up an immoral attitude" and "presents an immoral state of affairs as morally good" then the "attitude is immoral" and the work fails to teach us anything about immorality since what it presents is false [9, p. 185]. Whilst this stringent position appears "overly moralistic," Gaut demonstrates that it can be applied sensitively [17, p. 135]. His review of Nabakov's *Lolita* is a perceptive and nuanced account that illustrates how some, seemingly immoral works, are actually moral when the (manifest) author's intentions are understood more comprehensively and subtly. The novel's narrator, Humbert Humbert, seeks to engage the reader's sympathy for his child sex with Lolita, and his justifications for killing Quilty, Lolita's would-be lover. Gaut demonstrates Nabokov's skill in developing the novel as an ethical journey over the 56 days of Humbert's 'memoir.' He also traces carefully Nabokov's use of a double seduction of the reader: first in persuading the reader to have sympathy for Humbert and (through him) to vicariously enjoy sex with a child; and secondly in seducing the reader into going along with Humbert (to some extent) in his justification for killing Quilty. His conclusion is that "the novel's deployment of these strategies does teach us, via a particularly rich example, something about the complexity of moral and psychological judgement, of the need for fine discriminations of feeling and judgement, and of the seductive powers of art." He makes the broader claim that his 'ethicism' highlights aesthetic features of this and other works "that morally neutral critical methods discern only dimly, if at all." [9, pp. 194–202]. An advantage, it seems to me, of Gaut's insistence that this is *not* an immoral work, is in underscoring the identity of the 'moral view point' with the "manifested author." [9, p. 197 & p. 195]. This allows Gaut to distinguish *Lolita* from other cases, such de Sade's novels or Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will,* where there is no redeeming feature in the manifest author's attitude. Nevertheless, this does appear as something of a quibble in that Kieran can arrive at the same end by justifying 'immoral' aspects of this book in terms of the cognitive value of what the author has to teach. Gaut's critique of *Lolita*, has also added complexity to his 'merited response argument.' To the extent that Nabokov's is successful in leading the reader into vicariously enjoying sex with a child, and going along with Humbert in his justification for killing Quilty, it could be said that he has induced 'unmerited' responses. In defending 'ethicisim'

from this charge, Gaut points to "a characteristic pattern of enjoyment and recoil" by which "we are shown that we can be seduced to take a kind of enjoyment in something that we simultaneously abhor." He distinguishes between these as 'lower-order' and 'higher-order' prescriptions. The first response of enjoyment is "apparently prescribed" whereas the second is a "very different attitude" that is "really manifested by the work." Abhorrence triumphs as the overall attitude of the book and as the 'merited response' [9, p. 197, pp. 230–231].

Jacobson points to an ambiguity in the word 'merited' when a prescribed response is judged as 'unmerited.' It could mean that it 'lacks propriety' in the sense that it might be inappropriate to laugh at a joke because it is racist or sexist; or it could mean a response is not prudential or strategic, in terms of how others might see one, or because one's laughter would disturb others. Alternatively 'unmerited' could mean 'unwarranted' in the sense that laughter is not warranted because the joke is not funny. His point is that Gaut conflates these terms and that the argument that 'prescribing an unmerited response is an *aesthetic* failure in the work' relies on this conflation. Only an 'unwarranted' response is relevant to the aesthetic quality of an artwork. But to argue that an unwarranted response reflects on the *aesthetic* merit of an artwork presupposes that the aesthetic quality of the work does not warrant that response: which begs the question of the work's aesthetic value [14, pp. 170–179; 15, pp. 349–350].[4] Gaut replies that a response may be warranted, but nevertheless morally wrong. For example he does not deny that "people who took pleasure in watching public decapitations during the French Revolution enjoyed what was going on" (in other words their pleasure may have been warranted) but he asserts that they were morally wrong to have done so [9, pp. 237–239]. This can only mean that the 'merited response argument' is undermined as an argument necessarily linking morality to aesthetics and is exposed as a simple moral assertion: that moral criteria are relevant in judging the appropriateness of a prescribed response. Jacobson disagrees and insists that it is sufficient for the response to be warranted. This is to ask: 'Why should we relegate a work because it leads us into a "wicked" or "morally offensive" perspective, when wickedness may be the work's aesthetic feature?'

Guat's 'moral beauty' argument also appears anaemic following his critique of *Lolita.* Is Nabokov (as 'manifest author') a morally virtuous and (therefore) a beautiful person? Or, to take a different novel, is Truman Capote, as 'manifest author' of *In Cold Blood*, beautiful in this sense? These concerns seem irrelevant to the aesthetic worth of these works. Both authors manifest as gritty, resourceful, and masterful. These are not obviously moral qualities although they are aesthetic. Admittedly ethicism does not require that all three of Gaut's rationales function in all morally commendable (or morally reprehensible) artworks. I also accept that an observation that a "manifest author has a morally good character" may be relevant in reviewing the quality of a particular artwork, but as a ground for linking morality with ethics in a generic theory, it is insubstantial. There is a related concern that the significance of the argument depends on a strict distinction between virtue and

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[4]The argument is *petitio principii* and, as such, a logical fallacy.

beauty. This is to suggest that Gaut is overly categorical in defining qualities as moral or aesthetic. There is an ambiguity, which Hamilton points to because "the ethical and aesthetic often interpenetrate in a way which disables us from distinguishing them." He believes that, "Gaut, like many other theorists, misses the point because he often talks as if it is perfectly clear just what the moral import of a work of art is. And if one wants to reason why this is so, the answer… is that he has a strong tendency to operate with a simplified and narrow conception of morality, according to which it is clear what is morally good and what morally bad [such as] hurting others, refusing equal treatment" [10, pp. 45–46, p.48]. This is an aspect of a more general concern that ethicism makes simplified and narrow assumptions about both morality *and* art. Jacobson is similarly concerned about a tendency to be "morally correct in some final way" which he associates with "Hume and the Humean moralists." His concern is that, in "championing the *ethical criticism* of art," they are unavoidably evaluating artworks in light of their "own moral commitments" [14, p. 160].

Hamilton resists Gaut's ethicism as "surely far too strong" and simplistic. He is sceptical of cognitivist claims that art gives us moral knowledge and, even in those cases "where a work of art does effect a clarification in our moral thinking," he sees no good reason for assuming that this understanding will be "friendly to morality." It may lead one to hostility to morality or to despairing of other people. Alternatively a reader may reserve all her sensitivity for fictional characters with little effect on how she treats people in life. Nor is there any evidence that artists, or people who regard the arts as important, are morally advanced although, "our knowledge of art can easily flatter us into thinking it makes us morally better people." When art does appear to contribute to moral education, it is just as likely that this observation relates to people who were already sensitive to moral concerns [10, p. 39 & pp. 43–44]. Jacobson identifies a core problem with moralism in Hume's confident statement that, when a work describes "vicious manners" without attributing "blame and disapprobation," then "I cannot, nor is it proper I should, enter into such sentiments" [12]. This indicates a "muddle over the distinction between psychological and normative claims [that] has infected Humean moralism from its beginnings." Effectively, what one *can* feel or *should* feel becomes a barrier to entry and may preclude any assessment of an artwork's aesthetic value in the same way as the "high price of opera tickets."[5] The difficulty is that one's inability or refusal may be a "false delicacy" resulting from "prejudice or a failure of imagination." There has been a "litany of works condemned as immoral" (including *Ulysses, Huckleberry Finn,* and *Lolita*) which "have always seemed indisputably corrupt to their critics." Nevertheless Jacobson steps back from concluding that "built-in obstacles to the appreciation of a work never bear on its aesthetic value" [14, pp. 187–191 & p. 168].

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[5]Carroll also discusses the point that if an artwork is "inaccessible to that person, he is in no position to judge the work aesthetically" [2, p. 379].

15.5 Discussion

This discussion of a relationship between the arts and ethics, re-energised by 'Humean-style' moralism, has raised differing ideas about the strength and nature of moral evaluations in estimating the aesthetic value of a work of art. Although it is conceded by all the discussants, that not all moral attributes are relevant to a work's aesthetic value, and that many non-moral attributes are also contributors, the debate has focussed on moral merits and demerits. In the broader context of appreciating artworks, we respond to moral, cognitive and affective aspects from our *own* perception (rather than in the object as Hume maintains). It is not that a work is morally admirable, intelligent, perceptive, and emotionally soothing, but that we may find those qualities in it. It is possible to distinguish between a moral response and a critical appraisal, and to make "fine discriminations of feeling and judgement" [9, p. 201]. This includes the possibility of having moral revulsion alongside critical admiration. The observation that one is strongly affected by a work of art may be the basis for attributing an affective power to the work and recognising this as an aesthetic value—even though one is shocked or morally affronted by it.[6] This approach provides a flexible basis on which to understand differences in our responses along each of these dimensions within ourselves and to understand differences of judgment between people (some of whom may have come to similar evaluations but have given different weights to them). It is also a more constructive way of understanding the issues between autonomists (or formalists) and moralists. Formalists, such as Fry and Greenberg, were keen to promote creativity and protect art from limitations on its freedom [19, pp. 3–8]. This was, in effect, to give weight to a cognitive dimension. Moralism may have been a necessary corrective to dogmatic assertions of formalism—by pointing to the relevance (in some artworks) of moral assessments to aesthetic evaluation—but it runs a risk of overemphasising the moral dimension.

One may find French novelist Michel Houellebecq's *Atomised* to be morally repugnant and observe that its affect is a sense of despair and meaninglessness (at least for some readers) [11]. In the reflective process I am advocating, these responses can be distinguished. Even if one is morally repulsed, the novel's capacity to engender despair and meaninglessness is an aesthetic experience—albeit an uncomfortable one. From an intellectual perspective, the novel can be related to broader cultural issues. It may have captured a sense of "our atomised society" (as suggested by its cover) and Houellebecq could be seen as, "A lyric poet in the era of late capitalism" [13]. The fact that *Atomised* has won awards may also be considered relevant.[7] In this process, no *one* aspect (moral, affective, or cognitive) can be assumed, in advance, to trump another, and the relative weight that is given to each of these factors is itself a part of the reflection on *a particular* artwork.

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[6] This is to side with Jacobson in valuing "the significance of the aesthetic experience itself" [15, p. 353].

[7] It was winner of the *Prix Novembre* prize and the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. Houellebecq's most recent novel *The Map and the Territory* was awarded the Prix Goncourt in 2010.

Inherent in this proposition is that one's aesthetic evaluation is separate from the question of whether one 'likes' the work or not. One may recognise *Atomised* as having aesthetic merit, for any of the above reasons, yet not be open to reading any more of Houellebecq's novels. Resistance remains an option. There may be insufficient 'pay-off' (*à la* Kieran) for enduring the experience. Furthermore, I suggest that something like this process occurs in the public arena. Contrary to Hume's essay 'Of the Standard of Taste' (which gives determination of aesthetic quality to "men of delicate taste") aesthetic evaluation, as a public reflection, is open to all in a process of continuing revision [12]. Montale's notion of a work of art having a "second life" in "memory and everyday circulation" is a relevant aspect of this reflection [18, p. 21]. Houellebecq's oeuvre may be forgotten in time, or alternatively it may be seen as the beginning of an emerging genre in literature that embraces life as banal emptiness, just as Duchamp's 'Fountain'[8] was (in hindsight) a significant moment in the history of art and part of a challenge to the idea of art as an original object of beauty [7, p. 43].

Whilst general propositions about a relationship between morality and aesthetics may be of assistance, I don't believe that one theory can adequately *capture* this process. Bernard Williams, in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy,* argues against all-encompassing ethical theories and notes that not all moral reflections require theory [23, pp. 111–119]. Any relation between ethics and aesthetics is established in critical assessments of individual works of art, as Jacobson insists [15, p. 333 & p.346]. Devereaux makes the same point (in discussing "beauty and evil") that the general issue "becomes real only insofar as it arises in particular cases" [5, p. 252]. Appeal to an overall theory of a relation between art and ethics and may divert attention from the particular moral propositions on which it relies and gives any evaluation an illusory substantiality. Jacobson has "nothing to say against a moralist who takes himself simply to be expressing, or even evangelizing for, his own evaluative convictions… the only cost of moralism is bad taste." What he objects to are the "grander ambitions" of Humean moralists who "suggest that a there are features of our emotional engagement with art [that] lend credence to their view." This is most evident in ethicism which displays a Humean "rectitude of that moral standard"[9] as if there is one objective standard, and for all time, on which all rational people could agree. It amounts to taking prior moral standards and applying them as criteria in assessing the quality of art. Jacobson proposes a more open approach on the ground that "objectivity in ethical matters is less a view from nowhere than an ability to view things imaginatively from a variety of ethical perspectives" [14, pp. 160–161 & p. 193].

Eaton contends that, "Seeing a connection with aesthetics requires that one have a different way of thinking about ethics." From her perspective, ethics is not a *prior* standard by which to judge aesthetics. Rather, the relationship is synchronous, with neither aesthetics nor ethics "causally or conceptually prior." Ethics is "more like choosing one story over another" than "making an ethical decision." Acting ethically "requires acts of imaginative exploration," reference to symbols, personal myth, and

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[8] See Chap. 4.
[9] Hume's Essay [12].

fable, rather than rules or a "sheaf of principles." In this picture, art and ethics are understood as "essentially intertwined" and defined in terms of each other [6]. This view is preferable to Hume's moral rectitude. It provides a rich, imaginative, and more nourishing understanding of both morality and aesthetics. It is flexible and able to accommodate changes in the arts, and is preferable as an attitude that allows for an open exploration of the relation between ethics and the arts.

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Chapter 16
Ethics and Aesthetics—Joined at the Hip?

Miles Little

Aesthetics and ethics are two branches of philosophy that deal with judgement. Aesthetics discourse uses terms such as 'beautiful', 'pretty', 'ugly', 'hideous', 'pleasing' to record our responses to sensory experiences and associated emotions. We can apply these words to natural phenomena, such as landscapes, sunsets, ruins or people; or to works of art, such as paintings, novels, poems, pieces of music, and so on. Aesthetics is the philosophy that derives from the fact that we make these everyday judgements. It examines such issues as whether the attribute of beauty resides in the object of our judgement, or in our own minds; or whether there are universal standards of taste; whether terms like 'balance' or 'form' applied to a work of art are validly communicable between different people.

Ethics discourse uses words like 'good', 'bad', 'just' and 'unjust' to classify the quality and nature of interactions between people, and between people and their environments. To help a blind person cross a busy road is likely to be called 'kind' and 'good'; to pollute a major river with industrial waste may be judged as 'selfish' and 'bad.' There are many theories that attempt to unify the standards and processes by which we reach ethical judgements, such as emotivism, principlism, deontology, virtue ethics, feminist ethics, reflective equilibrium, and they constitute philosophical ethics. But we will not be concerned with their details here, nor with the unresolved arguments that still beset aesthetics as a branch of philosophy. It is enough to say that in this chapter we will accept that ethics and aesthetics are discourses of judgement, with their own objects of judgement, and their own vocabularies (that may overlap significantly in places). And we will explore how they are connected, and how that connection has been shaped in particular ways by contemporary media.

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16.1 The Nexus Between Aesthetics and Ethics

Wittgenstein famously claimed that "Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same", but there were many before him who made similar connections between them. Plato conjoined virtue and beauty, while St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas linked beauty and the good in their understanding of man's relationships with God [1]. The word 'aesthetics' first appeared in the eighteenth century in the writings of Baumgarten. Hume, Kant, Schopenhauer, Croce and Heidegger all wrote about beauty and taste. More recently, Dickie, Danto and Nussbaum have examined social, emotional and institutional contributions to the understanding of aesthetics.

But a bare listing of eminent names gives little idea of the complex history of aesthetics and its changing status as a branch of philosophy. Jane Forsey traced that history in 2003, pointing to its fall from independent branch of philosophy to minor subsidiary. At the same time, ethics has risen in importance [2]. She attributes this fall to several factors – a Platonic fear of art as a means of subverting the authority of the state; the hostility of logical positivism to all that was speculative and not empirically verifiable; the exclusiveness of the Art for Art's sake movement that claimed art as an autonomous domain beyond the reach of philosophy.

Two less obvious strands of thought have entered aesthetics, almost by stealth. Marshall McLuhan created intellectual and social waves when he began to write about the persuasive and manipulative powers of the media, particularly the visual media such as film and television [3]. Commenting on the capacity of the media to shape public thought, belief and discourse has become an industry since McLuhan's day, and university courses in media studies are commonplace. Advertising is so much a part of the day that few people stop to think critically about its form or content. The medium, as McLuhan famously wrote, is the message. Its existence is part of our backgrounds. It is always there, and by influencing our beliefs, it affects our ethical judgements in ways that I want to examine in this chapter, and it does so by tapping into our aesthetic responses.

The second, less obvious, intrusion into aesthetics comes from neurophysiology, and particularly from neuroimaging. It has been known for some time that oxytocin secretion makes people more benign and co-operative, more likely to judge kindly and to trust others [4]. More recently, brain localisation studies have shown that similar brain areas light up in response to aesthetic and ethical challenges, particularly the pre-frontal cortex [5, 6]. The nexus that Wittgenstein claimed can be shown to exist at the structural level, as well as the philosophical.

Our brains and our emotions, then, link aesthetic and ethical issues, and the media – print, sound and visual – act as mediators by repeatedly presenting us with pervasive visual and verbal images, advertising clichés and quotable catch phrases like 'the War on Terrorism.' The aesthetic force comes from production values that emphasise the aesthetic limits of each medium – crafting of words, attractive lay-out in print; voices and expressed values that particular audiences can relate to on radio; editing, framing, colour, excitement, form in television and film [7]. Advertising spends money and time determining the aesthetic and ethical selling points that

work with audiences. All forms of media persuade us to perceive the ethical in an aesthetic frame [8]. And that frame is a discourse, and we need to understand something more about the nature of public discourse.

16.2 Public Discourse

The word discourse can have many meanings, but it used here in relatively precise sense. A discourse is a structured use of language which assigns particular meanings to predominant words, and which expresses ideas and ideals common to a group of initiates and believers, who use the discourse in order to frame particular views of the world, and to express their membership of particular discourse communities [9–14]. Thus, for example, doctors learn the vocabularies of anatomy and physiology, and use words in ways that distinguish them from non-doctors. A doctor using the word 'shock' at a medical meeting would not need to explain that he refers to a particular state of circulatory inadequacy, whereas he could easily be misunderstood by a lay audience, an audience of electricians or of seismologists.

Discourses and discourse communities are complex, and one person may be member of multiple communities – medicine and music, for example, or law and sailing. And there is overlap between communities; there are points of common interest for law and medicine. Thus, there may be shared discourse terms with the same meaning between discourse communities – medical malpractice means much the same to lawyers and doctors. At the same time, someone may be a member of two discourse communities, and change the meanings of words as she moves from one community to the other. A doctor who is a lawyer may refer in one context to a 'shocking' crime, and in another to haemorrhage as a cause of shock. The same word is used, but its *situated meaning* has changed.

Discourses and discourse communities deal in more than language. The language expresses underlying beliefs, commitments and ideologies. Meanings are condensed in *iconic texts* (like the Bible or Quran, or Beauchamp and Childress's text on principle-based ethics, or the Hippocratic Oath), and confirmed by *master narratives* (such as Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech), utterances that pass into memory, condensing the aspirations and ideals of the discourse community. They use extra-linguistic signals as well to confirm their own membership of a community, and to remind outsiders that they do not belong. Thus the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons has its own imposing headquarters, ties for Fellows only, cuff-links, badges, ceremonies, and so on. All these are part of the discourse of being a surgeon, and part of the bonding that makes a discourse community.

Little and Lipworth have distinguished three kinds of discourse (see Table 16.1). Type 1 discourse is a discourse of experts, of surgeons, political scientists, plumbers, electricians, a discourse common to people with training and special education that allows them to claim membership of a particular discourse community [14]. Type 2 discourse is public discourse, a discourse that develops in response to an issue or affair that draws public comment. The bombing of the World Trade Centre in 2001

Table 16.1 Classification
of discourses

Type 1 – "expert" Discourses-of
e.g. medicine, literature, feminism
Type 2 – public Discourses-about events or affairs
e.g. 9/11, Asian tsunami, *News of the World* mobile 'phone hacking'
Type 3 – critical Discourses-aimed-at
e.g. Science, feminism, cloning, urban design

9/11 is an example of an affair that provokes public discourse; the resultant War on Terror an example of an issue that is generated by the process of discourse over a longer time scale. Type 3 discourse is discourse about another kind of discourse, a critical or explanatory discourse that offers elucidation or criticism of its target discourse. Feminism, for example, offered a profound critique of established beliefs about the roles and capacities of women in modern society. It began life as a Type 3 discourse, and has turned into a Type 1 as its strength grew.

Here, we are most concerned with Type 2 or public discourse and its natural history. I have previously summarised that natural history as follows [8, and see Table 16.2]:

> Type 2 Discourses follow more or less predictable courses in five frequently overlapping phases. In Phase 1, the event or affair is made public. In Phase 2, the public responds intuitively with some such emotional judgement as approval, condemnation, horror, elation, or despair. In Phase 3, opinion leaders and the media pick up on the intuitive response, exploiting it and amplifying it into a common acceptance that produces an appearance of public unity. This is an appearance only, and is better thought of as 'pseudo-unity', because Type 3 critical Discourses (including counter-Discourses) develop *pari passu* with the pseudo-unity. At the height of the pseudo-unity, there are potential dangers for those who utter a Type 3 Discourse – witness the hostile responses to Susan Sontag's defence of the September 11 bombers, or to the decision by Pat Dolan of News 12 in New York to ban US flag-pins on screen. The US ambassador to Germany refused to attend Sontag's acceptance of the Friedenpreis given by the German Booksellers Association in 2003. Dolan was forced to apologise to the American people for his decision.
>
> Phase 4 of a Type 2 Discourse is the phase in which Type 3 Discourses flourish, a time when reflection re-evaluates intuition. This is the phase in which people develop thoughtful, often balanced critiques of the intuitive responses. It is the phase that reveals that the apparent unity of Phase 2 was indeed a pseudo-unity. Once again, opinion shapers and the media play significant roles in determining the content and direction of Phase 4.
>
> Phase 5 sees a realignment of people within new Type 2 or Type 3 Discourse communities, the emergence of groups speaking about the original event in different ways with different values and meanings. September 11, for example, has produced many different critiques of the original intuitive responses, responses demonstrated by both the media and the public.
>
> The media, its aesthetic values and its images, play an important part in the evolution of Type 2 Discourses. They pick up, amplify and capitalise (literally and figuratively) on the early intuitive response; they provide outlets for reflection and the development of Type 3 Discourses; and they give time and space to counter-Discourses when it is opportune or safe to do so.

Despite its emotive content, and its almost unapproachable status, the discourse about the Holocaust of the Nazi era gives us an opportunity to see how these phases of a type 2 discourse evolved over 65 years, and the ways in which the media have played their part in determining the direction of that evolution.

Table 16.2 Phases of public (Type 2) discourse

Phase 1 – emergence of the 'facts'
Phase 2 – intuitive responses
e.g. guilty/not guilty, patriotism/racism, justice/injustice
facilitation of intuitive responses by opinion leaders
Phase 3 – pseudo-unity
Phase 4 – reflection
shaping of reflection by opinion leaders
Phase 5 – realignment

Phase 1 of the discourse was initiated by the syndicated reports, photographs and film from the concentration and death camps. All these were inevitably shaped by horror, indignation, rage and condemnation. The moral tone was inescapable. 'Dispassionate' reporting was impossible. At the same time, there was a strongly aesthetic framing. Some of the most haunting and still remembered images from that time were taken by two fashion photographers with long training in aesthetic composition, Lee Miller and Margaret Bourke-White. Stacked corpses, skeletal prisoners, beaten guards, barbed wire, shocked soldiers and civilians were all captured in well composed, cropped and edited still pictures and movies.

An intuitive outpouring of pity and anger followed as *Phase 2* of the evolving discourse. *Phase 3* began at the same time, with victorious governments planning their public responses of condemnation, briefing lawyers to find discursive terms such as genocide and crimes against humanity that could be used as concepts by which to define what was self-evidently wrong. A persuasive newspaper campaign ran in almost all countries. The Nuremburg trials were expertly filmed in dramatic detail, and those films were shown internationally. The peoples of the Allied nations stood apparently united. Even then, however, there were voices of uncertainty, questioning the propriety of judgement in 'the court of the victors', and wondering what would be achieved by death penalties against the political perpetrators. There was a great majority united behind the processes and the punishments, but not a complete consensus. Unity was only apparent. Attempts to enunciate Type 3 discourses were not well received, particularly when these were anti-discourses that sought to deny the validity of the dominant discourse. Holocaust deniers such as Robert Faurisson and David Irving have been met with anger and even legal action.

Now, however, we can see the slow evolution of *Phase 4* in this discourse, and once again aesthetics and the media are vital as a means of encouraging reflection and re-evaluation. As I have pointed out elsewhere, there have been thoughtful and provocative Jewish contributions to these Phase 4 discourses that have recognised the ways in which the Holocaust has entered the spiritual and moral realm of Jewishness, and begun to re-shape its aesthetics. Among films, we can identify *Schindler's list* and *La vita è bella* as redeeming representations of 'good' and 'optimism' in the face of horror. Kertesz's novel *Fateless* is stark and uncompromising, but presents a child's naïve view of camp-life as his 'normal', and his homecoming as an ordeal in which no one understands his past.

But others have gone further, and argued their right to see a spiritual grace in the Holocaust that helps to define what it is to be a Jewish artist or intellectual. Thus the artist Natan Nuchi writes

> I would like to emphasise that I regard the fact that my father was a survivor as secondary to many other reasons for dealing with the subject…Such issues as the connection between the Holocaust's naked/nude figures and the history of figure painting, or the relation and contradiction between the Holocaust as subject matter for art and the rest of contemporary art, or the fact that for me, dwelling on the Holocaust provided an extreme vantage point from which I could consider the rest of culture more clearly. These seemed to me more urgent and important than the fact that I was the son of a survivor. (Nuchi, quoted in Baigell [15]).

And Melissa Raphael-Levine, feminist theologian, said in the Sherman Lecture of 2008

> The Holocaust now constitutes a numinous anti-revelation, where the blinding absence or voiding of God and the sheer scale of human affliction and disappearance is in the process of becoming an aesthetic experience of the sublime for many contemporary Jews.

These critiques, blending ethics and aesthetics, are morphing into Type 3 discourses, discourses about the discourse of the Holocaust. *Phase 5* realignments are perhaps just beginning to take shape, and we will need a new generation further removed from its immediacy to determine how it will be incorporated into the discourses of many nations.

Public discourses tend to evolve in similar phases, although time-scales may be very different. The same evolutionary patterns can, for example, be traced in the 10 years of responses to 9/11 – the much publicized bombing of the Twin Towers (Phase 1); the immediate, intuitive surge of enraged patriotism (Phase 2), encouraged by statesmen and the media (Phase 3); the apparent unity of a blighted and affronted country; the earliest critiques (Susan Sontag, Pat Dolan of News 12); the steady growth of differing voices (Type 3 discourses of Phase 4) speaking for and against the 9/11 Memorial and the building of a nearby mosque; and the more concrete realignments evident at the 10th memorial gathering (Phase 5). Just as Natan Nuchi proposed the Holocaust as art, so Karlheinz Stockhausen and Damien Hurst early proclaimed 9/11 as incomparable art. Hurst in an interview is quoted as saying that 'he believed the terrorists responsible for the September 11 attacks "need congratulating" because they achieved "something which nobody would ever have thought possible" on an artistic level' ("9/11 wicked but a work of art, says Damien Hirst", *The Guardian*, 11 September, 2002). Stockhausen, in a radio interview, claimed that 'What happened there, is – now you must all reset your brains – the greatest artwork ever. That in one act, spirits accomplish something that in music we could not dream of; that people rehearse like crazy for 10 years, totally fanatically for one concert and then die. That is the greatest artwork for the whole cosmos' (Karlheinz Stockhausen, Interview, *Norddeutscher Rundfunk*, September 2001). Here, amongst the earliest responses, are clear indications of the dialectic that every event or affair will provoke, of the innate determination of some people to be different, to find the aesthetic in the face of the moral, and to translate the moral into the aesthetic because the two stand in such close and ambiguous relationship.

16.3   Implications

Aesthetics and ethics are linked because they represent the philosophies that underpin human judgement. In aesthetics, the judgement is directed toward the emotional responses that individuals have to sensory perceptions. In ethics, we are concerned with judgements of interactions between humans, and between humans and other entities in our environments. We have evidence from cerebral localization studies that these acts of judgement involve very similar sites in our brains. The ancients linked beauty and the good; so do today's neuroanatomists.

Many things have changed since the days when Plato, St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas, Hume, Baumgarten, Kant and even Wittgenstein wrote about the nexus between ethics and aesthetics. Human brains may have remained much as they were, language may have gained and lost in scope and precision, artistic canons undergone revolutions, but changes in the ways of mediated communication are overwhelmingly important, way beyond any other changes. We are, as we are frequently reminded, living in the era of the image. Baudrillard [16] commented on 'This viral contamination of things by images, which are the fatal characteristics of our culture'; and Daniel Boorstin wrote 'We live in a world of our making … We love the image, and believe it' [17]. We may still get much reward from contemplating art in galleries and from reading novels, from attending concerts or listening to CDs, but television and the daily print media, the steady sounds from radio commentators, news bulletins, interviews, chat shows, documentaries and so on penetrate our minds and alter them by a process akin to 'viral contamination.' The changes this may make to our 'ethical DNA' should not be underestimated.

Today's media are aesthetically framed to capture market share. Production values are just as important as content. The editing of news clips and documentaries is done with careful regard to appearance, framing, colour balance, sound matching, and cutting so that attention span is not exceeded. When we watch a historical documentary about the earthquake in Japan, we see repeated dramatic footage of great black walls of filthy water sweeping everything before them, we see devastated landscapes, nuclear reactors exploding, countryside evacuated. But we do not see the hundreds of hours of footage discarded in favour of the aesthetically most appealing images, the images that fulfill criteria of appeal to the greatest audience. Decisions of that kind are made by producers and editors, and that is logical and necessary. It does mean, however, that our ethical judgements have been made to some extent by those who make the programs that we watch, or those who control the words we read in newspapers or hear on radio, for images are made in words as well as pictures.

The nexus between ethics and aesthetics in post-modernity is a mediated one, and the media have become the predominant enculturing force. Even popular entertainment presents ethical issues, and suggests what may be important for us to consider. We may watch reality TV, for instance, and be prompted to judge for or against housemates in *Big Brother*; we may be presented with ethical dilemmas on hospital programs, and usually see them resolved in one way or another. Ethics is

packaged aesthetically, and our morality is implicitly shaped. Serious presentations about issues such as euthanasia commonly blur the distinctions between allowing someone to die and assisting their suicide. Media representations are incomplete by necessity, but inescapable in one form or another and profoundly influential. Their pervasiveness demands recognition. The discourses of ethics and aesthetics have become convergent. The conjoint discourse shapes our understanding of reality. Thomas and Thomas wrote in 1928 that "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" [18]. In other words, people respond to situations not as they may be in truth (whatever that may mean), but to what they have come to perceive and believe as the truth – and that is heavily influenced by the ethical-aesthetic discourse of the media. Writing of production values and styles in television drama as a genre, Nelson acknowledges that "These aesthetic judgements, however apparently fleeting and fluid, are, like all estimations, inevitably imbricated with ethics and politics, that is with questions of how we should live and how we should organize our societies to promote our ethical ends" [7, p. 225].

I would not want to convey the message that this is all bad. Media success is a part of contemporary life, and it would be foolish even to try to slow down its forward march. It would be wise, however, to acknowledge what is happening, and to alert students of bioethics to the importance of the media as a source of ethical knowledge in the community at large. At the same time, it seems useful to encourage students to develop critical habits that can be used to detect the shortcuts that the media have to use, and the aesthetic techniques that serve as rhetorical devices to sell the image and its message.

It would be best, I think, to accept that the media, in all its forms, offers a vast resource on which to draw in teaching students to become ethically aware [19] and ethically reflective [20]. The media are part of humanity's natural history, its evolution, and we must learn how to accommodate to it and use it to understand and work with 'the crooked timber of humanity.' Umberto Eco put his finger on the spot when he wrote 'I believe it is my job as a scholar and a citizen to show how we are surrounded by 'messages,' products of political power, of economic power, of the entertainment industry, and to say that we must know how to analyze and criticize them' [21].

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Part III
Bioart and Bioethics

Chapter 17
Taking Responsibility for Life: Bioethics and Bioart

Joanna Zylinska

17.1 Life in Bioart

Bioart, a genre of art in which artists use biomaterial such as live tissue, blood, genes, bacteria or viruses as their 'canvas,' is literally teeming with life. Tissue Culture & Art Project headed by Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr have grown a "semi-living coat" out of immortalised cell lines, which form a living layer of tissue supported by a biodegradable polymer matrix. Displayed in a glass sphere connected to various test tubes, the tiny garment-like object, branded Victimless Leather, brings to the fore "the moral implications of wearing parts of dead animals for protective and aesthetic reasons," while also engaging us in a visceral reflection on our use of living systems in everyday life [13, non-pag.]. There is also Blender by Stelarc and Nina Sellars: a vibrant installation consisting of a large glass capsule in which liquid biomaterials (such as subcutaneous fat from both artists' bodies, obtained via liposuction) bubble and slosh about, accompanied by the regular clicking sound of the blending mechanism's switch, which creates a pulse-like effect. Tagny Duff's Living Viral Tattoos, rendered in a petri dish on human and pig skin by viral vectors and immunohistological stains, in turn foreground both violent and productive relations between humans, animals and viruses, whereby the bruising effect that stands for the tattoo represents the processes of wounding as well as healing. Life's effervescence is poignantly embraced in Eduardo Kac's "plantimal" Edunia—a handsomely growing genetically engineered pinkish flower which is a hybrid of the artist and a petunia, with the artist's own DNA expressed in the red veins traversing the petals.

In *Bioart and the Vitality of Media* Robert Mitchell argues that bioart offers an embodied experience of what he sees as "the fundamental (i.e., generative) sense of media—namely, medium as a condition for transformation—and it encourages a sense of 'life' as less a property or informational pattern that is proper to organisms

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than a perpetual process of emergence" [11, p. 11]. But it is not just bioart projects that are on the rise. Opportunities for publicly displaying bioart are also growing rapidly, with "spectators themselves [framed] as media for the transformative powers of life" [11, p. 11]. Exhibitions including L'Art Biotech at the National Arts and Culture Centre Le Lieu Unique Nantes, France (2003), Sk-interfaces in Liverpool, UK (2009), and Visceral: The Living Art Experiment (2011) at the Science Gallery in Dublin have firmly embedded bioart in the contemporary art landscape. In the process, the artist's studio has been replaced by an art-science lab, with modes of work borrowed from science, engineering and computing being incorporated into the more conventional artistic palette. Bioart is also propagating through channels such as residencies and hands-on biotech workshops at the SymbioticA research facility led by Catts and Zurr at the University of Western Australia.

Yet I want to argue in this essay that it is not so much its daring or even blasphemous novelty or its serious yet irreverent interdisciplinary crossings that make bioart worth our attention. Rather, it is *what happens to life itself* within bioartistic practice that opens up the most interesting set of possibilities—for artists, philosophers and a wider public. These possibilities are not just visual but also material, and thus we may say, ontological: they concern the very nature of existence in time, and of what we understand by the seemingly self-evident concepts such as duration, emergence, reproduction and being alive. In works such as those by Tissue Culture & Art Project, Stelarc and Sellars, Kac or Duff life is being re-created, pushed to the limit, remoulded, remediated, cut and spliced back again. Bioartists can thus be said to take art's creative imperative to a different level, echoing to an extent what the philosopher Henri Bergson termed "creative evolution" [2, p. 170]: a form of life's unfolding which does not proceed in straight vertical lines according to a pre-designed formula but which rather entails the possibility of creating some 'real novelty,' or what Sarah Kember has termed "life-as-it-could-be" [9]. This is not to say that novelty is desirable under any circumstances, or that it is inherently progressive and good. Nor is it to assert that bioart remains outside the dominant cultural norms, or that the creative impulse which underpins their practice releases artists involved in the manipulation of life at genetic, cellular or tissue level from wider social conventions and obligations. We should therefore by all means give due consideration to questions concerning artists' rights and moral obligations that frequently get raised in debates surrounding bioart: questions as to whether artists *have the right* to manipulate life and to 'play God' in this way, whether *it is 'moral'* to do so, and whether *life as such does not deserve some kind of protection* from the possible excesses of some irresponsible experimenters—excesses that the twentieth century in particular witnessed in high number.

17.2   Normativity and the Democratic Paradox

However, while such questions are understandable and important in the given context, I want to suggest that they are not *the best questions* we can ask about bioart, for the simple reason that they evoke a normative position on life, echoing the mode

of reasoning that in philosophy and health-related disciplines goes under the name of 'bioethics.' Traditional bioethics is anchored in some kind of unique superior value, which itself remains free from questioning (a value such as God, life, nature, human dignity, autonomy or property). This superior value then serves as an orientation point for the formulation of a moral code, a code which stipulates 'universalisable judgement,' i.e., what must and must not be done, under all possible circumstances. In my book *Bioethics in the Age of New Media* I argued that such normative, procedural, value-driven bioethics is not adequate for a complex democratic society, whose very own signal points such as 'life,' 'nature' and 'the human' are undergoing a series of technological transformations and mediations—as well as existing in a series of antagonistic relations between holders of divergent positions on life (e.g. those who see the foetus as a future human and thus having an inalienable right to life vs. those for whom the foetus is a collection of cells which lacks sovereign existence and about which decisions are to be made by its physical carrier) [16]. To take this argument further, I want to suggest that conventional bioethics as an ethics of life that is amenable to prior judgement and reasoned argument falters when facing many bioart projects. Indeed, it can only approach them by retreating to the rather conventional definitions of life, nature and the human—definitions which both bioartists and bioscientists (whose research the former incorporate into their practice) are in the process of radically reformulating. As a result, conventional bioethics tends to overlook what Chantal Mouffe has termed "the democratic paradox." i.e. a state of events whereby "[w]hat cannot be contestable in a liberal democracy is the idea that it is legitimate to establish limits to popular sovereignty in the name of liberty" [12, p. 4]. The democratic paradox signifies that that the liberal democratic idea of 'human rights,' if applied to its logical conclusion, will always inevitably jeopardise some else's existing rights. Mouffe emphasises that it is important for us to understand that in a liberal democracy there always exists "a constitutive tension" between different logics, grammars or articulations (say, of ideas of God, freedom, nature, justice, property, dignity, etc.), "a tension that can never be overcome but only negotiated in different ways" [12, p. 5]. Rather than aim for a straightforward resolution premised on a liberal rational argument (which will inevitably entail its own constitutive blind spots), Mouffe suggests that this negotiation should rather be envisaged to take the form of "*contamination*, in the sense that once the articulation of the two principles has been effectuated [pro-life and pro-choice, say—JZ]—even if in a precarious way—each of them changes the identity of the other" [12, p. 10].

This is where bioart's interventionist energy as a contaminant of the liberal consensus comes in. However, for me this negotiation is not just language-based, i.e., it is not just a form of rational deliberation, but also an affective transmutation which involves making changes to the material arrangements of the world (i.e. to the negotiators' bodies and minds and to the very material dynamics of life that shapes them). The purpose of such contamination is to make a responsible critical intervention into the premises behind the liberal norms and values—which, when unquestioned, have the tendency to turn into moralist assumptions. As mentioned before, the question of bioartists' responsibility with regard to their practice therefore can, and needs to be,

raised. Yet we should be wary of retreating too early to pre-established moral positions, especially since, in situations of threat and panic, such moral retreat tends to turn into morality's ugly twin: moralism. The latter names a situation whereby moral reasoning gives way to embedded and frequently intransigent positions, which manifest themselves in blanket bans (on any kind of experimentation with or annihilation of 'life,' on undermining 'human values,' say, or on 'playing God') and an oftentimes hysterical refusal to consider the lack of shared ground with one's opponents [see 4, pp. 18–44; 15, pp. 78–83]. Bioart is thus capable of bringing to the fore the social antagonism that exists over various pre-biological and non-technicist definitions of life, be it religiously inflected or secular, which are frequently spiked with some shards of metaphysics (life as a manifestation of God's breath, life as a precious original substance unifying all beings, life as a public sacrum) [see 8]. As mentioned before, such antagonism is inevitable in a liberal democratic society in which people of various religious and political orientations share social and cultural spaces. It is precisely in negotiating the antagonism over the meaning of life that bioart can help us—although it also inevitably involves the possibility of adding to the antagonism, by stirring passions and disturbing the majority consensus with its 'contamination work' (be it genetic or philosophical). Bioartistic experiments not only undermine the metaphysical understanding of life but also challenge the traditional humanist value-based ethics, where this nebulous entity called 'human life' is posited as a value in advance, something to be protected at all cost.

17.3 Performing Life

We could perhaps argue that bioart has the power to become involved in the performative enactment of life as such. This power manifests itself in being able to pose or even force questions about the 'meaning of life' at its material level, about the boundaries of living organisms and the relations between them and their environment, and, last but not least, about the connection between the postulated autonomy (and hence self-ownership) of living organisms and the possibility of patenting and commercialising various life forms. Naturally, we do not *need* bioart to do this: biotechnology itself is perfectly capable of raising critical questions of this kind and creating fundamental problems for our established ideas of life. In its attempt to clone living organisms, endow inanimate domestic objects such as toasters and fridges with 'intelligence,' and create artificial life, it realigns the boundaries of metaphysics with its technical interventions into the living and the non-living. Yet bioart is uniquely placed to undertake this kind of questioning knowingly and purposefully, since it lacks the pragmatic imperative of many science and technology projects, whereby innovation and economic growth frequently overshadow any non-goal oriented agendas. Although the two are often developed from within the same labs and are part of the same research grants, bioart's mission is ostensibly different from the one embraced by the biotechnological industry. The primary business of bioart is the representation, articulation and open-ended creation of new

forms and modes of life—not capital-induced production of Life™. In saying this, I am taking a different position from Mitchell, whose has a rather US-centric picture of bioart. Indeed, a piece of US Congress legislation, the Bayh-Dole Act, which establishes a new "innovation ecology" by facilitating the transfer of patents and products between research institutions, corporations and the public, provides for him a model for the dynamic network of relations that all bioart seemingly find itself in—even though many of the artists he discusses in his book (and, in fact, all of those I have referenced so far in my essay) are based in non-US institutions, with different funding regimes and different sets of relations to the overarching neoliberal logic, and hence to notions of the social and the public [11, pp. 54–55]. Yet Mitchell seems to take that logic, with its unique North American articulation, for granted as something that artists can only *respond to*, retroactively. *Pace* Mitchell, I would argue a distinction needs to be drawn between innovation and invention, and that it is precisely in the gap between the two that the real potentiality of bioart lies.

To return to the question of bioartists' rights and obligations, then, I would like to rephrase it here as a question of taking responsibility for life. I want to suggest that, far from being immoral or irresponsible, artists experimenting with life are themselves performatively engaged not just in enacting life differently but also in enacting a different ethics of life. Through their practice, they give shape to a new bioethical framework for thinking what it means to live a good life—and to *make life good*, literally. It is precisely the inventive, creative aspect of bioart, its ability to enact new possibilities in and for life that, for me, situates it within an ethical horizon. Yet, as stated before, this is not to designate *any* form of novelty or creative endeavour as valuable or good *per se*, only to draw attention to an inherently creative potential of bioart, no matter whether it is actually going to be actualised in individual works or not. In remoulding life, bioartists cannot therefore be judged by the established normative criteria which correspond to entities and the world presumed to be a certain way if they themselves are involved—at the core level, we might say—in transforming the very fundamentals of that world. As well as reinventing life, bioartists may thus be offering us a way of reinventing life's norms and our conceptualisations of it.

I should perhaps make a quick reservation here that I am not an uncritical apologist for bioart as such. Indeed, I readily acknowledge that much of the work that falls into the category of bioart is not that interesting on its own terms: too derivative with regard to biotechnology and bioscience, too fascinated with the technical process, too focused on the pedagogic aspect of bringing science to the people, too insular in its own preoccupations with technical details. Yet it is precisely the perhaps rare but nevertheless transformative bioartistic events (by which I do not mean just installations or performances taking place in galleries but primarily the convergence of forces in the world when a particular bioart project disturbs something in the arrangements of this world) that a bioethical potential of bioart comes to the fore for me. It is when bioart takes responsibility for life, without retreating to any predefined entrenched moralist positions about what this life is and how it should be treated, that contours for a new paradigm for an ethics of life in the biotech era are being drawn, I would suggest.

17.4 Between Transformation and Invention

This is precisely the agenda explicitly embraced by Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr's more recent work titled *Crude Matter* and designed as a series of artistic meditations on the material aspect of life—and on human intervention into it. Referencing the Jewish folk story of the Golem (which literally means 'crude,' 'unshaped' or 'raw'), the project explores the transformation of different materials into substrates which have the ability to support and act on life. The artists explain that "*Crude Matter* attempts to destabilise the prevailing logic of the transformation of life into raw material for engineering ends; to bring to question the logic that seems to privilege the information embedded in DNA over the context in which life operates" [14] While no outright ban on the manipulation of life is postulated by them, Catts and Zurr foreground the issue of human responsibility for the knowledge about life, while also highlighting the human hubris which manifests itself in some of the applications of this knowledge. What projects of this kind enact is therefore a new understanding of the context for life. The artists do not eschew responsibility for their practices or pronouncements, but this responsibility focuses on one fundamental (meta)question: *what does it actually mean to bear responsibility towards life*? We could understand the latter to be driven by an imperative to consider *what it actually means to invent life well*. This imperative also requires us to reflect on how this responsibility for life can be enacted given that the very substrate for which responsibility is to be taken is in the process of being remoulded. We are thus faced here not just with the democratic paradox that Mouffe revealed to us but also with an ontological one: at the very heart of the bioethics enacted by many bioart projects lies an empty signifier that nevertheless exudes a content-free obligation to respond to it, and take responsibility for it.

Obviously, in particular circumstances this empty signifier 'life' gets filled with specific content. Our response to such content is always *marked ethically*, even if it is not always *ethical in itself*. In contemporary critical thought there has been a tendency (driven by the work of Spinoza and Deleuze) to see such ethical responses primarily as affective reactions, whereby what happens to a living body after it has entered into a composition with other bodies, and whether it enhances or reduces its capabilities and potential energy, has been deemed as an adequate indicator of a 'good' relation. "The good is when a body directly compounds its relation with ours, and, with all or part of its power, increases ours," as Deleuze puts it in his book, *Spinoza* [6, p. 22]. In this context, ethics is defined as a form "*ethology* which, with regard to men and animals, in each case only considers their capacity for being affected" [6, p. 27]. Rather than reacting to a given situation—a gesture that can perhaps be seen as secondary and passive, and that would surely sound like anathema to many of our bioartists discussed in this chapter—ethics in the Deleuzian framework should be "active," focused on "production for the sake of production itself, an ungrounded time and becoming" [5, p. 55]. If life is understood as an ongoing and dynamic technical process, then an ethical imperative lies in creating new, interesting ways of becoming, and of being part of this life. In this sense

bioartists such as Catts and Zurr or Kac can be said to be acting ethically in their ethological, life-altering adventures and experiments, with the previously raised question of responsibility relegated to the treasure chest of old, responsive and passive forms of morality.

17.5   Affective Encounters and the Ethical 'Cut'

However, I would argue that not only is the above delineated position on ethics not entirely satisfactory but also that the bioartists under discussion can be said to be ethical in a much stronger sense, which I will outline below. Let me start by contending that the partly embodied nature of our relatedness to life cannot be denied, especially after the disembodied rational moral subject of traditional ethics—which could supposedly take an objective and impartial stand on issues via logical deliberation—has been presented as nothing more than a fantasy in many recent works of cultural, media, feminist and queer theory. I also want to suggest that this entering into a relation with other bodies, situated as they are in a field of forces in which such an encounter happens, also requires what I term a 'cut' to be made into this field. The function of this 'cut' is to allow, first, for *these* and not *some other* relations to be recognised *as individual relations*, and, second, for (at least provisional) judgments to be made about those relations. The situation as such demands an assessment from the human—who is capable not only of recognising in him- or herself this propensity for being affected but also of theorising this propensity. The 'cut' referred to above therefore stands for:

> a reflexive moment in which an evaluation is to be made about the powerfulness of an encounter between particular elements—bodies, and about the supposed 'goodness' of this encounter… To judge this increase in our power or even to actually understand who is the 'we' in this relation, a moment of at least temporary differentiation between different parts of the assemblage has to occur. If ethics is not to turn merely into a formal exercise in the study of life flow's increase and decrease, one needs to be able to determine why some bodily encounters *matter* more than others, and who they matter to at any particular time. [16, pp. 166–7]

This 'ethical bind,' if we want to call it this, is made apparent in a project called In Vitero by the Australian artist Tarsh Bates, a project "which examines the evolution of 'somatic semantics' or ways of understanding through bodies" [1]. The work consists of two durational live performances occurring in two different locations: a science lab at the University of Western Australia and a public studio at Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (PICA). Focusing on embodied affective encounters between various organisms commonly used in reproductive biology and housed in customised glass vessels, such as, e.g., fruit flies (Drosophila melanogaster), thrush (Candida albicans), slime mold (Physarum polycephalum), and the artist herself, (Homo sapiens sapiens), it explores what Bates describes as "the aesthetics of care, which investigates the potential that sustained proximity and care can offer in exploring the relationship between the carer and cared-for" [1]. Even though it

remains open to the processes of emergence and the unfolding of different relations between living organisms, In Vitero is also framed by a series of prior questions that call to responsibility the artist's relation to life: "What does it mean to care for fruit flies, slime mould, daphnia, hydra, or soil nematodes in a gallery? Is it possible to develop a different relationship between Candida albicans (commonly known as thrush) and humans by caring for it? How do we care for creatures that are not cute, furry or even visible? Is it appropriate—or ethical—to contain organisms in glass terrariums and keep them for our own purposes, aesthetic, cultural, educational or scientific?" [1]. It is therefore clearly not just how the various organisms are mutually affected in the encounter that is being assessed in the project but also how, through recourse to its species singularity, the Homo sapiens participant can perform a reflection on the established relations—on how they enfold, on what they mean and on whether they could and should be altered.

We could perhaps go so far as to suggest that artistic experiments of this kind furnish what might be described as an 'ethics lab,' whereby it is not just life that is experimented on but also the normative frameworks through which it can be approached and dealt with. If acting ethically involves making cuts to the flow of life, as we said earlier, then we need to acknowledge that those cuts are going to be both material (involving the cutting and splicing of genes or cells) and rhetorical. In performing (bio)ethics with their work, bioartists seem to be taking heed of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical imperative to approach problems of the world not just by saying what we already know about it but first of all by inventing new concepts— a process which for the authors of *What Is Philosophy?* is a "matter of articulation, of cutting and cross-cutting" [7, p. 16]. Bioart can thus be described as being involved in twin processes of inventing life and cutting through life—with a double-edged scalpel of responsibility and necessity. This is to say that cutting, both material and rhetorical, is inevitable, but also that the kinds of incisions that we are going to make into life *matter*. Indeed, they matter also in an ethical sense, which will have to be decided anew in various contexts. Since this nebulous entity called 'life' is itself in the process of being re/created in the artistic experiments and their articulations, there is of course no reason to posit 'life' as a value in advance. As Rosi Braidotti argues, life is a "fundamentally amoral force, the true nature of which is best expressed in its relentless generative power. There is no implicit a priori difference between cancer and birth, or between a malignant proliferation of cells in cancer and the benign proliferation induced by pregnancy" [3, p. 223]. Seeing life as a force, a dynamic movement, an unfolding of potentialities which are often unknown in advance carries with it both a suspension of ontological certainty and an ethical imperative to *cut well* into life, to make *good things* with it. Rather than posited as a prior value, life becomes a minimum condition of any ethical framework—and of there being those who can exercise and act on that condition. To cite Braidotti again, "Ethics is a thin barrier against the possibility of extinction. It is a mode of actualising sustainable forms of transformation" [3, p. 217]. It is therefore the protection of this condition, of the possibility of life's unfolding, that constitutes what we might term the first minor injunction of any kind of non-procedural bioethics. This injunction always needs to be coupled with two others: to cut well into life

and to respond well to life already formed (or, as we may also put it, 'temporarily stabilised'): to entities, beings, organs, cells. It also means taking responsibility for the life of the other, be it another human or a slime mold, but not necessarily in the same way. This process requires critical reflection from the human as a temporarily stabilised ethical subject on the emergence of these life forms, and on the relations between them—*on how such living forms are constituted, on what they do and on what it means*.

The imperative and propensity for 'inventing well' is derived from humans' capacity for developing empathy with other life forms, for being sentient with and about them, and for being able to theorise this shared sentience. However, it is precisely the moment of reflection on that capacity and on the forms of affect it generates that is a condition for any such living encounter being ethical. (Otherwise there is a danger of cuteness, say, becoming a moral value.) Cutting well thus means cutting "in a way that does not lose sight of the horizon of duration, or foreclose on the creative possibility of life enabled by this horizon," whereby an ethical in-cision is always also a de-cision [10, p. 82]. We could therefore suggest that bioartists, busying themselves in their 'ethics labs,' are twenty-first century science-philosophers, making life and making rules about life. But they do need to take responsibility for their own situatedness in life: for their engagement with life and for their differentiation from it. Of course, as we said earlier, not all bioartists are ethical in this sense, with many reneging on the minimal 'critical vitalist imperative' to create life and to reflect on it. But the interesting even if rare examples of 'good invention' turn bioart into an important tester of our moral hierarchies—of how we value certain life forms more than others, and of how we cut through them, to *make life better*.[1]

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[1] This chapter was developed from a catalogue essay I wrote for the exhibition of Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr's work at the Centre for Contemporary Art (CSW Łaźnia) in Gdańsk, Poland, in 2012.

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Chapter 18
The Unnatural Relations Between Artistic Research and Ethics Committees: An Artist's Perspective

Ionat Zurr and Oron Catts

> *We overlook only too often the fact that a living being may also be regarded as raw material, as something plastic, something that may be shaped and altered.*
>
> *H.G. Wells [7]*
>
> *…for an art is like a living organism—better dead than dying.*
>
> *Samuel Butler [1]*

18.1   Introduction

Since the early 1990s a growing number of artists have been working with the tools and concepts of the life sciences for the sole purpose of research and artistic expression. Artists scrutinise, and develop ways of engaging with and applying, knowledge from the life sciences. These new understandings and changing perceptions of 'life,' along with a growing instrumentalisation of life by the 'biological revolution' enterprise, provides the uneasy niche many artists chose to probe and explore.

Artists who choose to work with the tools of modern biology in manipulating living systems have limited options in advancing their work because the resources needed are almost exclusively in academia and industry. As a consequence most artists who work with biological material do so within institutional settings that provide access to support, expertise, and relevant technologies. SymbioticA is recognised as the first artistic laboratory dedicated to providing artists with support for this kind of research within an institutional setting. The laboratory was established in 2000 within the School of Anatomy, Physiology and Human Biology Faculty of

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Life and Physical Sciences in the University of Western Australia. One of the requirements of the University is that all projects, including those of SymbioticA, must receive ethical as well as health and safety clearances from appropriate committees.

SymbioticA artist-researchers make use of scientific techniques in manipulating life forms. Through their hands-on experience, these artists become well informed critics of the technologies they practise. As a consequence, their projects may intentionally provoke, expose hypocrisies, meditate and question the limits of 'what is acceptable' by current societal standards. The approach of SymbioticA artists can therefore be challenging for review committees. One of those challenges is to the utilitarian analysis that committees use to assess the worth of research projects. Artist-researchers face their own challenges in working within ethical guidelines that are geared predominantly for biomedical research.

A major role of ethics committees is to review research on animals and humans, within established guidelines, by carefully weighing the potential benefit of the project against the potential risks of harm or suffering. This analysis however takes on a different character when the project itself confronts the utilitarian ethics that are inherent within these guidelines as the value of the arts is not measured by any instrumental benefits in achieving other ends. As a consequence of these different perspectives, calculating the benefits of an open ended, non-utilitarian artistic research project, presents an ethics committee with a difficult confrontation. There are broader issues also, that relate to whether artistic research should be considered as research at all. Furthermore it is new and challenging for members of ethics committees to accept that ironic and playful approaches could be recognised and taken seriously as 'research tools' and methodology. In this exchange, the work of artists inevitably reflects back on the current role and procedures of ethics committees. Any notion of artistic research as of value for itself—or artistic freedom as an end in itself—can be foreign to ethics committee processes and deliberations. What we are suggesting therefore, is that there is an inherent tension in ethics committee review of art-research.

The relations between art and ethics were never neutral. Some artists see their role in terms of contesting accepted notions, provoking and questioning what is ethical—sometimes by deliberately creating uneasiness and discomfort. Although it is accepted that artistic research within an institution should follow institutional rules, this conflicts with the intention of artistic projects when the aim is to provoke or subvert those same rules. Furthermore developing research projects and art-works within a biological science context requires interesting readjustments on both sides. One of the issues is that artists are required to articulate their project in a way that makes sense within a science-research framework, in order to communicate to the members of the committees about the project. Reconciling an ethos of artistic autonomy and subjectivity with research ethics guidelines is a high wire act with attendant risks of falling heavily to the ground. In this chapter we illustrate some of the trials and errors of these interactions by describing particular projects as case studies and examining the review processes as they have unfolded.

18.2 Case Studies

18.2.1 Is Art Research?

On a few occasions the first response from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC), to a proposal from SymbioticA, was to state that the Committee did not consider the proposed work to be research, or (similarly) to request a statement explaining why the proposed project should be considered research within the terms of the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans [5].

On these occasions we have replied that the area of artistic research SymbioticA deals with is "emerging knowledge and technologies"—an area that is fraught with challenges. We have expressed the view that the National Statement recognises this as research in referring to "a planned study of existing practices with a view to changing/improving practice in light of the study's findings and/or to increase understanding." We have also advanced the view that it should also be recognised (within the terms of the Statement) as "a newly emerging multi-disciplinary genre of research" in that "it also represents a study of existing practices (both art and the life sciences) with a view to changing the practice and to increase understanding." Further, we have pointed to a "risk" expressed within the National Statement of "omitting newly emerged genres of research, of which various kinds of multi-disciplinary research are examples." We have noted that most of SymbioticA's research meets the definition of "pure research" (from the National Statement) in that it is "non-therapeutic, non-clinical and non-applied." It is also apparent that some of the research proposals from SymbioticA have a potential impact on humans and that for this reason, within the terms of the National Statement, there is a need for a HREC to review them. In our view SymbioticA deals with exploratory and speculative research into the use of different biological and biotechnological tools and materials as a medium for artistic expression. It also explores the ways in which artists and audiences respond to developments in the life sciences. For all these reasons we have advanced the view that SymbioticA's proposals should be treated as research and considered by the HREC. We acknowledge that defining artistic research *as research* is problematic as most of SymbioticA's research does not fully adhere to scientific principles of research as "systematic prospective collection of information to test an hypothesis" (as defined in the National Statement) [5]. However we claim that art is not science and that scientific principles of research are not the appropriate measure in assessing whether artistic projects are research or not.

18.2.2 Animal Ethics Committee

SymbioticA artist Verena Kaminiarz set out to explore the changing relations humans have with animals when those animals have been designed and engineered as specific human disease models. Through the development of '*May the mice bite me if it is not*

true' (2008) the artist also questioned the ethics of the Animal Ethics Committee whose role is to protect the welfare of these new 'living tools.' The work, which was mounted in the Animal Housing facility at the University of Western Australia, concerned the use of mice that have been developed as 'human disease models.' The project focussed on four mice, each of which was positioned as a living portrait of a person who had died from a condition that particular mouse had been developed to model. The resulting 'mouse portraits' were of Franz Kafka (lung cancer), Joseph Beuys (natural causes), Felix Gonzalez-Torres (compromised immune system), and Gilles Deleuze (lung cancer). The project mimics some elements of biological research (the location and care the mice receive) and deliberately alters others (the housing, the materials within the mice houses to make the environment richer, and the focus on their identities as 'individuals' by naming each mouse). Kaminiarz describes how the project, "focuses on mice used in science to model human diseases. This work re-contextualizes laboratory animals and relocates them into a field of cultural and philosophical study. With the work I attempted to create a situation that forces questions about scientific conventions, biological art practices and the ethical and philosophical implications of the collision of these practices" [4]. So as to respond to a utilitarian ethics analysis of the Ethics Committee, whereby beneficial outcomes need to be articulated in the application for ethics approval, Kaminiarz argued that "the project draws attention to the possibilities of life manipulation and function as an illustration of contemporary biomedical technologies." She was also required to outline how the research may benefit humanity, which she did by proposing that the work would "facilitate personal engagement with the subject of work" (each mouse) and that this "engagement will create a broader understanding of the connection between humanity and the rest of the world."

Kaminiarz used transgenic mice that were considered 'surplus' and 'retired breeders,' each of which was destined to be culled. The housing she designed for the mice was larger and offered the mice a richer and more varied environment in comparison with the standard animal housing in research labs. Although the project posed *no* harm to the animals (rather, the project rescued the animals and allowed them to continue living in comfort) the Committee was reluctant to give its approval. The problem was that no systematic and recognisable scientific procedure was to be employed, no measurement was proposed, and no quantitative data would be generated. In effect, the ethics committee was questioning the merits and validity of artistic research in not following the methodology of the scientific research. Naming the animals was also questioned: because it may skew the objectiveness of the researcher by personalising a relationship with a mouse which would otherwise be regarded as a tool in research. However this was exactly the point in issue for the research project. Kaminiarz aimed to probe the ethics of the instrumentalisation of life as raw material for technological ends. In other words, by transforming the mice from a scientific model and individualising them, she drew attention to the 'de-humanised' use of animals for scientific research. We believe that this may have been the major issue concerning Ethics Committee members.

The paradoxical nature of the Ethics Committee was revealed again in later stages of the project. When the student had completed her course of study, the Ethics

Committee requested that the project be terminated and the animals euthanised. SymbioticA had difficulty persuading the Committee to allow the mice to live out their 'natural' lives even with a commitment from SymbioticA staff to look after the animals. We met further difficulties when Joseph Beuys (the mouse) died from natural causes and left only one mouse (Felix Gonzalez-Torres) in the house the pair had shared. According to Animal Ethics Committee regulations Felix was required to be euthanised as it is "unethical" to have only one single mouse in a cage as mice are social animals. For Kaminiarz it seemed even more cruel to euthanise Felix, rather than allow her continue living, even though it may be a somewhat lonely life. Tellingly, when we subsequently advised the Ethics Committee of the death (from old age) of Joseph Beuys (mouse), we were obliged to report his death on a form that assumed the death had been caused by the researcher through "procedures performed" or by "unplanned euthanasia." There was no option for death from natural causes.

Kaminiarz project was an 'artistic intervention' within the University's Animal Holding facility and was intended to prompt researchers, who work in this space as part of their research, to reflect on their 'research tools' as living subjects. It was not in opposition to animal experimentation, but rather aimed to re-instate, or draw attention to, an uneasiness about using animals (and living materials) as technological means for human ends. Kaminiarz's project exposed some of the paradoxes inherent within animal ethics committee processes, where minimising harm for the animals has (at least in some committees) become secondary to fulfilling the regulations that can be applied with little reflection about their ethical significance or meaning.

However this is not always the case. To give an example of a more reflective response from an ethics committee: the Chair of the Animal Ethics Committee of UWA wrote to PhD student Pia Interlandi (who was working in conjunction with SymbioticA) to congratulate her "on setting a fine example for others to follow" in her "care and respect" for animals. This related to a project developed by Interlandi to investigate forms of ecological burial garments. She had joined with the Centre of Forensics Science (UWA) in dressing two dozen, forty-kilo pig carcases, with garments developed by Interlandi, prior to burying the animals. The Chair of the Animal Ethics Committee had visited the burial site and wrote to Interlandi that, "We were most impressed by the manner in which you are approaching this project, in particular the care and respect you show for the animals, both in the preparation of the burial shrouds and ceremonies that take place surrounding the burial." He added that "A major element of ethics is respect for the animals that have lost their lives when contributing to important outcomes, but unfortunately this respect is not as common as it should be."

18.2.3 Using One's Own Skin

One of SymbioticA international precedents in regards to human ethics approvals is concerned with artists working with their own tissue externally to their body. This kind of research raises a couple of bioethical questions: The artist has to have a biopsy to obtain the tissue; hence there is a need for inflicting harm on a body for

non-medical purposes. The artist's relation with the subject matter may raise ethical issues as the artist (or part of the artist) *is* the subject matter. In addition, working with one's own tissue may be risky. This is because the body's immune system will reject cells and tissues coming from another individual. However, if cells/tissue from the same person are re-introduced to the body the body will not recognise the cells as foreign. When working with cells/tissue in vitro (externally to the body) there is always the risk of the cells mutating and therefore, their re-incorporation into the body may carry risks.

When SymbioticA proposed a project of this kind, the response from the Ethics Committee was to seek our clarification, on the grounds that "There are major safety implications for this project." We were asked if the "cells from the participant [would] be immortalised by transfection or chemicals that can induce mutagenesis;" and the Committee letter also observed that "The usual rule of tissue culture is that an individual should never work with their own cells." (On this point, we have not been able to find a written reference to the "usual rule of tissue culture.") In answering their concerns we advised that we are well aware of the risks associated with researchers working with their own cells/tissue and that all researchers in SymbioticA are trained to follow the relevant (and stringent) containment protocols. They are not permitted to work with any human or possibly hazardous materials before they can demonstrate that they can follow those protocols. The Committee has accepted these reassurances and to date eight SymbioticA artists have been permitted to use theirs and others tissue as part of their research. As an example, we discuss the first biopsy case put to the University Human Ethics Committee as part of the work of the artist Kira O'Reilly.

This project, entitled *Marsysus—Running out of Skin* (2004), explored traditional lace making techniques interwoven with tissue culturing and engineering to develop an *in vitro* living lace of skin cultured from cells biopsied from the artist's body. O'Reilly learnt the techniques of tissue culture using both human cells lines and primary skin tissue taken from pigs (that were sacrificed in a scientific research project carried out in another School). She met with a surgeon (who has asked to remain anonymous) who agreed to perform the biopsy and remove skin material. In her application for human ethics approval (as the researcher and subject of research) O'Reilly argued for the benefits of her project to humanity (as is required by the review process) in terms of its 'social,' 'cultural,' and 'ethical' features. She described these as:

> *Social:* How do we understand the body and our specific bodies within increasing acceleration of biomedical technologies and applications? The project and its processes and metaphors will navigate and open up spaces for meaningful engagement with 'how to have a body now.' The personal nature of the work as well as its conceptual and formal concerns will allow for meaningful and multiple engagements.
> *Cultural:* Merging of the cultures of scientific and artistic practice, allowing for the translations and similarities and differences of cultural practice to inform each other into emergent practices.
> *Ethical:* Through dialogue, research and practice the project will address what the implications of scientist and artists creating living cultures are and what does this mean when the lines between therapeutic, indirectly therapeutic and non-therapeutic cannot be easily drawn.

O'Reilly elaborated on the ethical aspects of the study in terms of 'respect' and 'responsibility.' She was endeavouring to work within the usual Committee discourse. For example, 'respect' was indicated by her ability "to make an informed decision." She added that she displayed a "willingness to use her body in the art work with awareness, sensitivity, and thoughtfulness" which was to take the discussion beyond the usual research ethics framework. On 'responsibility' O'Reilly argued that "the action is appropriate and therefore respectful to both her as an individual, to her practice, to the scientific support she will be receiving in realising the work, to the larger body of UWA in which the work is conducted." She claimed that "Responsibility is also demonstrated in the seriousness of the project research and its aims to contribute to a compelling and useful engagement that goes beyond the immediate confines of her practice." This exemplifies the careful work that is needed in negotiating ethical approval for artistic projects within a scientific research ethics framework.

18.2.4   Tissue from Living Donors for Artistic Expression

During her SymbioticA residency in 2008, artist Tangy Duff applied to the Human Research Ethics Committee to obtain and use tissue from living consenting donors for the sole purpose of artworks. *Living viral tattoos* by Tangy Duff is a series of *in vitro* sculptural prototypes made of living tissue (in this case, surplus human tissue discarded after elective surgery) that has been incubated with a lentivirus, which is a third generation non-pathogenic clone of HIV infused with fluorescent protein. A 'tattoo' is formed by the bruising effect that is created when the virus is added to the tissue. Some of the 'tattooed' skin was then to be formed and sutured into the form of a book that was to be presented in exhibitions under the title *Cryobooks Archives*. It is important to emphasise that all donors were to give consent for their skin to be used specifically for Duff's artwork.

Although Duff's project was approved, we had difficulties obtaining an approval for an artistic research project that involved the donation of small amounts of blood. The piece was titled *Blood war* (2010), by the artist Kathy High [3]. *Blood War* was set up as a series of 'races' in which different people's white blood cells were entered in 'play-offs' against each-other. The cellular 'winner' of each round went on to fight another participant. *Blood Wars* playfully engages with age-old debates about blood traits and engages in discussions of the powerful histories of blood. The claim was that, by participating in *Blood Wars*, "one will come to a better understanding of the processes of blood cell division, cell staining, immune cells and the immune system functioning, time-lapse microscopy and laboratory protocol." Each participant was required to complete a consent form for blood withdrawal (done by a phlebotomist) and also to complete a form containing questions on their age, gender, ethnicity, political leanings, sexual orientation, economic status as well as favourite food.

The Committee was concerned about "how this study fits the definition of research" and how it meets the criteria for "research merit and integrity" from the

National Statement. They asked us to provide a research hypothesis; if it was appropriate to be discussing 'racial superiority;' and whether this information could be misused or misinterpreted. They had further concerns about whether the cells of participants may be identifiable through the 'biography descriptions' provided and asked for re-assurances about our processes for maintaining anonymity and privacy of the participants—particularly relating to how we would provide feedback on 'blood war' results. We were apparently able to satisfy all of the concerns raised as the project has received ethics approval not just from UWA (where the initial research took place) but was also from the ethics committee at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (the home base of the researcher) and Trinity College, Dublin (where the project was publically shown). Nevertheless, the concerns raised by the Committee highlight the challenges faced by both artists and ethics committees when they try to communicate. We are fortunate that these committees have accepted, as one of the strengths of artistic expression, the capacity of art to convey many meanings (some of which are quite radical) through the use of irony and ambiguity.

18.2.5 Audience Response to Tissue

The last case study we present focuses on an expressed concern by ethics committee members about audience sensitivities and 'when and why audiences should be protected.' In 2003 Catts and Zurr (authors of this paper) were collaborating with the artist Stelarc, to grow a quarter scale replica of his ear using biodegradable polymers and living cells. The tissue engineered ear was cultured in a rotating microgravity bioreactor which allows the cells to grow in three dimensions. *Extra ear – ¼ Scale* represented a recognisable human part. However, it was to be presented as 'partial life' and raised questions about notions of 'wholeness of the body.' It also confronted broader cultural perceptions of 'life' given our increasing ability to manipulate living systems. The authors were dealing with the ethical and perceptual issues stemming from the realisation that living tissue can be grown and sustained, and is able to function outside of the body.

We received correspondence from the exhibiting venue stating that there was no policy on presenting living tissues in their gallery and requesting a statement from us that the work did not raise ethical issues in general and in particular in the biomedical community. We could not give this assurance to the gallery as we see the primary aim of our work as providing tangible examples of issues that need further ethical scrutiny. Furthermore, our work invites people to engage critically with the broader biomedical project. Therefore a decision was made to cancel the installation; only to later 'compromise' and allow it to go ahead on the condition that we did not use human tissue. The request to use animal cells, which are not of human origin, raises a whole new discussion about speciesism, human sanctity, and the perceived human dominion over nature. However, this issue is not within the scope of this paper and therefore we leave the somewhat puzzling request by the gallery for you, the audience reading this paper, to ponder.

As we planned to use commercially available cell lines (human and other animals) to grow over the polymer scaffold in the shape of the ear, we were not required to go through the full ethics review process. The reason for this was the assumption that commercially available cell lines have been obtained ethically and the donor cannot be traced. With this project however, we decided that there was a need to seek a full ethics approval, not the least because the exhibiting venue's expressed apprehension about the work. The angle that we chose to take with the Human Ethics Research Committee was to argue for an 'ethical right' for the audience to be exposed to an artwork which raises bioethical concerns. The subjects/participants were therefore members of the audience who would view the work directly as well the public at large that might be exposed to the work via the popular media. As we stated, in our application for ethical clearance from the Human Ethics Committee for *Extra Ear ¼ Scale,* the project was "intended to make the viewer rethink their perception of life" but nevertheless we acknowledged that this would "undoubtedly cause uneasiness to some of the viewers." We argued that "forcing people out of their comfort zone is one of the major roles of contemporary artistic practice dealing with the implications of the introduction of new technologies, and in particular when these technologies are dealing with new modes of manipulation of living systems."

To meet ethics committee requirements we laid out potential benefits to the 'participants' (the viewers) in terms of their being "drawn to reassess their perceptions of life in the light of their encounter with a real tangible example of the concept of partial life." We expressed a hope that this would "assist them in coming to an informed opinion in regard to developments in the bio-medical field" and would "provide them with the opportunity to meditate on what it means to be alive." With regard to humanity generally, our point was that the project was "part of a larger scale endeavor by artists internationally to deal with new concepts of self and life that our society is being confronted with, in the light of developments in the bio-medical field." We argued that "art can play an important role in generating a cultural discussion in regard to these issues: by presenting tangible examples of contestable scenarios, art can act a starting point for a broader philosophical and ethical discussion." The installation was finally given ethics approval, although perilously close (2 weeks prior) to the show's opening.

18.3 Conclusion

Recently the need to develop an ethical framework for artists, who work with biological research methods and materials, has been suggested. Nicola Triscott, Director of 'Arts Catalyst,' proposed: "a possible structure for an independent arts ethics advisory panel, since a number of artists have said that they would benefit from expert ethics advice on their proposed projects, both to reassure funders, venues, collaborators and media, and to advise the project itself" [6]. We would support this development. We hope that the lessons from the above arts-research

case studies within SymbioticA, and the negotiations with the ethics committees at the University of Western Australia, will be helpful in guiding the formation of any panels that may result from Triscott's proposal. More broadly, these narratives offer some insights into the role of ethics committees and may contribute to changing understandings of ethics in relation to life and being in contemporary society in the midst of a biological and biotechnical revolution.

Artistic research is valid and important as it enables the expression of different perspectives and views through different approaches and methodologies. Experimental art is concerned with the 'production' of non-utilitarian artefacts. In the cost-benefit assessment of the artistic project the artist is asked to provide arguments that relate to utilitarian or commercial gain. Some artists will contest the premise of utility for a commercial gain as a basis for ethical consideration. From this perspective, the process of review, and the entire artistic project in working with living material, can be seen to be both ethical and political. Also, in that way the artist enables society as a whole to engage with contemporary bioethically complex issues as well as to project towards future scenarios.

It is now obvious that bio-matter is increasingly used as raw material, and that a utilitarian and engineering ethos provides the values inherent in current evaluative frameworks [2]. One way to emphasise and attract attention to alternative frames of thought is to open up the very same tools and spaces, that serve this 'bio-engineered' future, to others including artists. Submitting artistic research projects for the scrutiny of ethics committees has been a necessary step in a process of developing alternative evaluative frames of reference. From this perspective, enabling artists to enter into laboratories to create living and semi-living artworks is not only ethical but also political.

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Part IV
Art and Ethics in Relation to Science and Medicine

Chapter 19
Ethics and the Arts in the Medical Humanities

Claire Hooker

Within the relatively new field of the medical humanities, the arts are regarded as a primary mode by which medical practitioners and health care workers can develop more humanistic relationships with their patients. Those who advocate for including creative arts in medical and health care training, institutions and practices, are passionate about them. They see the arts as a means of cultivating empathy for patients and multivalent understandings of illness in practitioners, and dignity, autonomy and empowerment in patients.

It is hard to argue with this passionate advocacy. And yet the expectations held about what art is and what it does are concerning. In this chapter, I outline the benefits that art is expected to provide, and suggest a philosophical framework for them—Martha Nussbaum's model of 'fine attention' and loving responsibility. I then discuss several critiques of this model, including its assumptions about audience reactions, the epistemic privilege accorded to experience and narrative, its hegemonic reproduction of elite Western culture and its normative aesthetics in scholarship and art. I then briefly examine 'postmodern' scholarship that has offered critiques of the model and identify that it too rests on (different) assumptions that certain kinds of art and aesthetics promise ethical benefits. I conclude by suggesting that we will be best served by maintaining a productive tension between both approaches.

19.1 The Medical Humanities: A Growing Field

Just what 'the medical humanities' are or is, is a topic for regular discussion, prompted by generational change in a relatively new, fast-growing field and the consequent questioning of its assumptions and practices [5, 9, 13, 19, 27, 40, 41, 44].

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It has a very specific, identifiable history, and it is within this that we can understand its approach to art.

The medical humanities arise from concerns, often expressed by doctors as well as critics, that medical practice has become distanced from 'the human side of medicine' as it has become more technically accomplished [43]. Reflecting the Weberian concern that scientific and managerial rationalism was driving a "disenchantment of the world," a loss of meaning that impacted on ethics [2, 21], doctors feared that science was eradicating the 'art' of medicine. This 'art' was ill-defined; it joined clinical judgment to wisdom in patient relations [3, 38, 43]. The medical humanities as a designated field first appeared in late twentieth century America, where medical trainers prescribed the humanities and creative arts as a necessary supplement to technical medical education, which offered little preparation for the emotion and meaning that are intrinsic to encountering illness [4, 5], tended to reduce patients to the numbers and body parts of biomedical diagnosis, and subject the sick to the uncaring managerial rationalities of health-care systems [8, 9, 23, 24]. Since then, the field has been oriented to pedagogical and clinical practices, its content focused on the experience of illness and disability, suffering and death, and on the cultivation of humanistic relationships within healthcare. The field is not defined by clear conceptual frameworks or methodologies, apart from productive research on narrative and illnesses [5, 13, 23, 46].

Art is prominent in the medical humanities, which overlaps, but is not quite the same as, the contemporaneous and equally burgeoning 'arts and health' movement worldwide. Arts and health is significantly more heterogenous, and makes broader claims about 'wellbeing' [12, 42]. Analysing these lies beyond this chapter. Regardless of the positioning of the two fields, the groundswell of support that the arts have received in health and medicine in recent years—flourishing despite increasingly tough economic conditions, and expanding rapidly in the developing world—is indicative of the enthusiasm of health care professionals and patients alike, and there is now a large body of community-based artwork available for training and professional development.

Like any field, medical humanities is marked by dominant discourses (if not paradigms), including, at present, some about art. These presumably reflect the outlook of those who constructed the field in its initial phase, often clinicians of a common generation and educational background [43]. 'Art' in the medical humanities has almost exclusively referred to the traditional fine arts, also including literature and informal narrative and creative writing. A lot of art is absent: the absurd, the avant-garde, performance art, large quantities of multimedia art and popular culture. Much humanities scholarship has been absent from the field too (presumably the result of limited time and resources), most notably that arising from critical theory, semiotics and Continental philosophy. Big questions (Weberian disenchantment, for example; or the value of the Western 'canon') are implicit, but are as yet little examined.

19.2 The Benefits Ascribed to the Arts in the Medical Humanities

In the medical humanities, art (understood inclusively as all practices so-called, and certainly of creative writing and performance) is generally regarded as a good thing. Without having theorised it explicitly, there is basic agreement that: art is a basic human capacity, perhaps also a fundamental human need; that art offers extraordinary potential for learning, relating, and communicating [15]; and that art greatly increases individual and community well-being [12, 42]. For the purposes of this chapter, I am happy to accept these propositions along with Dissanayake's definition of art as the creative capacity to make things 'special', the use of skill and imagination to produce aesthetic objects, environments and experiences. It is logical to consider art as the ethical equivalent of language: a capacity so fundamental as to be simply part of who we are [15].

This nonetheless leaves a lot of room for a more complex and ethically troublesome set of particulars. In the medical humanities, art is treated more as a practical instrument for improving healthcare practice in specific ways. There are four central rationales for art in healthcare practice:

Art as an Aid to Understanding Patient Experience Art gives healthcare workers an insight into the experience of illness, physical change or impairment [14, 37]. Art reminds the clinician that the meanings attached to illness and disability may hold as much pain and/or have as much or more impact for a patient as physical suffering, and in some ways may even *constitute* the physical aspects of illness.

Art as a Means of Cultivating Empathy and Ethics in Healthcare The insight into patient experience that art provides, with the complexity of nuance and sensibility that art alone can convey, will together develop compassion and empathy in practitioners. This will increase doctors' ability to treat emotional or psychological distress alongside physical problems, increase patient compliance with prescribed treatment by suiting treatment to a patient's emotional needs, and be foundational for productive therapeutic relating [10, 16, 18, 28, 30]. It will motivate doctors to behave ethically; they can also use art to rehearse real-life ethical challenges and to cultivate 'reflective practice' [16].

Art as a Means of Sharpening Cognitive Capacity Skills in communicating, critical thinking, history taking and cultural competency may be sharpened through the insights and intellectual challenges of art [16, 19]. 'Narrative competence,' including recognising the metaphoric basis of many concepts about illness and disease, is promoted as a primary skill for all healthcare workers [10, 18].

Art as a Mode of Therapeutic Self-Expression Creating art affords patients the capacity to explore their own suffering, illness or disability. This expressiveness offers therapeutic catharsis and allows the sufferer to challenge biomedical or socially discriminatory ways of defining them and their illness [14, 32]. This may enable

patients to reclaim dignity, identity and autonomy that have been eroded by illness and the constraints imposed in institutionalisation [11, 35].

To these four instrumentalisations of art in medical humanities, we might add a fifth benefit, which, while oriented towards these practical and political goals, extends beyond them. We might say, broadly, that art offers a *general* form of resistance to the world of late modern medicine and healthcare: to the distancing and disenchantments of scientific, highly technologised medicine and the perpetual anti-humanistic rationalisations of healthcare systems and bureaucracies [9]. Art can be valued on existential grounds, as a way back into existential living and appreciation, an orientation towards the world described as open-mindedness, enrichment and re-enchantment, a critical part of phronesis [3, 5, 10, 46]. This is felt profoundly as an ethical good.

Yet, as alluring and persuasive as these claims sound—all the more so for being clearly heartfelt, the evidence of personal experience being hard to ignore—can we place much reliance on them? Or are they merely wishful projections from those who have found pleasure in art-and-health experiences? One problem is that the medical humanities can as yet offer neither a coherent theoretical foundation to such claims nor an empirical one in the form of sufficiently rich or rigorous evidence. Aside from the literature theorising narrative as intrinsic to illness experience [18, 28] and to medicine itself [10, 46], there is no systematic account for the relationship between art and ethics within the medical humanities. So as a first step let me suggest one—that of Martha Nussbaum.

19.3 Nussbaum/Charon: A Model for Art and Ethics in Medicine and Healthcare

Though she receives surprisingly little explicit discussion in the field, Martha Nussbaum's account of art and moral living so perfectly fits the concerns and articles of faith within the medical humanities that it is as if she had designed a philosophical foundation especially for it. We can see this concordance in her focus on art and literature, on love and reflection, and on everyday life in her version of what it means to be ethical [33, 34].

Nussbaum's is an ethic of love rather than reason, at least narrowly defined. She insists on the ethical value of emotion and imagination, and the priority of perceptions and of the particular [25]. She proposes that our capacity to make good moral judgments is dependent on our ability to grasp a situation in its complex wholeness, and to be able to discern the qualities and inter-relationships that inhere in it. We must do this with fairness and sympathy, viewing the situation on its own terms. This stance fits with the insistence within the medical humanities that the subjective, emotional judgments and choices made by patients—differing from or even objecting to the scientific, rational determinations of biomedicine—have ethical importance

and validity, and the demand that doctors 'see' and appreciate patients within the complex, emotionally-charged and uniquely particular circumstances in which they find themselves [10, 16].

Nussbaum takes all of the nuances, intimacies, and moment-to-moment specificities of human relating to be at the centre of ethical concerns. She sees our moral task as constantly attempting to be "richly responsible" as embodied, emotional and relational beings [34]. This has immediate relevance for doctors and other carers, who, in the view of the medical humanities, bear enormous ethical responsibility in their relating to patients, because physical impairments are frequently accompanied by profound existential and emotional needs. Nussbaum argues for the 'incommensurability' of different valuable things. Similarly, the medical humanities would draw attention to incommensurabilities between physical and emotional/existential value, for example, when treatment advocated by doctors to secure the former seems to the patient to unbearably erode the latter. Nussbaum's emphasis on the ethical significance of contingency and possibility is promising though as yet unused in the medical humanities: this could help make sense of patient and practitioner feelings and choices in the face of the many uncertainties of medical practice.

It is easy to follow Nussbaum in seeing art, and above all, literature, as a fundamental and necessary medium for cultivating this form of ethical living. Art reveals how "moral communication … partakes both of the specificity and of the emotional and imaginative richness of [a character's] individual moral effort" [34]. Literary writing can encompass the detail, irreducible complexities and contextuality of a situation, and convey the inseparability of fact and value—each description is also an appreciation [25]. This kind of writing needs to be fair, loving and generous towards its subject: it must enact the ethics it proposes, and enlist the reader in this loving perception. Literature constructs the kind of consciousness about the world that best reveals it [25]. In Nussbaum's words—a writerly expression embodying the "fine attention and rich responsibility" that she sees as our ethical task—"[s]tories cultivate our ability to see and care for particulars, not as representatives of a law, but as what they themselves are: to respond vigorously with senses and emotions before the new, to care deeply about chance happenings in the world … and to be bewildered—to wait and float and be actively passive" [34]. Nussbaum metaphorically assigns a social role to express the ethical capacities of literature: she describes it as acting "like a friend" to us—supporting us, leading us into understanding of others, and cultivating our love [34]. Howard Brody has likewise, and independently, conceived the medical humanities as playing this role of 'friend'—a conception that in turn echoes Sir William Osler, who described the classical humanities relating thus to doctors a century earlier [3, 5].

Works on narrative medicine, for example Rita Charon's eponymous and foundational book, often read like Nussbaum's model put into practical action [10]. Like Nussbaum, Charon's goal is to have doctors relate to patients with a rich, loving responsibility that can only emerge from the capacity to finely perceive the patient honestly, fairly, generously, and on their own terms, and to have an affective response

to them—in her words, to be moved by them. For Charon this goal can be fully realised only by listening to patient narratives and through creative and reflective writing, by these means cultivating 'moral attention' as the primary component of an ethical and productive therapeutic relationship. Her account is prompted by and fits with patients' repeated insistence that their doctors act also as witnesses to their pains, struggles, and existential challenges [6], and is made highly persuasive by her entertaining and moving anecdotes of therapeutic accomplishment that arise as a result of her methods.

Many health care professionals have taken up Charon's instrumentalised program for cultivating this fine moral sensibility—narrative medicine—with enthusiasm and success. Yet as any teacher in a medical humanities program knows, the Nussbaum/Charon model leaves many students cold. This is not because they are self-serving unethical people [29]. A cultural gap, or perhaps many, exists between Nussbaum's generation of educated professionals and those of the contemporary, fractured, media-riven and globalised health care marketplace. This model of art-as-ethical-cultivator is culturally, aesthetically and ethically limited, and simply does not fit their knowledge or their experience. It is limited by its moral realism, its social norms, its assumptions about audience response, and its own aesthetic qualities.

19.4   Criticisms of Nussbaum/Charon

To many, the view that art cultivates empathy and prompts morally grounded self-reflection and hence results in improvements in ethical conduct in its audiences is absurd. There is very limited (if any) evidence to suggest that teaching people about art and literature does anything other than improve their knowledge of art and literature, or that even *if* art in fact does generate empathic sentiments, that this will result in ethical *actions* [20, 26]. The atrocities committed by a range of 'culture'-loving arts-supporting doctors in various notorious and appalling historical contexts (Nazi Germany comes to mind) should put that hope to rest.

Art in the medical humanities, therefore, is not merely about empathy, just as the literature of Nussbaum's philosophy cannot only be about ethics. Both are also about cultural hegemony. Nussbaum's philosophy of literature and ethics is constructed exclusively from works in the Western canon. (Indeed, her philosophy could be read as an updated and more sophisticated defense of the canon [31]). In the medical humanities, similarly, almost all pedagogy and writing is about 'high culture' works of visual art—chiefly, European painting and sculpture—and literature, mixed with a small set of similar contemporary works chosen to represent certain diseases or dilemmas [4, 22]. This presents us with very different ethical considerations. Hegemonic cultural forms silence or marginalise the socially disempowered. In the medical humanities this might mean that particular kinds of emotion—grief, sacrifice, resolution—particular concepts—empathy, autonomy, illness, depression—and particular forms of personhood—disciplined, self-improving—become naturalised and present

themselves as intuitive and authentic, excluding or delegitimating other ways of being [7, 46]. This impacts on how doctors perceive, construct and respond to 'good' or 'heartsink' or 'crock' patients [1]. As Terry Eagleton has pointed out, cultures instantiate values and ethical habits as aesthetic preferences. This allows for judgments to be made swiftly and intuitively, as a result of a "sheer quick feel". Thus, "moral-ideological imperatives infiltrate the very textures of lived experience as tact and know-how, intuitive good sense or inbred decorum" [17]. This implies that what a doctor sees as 'phronesis' or 'humanity' in their relations with patients, might from a different perspective seem normative, implying and extending the moral and social ideals of the educated elite.

One way of confronting this is to be aware of it. But in the medical humanities, very little attention is paid to the constructedness of both experience itself, and of how experience is represented in art (beyond noting metaphor and perhaps, in art-appreciation mode, other literary or artistic devices). Because of the ethical impetus to empower patients in the face of both their own suffering and the epistemological and social power of biomedicine, art produced by patients goes unquestioned. Debates about genre or the definition of art, for example, have been virtually non-existent in favour of an anything-goes supportive stance that seeks, in the first instance, to do justice to and to validate the concerns of its suffering creators. Such works are unproblematically treated as 'revealing' the 'experience' of illness. But, as several scholars have pointed out, to give these works such epistemological privilege is problematic, and not only because we risk taking the persuasively-written account of one particular, highly articulate and talented sufferer as definitive of all patients with that condition. Narratives are representations still, formed from the conceptual material and social context of the narrator, and constructed to impose coherence and meaning on a situation or set of events [46]. They cannot tell us what an experience was 'really like', because they construct that experience in the process of representing it [39].

Nussbaum's moral realism is likewise troublesome: while art and literature may indeed attune us to the complexity and fine detail of a person and situation, that does not mean that we do, or can, grasp how things or people *really are*, or lovingly perceive them on *their own terms* (which is not quite the same thing, though the two are sometimes conflated) [25]. The claims of narrative medicine practitioners to reveal the 'real' concerns of patients is even alarming, since, whilst undoubtedly speaking to authentic and productive moments of learning and insight, they reinstate the epistemological authority of the physician and ignore how much we all, patients and health care workers, construct and reconstruct our sense of self, our memories, our feelings and perceptions, and how much an apparently coherent narrative is the result of this process of co-construction [46].

I empathise with the doctor (or other) reader who, after having read a novel or viewed a painting about illness, is flooded with feelings of sympathy and concern, and (even more persuasively) of enlightenment and understanding of a situation for which they have no reference point in their own experience. To ask this reader to coldly question their most intuitive gut-level gestalt of the meanings of personhood, struggle and transcendence within it feels destructive. Instead we as audience

comply with—and not merely comply, but give ourselves to—the normative emotional and aesthetic register offered us in the Nussbaum/Charon model. For this model is committed to certain aesthetics in both art and audience response to art: moral engagement, sympathy, uplift, inspiration, close attention, rich responsibility, love and the rest, and it is these that secure a consensual hegemony. "Paradoxically, it is in the most apparently frail, private and intangible of our feelings that we blend most harmoniously with one another," Eagleton reminds us, and adds, in a statement that ought to be particularly barbed for the medical humanities (which loves its George Eliot, its Tolstoy, its Checkov, its William Carlos Williams), that "if one wanted to give a name to the single most important … instrument of the kind of hegemony in question, one which never ceases to grasp universal reason in concretely particular style, uniting within its own depth an economy of abstract form with the effect of spontaneous experience, one might do worse than propose the realist novel" [17]. Such things as a sadomasochistic thriller film, or a suspension performance, just don't work the same way, yet they too can be—can't they?—art.

19.5 Postmodern Approaches and Their Limitations

To the naïve model of art as a sensitising force, 'critical,' 'postmodern' and 'cultural studies' scholarship offers a contrary ethical project: to decode the systems of meaning and power that operate within, on and through them and identify how they function as mechanisms for social reproduction [31, 45]. Eagleton's critique of aesthetic as ideology is just one of many in this vein. As I have indicated above, this project is ethically important for the way we approach art in health and medicine. It could be intellectually productive too. One can immediately envision pedagogic and scholastic opportunities: for exploring Otherness and abjection (e.g. for research on obesity and aging), questioning narrative coherence and the nature of suffering, querying the construction of ideal death in palliative care and perhaps facing instead an existential abyss, deconstructing the visual cultures of health and health promotion, jettisoning foundational concepts such as empathy, dignity and autonomy and reworking them in the dangerous, slippery and unstable modes of social co-production [36].

We must not forget, though, that this sort of 'postmodern' scholarship has its own normative stances, language, aesthetics and affectivity. In some ways, it is dedicatedly and normatively *anti-aesthetic* and ruthlessly cerebral: its language and presentation notoriously elitist [45]. Unlike the Nussbaum/Charon model, in which emotion, 'being moved by' art, is a key feature of its ethical utility, a lot of postmodern scholarship normalises a form of self-questioning that aims precisely to get in the road of emotional and aesthetic responses, doubting them, as Eagleton does, as sneaky forms of cultivated cultural hegemony. If the ideal ethical audience in Nussbaum/Charon is loving and uplifted, the ideal ethical audience discursively constructed by postmodern scholarship is a mind that distrusts and disrupts such sensibilities. This risks an aggressive repression of the private and affective in

favour of the public and the rational—an ironic reproduction of one of the most foundational polarities of bourgeois social practice [17, 45].

I would argue (cheekily) that in fact this scholarship embodies a 'return of the repressed,' in this case, aesthetics. Postmodernism has its own aesthetic preferences: those of troubling, destabilisation, disruption, transgression, rupture, fragmentation. Art is constructed as having a deliberately troubled and sometimes hostile relationship with its audiences: unsettling, obstructing, confusing, abstracting, unresolved and sometimes, if not exactly requiring, at least involved in a co-dependent relationship with wordy, theoretical exposition. (Think performance artists, body modifiers, and other soma-technicians such as Orlan, interrogators of body politics like Cindy Sherman, online multimedia artists, for example, Melinda Cooper, and multiple genres of noir, black/blue/insult and surreal comedic, cult and arthouse filmography, all virtually absent from the medical humanities.)

Such artworks, and such an aesthetics of disturbance, may or may not provide a better connection with contemporary student doctors and health workers than the Western canon and the humanist traditions embodied in Nussbaum/Charon. But privileging the destruction of our self-assurance can be almost as problematic as the oblivious and egocentric assumptions of middle class universalism they challenged. To insist that art should be disturbing, wounding, and destabilising, or to claim that its ethical achievements are always thus accomplished, would be unsatisfactory. Such aesthetic norms risk alienating audiences from their ethical project and its intended objects, for example by failing to engage productively with the pleasure people take in art [17, 45]. They emphasise the fragility, the reproduction of social power, of emotional/aesthetic response to art, but not its productive capacity for sharing and connecting: the marvel that "consensual intersubjectivity can be found installed in the very inwardness of the subject" [17, 45].

19.6   Conclusion

I have cast this essay (over-simplying for the purpose, of course) in terms of two different approaches that might be used to ground an ethics of art in medicine: one, vested in romantic and humanistic traditions, and the other, in critical, semiotic and postmodern traditions. Each has different aesthetic, artistic and emotional preferences as intrinsic parts of their approaches to ethics.

The two are opposed on fundamental issues (e.g. epistemology) in ways that limit our capacity to combine them in a productive, dialectic tension. Nonetheless, each may find it possible to import some elements from the other to augment or temper its projects. Examining the productive possibilities of both is work for the future. The medical humanities, with its urgent requirement to meet the real-life needs of the suffering and the dying, provides a primary site for this work, a test ground for big academic arguments about the ethics of literature, the value of the Western canon, the role of the humanities in public life and the relationship between aesthetics and cultural studies. And of course the medical humanities has much to

gain from this work also, in particular, from adding formal and scholastic analytic tools to its current repertoire of intuition and sensitisation. For example, approaching art as something constructed certainly offers new opportunities for negotiating moment-by-moment the emotional and existential in illness and health, for disrupting but also reaffirming the roles of doctor, carer and patient, knower and knowing. Similarly, Nussbaum's account of the sophisticated, nuanced, and cultivated complexities of fine-grained moral attention—as represented in 'high culture' art—provides a rich conceptual basis for a contemporary approach to phronesis in medical practice. It's not clear what happens to sympathy or empathy, but perhaps they may be reconfigured as responsible (ethical) engagement and collaboration with Others—or perhaps this may come at too great a cost of our investment in shared feeling [36].

The two approaches have two commonalities that indicate something more general about the value of art. Firstly both approaches emphasise questioning, indeed self-questioning, as central to the ethical value of art. Secondly, both link pleasure to the knowing that is derived from art. The models are epistemically opposed, but both accord art a significant 'truth value', one more convincing, sometimes, than reason or empiricism. From this we may infer that it is indeed art's capacity for complexity and for importing novelty in representing things that makes it compelling, and that such growth in our understanding underlies any capacity for ethical response. We should remember, too, that academic discussion itself misses the mark on some level. Analysing art in one genre cannot define it. Treating art instrumentally, as a thing that confers ethical benefit, is to fail to capture what we value in it.

Perhaps Dissanayake is right. Art may be friend or jackanapes, divine fire or self-indulgence or anything else: maybe it's just being momentarily special that is so good.

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Chapter 20
The Songs of Spring: Quest Myths, Metaphors, and Medical Progress

George J. Annas

In his ode 'To Autumn' Keats asks, "Where are the songs of Spring?" He then quickly counsels Autumn to "Think not of them, thou hast thy music too …" Keats' poem can be read as a celebration of aging (or even dying). Autumn certainly does have its charms, but we can enjoy them primarily because Autumn itself signals not only the coming end of the year, but also the promise that it will be followed by yet another. We all understand that we are mortal, but refuse to accept death (or even Autumn) as inevitable.

Modern medical research and mass marketing conspire to enable Americans to deny death by suggesting that researchers may yet discover a medical 'fountain of youth.' Even if the fountain cannot enable immortality, the suggestion is that it will at least be able to postpone death for a very long time. Medical progress itself is now measured almost exclusively by longevity—in terms of both overall life expectancy, but also in terms of survival rates following treatment for disease. Quantity of life continues to be relentlessly pursued and privileged over quality of life. The focus on increasing longevity in medical research is enabled, and even encouraged, by the arts—including classic story telling methods, including use of the quest myth, and the creative use of metaphor.[1]

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[1] In this chapter I continue with what has become a series of essays on the role of metaphors, stories, and myths on health care reform and medical research in America. The first in the series, written in the mid-1990s, relies heavily on Susan Sontag's work. It explores our reliance on the military metaphor in medicine (in the context of the defeat of the Clinton Health Plan) and the political attempt to replace it with the market metaphor. Among other things, I argued that a new ecological metaphor would be more sustainable and patient-friendly [4]. During the debate over the Affordable Care Act, I revisited the topic of the role of medical metaphors in policy making to explore the way President Obama used stories of real people to promote his healthcare plan, and the way commentators used death and destruction metaphors to frame our health care system [2].

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In this chapter I examine the application of the quest myth and related metaphors to the most celebrated medical research project of the past two decades, the human genome project, and the ongoing attempt to 'translate' genomics into clinical medicine, commonly termed 'personalised medicine.' My modest goal is to illustrate how the quest narrative can make even out of control, and extraordinarily expensive quests seem much more reasonable and supportable in theory than they are likely to be in practice.

20.1 Genomic 'Personalised' Medicine

Personalised medicine, medicine tailor-made for each individual patient, has as its premise the belief that an individual's unique genome determines (at least probabilistically) the way the individual will respond to specific drugs, diets, exercise regimes, and other treatment or risk reduction strategies. The goal is often stated as replacing 'one size fits all' medicine with 'the right drug, for the right patient, at the right time.' The most prominent metaphor is to use the individual's DNA, the 'blueprint of life,' to 'tailor' treatment regimes that are most likely to lead to successful treatment—measured in increased length of life, sometimes simply termed 'saving lives'[1]. The dream of personalised medicine is largely powered by the successes of the personal computer and the smartphone. Can technology do the same for genome testing by driving down the price and improving the accuracy and speed? At the time of writing the answer is *maybe*. As explained by an information technologist, "For all of human history, humans have not had the readout of the software [the genome] that makes them alive. Once you make the transition from a data poor to a data rich environment, everything changes" [8]. So there is a parallel technological quest, as the *New York Times* suggested in its headline for an article about new genome sequencing machines, to "break the gene barrier" [10].

This quest to cross the gene barrier, of course, immediately suggests the successful quest to break the sound barrier, and even the successful quest to put a man on the moon. President Clinton announced the completion of the first draft of the

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The two other essays in this series have been focused on medical research. One, also written in the mid-1990s, uses Tennyson's poem, 'The Holy Grail,' as an example of a quest that has direct application to our medical research agenda. I concluded that, "Our quest for the Holy Grail of medicine (immortality?), as honorable as it is in theory, can become destructive in practice" [3]. This destructive force is, I think, most notable in general terms by encouraging Americans to demand experimentation as treatment, and in specific terms by encouraging terminally ill patients and their physicians to see novel experiments as a way to avoid discussions of death. A more recent essay, written shortly after passage of the 2010 Affordable Care Act, relied heavily on W.H. Auden's list of the "essential elements" of a typical quest story (a precious object, a long journey, a hero, a series of tests, guardians to be overcome, and helps who assist the hero to gain the precious object). I observed that "The quest narrative, paired with stories of very sick and dying patients, has had a profound effect on the way we package and sell medical research in the United States," and suggested that we will have to deploy more than quest narratives in the political arena if "we want to create a sustainable and equitable health care system in the United States" [1].

human genome at a White House event featuring both Francis Collins and Craig Venter in 2000 [16]. What has been most commented on is the President's comparison of the map of the American frontier that Meriwether Lewis prepared for Thomas Jefferson, with the 'map' of the human genome, which President Clinton termed "the most important, most wondrous map ever produced by human kind." Perhaps he can be forgiven for his over-the-top rhetoric in referring to the code as "the language in which God created life." But Clinton also knew what the public was likely to be interested in:

> With this profound new knowledge, humankind is on the verge of gaining immense new power to heal. *Genome science* will have a real impact on all our lives and even more on the lives of our children. It *will revolutionize the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of most, if not all, human diseases.* In coming years, doctors increasingly will be able to *cure diseases* like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, diabetes and cancer by attacking their genetic roots … In fact, *it is now conceivable that our children's children will know the term 'cancer' only as a constellation of stars* [16]. (Emphasis added.)

The precious prize at the end of this quest is the abolition of disease. But when Clinton went off script at the end of the press conference, he reverted to the (American) dream of a longer life: "When we get all this worked out and we're all living to be 150 … young people will still fall in love and old people will still fight about things that should have been resolved 50 years ago …" President Clinton can, of course, be forgiven for speaking directly to the public and exaggerating the potential payoff of his federal program. But Francis Collins, the leader of the federal program (he prefers military metaphors, describing himself as the 'field marshall' of the genome project) was just as extravagant when talking about the project to scientists assembled at Cold Spring Harbor just a few months later:

> We have been engaged in a *historic adventure*. Whether your metaphor is Neil Armstrong or Lewis and Clark, *your metaphor is at risk of falling short.* There is no question that *the enterprise* we have gathered here to discuss will change our concepts of human biology, our approach to health and disease, and our view of ourselves. This is the moment, the time when the majority of the human genome sequence, some 85 per cent of it, looms into view. *You will remember this.* You will tell your future graduate students, perhaps even your future grandchildren, that you sat, stood, or sprawled in Grace Auditorium, in the presence of *the intellectual giants of genomics* that fill this hall right now, and of Jim Watson himself, and reflected upon this *astounding time in our history* [5]. (Emphasis added.)

Although the genome quest is to cure all diseases and lengthen life, there is one constellation of diseases that outranks all others, as President Clinton suggested: cancer. Nor was Clinton alone in highlighting cancer at the 2000 White House genome ceremony. In the only specific case he talked about, Francis Collins described attending the funeral of "my beloved sister-in-law" (the day before) who "died much too soon of breast cancer." He continued, "The hope and promise of understanding all of the genes in the genome and applying this knowledge to the development of powerful new tools came just too late for her" [16]. Craig Venter, in his presentation, went further, noting that the genome sequence represented a "new starting point for science and medicine" with the potential to impact every disease. But cancer was the disease on his mind in saying that, "each day approximately 2,000 die in America from cancer. As a consequence of the genome efforts … and

the research catalyzed by this information, there's at least the potential to reduce the number of cancer deaths to zero during our lifetimes" [16]. It was, of course, Richard Nixon who launched America's 'war on cancer' more than 40 years ago. A decade after the White House genome ceremony, Francis Collins has begun the process of modifying the military war on cancer metaphor described so well by Susan Sontag, to a less ambitious police metaphor:

> Coming like a *thief in the night*, this culprit [cancer] regularly steals away hopes for a long and happy life … But the effort to *catch and convict the culprits* is rapidly gaining ground. The ability to search the genome for both hereditary and acquired mutations provides us with an increasingly precise picture of how these '*genes gone bad'* carry out their *dastardly deeds.* And learning their *MO* provides us with the opportunity to thwart their attacks in much more effective ways, including efforts to *prevent the crime* rather than trying to clean up the mess afterward … '*law and order'* is now a real possibility [5]. (Emphasis added.)

Following the destructive war in Iraq waged on the basis of false information, and the continuing disaster in Afghanistan, it is no wonder that there are attempts to displace the military metaphor in medical research. Nonetheless, with the US now having more of its citizens in prison than any other country in the world (both numerically and per capita), it is difficult to see how this metaphor will inspire the public more than the military metaphor. Perhaps the suggestion is the hybrid 'war on terror,' with cancer in the role of terrorist, and the researcher in the role of protector. In fact the prospect of a flu pandemic in 2012 led directly to a bioterrorism/epidemic merger, with flu studies of transmissibility being temporarily labeled "top secret" so that the results would not fall into the hands of terrorists who might use them to develop a new bioweapon. Of course, seeing medical research as advancing the effectiveness of bioterror weapons is an example of a negative quest narrative.

20.2   The Little Prince's Anti-quest

Francis Collins also deploys stories (in the science fiction genre) to help explain both why the quest for personalised medicine is slower than he, Venter, and Clinton had predicted, and what the future could still hold should he continue the quest. For example, he concludes his 2009 book, *The Language of Life*, with a chapter entitled 'A Vision for the Future.' In it he twice quotes Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the author of *The Little Prince* (which Collins says is "one of my favorite books when I was a child"), "As for the future, your task is not to foresee, but to enable it" [5]. But the stories he tells are of most interest. The first story is about a little girl named Hope who was born on New Year's Day, 2000. When she was 20, her favorite uncle died at age 48 of a heart attack. Hope decided to do a complete family history, supplemented with a complete genome analysis (which cost only $300 in 2020). With the assistance of her physician, she learned she was a carrier for cystic fibrosis (CF), and was a higher risk than average for breast cancer and high blood pressure, and at three times the normal risk of a heart attack. These findings motivated her to pay more attention to diet and exercise.

Five years later she met George, who after their engagement agreed to have his own genome analyzed. He was normal for CF, but at higher risk for obesity and colon cancer. When, 3 years later, they decided to start a family, they did not employ preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), but did have a complete genome screen done on their newborn son, Raymond, aka "Ray of Hope." Ray turned out to be extremely predisposed to obesity (60 % probability), and a specific diet with reduced fats and calories was designed for him. By 2035 "all three members of this little nuclear family were doing well." In 2045 George underwent an exam for colon polyps, which were found and removed. "As the years passed, the potential for extending the human life span grew. Hope and George began to explore the possibility of taking a new drug that had just been approved for that purpose" [5].

When Hope was 68 she had a heart attack; but the emergency medical technician who responded to the emergency call was able to immediately institute "the proper drug treatment" to save her life because he had access to her genome sequence. The following year George, now 70, developed early signs of Parkinson disease. His physicians used one of his skin cells to grow new neuronal cells to insert into his brain to reverse the disease. In 2100 Hope celebrated her hundredth birthday and she and George their 75th wedding anniversary with their family wishing them "well for many more years to come" [5].

This 'dream' scenario is immediately contrasted with a 'nightmare' scenario, in which little patient educational material is available and genomic screening is discouraged, so nothing is done after her uncle dies of a heart attack. Hope still meets George and they have a son; but he is seriously obese by age 6 and remains so for the rest of his life. Hope herself develops hypertension by age 35. When she has her heart attack at age 50, it goes unrecognised in the emergency department and she dies. Her son is now morbidly obese, and George is unaware that his undiagnosed colon cancer is about to spread to his liver. Collins concludes: "What a grim scenario! Sadly for us all, this disappointing outcome could still happen. Yes, *medical science, built upon ever-increasing knowledge of the human genome, is poised to deliver substantial medical benefits in the coming years*. Good science is necessary but not sufficient—it will take the full engagement of researchers, governments, health care providers, and the general public to avoid this depressing alternative" [5]. (Emphasis added.) The book ends with a two paragraph "final exhortation." The first paragraph begins by repeating the quotation by Saint-Exupéry: "As for the future, your task is not to foresee, but to enable it." This is followed by a plea to readers to help enable his personalised medicine quest: "For the future of personalized medicine, this exhortation is not just for the scientific community, or the medical community, or the government—it is for each of us. The success of personalized medicine will come about only when we each take responsibility for our health" [5].

Using Saint-Exupéry's *The Wisdom of the Sands* as a guide to medical research is of interest. The book is a strange and rambling meditation on life and leadership by an imaginary king of a desert empire. What the king means by "enabling the future" is to ignore it, and work only in the present. The king explains himself in the paragraph before the quotation: "Then, you may ask me, whereto must I shape my course—since goals are meaningless? And I would answer you by imparting

that pregnant secret, hidden under simple, common words, which I have learned little by little in the course of my life: to wit, that preparing the future is but establishing the present. *Those who are forever pursing phantoms of the mind, bred of their imagination, do but fritter themselves away in utopian dreams and vain conceits*. For the true use of the future is to decipher the present" [13, pp. 154–155]. (Emphasis added.)

Of interest is that this view can be seen as an anti-quest view—instead of working toward some imagined, wonderful future, the goal is to concentrate solely on the present. Or, as Saint-Exupéry puts it himself (more eloquently and directly): "all true creation is not a prejudgment of the Future, not a quest of utopian chimeras, but the apprehending of a new aspect of the Present, which is a heap of raw materials bequeathed by the Past" [13, p. 155]. The major metaphor Saint-Exupéry himself uses is that of a gardener who "enables the future" by planting seeds and tending to his garden.

Collins may be on firmer ground with his illusion to *The Little Prince*, which is much better known and is an explicit work of the imagination [14]. Without, I think, falling victim to my own imagination, we can see the little prince's request to the narrator to "Draw me a sheep" as a demand to enable the future by creating something in the present. In the story the little prince is not happy with any of the pictures the narrator draws (just as the grownups were never happy with the drawings he made when he was a child). Instead, it is only when the narrator draws a box and tells the little prince that his sheep is inside of it that the little prince is satisfied: "That's just the kind I wanted" [11].

Perhaps we are like Goldilocks tasting porridge, and searching for one that is not too hot, not too cold, but "just right." Unlike Goldilocks, however, we know at some level that we will never find what we are searching for, but nonetheless believe that the quest itself is intrinsically worthwhile. Or, as the fox tells the little prince in words that could be applied to the leader of the human genome project: "Anything essential is invisible to the eyes … It's the time you spend on your rose that makes your rose important" [12, p. 64].

20.3   Stories About People Who Need Healthcare

The quest for personalized (also called genomic medicine) medicine will mean little to most Americans if we are unable to radically reform our health care system, first by making it available to all, and secondly by controlling costs (and, less discussed, improving quality). The 'quest' for a robust national health insurance scheme with access for all has been painful [15]. The results, as passed in legislation known as the Affordable Care Act (ACA), are still in doubt, especially following the oral arguments at the US Supreme Court regarding the law's constitutionality in March 2012. At the argument stage it became clear that at least five of the Justices wanted the US to suggest a 'limiting principle' that would allow the Court to find the Act constitutional under the Commerce Clause, but would not commit the Court to

finding any other federal requirement that Americans purchase a private product. The argument—including appeals to slippery slopes leading to mandatory purchases of broccoli, cell phones, burial insurance, and even certain kinds of automobiles— was more illuminating in showing the commitment to the market as a solution to health insurance coverage than any legal principles. Nonetheless, I believe that the government's constitutional arguments were just too abstract to defend the constitutional challenge to the ACA. A clear limiting principle is what the Justices wanted, and it was a mistake not to provide one in the administration's briefs. In the absence of a limiting principle, the uniqueness of the American health care system could be argued best, I think, by illustrating the negative impact of the current dysfunctional health care system on the lives of tens of millions of Americans, and explaining how the mandate makes guaranteed issue of health insurance (regardless of existing health problems) possible, and thus will change their lives for the better. In short, what may have been needed to make the quest for a national health insurance scheme successful (at least for now) is stories.

In electoral politics this is, of course, not controversial. Both President Obama and then Senator Hillary Clinton, for example, recognised the power of individual stories of people whose lives had been dramatically and negatively affected by our current nonsystem on the 2008 campaign trail [2]. And after his election, President Obama continued to rely on the stories of real people, including his mother and grandmother, to support the ACA [1]. It is even fair to say that the law, which just barely survived, would not have been passed at all were it not for the stories told at a White House summit on healthcare hosted by the President. At the summit, stories of individuals and their often heartbreaking interactions with the health care insurance industry greatly outweighed more abstract arguments about cost and "socialized medicine" [1]. Appellate courts are not supposed to care; but in this case at least an attempt should be made to convince them, or at least to convince Justice Anthony Kennedy (the 'swing vote' in a likely 5:4 decision), that they should.[2] Real people did not figure in the oral arguments on the mandate, even as examples to explain how the healthcare market and its financing method, the health insurance market, actually work in the real world.

Nonetheless, at the end of his arguments on the third and final day, in the context of the expanded Medicaid program, and with only a minute or so left in his presentation, Solicitor General Donald Verrilli made the point I think he could have

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[2]This chapter was written after the oral arguments, but before the decision was announced. The Court upheld the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act by a vote of 5:4, but Chief Justice Roberts, not Justice Kennedy, turned out to be the deciding vote. He unsurprisingly led 4 other Justices in ruling that the individual mandate was not authorised by the Commerce Clause, but he surprisingly led the remaining four Justices in ruling that the penalty for not purchasing health insurance could be upheld as a constitutional tax. The portion of the law expanding Medicaid coverage for the poor was seen as coercive, and acceptance of federal funds by the states to expand their Medicaid coverage is now voluntary on the part of the states. Remarkably fiscally, but totally understandably politically, a significant number of states, including Texas and Florida, have refused to take the federal funding to expand their Medicaid programs, which will leave millions of poor people uninsured and threaten the viability of the ACA itself.

usefully led with, that the ACA solves "problems in the economic marketplace that have resulted in millions of people not having health care because they can't afford insurance." Verrilli continued, echoing the health and human rights mantra (that health and human rights are 'inextricably linked') in a country without a 'right to health:'

> There is an important connection, a profound connection between that problem and liberty. And I do think it's important that we not lose sight of that … [because of the Medicaid expansion] there will be millions of people with chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease, and as a result of the health care they will get, they will be unshackled from the disabilities that those diseases put on them and have the opportunity to enjoy the blessings of liberty. And the same will be true for the husband whose wife is diagnosed with breast cancer and who won't face the prospect of being forced into bankruptcy to try to get care for his wife and face the risk of having to raise his children alone, and I can multiply example after example after example [6].

The Solicitor General then aptly and succinctly summarised the administration's case that healthcare is unique, and upholding the ACA does require granting Congress unlimited power (the kind that the states have under their 'police powers') to regulate Americans under the Commerce Clause. How to deal with the national problem of 50 million people with very limited access to healthcare because they have no health insurance is, he concluded, "a judgment of policy that [nonelected, unaccountable, and way right of center, left unsaid] should respect" [6]. This point is very similar to one made by the President a week later when he suggested that it would be "unprecedented" for the Court to overturn a law passed by the elected branches of government after a long and bitter battle.

The Solicitor General may well have tried to drag the tens of millions of uninsured Americans before the Court in an act of desperation. As a general rule, facts should not substitute for arguments about constitutional doctrine. Unfortunately, Constitutional arguments only matter to neutral, nonpolitical, judges. Those adjectives do not describe this Court. In the case of a once-in-a-half-century statute, that was passed to improve the lives and health of real people, to leave the people on the steps of the Supreme Court building was a political, if not a legal, misjudgment. The uninsured people of the US are a necessary, if not sufficient, supplement to constitutional doctrine in the context of a Constitutional challenge to a Congressional attempt to provide access to health care for all. By July 2013 the Affordable Care Act was under vicious attack (again) from Republicans who sought to repeal it. In response, President Obama reverted to the strategy that got him the bill in the first place: telling stories. Specifically, during a press event at the White House with a group of Americans who had already been helped by the ACA, he recounted "the stories of middle-class families arrayed on the stage behind him" [9].

20.4 Competing Stories in American Healthcare

It is too soon to tell how either the quest for personalised medicine or the quest for a universal health insurance program will fare in the US. It is not too soon to predict the future if it is 'enabled' with successes of both of these quests. The future these twin developments will enable is one in which healthcare costs become the central

issue in American healthcare, because by definition using an individual's genome to customise or tailor treatment, especially in the realm of cancer (from which 160,000 Americans continue to die annually), will be crushingly expensive [7, 8]. The dream that even though such treatment will be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars it could turn out to be cheaper than current ineffective radiation, surgery, and chemotherapy seems a complete fairy tale, at least for now [7, 11].

Keats could praise autumn, but Americans are stuck in summer, believing, against all evidence, that "warm days will never cease" and we will live with the "songs of spring" forever, enabled, for now by a quest for a genomic cure for life. It is also likely not irrelevant that Americans see transhumanists as heroes who attempt to vanquish death, even when they create bioweapons as in the best selling book of the summer of 2013, Dan Brown's *Inferno.* Keats accepted both his own death and the limitations of medicine; Americans accept neither and continue their quest for immortality even in the face of overwhelming narratives that tell us that the death rate among humans is 100 %.

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Chapter 21
Art, Place, Climate: Situated Ethics

Ruth Little

> *To me, a potential of art lies in its ability to let us express ourselves*
> *by combining aesthetic reflections with what we could broadly*
> *call 'ethics,' understood as a basic feeling of responsibility*
> *towards other people and the world in which we live.*
>
> Olafur Eliasson [9, p. 80]

In 2001 artist David Buckland established interdisciplinary arts organisation Cape Farewell following dialogue with climate scientists at the Hadley and National Oceanographic Centres in England. The scientists reported that despite persuasive evidence of anthropogenic influence on earth's climate system, scepticism and apathy towards this "quintessential global problem" continued to dominate in the public domain [15, p. 157]. In response, Buckland sought to bring alternative ways of knowing to bear upon the "infinite plasticity" of global climate change and to translate the data and conclusions of climate science into idiomatic and accessible forms of expression [8, p. 28]. The Cape Farewell project aimed to stimulate and sustain an artistic practice which specifically investigated the relationship between human agency and earth's climate systems. The broader aim was to use the affective power of art to influence a transition in cultural response and social behaviour towards greater forbearance, ingenuity and resilience in the context of climate change. Implicit in this approach is the idea of the artist as a "strategic cultural agent acting with full awareness to shift the symbols and metaphors of a culture" [8, p. 29].

In 2003 Buckland embarked on Cape Farewell's first sailing expedition, to Svalbard in the Norwegian High Arctic, with a crew of 20 artists and oceanographers. The expedition initiated an on-going programme of action research based around sailing journeys in fragile environments. In 10 years of oceanographic and

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place-based research and making, over 150 artists have witnessed, recorded and communicated significant changes in summer sea ice cover, glacier movement and ocean temperatures and salinity in the Arctic. The Cape Farewell project, like a growing number of interdisciplinary climate-related art projects around the world, raises the question of what knowledge is necessary to bring about a shift in human values and behaviours, and asks specifically where this knowledge resides. Acknowledging the inefficacy of empirical data alone as a stimulus to change, a loosely networked and growing international movement is investigating the role and responsibility of the individual artist in communicating and influencing social response to changes in earth's climate system and its interdependent biological populations.

The scale of the challenge seems huge. "Climate change," argued visual artist Gary Hume, "is too big for my art." For Buckland and his collaborators, responding to a changing climate demanded shifting the scale of perception from the global to the local, creating palpable contexts within which artists might deepen and extend their knowledge and responses in dialogue with scientists; reflecting, critiquing and refracting research methods, employing material samples and iconographies of data collection, and proffering and provoking reflection and action. Many of the artists, who have joined Cape Farewell expeditions to the high Arctic, Peruvian Amazon and western isles of Scotland since 2003, have extended their languages, methodologies and capacities to engage new participants and find new forms of communication for the 'wicked' problem of anthropogenic climate change. In 2005, Gary Hume created an iconic image of the underbelly of a polar bear, depicting the stylized mammal with hermaphroditic sexual organs. The image was based on observations by scientists of the suspected impact of polybrominated diphenyls (PBDEs) on the sex and thyroid glands, motor and brain function of polar bears.

In 1990, Bill McKibben's *The End of Nature* propelled the phenomenon of global warming into the public sphere. It drew on the science of James Lovelock's Gaia theory, propounded in the 1970s, to argue for the ubiquity of complex adaptive systems on earth and the inefficacy of simple or linear models of natural and social processes. Earth system science, with its roots in chaos and complexity theory—the sciences of change—demonstrates that the outcomes of sustained human intervention in dynamic, non-linear systems are impossible to predict with accuracy. It displaced mechanistic metaphors of natural processes, and introduced the condition of uncertainty and the inevitability of change as fundamental aspects of late twentieth century life.

Climate art developed within this expanded philosophical framework, proposing a new discourse based on the situated ways of knowing offered by both the arts and earth sciences. This "multi-dimensional representation," according to Tom Wakeford, "helps us both understand and emotionally grasp the dynamic nature" of our changing environments [5, p. 90]. Climate art is an extended and emergent practice rooted in place, context and complex systems. Built on fundamental narratives of agency and change, it seeks to engage and re-orientate a participant audience towards specific environments and the consequences of their transformation. It is, either implicitly or explicitly, an ethical and intentional act of research, moral

reflection, and transmission—of warnings, aspirations and values—in which the artist chooses engagement with living contexts while considering the implications of his or her individual actions. Like other place-based enquiries in the second half of the twentieth century—in land, environmental, performance and body art, as well as indigenous art traditions—the immediate challenge made by climate art is to the separation in the gallery or museum of the art object or gesture from its ecological context. Its more radical challenge may be to an understanding of art as ethically neutral and independent of the process by which a work is made.

Climate art pursues a reinvigoration of sensory response in the relationship between the individual and his or her environment. It has evolved within an expanded understanding of the aesthetic (based on the word's origins in the Greek *aisthisis*, perception) as felt, sensory engagement, in specific opposition to that which is *an*aesthetic. It posits perception itself as a form of agency and collaboration with our physical environment and seeks to develop the body's aesthetic tools through immersion in particular contexts. Susan Buck-Morss has argued that twentieth century Western culture and technology is an anaesthetic system, within which the senses are flooded rather than numbed by environmental stimuli [6]. In opposition to this, aesthesis is a process in which the perceiving self and the world coexist in a perpetual subjective loop of connection and cognition.

Sound artist Max Eastley reflected on the relationship between the perceiving individual and the dynamic non-human environment in his recordings of cracking ice on the beaches of western Greenland in 2005. Using wind to vibrate and 'play' a length of cord, or the steel hull of a sailing boat as an amplifier for seal song, Eastley used sound waves of specific frequencies as a material generated by the Arctic and 'wove' these into abstract compositions—kinetic sound sculptures in which music is made by chance rather than design. Many of the artworks created on these expeditions register the incapacity and vulnerability of the individual in the face of environmental dynamism and relentless change. Choreographer Siobhan Davies spoke of her experience of making a 'Walking Dance' on the ice in Svalbard, "I sense a vulnerability. I feel myself as something hot and bloody … So if I find the little bit of warmth I have, I need to protect it. The idea of protection, of care, seems particularly momentous here" [5, p. 88].

To be sensually aware is to be engaged, and so to lose the distinction between self and other selves, between nature and human nature. Perception, thus defined, is a form of attention, or tending to, and implies relationship and so responsibility. Kathleen Soriano, one of the curators of the Royal Academy's 'Earth: Art of a Changing World' exhibition in 2009, the first by a major UK institution to focus specifically on climate change, made clear that "we're not offering information … We wanted people to have an aesthetic response" [7]. Moral responsibility, environmentalists and ecologists have long argued, arises in the energetic and material connection between human action and its environmental consequences. The order imposed on nature for human benefit results in disorder (entropy) elsewhere, and so a climate aesthetic is an aesthetic of implication. The networked flows of river systems and ocean currents, the intricacies of biodiversity and the immense, interwoven impacts of feedback in earth's systems are all disturbed by human activity,

and the art that seeks to explore this complexity and contingency is often a dynamic form of enquiry in which mutual interdependency is reflected both in process and outcome.

In her argument for a greater attention to the 'vitality' of non-human bodies and to the materials and processes of which we are part and which are part of us, philosopher Jane Bennett claims that "there will be no greening of the economy, no redistribution of wealth, no enforcement or extension of rights without human dispositions, moods, cultural ensembles hospitable to these effects" [2, p. xii]. Bennett advocates renewed attention to the energetic flows and interactions of all matter, including human beings, as a means of dissolving the perceptual separation of human nature from the natural world. In this she looks back to the nineteenth century philosophy of vital materialism and forward to a mutualism that acknowledges the constraints placed by non-living agents, including the atomic and chemical components of our oceans and atmosphere, on human 'free' will.

Bennett's attention to the generation of 'cultural ensembles' hospitable to acts of stewardship is echoed by climate scientist Mike Hulme, founder of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Research and Professor of Climate Change at the University of East Anglia. Hulme argues in *Why We Disagree About Climate Change* that "as well as describing a physical reality, climate can also be understood as an imaginative idea—an idea constructed and endowed with meaning and value through cultural practice" [14, p. 14]. Bennett too points out that "the ecological problem is as much a matter of culture and psyche formation as of water management, etc.," and highlights the perpetual feedback between culture and climate in her assertion that culture itself "is not of our own making, infused as it is by biological, geological and climatic forces" [2, p. 115]. The point is clear: human agency is not absolute; it is expressed in the intimacy of the human and the non-human. Climate and culture are interrelated and inseparable phenomena, and a renewed sensory engagement with the 'vibrant matter' of which we are made and in which we are embedded is considered fundamental to the shift in values that must accompany future collaboration with non-human agents.

21.1   Place

Place is the most pervasive of all influences on the psyche. We meet our environment through the senses; our relationship with it is felt, embodied, dynamic, porous and transformative. Connections with place reinforce cultural identity and continuity: "The perceptions and actions of human beings are … tuned to the characteristic shapes and qualities and patterns of behaviour of our own respective natural environments" [17, p. 24]. Land art began to explore this visceral interaction and dynamic relationship in the 1960s, in part in response to the environmental concerns raised in 1962 by Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring* and to the iconic image of our blue planet captured during the first manned earth orbit by Apollo 8 in 1968. To some extent the epic Earthworks of this period "materialize both the social fragmentation of the late 1960s and the era's desire for regeneration through nature" [20, p. 55]. But the

primary concerns of the movement's leading artists such as Robert Smithson and Michael Heizer were formal and material rather than ethical. By the late 1960s, however, more intimate and personal earthworks were being created by artists such as Keith Arnatt and Charles Simonds, and by 'earth body' artists such as Ana Mendieta, suggesting a material and energetic connection between the artist's body and the earth. The perceived and experienced phenomenological environment—the framed, narrated and interpreted context of our lives—began to replace the great inhuman vistas of the early land art projects, and to incorporate the self in a relationship of symbiosis and responsibility for the places we inhabit and encounter.

This ethos has developed in the hands of landscape artists such as Andy Goldsworthy and Chris Drury into a commitment to working with natural materials, with the resources provided by a particular place and the folk knowledge required to manipulate them. Goldsworthy has claimed, "my art is a way of learning … It is collaboration, a meeting point between my own and earth's nature" [20, p. 78]. Much of Goldsworthy's work is left *in situ* to decay, and the emphasis on the transience of both the artwork and the artist marks a shift towards notions of interdependence that characterises much climate art. Goldsworthy's time-based, process-led making has its own eco-logic encouraging a sharper perception of the land, but he denies that his works are intended to be interpreted within an environmentalist or specifically ethical frame. They are, however, poems of place in which the art image or object remains porous to its context, and in which context itself is a material: "Looking, touching, material, place and form are all inseparable from the resulting work. It is difficult to say where one stops and another begins" [12].

By 1980, US conceptual artist Agnes Denes was extending the metaphor of place in her advocacy of a socially-engaged role for the artist in relation to earth's ecological systems and the impacts of human behaviour on them. Often monumental in scale, Denes' works are transformative interventions in both rural and urban landscapes, and they involve collaboration with natural processes and biological cycles. This experience of mutual making becomes central to the contextual or situated climate art which has evolved since the late 1990s.

"The natural world is not only a material resource" writes Rebecca Solnit, "but the source of the metaphors through which we ground our human acts and states" [18, p. 43]. Like much indigenous art, which reflects and recreates "the enriching and dynamic personal stories of experienced human-environmental relationships," place-based art is implicitly 'vital' in its materialism, and its affective qualities may be readily considered to have an ethical dimension [4, p. 38]. A situated aesthetic is a dialogue between artist and place, an embodied perspective which cannot be separated from or oblivious to the ecological functioning of that place. The sites of intervention, including coastlines, island ecologies, ocean currents, and the bodies of threatened species, are often liminal and subject to early and significant transformation as a result of altered climatic conditions. These sites become metonymic: they refer to a broader context, and the field of perception thus extends beyond the immediate to the proximate and possible, as well as back into a vanished past.

Australian philosopher Glenn Albrecht has coined the term 'solastalgia' to refer to the emotional distress caused by the alteration of a familiar place; the feeling of homesickness for a home still inhabited but no longer recognisable. This is an issue

of increasing concern in both developed and developing nations: climate scientist Diana Liverman warns that "Arctic, Alpine and coastal peoples are losing the ecological basis of their cultures," while Robert Macfarlane, writing of the transforming environment of the Inuvialuit inhabitants of Banks Island in the Canadian High Arctic, notes that "old words … are now unaccompanied by their phenomena; new phenomena … are unaccompanied by words" [5, pp. 148, 170].

But changing landscapes, particularly those produced by retreating ice or water, may also *create* place, raising ethical questions of future ownership, care and stewardship. The issue is most pressing in the Arctic region, where a warming ocean and atmosphere are making new caches of fossil fuel available for the first time to competing national interests. Artist Alex Hartley developed a large-scale public art project following a journey with Cape Farewell to the Arctic in 2004 during which he 'discovered' and claimed a small island revealed by retreating ice, sailed a portion of it into international waters, and named it Nowhereisland. Hartley made citizenship of the island available to all, and has engaged prominent thinkers and private citizens in the creation of its constitution.

Jay Griffiths refers in *Pip Pip: A Sideways Look at Time* to the erosion of place distinctiveness in contemporary globalised societies, and argues for the restoration of the local and the knowledges that reside within it [13]. She sees this as vital to the acquisition of 'slow' or niche knowledge: shared, interdisciplinary knowledge which may renew our communal sense of connection with, and responsibility for, our own places and their resources. "We have to *work* actively with our senses," claims Eliasson, "to sharpen our sensibility towards the complex, heterogeneous world we inhabit" [9, p. 80]. Mike Hulme makes an equally strong plea from the perspective of the scientific community for a revaluing of local, traditional knowledge of climate and resource use as a guide to adaptation. He argues for a new eco-ethics which identifies and acknowledges the intrinsic and aesthetic value of natural environments to their inhabitants: "Not only must science concede some of its governance to wider society, it must also concede some ground to other ways of knowing … there are ways of understanding climate other than as a globalised, physical entity observable through scientific measurement and manipulated in computer models. As climate change discourses have reached out geographically and culturally, the value and role of local environmental knowledge about climate has begun to be recognised" [14, p. 81].

21.2 Culture and Climate

Many of the artists who have investigated the causes and impacts of our current condition of climate change, including Dalziel and Scullion, Ackroyd & Harvey, Lucy and Jorge Orta, Amy Balkin and Mary Edna Fraser, Edward Burtynsky, Yao Lu, Fiona Hall and Tomás Saraceno, seek in their work to define experience enmeshed in complex process and natural systems; in the landscapes, resources and rhythms fashioned by a particular climate. Their work sees the art object as a form of social intervention, a means of drawing the abstract, statistical properties of climate into the perpetual

conversation of culture. Culture is a process of pattern formation producing 'webs of significance,' according to anthropologist Clifford Geertz, which humanity has spun and in which we are suspended [11, p. 5]. It distributes values and meaning across society, allowing us to assign particular meaning to an object, behaviour or condition. Within the vast array of learned and communicated cultural practices, art's affective influence is acknowledged by a number of commentators and practitioners as catalytic. George Steinmann defines art in this context as "a socially related practice whose potential lies primarily in the development and provision of specific ways of thinking and working; it encourages certain capabilities" [8, p. 67].

Climate art works are works of art and also works about art as action. As societies develop, it is the artists, says director Anne Bogart, "who articulate the necessary myths that embody our experience of life and provide the parameters for ethics and values" [3, p. 3]. The graduate programme at London's University of the Arts was established in 2010 by Chris Wainwright in partnership with Cape Farewell, with the deliberate aim of engaging a new generation of creative and scientific thinkers in a dynamic and dialectical approach to issues of climate and culture. The programme takes an ethical approach to art education, conceiving of the production of cultural capital as a bridge between pedagogy and policy, and arguing for the creative co-production of climate knowledge.

Cultural responses to climate change tend to express one of four attitudes: the first and most pervasive is elegiac. Choreographer Siobhan Davies responded to the Arctic with a dance piece entitled *Endangered Species*, recorded on video and projected within a museum vitrine. The film narrates a process of human technological evolution which reaches an end point in extreme physical encumbrance. The dancer's body becomes increasingly inhibited in its movements with the addition of material extensions in the form of plastic rods. In the end, adaptive movement becomes impossible, and the illusion of progress fades into ironic eulogy. UK artists Ackroyd & Harvey's *Polar Diamond* (RSA Earth Exhibition 2009) was created using a polar bear bone found in the Arctic. Carbon from the residue ash of the cremated bone was subjected to great pressure and heat to produce a diamond. Using technology to accelerate a process that occurs naturally over millions of years, the work asks how we value what we stand to lose, and what price is ultimately being paid for carbon.

A second strand of work bears witness. Photographer Mitch Epstein's American Power series (2003–2009) considers the generation of energy and its ecological and social impact across the US. Epstein's images record the inextricable relationship between energy and power as a political construct. In their formal aesthetic properties, their juxtaposition of the epic and the domestic, and their observational quality, the photographs appear ethically neutral, but their stillness and silence, which belie the vast, dynamic and closely guarded industrial processes on which they are based, are profoundly disquieting. In an accompanying website, Epstein invites viewers to consider the ethics of their own energy use and the global capacity of American 'power' for good or ill [10]. He asks the visitor/viewer to extend the meaning of the work into his or her own life, placing the aesthetic object in the personal sphere as a navigational tool (Figs. 21.1, 21.2, 21.3 and 21.4).

Fig. 21.1 Gavin coal power plant, Cheshire, Ohio, 2003 (Photo: Mitch Epstein)
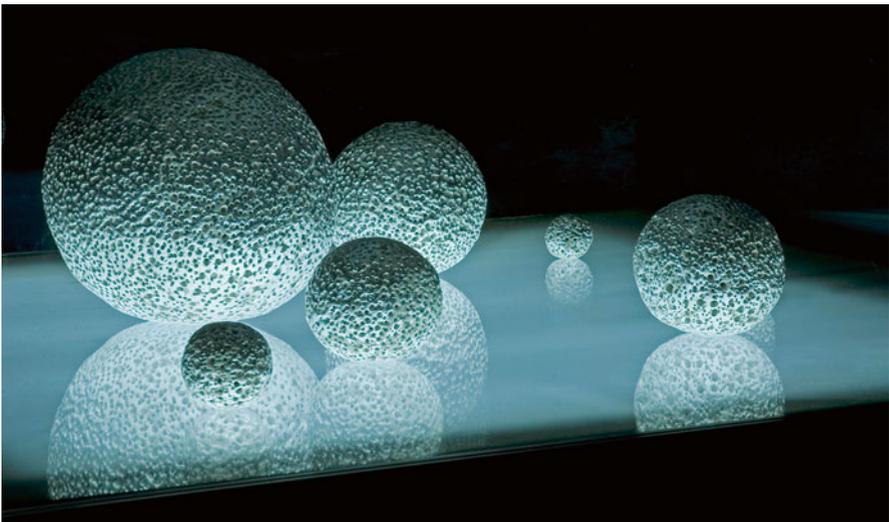
Fig. 21.2 Anne Bevan, Nova, 2007 (nine hollow clay forms, silver leaf, aluminium & acrylic light table) (Photo: Michael Wolchover)

Fig. 21.3 Antony Gormley, Peter Clegg, *Three Made Places*, Svalbard, 2007 (Photo: David Buckland)

Fig. 21.4 Clare Twomey, Specimen, 2009 (unfired china clay) (Photo: M.J. Kelly)

A third strand of climate art is immersive and interdisciplinary in its approach and methodology. 'Hybrid' artists, including Annie Cattrell, Anne Bevan, Dalziel and Scullion and Ackroyd & Harvey, often work outside the galleries, in communication or close collaboration with scientists. They are conceiving new forms and articulating experiences of individual and ecologically embedded lives. This approach may also involve visualising the unnoticed or invisible. Art historian Martin Kemp argues that fundamental properties of aesthetic and scientific perception lie deep beneath nature's surface appearance. Scottish artist Anne Bevan has created large scale models of microscopic single-celled marine foraminifera, the fossilised sediments of which are a source of fossil fuels, and therefore of the atmospheric changes they are now being used to study. Bevan questions "how we view and understand things we cannot easily see, specifically in relation to the marine environment and climate change." Bevan's work also explicitly considers how creative practice may influence our capacity to imagine new futures, and examines Albrecht's concept of solastalgia in the aesthetics of environmental change as they relate to ideas of idealised protected landscapes now under threat from large-scale renewable energy schemes on and offshore.

Finally, a strand of climate-related projects, including the 1:1 scale model *Cloud Cities* of Tomás Saraceno, design and propose radical or remedial interventions into changing landscapes, and are essentially trans-disciplinary, pragmatic and idealistic in their approach. They press narratives of change and agency forward, positing or modelling alternative futures. Artists including Stacy Levy, Alan Sonfist, Tim Collins and Reiko Goto use the design competencies of art to engage with real problems and real possibilities. Saraceno refers to Félix Guattari's 'The Three Ecologies,' in which he extends the definition of ecology to encompass social relations and human subjectivity as well as environmental concerns. To Saraceno, "Utopia is not a matter of imagination—it's an emergency one is forced to imagine as the only way out, and this is what we need today" [19].

21.3   Embodied Knowledge

David Abram argues in *The Spell of the Sensuous* that "the body is my very means of entering into relation with all things." Abram's argument, derived from the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, is that only by reuniting mind and body, process and place, language and its origins in the felt and perceived world, can a sustaining reciprocity with the animate earth be restored [1, pp. 47, 56]. Embodied knowledge also implies humility, from the Latin *humus*, earth—it is grounded knowledge that digs down into and defers to context. Its most complete expression comes in the action of stewardship, which involves the convergence of knowledge, culture, tradition and ingenuity in particular contexts, and the apt and affective expression of resonant and relevant questions about relationship, care and wellbeing in those contexts. The experience of the vulnerable body and the effortful search for security, as explored by Chris Drury in his sanctuary-shelters built from and in specific environments, finds poignant expression in the work

created on Arctic sea ice by Antony Gormley and architect Peter Clegg in Svalbard, 2007. Together they built three snow shelters, 'Block,' 'Standing Room' and 'Shelter,' as simple, temporary statements with the potential to encase or hold the human form. These three places, Gormley wrote, "constitute a continuum of places that the human needs to dwell in: the physical space of the body, the imaginative space of consciousness, and the collective space of fellowship" [5, p. 38].

Ceramicist Clare Twomey also explores vulnerability metaphorically in her unfired clay flower works (*Blossom, Specimen*), which were inevitably damaged by visitors to the exhibition space. These fragile, unprotected pieces gradually lose definition in a vivid expression of mortality and entropy. Tomás Saraceno finds a more constructive capacity in the physical engagement of the viewer with his art, and his work encourages communal bodily interaction in the event space. "Evoking Humberto Maturana's autopoiesis, Saraceno tells us how he sees the individual and the environment as a dialectical pair, and his own work as a cautionary tale, aimed at raising awareness about the inescapable reflexivity of living systems" [19].

21.4 Art, Science, Interdisciplinary Futures

The environmental and ecological art of the 1990s sought new knowledge in the Earth sciences to underpin the 'structural intuition' that Martin Kemp attributes to pioneering artists throughout the ages. When art institutions began to display and promote new works of climate art in the following decade, the artists they featured were already collaborating closely with scientists including biologists, oceanographers, physicists, and, more recently, neuroscientists and biomedical scientists. Michèle Noach, who joined Cape Farewell expeditions in 2007 and 2008, sought to incorporate into her work "the inevitable spillover from what the oceanographers were busy observing with their scopes and graphs and screens and vials. These fragments of the real world, slivers that explain the real world, are also filtering through to how the whole is calibrated, understood and recalled" [5, p. 130].

Mike Hulme insists that linear models of how science should be 'deposited' in the minds of citizens are inadequate, and that notions of circularity, multiplicity, plurality and multi-vocality might allow different frames to emerge. He joins a chorus of artists and scientists seeking to reunite the 'two cultures,' insisting that the condition of climate change can be used as a new form of enlightenment. Science fiction writer Oliver Morton claims that climate change is no longer a future to be avoided, "but a context for all the futures, good or ill, that we might go on to inhabit" [16, p. 80]. Art and science together may serve to co-create this future, or rather to conceive of it as an extension of the continuous present. Place-based climate art is beginning to link local, aesthetic and empirical knowledge into archipelagos of values-based practice, where the individual is expanded through connection with others and with other, more integral, ways of knowing.

The role of art in values-formation and in the creation of ecological resilience and wellbeing itself requires on-going analysis and research by cognitive and

social scientists, among others, into affect, frames, meaning and the theory of mind, along with qualia (what human beings subjectively add to the scientifically measurable aspects of experience) and individual and community welfare. Climate art, however, with its roots in the stewardship of place, local knowledge and contextualised ethics, is contributing to new interdisciplinary and intercultural approaches to human flourishing, based in the creative renewal of our ecologies, technologies and societies.

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Part V
Conclusion

Chapter 22
Art's Rich Contribution to Ethics

Paul Macneill

This book is a collection of invited essays on *Ethics and the Arts*. Most of the chapters were written without each author being familiar with other chapters and there is (unsurprisingly) a range of different approaches taken. Nevertheless, there is also a considerable degree of coherence between the chapters, which I aim to bring out in this concluding chapter. My further aim is to examine the ways (in the particularities of each chapter) in which the arts can, and do, make a major contribution to ethics. As discussed briefly in the Introduction, I consider that the relationship between ethics and the arts is two-way. In this book, ethical concerns are discussed *within* the arts—but so too is ethics considered from the vantage point *of* the arts. In this chapter I take up this idea from both angles, in discussing the approaches taken by various authors toward ethics within their artform, as well as in drawing insights from the discussions of various ideas, art theories and practices, and a range of other disciplines, that may offer broader understandings of ethics. There are ethical issues that concern artists and a good many of them have been captured in chapters of this book.

   This concluding chapter is organised around the ethical issues I have drawn from the *preceding* chapters and these are represented by the sub-headings below. Included (for example) are: '*intercultural issues in making art*'; and '*art as an alternative approach to understanding ethics.*' In compiling this book I have been particularly interested in the last of these: drawing understandings about ethics from the arts, and applying these in ways that may enrich our understanding of ethics more broadly.

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22.1 Intercultural Issues in Making Art

Rachael Swain, in Chap. 10, has written about intercultural issues in making art. This is the *raison d'être* of her work with the Marrugeku intercultural performance company. She writes of the importance "of 'being in place' and 'seeing country' … in order to understand how this work of 'art making' and 'culture making' can encourage audiences to 'listen differently' for Indigenous approaches to meaning and knowledge." She describes this as an "ethics of listening." Swain's approach illustrates what Ruth Little describes (in Chap. 21) as "Embodied knowledge [that] also implies humility, from the Latin *humus*, earth—it is grounded knowledge that digs down into and defers to context." Little also describes this approach as "situated ways of knowing" and "situated ethics." From these two chapters we might tentatively suggest that 'listening differently' is one means for 'situated knowledge.' Gaining knowledge in this way is also an expression of 'situated ethics.' However, I am cognisant of the risks of drawing conclusions from across two or more chapters relating to different art forms.

During the last 2 weeks of preparing the manuscript of this book to send to the publisher, I was invited to a Symposium, held here in Singapore, on 'Reconsidering contemporary acting and actor/performer training from intercultural perspectives.'[1] Although this required me to steal time set aside for this book, I attended the Symposium and am pleased I did so, because much of what was discussed was relevant to ethics and the arts. The Symposium topic focussed on culture, yet many of the concerns expressed about intercultural work related to valuing and respecting the cultural forms that one may draw on in theatre and performance work—particularly when performing traditional artforms that derive from cultures other than one's own. Nevertheless, some of the presenters at the Symposium, who work 'interculturally,' spoke of being so immersed in an artform from 'another' culture that it had ceased to feel foreign and there was no longer any sense of intercultural relationship that needed to be negotiated. As I understand this: relating to an artform, such as Kathakali from Southern India, may become natural for someone who has been immersed for a long time in the practice. It is analogous to someone fluent in more than one language: there is no sense of mixing, but a richness that is gained from bilingual, or multilingual fluency. Similarly there can be an ease that comes from immersion in another artform that could be described as bi-cultural, or multicultural fluency. That understanding however, should not deflect any of us from recognising that within this ease and facility there is an underlying respect for the integrity of the art form that one has imbibed. The respect inherent in this relationship is primarily an ethical posture.

From a broader perspective, intercultural activity—and the concerns relating to integrity of each artform—has relevance to this book project also. Editing a book on

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[1] The Symposium on 'Reconsidering contemporary acting and actor/performer training from intercultural perspectives' was organised by Intercultural Theatre Institute (Singapore) and The Institute For Interweaving Performance Cultures of Freie Universitat (Berlin) and held in the Intercultural Theatre Institute (Singapore) from 28 to 30 November 2012.

Ethics and the Arts has involved bringing the discourses of a number of different artforms together and relating them to ethics, which is a further distinguishable discourse of its own. In a metaphorical sense at least, this bringing together of ethics and the arts is an intercultural activity. Just as there needs to be an immersion in an artform for there to be fluency and grounded respect, the corollary is also be true: that lack of grounding and fluency brings with it the risk of blunders and disrespect. Attempting to draw lessons about ethics from a number of different artistic genres and applying those lessons to ethics in general, runs the risk of superficial treatment. However in this concluding chapter, with that caution in mind, I will nevertheless attempt to articulate more general perspectives on ethics offered by the various authors, by considering chapters individually and in combination. I will also offer a word-painting of a particular quality that the arts bring to understanding and practising ethics. My formulations necessarily remain open however, to further more fine-grained and situated work, and consequently any of my conclusions remain open to subsequent amendment and correction.

22.2   Substantive Moral Issues Portrayed in Art

Henri Colt's Chap. 7 'Movies and medical ethics' raises a number of substantive concerns drawn from feature films that cover a variety of moral issues such as 'bureaucratic rigidness and insensitivity,' or 'assuming to know what a patient would want without checking.' The list of moral issues portrayed in movies is extensive and Colt discusses a number that are relevant to medicine: 'stereotyping of people with particular health conditions,' 'subjecting people to experimentation without their knowledge,' through to an extreme scenario of 'quarantining a whole town and killing its citizens to avoid the outbreak of a deadly virus.' His chapter however is not focussed on these particular issues but on the capacity of movies to portray such issues potently, and the effectiveness of this artform in teaching.

Debora Diniz's Chap. 8 takes the theme of injustices apparent in a system of incarceration for mentally ill people who have also committed a crime. The primary aim in her chapter however is in examining the use of documentary as a means for bringing about political change. Similarly, in Chap. 20, George Annas raises the issue of spending on expensive programs like the Genome Project, and personalised medicine, when the health care system itself is unable to provide for ordinary health needs of American people. His point is that literary devices—including classic story telling methods, the use of the quest myths, metaphors, and the idea of progress—can play into desires for immortality/death-avoidance and serve to perpetuate an inequitable distribution of health resources. Joanna Zylinska's Chap. 17, 'Taking responsibility for life,' takes an artistic medium—bioart—and argues that traditional ethical approaches for responding to this new art form are not adequate.

In each of these chapters, the aim has been to explore the moral issues raised by an artform, with the intention of considering how the artistic genre itself is generative

of various outcomes including: educational approaches, political change, ignorance (by perpetuating death avoidance), and new understandings of life and new ways of taking moral responsibility.

22.3 'Relating' Ethically Examined in Theatre, Film, Dance, and Toward 'Place'

Several of the chapters raise questions about the nature of relationship. Phillip Zarrilli for example, in Chap. 11, looks at an ethical quality of relationship between actors in performance, between actors and the audience, and between acting teachers with their students. He considers these relationships phenomenologically as intersubjectivity and examines some of the ethical implications of intersubjectivity as being with—and being for—others: both as an actor with another actor on stage and as an actor in relating to an audience. Brian Bergen-Aurand, in Chap. 6, discusses a renewed focus on moral responsibility in film analysis and critique. Central to moral responsibility are the relations between characters in films, the filmmaker's relation with those characters, and how the film relates to filmgoers. For Bergen-Aurand ethics "arises through encountering the other" and he (along with Zarrilli) accepts Levinas's view that "this encounter provokes a response exterior to myself … as the other is seen as exterior to me, 'irreducibly different,' unique, and incomparable [to] me" (Chap. 6).

In Chap. 9 Philipa Rothfield considers relationship between dancers in terms of Spinoza's concepts of how interactions with another performer can add to, or detract from, a dancer's corporeal power. Similarly a teacher can add to (or subtract from) the corporeal power of a student by enabling the student to express more. Power in this sense is understood as a capacity for activity and an experience of creative power in the body rather than power over another person. With an increase of power there is an increase in joy both for the performer herself, and for the audience witnessing her movement. This is to express the good. As Rothfield presents it, Spinoza's ethics involves a shift in focus—away from a subjective knowing and pre-conceptions of the good—toward an understanding of the good as an accumulation of power through accessing one's essence and through accumulating power in combining with others.

Both Rachael Swain (in Chap. 10) and Ruth Little (in Chap. 21) broaden the concept of relationship to include relationship with place. This relationship is ethical in a grounded sense (both literal and figurative)—although it may also include (for Swain) an awareness of loss of place, removals, deportations and atrocities committed in particular places. In this sense, making art (whether painting or dance performance) involves incorporating an awareness of relationship to place. Making art is also making community and making culture. Ruth Little's Chap. 21 takes ethical relationship to include place in the broadest sense of relationship to geography, oceans and climate systems. Understanding

relationship in this way necessarily raises questions about care and responsibility. These relationships are situated within particular contexts and express what she means by situated ethics.

22.4 Art as Celebration—Supportive of Community and Ethical Relationship

In exploring music and morality Philip Alperson (in Chap. 3) gives attention to the integral role of music in community: marking important events, enabling celebration, contributing to national identity, and establishing and identifying particular communities within a broader community. All of these are, for Alperson, contributions to ethical life. For James Thompson (in Chap. 12) theatre fulfills a similar function in community-based performance along with other activities of socially-engaged art making. He emphasises a need to allow a place for delight, beauty and joy, as important aspects of applied theatre, that can awaken individuals to other needs—including a need to face painful issues or broader issues of oppression within a community. In this way theatre and music contribute to building community and creating ethical relationships.

22.5 Moral Commentary in Works of Art—And Art as Political Protest

Iain Bamforth addresses directly the issue of moral commentary in works of art in Chap. 2, which is about Flaubert and his novel *Madam Bovary*. The major point of Bamforth's chapter is Flaubert's refusal to morally judge his character or to treat the novel as an instrument of moral or political persuasion. Flaubert thought it was not the author's role to offer a moral commentary on his character but to faithfully represent her—following what Bamforth describes as "a manner of seeing internal to the text itself" which he terms "subjective realism." In the preceding century the philosopher David Hume had expressed the opposite view in his essay 'Of the Standard of Taste' (1757) by writing (in effect) that "where vicious manners are described" they should be "marked with the proper characters of blame and disapprobation" [2]. I discuss a less demanding version of Humean moralism in Chap. 15 that is currently advocated—but Hume's view appears extreme even by these standards.

There has been a change from the notion of art as a conveyor of morality from medieval morality plays, a movement away from moral storytelling and political protest in painting (as I discuss in Chap. 4), and—following Bamforth—in literature since Flaubert. Literary characters, and moral subjects may be dealt with, but neutrally or sympathetically—possibly enigmatically—but not with condemnation and judgment.

Nevertheless art still has a role in protest and as an agent of political change. This is the subject in Debora Diniz's Chap. 8, which discusses 'ethnographic documentary' as "an instrument of ethical approach to social questions." The issue she confronts in the documentary 'The House of the Dead' is moral prejudice against madness and crime and her aim is to stimulate political action. Ruth Little's Chap. 21 describes a number of art projects in which artists have expressed their responses to climate change such as Cape Farewell's expeditions to the Arctic and the rainforests in Peru—again with the aim of promoting change.

George Annas's Chap. 20 is the third of a series of his essays on the role of metaphors, stories, and myths on health care reform and medical research in America. His aim in Chap. 20, as in all three of his essays, is to demonstrate "how the quest narrative can make even out of control, and extraordinarily expensive quests seem much more reasonable and supportable in theory than they are likely to be in practice." Although he considers this to be a "modest goal" it nevertheless serves a larger purpose of enabling political change through exposing literary devices that are used to dissemble.

James Thompson's Chap. 12 is also about political change. He works with applied theatre, often in workshop settings, and he brings to light the importance of affect—particularly joy, delight and beauty—as important elements in change even within dire circumstances. He makes the point that working for change should not be confined to instrumental approaches but should also encompass celebration, and he highlights work within intimate settings, not just big street events, as important elements in a change process.

22.6 Ethics and Images

Miles Little, in Chap. 16, points to a link between ethics and aesthetics that has become more overt in the age of the media, with the use of aesthetic techniques (framing, colouring, condensing, and simplifying) that are employed in the service of persuading us to particular views. In contemporary culture we are surrounded by aesthetically crafted images that are designed to influence us, through a wide range of media sources. Many of these images carry implicit moral messages and the quality of their presentation persuades us to take them seriously.

In this postmodern era, artists have played with media images: Andy Warhol, who is discussed in Chap. 4, being the most prominent of them. As I observe in that chapter, Warhol brought a media-savvy approach to 'high art' and played with commercial brand images and also images of tragic events—such as those that we are confronted with daily through the media. Airplane and car crashes, suicides, and the electric chair are presented as repetitive images in his 'Death and Disaster' series, and reduced to the banal, just as they are in the media. It remains unclear whether Warhol was deliberate in bringing irony and a moral sensibility into these *re*-presentations—but a moral sensibility is apparent in the way in which Marlene Dumas (also discussed in Chap. 4) *re*-presents images of a similar kind. This is to

bring a critique and moral reflection to painting, of the kind that Miles Little advocates in Chap. 16.

Sarah Sentilles, in Chap. 5, discusses a paradox about photographic images, that appear to capture what is 'real,' yet on closer analysis prove elusive. As she puts it, "Photography exists at the limits of representation" and that "Understanding photography this way provides resources for constructing a mode of looking that maintains a form of otherness based on unknowability."

22.7   Ethical Issues in Making Art

A number of chapters deal with ethical issues in making art. Flaubert's stance, discussed by Iain Bamforth in Chap. 2, of refusing to morally judge his character, is an ethical position about the role of an author in writing literature. In Chap. 8, Debora Diniz discusses the ethical stance of an activist documentary-maker. She addresses a need for the filmmaker to maintain integrity in making documentaries—even when the material she is working with runs counter (or may initially appear to run counter) to her larger purpose of promoting change. For example, she focusses on three characters in 'House of the Dead,' and of the three, one (Jaime) is disconcerting. He had been accused of three murders and appears, on camera, to lack any remorse. He represents the 'dangerous lunatic' who "directly confronts the fear of dangerous madness." Yet to omit him from the story, in order to make a more compelling case against these institutions for the criminally insane, would have lacked integrity. From a broader perspective, including a counter example demonstrates a willingness of the 'ethnographic-researcher/film-maker' to address all sides of the issue she documents. As Diniz states, "It is the 'dangerous Jaime' who dissipates the suspicion that the film is a romantic fable about men abandoned in forensic hospitals." Diniz openly uses film as an "activist documentary … with political ambitions." Nevertheless, it is "a piece of art for political action" and as such contains "a tension between the arts and political action." In Diniz's view this means that the documentary has to be both aesthetically appealing ("beautiful, sensitive, and solid") and to be authentic: the "characters need to be authentic." For all these reasons she includes Jaime.

Rachael Swain also deals with issues of integrity in her account of creating 'Burning Daylight.' She "outlines a collaborative intercultural process for performance making" which she characterises as 'listening differently.' It includes 'listening to place' and 'listening to country.' She regards this as an ethical process, and as "an ethics of paying attention," although it is not an approach that can be reduced to a codified form. She writes, in Chap. 10, that:

> after years of negotiating processes of creating contemporary dance, song and music in direct yet experimental associations with so-called traditional forms, we take the position that our approach is based on ethics, not protocols. There is no fixed or stable method to the work with which to set entrenched protocols for any cultural context. Every specific negotiation must be treated as a unique expression of the factors and individuals and their histories which make up the lived experience of culture in each specific milieu. This is an ethics of listening to the past, present and future—an ethics of paying attention.

22.8   Ethics of Art in Relating to Science and Medicine

Many of the chapters address the ethics of art in relating to science or medicine. This includes the two chapters about bioart (artists using living material such as tissue, blood, genes, bacteria or viruses and the bio-science techniques in making art). One of the dangers of art—that is made in collaboration with scientists and technicians—is an uncritical acceptance of new methodologies and an unquestioning acceptance the 'technological imperative' as though all 'technological innovation' is *progress* and inherently good. This amounts to "carrying a vested political agenda" (albeit unconsciously) within the art [4]. However neither Zylinska (Chap. 17), nor Zurr and Catts (Chap. 18) are uncritical in this sense, in their discussions of bioart. Zylinska acknowledges that much bioart is, "too derivative with regard to biotechnology and bioscience, too fascinated with the technical process, too focused on the pedagogic aspect of bringing science to the people, too insular in its own preoccupations with technical details." Nevertheless her point is that bioart (or at least the "rare but nevertheless transformative bioartistic events") raises ethical issues of a different order from those usually confronted within scientific or medical research and that these issues challenge our understandings of 'life' and the adequacy of ethical guidelines for evaluating research of this kind (as is discussed further below).

Claire Hooker's Chap. 19 addresses the medical humanities, which is a field that attempts (among other things) to assist health care students and practitioners in understanding their patients' experiences. This is inherently an ethical endeavor, motivated by a perceived need to soften a 'cold-clinical' or 'scientific-technological' approach to medicine—out of concern for patients' wellbeing. Although Hooker is critical, and suggests a broadening of approach, she is also supportive of the medical humanities and the moral sensibility of its major proponents.

George Annas, in Chap. 20, also relates to science and medicine and challenges the uncritical use of literary devices that might deflect from recognising how these devices are employed in support of an inequitable health care system (as is discussed above).

22.9   Ethics of Teaching and the Teaching of Ethics

A number of chapters raise concerns about either the ethics of teaching and/or the teaching of ethics. In Chap. 11, Phillip Zarrilli notes that, "teachers are in positions of power and authority over actors or students—positions of course which are open to potential abuse." Henri Colt—in addressing the teaching of ethics—discusses (in Chap. 7) the effectiveness of movies for learning-teaching medical ethics. This is related to one of Claire Hooker's interests (Chap. 19) in the medical humanities: its effectiveness in teaching empathy and ethics. In Chap. 14, I also discuss teaching ethics within medical schools, and am critical of the usual approaches for doing so.

My point is that the arts, and particularly the performing arts, could provide useful models for *practising* ethics skilfully as 'moral ideals' that go beyond normative accounts of ethics.

22.10 Normative Standards in Making, Appreciating, and Drawing Lessons from Art

None of the chapters takes a normative approach to ethics. Nor do any of the authors derive their position on ethics in relation to the arts from established norms, guidelines or codes of ethics. This is not surprising given that an aim of this book was to seek out alternative approaches to ethics (and hence influenced my choice of contributors). Nevertheless normative accounts are mentioned. Phillip Zarrilli discusses the book *Theatre & Ethics* by Nicholas Ridout—which provides an overview of normative approaches to ethics in theatre although Ridout does not constrain himself to a normative approach. As Zarrilli observes, Ridout recommends that theatre be approached "with uncertainty, with a view to the possibility of surprise, challenge or affront" [5, p. 70]. Zarrilli's own approach to ethics in theatre is *far from* normative in linking ethics with intersubjective sensitivity.

Whilst 'respect' is inherent in many of the chapters—such as in Rachael Swain's approach to Indigenous artforms—there is an evident reluctance to treat respect in a codified manner. Swain (in Chap. 10) is explicit in concluding that protocols are not helpful in that each situation of art-making she has faced has been unique and has required negotiation that took into consideration the specific factors within each particular milieu (as is discussed above).

As for normative standards in appreciating (or judging) art: I deal with this issue in Chap. 15 (in a critical review of the new 'moralisms') and conclude that "general propositions about a relationship between morality and aesthetics may be of assistance [but] I don't believe that one theory can adequately *capture* this process." Jacobson and Deveraux (discussed in that chapter) emphasise that any relation between ethics and aesthetics can only be established in critical assessments of particular works of art—and Jacobson, in particular, emphasises that there is "no true *theory* of the relation between moral and aesthetic value" that adequately includes all possible artworks [3]. All of this militates against assuming a normative position on a relationship between ethics and aesthetics. However both Gaut and Kieran argue that there is sufficient consistency in this relationship to provide for "some kind of account" of ethics as it relates to aesthetics and both of them advance theories of this kind (as is discussed in Chap. 15).

As for drawing moral lessons from works of art, Iain Bamforth—following Flaubert—asserts, "It would be entirely a mistake to assume that the morality inherent in the work itself is a lesson to be learned, a list of catechisms, an account settled, or indeed any kind of certitude extricable from the substance of the novel itself. Flaubert detested the urge to wrap things up, to move towards 'closure' in today's psychological language."

Nevertheless some standards may still be required. For example, Joanna Zylinska (in Chap. 17) acknowledges that bioart does not remain "outside the dominant cultural norms" and nor does 'artistic creativity' release artists "from wider social conventions and obligations."

22.11 Theoretical and Philosophical Positions Relating Ethics to the Arts

One of the features of the 22 chapters that make up this book is the range of theoretical approaches taken by various authors, and the range of philosophical positions that are drawn on in relating ethics to the arts. To illustrate this point: Philipa Rothfield founds her position on Spinoza's ethics, as elaborated by Deleuze. Joanna Zylinska also draws on Deleuze, and refers to Henri Bergson and Chantal Mouffe. A number of authors develop their positions in relation to Emmanuel Levinas: including Brian Bergen-Aurand, James Thompson (who also refers to Jacques Rancière and Simon Critchley), Phillip Zarrilli (who draws in Merleau-Ponty), and Sarah Sentilles—who develops her position further with reference to Judith Butler, Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes and Gordon Kaufman.[2] Debora Diniz refers to Butler, Barthes and Sontag as well as to Michel Foucault. Clare Hooker takes her starting position from Martha Nussbaum and Rita Charon and elaborates her position with reference to Ellen Dissanayake and Terry Eagleton. In Chaps. 13 and 14, I consider Jacques Derrida's deconstructive philosophy, and in Chap. 15, I discuss a number of philosophers of art, including David Hume, Noel Carroll, Berys Gaut and others. Miles Little, in Chap. 16, draws on a long list of eminent philosophers including Plato, Hume, Kant, Wittgenstein and more.

Stepping back from the breadth of theoretical and philosophical discussion represented in the preceding chapters, it becomes obvious that (at the very least) the field is diverse and has a long history. Nor is there any *one* position relating aesthetics to ethics that is adopted by all—or a number of authors—with the possible exception of Levinas, and his assertion that 'First philosophy is an ethics.' Even so, of those authors who refer to Levinas, most have qualified their positions (although to differing extents).

Berys Gaut notes, in the opening chapter of his *Art, Emotion and Ethics*, that "the relation of art to ethics has been a recurrent and central concern in Western culture from Plato to the present." He adds that this is a concern of ordinary people

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[2] Bergen-Aurand, Sentilles, Thompson, and Zarrilli all refer extensively to Levinas, yet their treatment, while similar, does not overlap except in minor details. Zarrilli and Sentilles give a relatively 'straight' account of Levinas—but even so, those accounts differ. Thompson construes Levinas in the light of subsequent commentators (Critchley & Butler); and Bergen-Aurand discusses Levinas in reference to particular film critics who have drawn on Levinas. There is no 'one account' common to all four of these authors. Reading the different accounts of Levinas, within the contexts of photography, film, theatre and participatory performance expands on one's understanding of Levinas and is illuminative.

as well as of philosophers [1, p. 5]. It is also a concern that has been evident in Asian cultures for centuries.[3] Taking all these observations together, my sense is that there is no one characterisation of this relationship that can (or should) be arrived at. A relationship between ethics and the arts is one of those demanding liaisons that—to come to terms with—each of us has to engage with and to contest for ourselves, based on our own philosophical inclinations, artistic commitments, and particular context.

22.12 Arts Offer a Rich Contribution to Ethics

Having offered the previous all-embracing statement, I nevertheless conclude by arguing for a particular approach—obviously deriving from my own preferences in the arts, my philosophical inclinations and my particular context. Details of my context are divulged in Chap. 14 and offered again briefly here: that I have taught ethics to medical students for more than 20 years and am dissatisfied with the predominant normative approaches, particularly because normative ethics does "little to promote an inner sense of mastery in acting well in relating to others." I have turned to the arts to look for qualities that may have potential application in promoting acting well—or acting ethically in relation to others—and in ways that go beyond normative approaches. To this I add: acting in ways that bring delight— and acting from a recognition that the most important change may be in the quality of affect rather than in achieving some instrumental purpose for an encounter.

Other contributing authors express similar concerns about the place of normative ethics at least in their particular contexts with reference to their artform. For example, in Chap. 17, the issue Joanna Zylinska examines is usually framed as 'the potential for harm that could arise from bioartists manipulating life forms' and a consequent perceived ethical requirement for artists working with these technologies to minimise harm. However Zylinska is concerned that putting the issue in this traditional way—and in the manner in which bioethics typically approaches such issues—runs the risk of raising moralist assumptions about 'life,' 'human values,' 'playing God,' and other metaphysical assumptions that foreclose any discussion. She argues that bioart has an important role to play in opening assumptions about 'life' for examination. Moreover it is peculiarly well placed to do so, in lacking the commercial or instrumental imperative that usually drives this kind of experimentation. Foreclosing any discussion on traditional grounds then would shut down the possibility of re-examining what we mean by 'life,' and miss an opportunity to re-examine the adequacy of the assumptions within the "traditional humanist value-based ethics" that are relied on for ethical decision-making. She suggests other ways for taking "responsibility for life" which allow us to reinvent life's norms and our conceptualisations of life.

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[3] For example, in the writings of Indian philosopher Abinavagupta (950–1020 C.E.) on aesthetics and ethics.

In her discussion of Spinoza's ethics Philipa Rothfield (Chap. 9) has chosen an alternative to normative ethics. She writes that Spinoza's ethics "dethrones the sovereign subject, eschews universal principles of good and bad, focussing instead on each body as the source and site of goodness." At one point she relates an instruction from choreographer Russell Dumas who suggests "keeping open possibilities in relation to dancing phrase material. The point is not to foreclose the ensuing movement by committing a body too soon, but to suggest a horizon redolent with possibility." She describes this process as "ethical improvisation."

I think I know what Rothfield means. In theatre and in jazz, many of the most engaging moments arise from improvisation. It seems a useful concept in ethics also. Like jazz musicians, we know the typical phrasing for interactions with others, yet we are free to improvise in ways that bring life to the exchange. There is also a manner of understanding this in relation to following a text, staying true to a set score, and acting within constraints—such as those delineated in normative principles of ethics.

Last Sunday, my wife and I went to a performance, by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, of Schubert's Piano Quintet in A major.[4] For readers who do not know this arrangement, it includes a piano, violin, viola, cello, and double bass.[5] Through all five movements of this performance, I was in delight. The musicians were serious yet spontaneous and playful—even as they stayed true to the score. There was a lightness and crispness to their playing, and their timing was fluid. What particularly delighted me was the obvious pleasure that each of the musicians took in his or her playing, and the occasional quick glances exchanged between the violinist and cellist that left a smile on both of their faces. I saw their performance as a splendid metaphor for ethics.

Normative ethics is a necessity in many circumstances. Not all situations can be left to the moment and some prior considered agreement between participants, to cover what ought to happen, is often needed. Nevertheless, even within those constraints, there can be a fluidity and lightness, a crispness and delight in the performance. There is no music in dull, rigid following of the score with each player absorbed in getting it right. The arts can illustrate what it means to relate with pleasure and joy in full and cooperative engagement.

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[4] Schubert's Piano Quintet in A major, Op. post. 114 D.667 also known as 'The Trout' and was timed at 39 min.

[5] The musicians were, on Piano: Xie Jing Xian; Violin: Chan Yoong-Han; Viola: Gu Bing Jie; Cello: Ng Pei-Sian; and Double Bass: Yang Zheng Yi. The Performance was on Sunday 2nd December 2012.

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Miles Little MD, MS, FRACS, is Emeritus Professor of Surgery. He was the Founding Director of the Centre for Values, Ethics and the Law in Medicine, University of Sydney 1995–2003. Previously he was Foundation Professor of Surgery at the Westmead Hospital 1978–1996 and Chairman of the Department of Surgery, University of Sydney 1978–1989. Miles has published poetry in *Quadrant*, *Southerly* and *Poetry Australia*, and a collection of poems: *Round Trip* (1977) Melbourne University Press.

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Sarah Sentilles is a scholar of religion, critical theorist, and author of three books: *Breaking Up with God: A Love Story* (2011); *A Church of Her Own* (2008); and *Taught by America* (2005). Her bachelor's degree (Yale) was in literature and art history. She holds a master of divinity and doctorate in theology from Harvard. She is an Assistant Professor at Pacific Northwest College of Art.

Rachael Swain is a founding member and Director of Stalker Theatre based in Sydney; and Founder and Co-Artistic Director with Dalisa Pigram of Marrugeku, the innovative intercultural-Indigenous dance theatre company based in Broome (far north west of Western Australia). She conceives and directs multimedia performances creating a unique synthesis of theatre, circus, video, and dance in a variety of alternative locations nationally and internationally. Her performances *Mimi, Blood Vessel*, *Crying Baby*, *Incognita, Burning Daylight, SUGAR, Shanghai Lady Killer* and *Buru* have been performed throughout Australia, the Pacific, the Americas and Europe. Rachael has an MA in Performance Studies from the University of Sydney; a practice-based masters from DASARTS, the Amsterdam School for Advanced Theatre and Dance Research; and a practice/theory PhD from the University of Melbourne where she is currently Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the School of Culture and Communications.

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